

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: BASIS FOR TEACHERS' TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

Most of the world's non-English language teachers speak English as a second or third language rather than as their first language. For many, their level of proficiency in English may not reach established by their school heads, colleagues, and students, raising the issue that is the focus of this research. Using the descriptive method of research, the researcher determined the perception of school heads, teachers, and students on the English proficiency level of teachers in terms of academic language and language comprehension. This also determined the level of performance of students in English core subjects, thus, the subject teachers could be encouraged to strive to become better educator to provide a venue for students to continuously dream of becoming better learners. The statistical formulas used for treating the data obtained were Frequency Count, Percentage, T Test of Difference between Unequal Samples, Weighted Mean, Kruskal-Wallis Test of Change, and Pearson R Product-Moment Correlation. The findings showed that the level of English proficiency of teachers and the students' performance on academic language and language comprehension were very satisfactory. Moreover, the findings showed that there was a significant relationship that exists between the English proficiency Level of teachers and the students' performance based on the components considered in the study. With this, a training design to enhance the level of English proficiency of teachers was proposed.

Keywords: English proficiency, core subjects, academic language, teachers' training, descriptive method, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Teachers, being an indispensable part of the teaching-learning process, play the major role in the motivation and engagement of students in the classroom, thus, they are expected to be proficient in the language for them to convey the necessary learning, ideas, and concepts to their students. Most of the world's English language teachers speak English as a second or third language rather than as their first language. For many, their level of proficiency in English may not reach

benchmarks established by their school heads, colleagues, and students (Richards, 2017).

English is not only known as the language of the English people but also as the language spoken by people in many countries. Therefore, it is important for English language learners to observe the differences in language use. To this end, the Philippine government has pushed to revamp the country's educational system on the integration of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, as well as the

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United Nations's call for Education for All (EFA) by 2015. Such revamp involves a review of the effectiveness of English language education (ELE) in the country, which may be described as at a crossroads, as stakeholders strive to address issues of developing the English language competencies of Filipino students on the one hand, and the strengthening of academic achievement on the other. This has been found wanting in significantly contributing to increase learning outcomes among Filipino students. ELE policies have been beset with issues of alignment and coherence in the areas of curriculum and assessment, and challenges in the implementation of genuine reform. In addition, ELE has been implemented at the expense of literacy in the mother tongues (Madrurnio, Martin, and Plata, 2016).

Researchers exposed that teachers need deep and broad expertise about language because of the range of functions they must serve. As communicators with students from diverse backgrounds, teachers need to understand that structural differences among languages and contrasting cultural patterns for language use may affect their students' discourse. In their role as educators, teachers need to know how English proficiency develops in native speakers and in speakers who are learning English as a second language. Understanding language development and acquisition helps teachers select appropriate materials for their students.

Similarly, their role as evaluators calls for an understanding of what language behaviors to expect based on students' language backgrounds, so that predictable dialect and language learning features are not confused with language deficit or delay. Teachers are also expected to know about language because of their role as educated human beings and to contribute this information to discussions in schools and beyond. Finally, teachers are important agents of socialization, who support children's developing identities as students who help children from a wide variety of homes and

societies learn to function comfortably and successfully at school, sometimes in a new language and culture.

In this vein, the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP), a nationwide program implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd), trains proficient teachers to become mentors to less proficient teachers in their respective schools. It was created in response to the need to raise the quality of English proficiency among Filipino teachers, particularly Reading/ English, Math and Science teachers, thus to improve the competencies of their students (PIA, 2009).

The researcher became interested to determine the English proficiency level of secondary teachers because it is expected of a teacher to have good communication skills. This undertaking also aimed to seek answers to queries on how teachers cope with the demands of the modern society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research was conducted to: 1) determine the perception of school heads, teachers, and students on the English proficiency level of teachers in terms of academic language and language comprehension; 2) test the difference of the perceptions made by the school heads, teachers and students in the assessment of the teachers' level of English proficiency; 3) determine the level of performance of students in English core subjects based from the ratings of teachers; and 4) propose a training design to enhance the level of proficiency among teachers to increase teachers and students English proficiency.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method of research was utilized in the study with self- made questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument. All the school heads and English core subject teachers from the eight schools were respondents. The student respondents were the second year and fourth year students



of the teacher respondent. On the other hand, the sample size of the school heads and teachers was eight and 149 respectively while the sample size identified for student respondents was 383 using the Slovin's Formula at five percent margin of error.

Two stages were used in the validation of the survey instruments. The first stage was the face of validation. In this stage the questionnaire was presented to a panel of three who were considered experts in the subject, English. This group was requested to analyze and give comments and recommendations to improve its content based on its organization, structure, and purpose. After editing and changing some items based on the recommendations made, the dry run was done. The dry run was done by conducting a survey by utilizing the questionnaires to 10 respondents from each group of respondents who were not part of the study. The results of the dry run were subjected to Pearson R Correlation Coefficient and were found valid and reliable. A request to administer the survey questionnaires was sent to the office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon approval, the questionnaires were sent to the respondents through the help of the principals. The statistical formulas used for treating the data obtained were Frequency Count, Percentage, t-Test of Difference between Unequal Samples, Weighted Mean, Kruskal-Wallis Test of Change, Pearson R Product-Moment Correlation, and Regression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Perception of School Heads, Teachers, and Students of the English Proficiency Level of Teachers in Terms of Academic Language and Language Comprehension

1.1. English proficiency level of teachers in terms of academic language. Table 1 presents the English proficiency level of teachers as perceived by the three groups of respondents. The researcher made use of

ten items in characterizing the status of the teachers.

Table 1
English Proficiency Level of Teachers in Terms of Academic Language

CATEGORIES	WEIGHTED MEAN		
	SCHOOL HEADS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
1. integrate academic language development into content instruction and how to use ESL techniques to make the concepts comprehensible	4.12	3.93	4.39
2. use visuals, gestures, less complex speech, modeling, and other techniques to present key information	4.00	3.88	4.44
3. clearly and completely model (and/or provide models of) target academic language that supports content learning	4.13	3.93	4.22
4. employ direction to help students learn the subject area topics and develop appropriate language skills	4.50	3.95	4.42
5. scaffold instruction so that students can construct meaning and understand complex concepts	4.87	3.99	4.52
6. make frequent use of comprehension checks that require the students to demonstrate their understanding	4.00	3.93	4.43
7. make sure that students understand academic topical conversations and most lectures without difficulty	4.38	3.85	4.34
8. deliver effective command of the language so that students can articulate their ideas, practice academic language, develop automaticity, and get feedback	4.25	3.87	4.32
9. train students understand instruction on language forms, academic vocabulary, and language learning strategies	3.63	3.83	4.20
10. engage students to several activities for them to understand detailed reasoning	4.00	3.93	4.29
AVERAGE	4.19	3.91	4.44

Result shows that the item, scaffold instruction so that students can construct



meaning and understand complex concepts, obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.87 signifying that the level of teachers' proficiency was very highly proficient based from the school heads' perception. While from the teachers and students, this item obtained the highest weighted means as well which were 3.99 that means highly proficient and 4.52 that was very highly proficient, respectively.

On the other hand, the item, train students understand instruction on language forms, academic vocabulary, and language learning strategies, disclosed the lowest weighted mean scores of 3.63, 3.83, and 4.20 respectively from the school heads, teachers, and students which was highly proficient.

On the average, a weighted mean score of 4.19 from the school heads, 3.91 from the teachers, and 4.44 from the students reflected similarly as highly proficient. This result implies that the teachers in the division were highly proficient in terms of academic language and that this proficiency was evident in their performance as assessed by their school heads and students.

These findings support the contention of Brookfield (2012) where it examined in detail the fact that critical thinking is best experienced as a social learning process and how important it is for teachers to model the process for students.

1.2. English proficiency level of teachers in terms of language comprehension. Table 2 presents the perceptions of the three groups in terms of language comprehension.

These affirmed that as perceived by the school heads, the item, provide instruction which incorporates a high degree of both challenge and support, got the highest weighted mean of 5.0 signifying a very highly proficient rating. Two out of ten items showed notable high-frequency form of questioning, hinting, explaining, and feeding back and encouraging students to say more and reason more with text and language, got similar weighted means which was 3.63 and ranked

lowest on school heads perception and interpreted as highly proficient.

Table 2
English Proficiency Level of Teachers in Terms of Language Comprehension

CATEGORIES	WEIGHTED MEAN		
	SCHOOL HEADS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
1. analyze texts to develop new literacy skills and strategies	4.63	3.97	4.43
2. maintain intellectual challenge of the task and help learners successfully engage with it	3.88	3.86	4.33
3. help students make sense of text and language through discourse or action	3.88	3.87	4.29
4. use of challenge-sustaining scaffolds maintain the rigor of tasks	3.75	3.94	4.29
5. promote students' sense – making that limit their own talk to share their reasoning and highlight ambiguity and differences of opinion	4.63	3.96	4.57
6. provide instruction which incorporates a high degree of both challenge and support	5.00	3.85	4.41
7. press for accurate knowledge and rigorous thinking during reading instruction	4.63	3.77	3.90
8. scaffolds often curtailed opportunities for higher-order thinking skills	3.75	3.83	4.20
9. demonstrated notable high-frequency form of questioning, hinting, explaining, and feeding back	3.63	4.05	4.64
10. encourage students to say more and reason more with text and language	3.63	4.08	4.52
AVERAGE	4.14	3.90	4.36

Contrary to the school heads perception, the item, encourage students to say more and reason more with text and language obtained the highest weighted mean, 4.08, as to teachers' perception while item, press for accurate knowledge and



rigorous thinking during reading instruction, got lowest of 3.77 weighted mean. Still, both fell on highly proficient rating. The students contrasted the school heads perception as well when item, demonstrated notable high-frequency form of questioning, hinting, explaining, and feeding back, garnered a weighted mean score of 4.64 and interpreted as very highly proficient. While they shared their obtained lowest weighted mean with the teachers on the item, press for accurate knowledge and rigorous thinking during reading instruction having 3.90 yet still having highly proficient interpretation.

On the average, a weighted mean score of 4.14 obtained from the school heads and 3.90 from the teachers both signified highly proficient while 4.36 weighted mean was obtained from the students that showed very highly proficient rating. It could be safely said that teachers had been showing proficiency in terms of language comprehension which could pose a good impact to teachers and students' performance in the classroom.

The result of the findings supported the idea of Escamilla, et al. (2013) that given the linguistic diversity among students in most schools, teacher-educators and instructional coaches can do more to model a range of bilingual pedagogies, even in primarily English-language contexts. This may include ways of deepening students' metalinguistic awareness of how languages work or providing more opportunities for students to make meaning of text and language in their home languages. Precisely, teachers' language comprehension could be avenues to make students get involved and accelerate active participation in the classroom.

2. Difference between and among the Perceptions of School Heads, Teachers, and Students on the English Proficiency Level of Secondary School Teachers

Table 3 revealed that the two components considered in the study manifested highly significant interpretation.

Table 3
Test of Difference on the English Proficiency Level of Teachers in Teaching

CATEGORIES	ΣR ² 's	H VALUE	INTERPRETATION	
			SIGNIFICANCE	DECISION
1. Academic Language	72,530.4	15.01	P < .01 H.S.	Reject
2. Language Comprehension	95,348.4	9.53	P < .01 H.S.	Reject

Accordingly, these components were: academic language with h-value of 15.01 and language comprehension with h- value of 9.53. It could be gleaned from the results that in the components mentioned in the analysis made, the difference obtained reached the .01 level of confidence; hence, a highly significant difference was met.

The results of the study implied that the hypothesis was rejected and that there were significant differences between and among the perceptions made by the school heads, teachers, and students in the assessment of the level of English proficiency of teachers.

3. Level of Performance of Students in English Core Subjects Based from the Ratings Made by their Teachers in the Subjects

Table 4
Performance of Students in English Core Subject

COMPONENTS	PERCENTAGE		AVERAGE	TRANSMUTED RATING	INTERPRETATION
	2 nd YEAR	4 th YEAR			
Academic Language	82	80.5	81.25	4.06	VS
Language Comprehension	83.5	84	83.75	4.19	VS

Table 4 presents the results of the ratings made by the teachers on students' performance in English core subjects in terms of academic language and language comprehension.

As gleaned from the table, both components registered a very satisfactory interpretation on the transmuted rating from the second and fourth-year students. The component language comprehension garnered the highest transmitted rating which was 4.19 and academic language obtained 4.06. Consequently, it could be safely said that as far as the components were concerned, teachers found their students to perform very satisfactorily in English core subjects.

The teachers' ratings that revealed the findings of the study were further given substance and supported by the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP), a nationwide program implemented by DepEd that trains proficient teachers to become mentors to less proficient teachers in their respective schools. It was created in response to the need to raise the quality of English proficiency of Filipino teachers, particularly among Reading/English, Math and Science teachers, thus to improve the competencies of their students (PIA, 2009).

4. Proposed Training Design

The level of English proficiency of teachers and the students' performance on academic language and language comprehension were very satisfactory. Moreover, the teachers found their students to perform very satisfactorily in English core subjects. With these findings, it can be said that there was a need to further enhance the level of English proficiency of teachers, particularly in academic language and language comprehension through intensive training for teachers that focused mainly on the academic language and language comprehension. The training can be done during the Gender and Development Training of teachers in the Division in order that problems and other issues concerning the proficiency of teachers be addressed by proper authorities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyses of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The English proficiency level of teachers proves that teacher's communication skills on the use of English as the second language is commendable.
2. A disparity on the perception of the respondents could be due to the nature of functions being performed by each group. School heads and students had gained respect for the teachers, as far as rating them is concerned; teachers being the subject of the study reserved modesty on their part.
3. The teachers find their students to perform very satisfactory in English core subjects based from the components studied.
4. A re-designed training program is needed to further enhance the level of English Proficiency of teachers in the division.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the different data gathered, analysed and interpreted, the following are the given recommendations:

1. DepEd Lipa City may take into consideration the findings of this study in the development of their in-service training programs particularly with the English teachers to strengthen their language proficiency.
2. The DepEd Lipa City may have provision to different training programs for teachers such as seminars and grant certificate programs for teachers to keep abreast of the modern society in terms of speaking, writing, reading, and listening despite having communicative competence acknowledged.
3. The English core subject teachers could be encouraged to strive to become better educator so as to provide avenue

for students to continuously dream of becoming better learners.

4. The proposed training design in this study may be considered for implementation.

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