

English Proficiency Of First Year College Students And Its Relationship To Their Academic Performance: A Basis For Proposed Action Plan

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Abstract

This study examined the English proficiency level of the students at University of Cagayan Valley particularly the college fresh men students enrolled in the School of Liberal Arts and Teacher Education program and its possible effect on their academic performance.

Using Quantitative research design, the study involved 238 student-respondents enrolled in the School of Liberal Arts and Teacher Education Program. Data was collected through adopted survey questionnaires measuring English Proficiency level of the respondents in three dimensions: Vocabulary, Grammar, and Reading Comprehension. Statistical tools such as Frequency and Percentage counts, Weighted Mean, Kruskal Wallis Test, Mann-Whitney U test, and Spearman's rho correlation were used to analyze the data.

Findings revealed that most respondents fall under the basic level in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar. This indicated that while students possessed fundamental knowledge of the English language, they still experienced difficulties in using vocabulary effectively, comprehending complex texts, and applying correct grammatical structures. Only a small number demonstrated advanced or expert-level proficiency, highlighting the need for further language development. Despite this, the respondents' semestral grades indicated that most of them perform at an accomplished level in their English course. This suggested that although their measured proficiency is basic, they are still able to meet academic expectations, due to classroom support, assessment methods, or compensatory learning strategies. Results also showed significant relationship between English proficiency and semestral grades. Vocabulary showed the strongest relationship, followed by reading comprehension and grammar. This implied that students with better language skills tend to achieve higher academic performance.

While students demonstrated moderate academic performance, their English proficiency remains at a basic level. This gap highlighted the need for structured and targeted action plans. Hence, the proposed V.O.I.C.E. Program is designed to address these gaps by focusing on



vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and grammar enhancement to improve students' overall English proficiency and academic success.

The study concluded that there is a need for structured and targeted instructional interventions to improve students' English proficiency. Hence, the implementation of the V.O.I.C.E. Program is strongly recommended, as it focuses on enhancing vocabulary, organizing ideas through reading comprehension, and strengthening communication through grammar. This program is expected to bridge the gap.

Keywords: *English Proficiency, Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading Comprehension*



Introduction

English proficiency refers to the ability to read, write, listen, and speak. It involves on the mastery of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication skills. This also refers to one's ability to use the English language effectively for different purposes. Being proficient in this matter is an important aspect of communication. Additionally, the speaker of the English language is considered proficient when they can express their thoughts and ideas freely without committing countless grammatical errors.

In today's interconnected world, English served as the global lingua franca—a common language used across countries for communication, trade, diplomacy, science, and education. According to the British Council, more than 1.5 billion people are learning English worldwide, and it is the official or dominant second language in over 70 countries. In international business, English is the primary medium for negotiations, contracts, and digital commerce, enabling professionals from different linguistic backgrounds to collaborate effectively. Likewise, in the academic and research community, most scientific journals, technological innovations, and global conferences are conducted in English, making proficiency essential for students, researchers, and educators to access and contribute knowledge.

On a broader scale, English proficiency plays a vital role in migration and employment opportunities, as countries like Canada, Australia, and the United States require proof of English skills for immigration and professional licensing. It also underpins the global workforce in industries such as aviation, healthcare, IT, and customer service, where accurate and efficient communication can impact safety, efficiency, and service quality. With the rapid growth of digital platforms and global media, English has further cemented its role as the bridge that connects cultures and nations, making proficiency not only a career advantage but also a necessity for active participation in the global community.

English proficiency also plays a crucial role in academic performance specially for the Teacher Education students, as it directly affected their ability to comprehend, communicate and excel in their coursework. They are future educators who are expected to have strong English skills in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing and speaking. Having them a strong English proficiency enables them to express their ideas clearly and persuasively in written and in oral forms. And having poor English skills can lead to miscommunication and difficulty in teaching concepts effectively in the future. English proficiency is not just an academic requirement but a foundation for future success. It influenced their academic performance in coursework, teaching effectiveness, confidence and career readiness. Improving English proficiency ensured higher academic achievement, better teaching abilities and greater opportunities for professional growth.

In the 2024 EF English Proficiency Index, the Philippines ranked 22nd out of 116 countries, maintaining a 'high proficiency' tag with a score of 570 out of 800. This score is considered sufficient for advanced tasks like giving work presentations and understanding complex media. The Philippines holds the second-highest ranking in Asia, after Singapore and is recognized as a major English-speaking nation. Despite this achievement, attaining a "very high



proficiency” level requires more thorough development of skills, particularly in academic and professional contexts. In this regard, college graduates/students are expected to demonstrate effective communication in both oral and written English, showcasing not only fluency but also critical thinking, coherence, and adaptability in diverse situations.

The study of Asio (2023) titled “English Proficiency and Academic Performance of College Students” highlighted that English language is one of the most dominating languages of the world which having its impact on every field work. As the world’s lingua franca, it is the most-used language of the internet, accounting for more than half of all websites. For many people, learning English is a way to get access to a broader range of information, connections, and opportunities. English as a foreign language in many countries, it becomes a compulsory subject taught in formal school from the lowest level to university level. Even though English is a foreign language, teaching English in schools and universities must aligned with the true function of language—as a means of communication. This means that English should not be taught merely as a written skill, but also as an oral performance that is both communicative and contextual.

In the University of Cagayan Valley, based on the observation of the researcher in her class, some students don’t possessed fluency in using the English language, as to the use of the different grammar rules in English some of them doesn’t know how to apply it correctly. There are several times that they just used to copy answers from their classmates just to have an answer for their given task. But they are already in the tertiary level so they should be able to construct simple sentences on their own and not just relying on the use of these rampant artificial intelligences.

In connection to this, teachers played a crucial role in assessing and improving students’ language skills, as they guide learners in developing proficiency through structured learning, feedback and motivation. Teachers served as mentors and facilitators in language learning; through effective assessment and targeted improvement strategies they equip students with the language skills necessary for academic success and professional growth. Strengthening students’ oral and written English skills directly contributed to improving the quality of education, as it equipped learners with the competencies needed to participate actively in global discourse, pursue higher learning, and access broader career opportunities.

It is also anchored on Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, which advocated inclusive and equitable access to quality learning opportunities and the promotion of lifelong learning skills. By focusing on English proficiency, the study recognizes language as a vital tool for communication, academic advancement, and professional success. Thus, it also underscored the pivotal role of English proficiency in advancing sustainable and inclusive development enhancing English communication skills aligned not only with SDG 4 but also supported SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, by preparing graduates to become more competitive in the workforce, and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by providing equal opportunities for students to develop a skill set that transcends social and economic barriers.



As the above-mentioned concerns regarding the English proficiency of students nowadays, the researcher then wants to assess the English proficiency level of the students at University of Cagayan Valley particularly the college fresh men students enrolled in the School of Liberal Arts and Teacher Education program and its possible effect on their academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the English Proficiency of first-year college students of the University of Cagayan Valley and its relationship to their academic performance for the academic year 2025-2026, as basis for a proposed action plan.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Program Enrolled
 - 1.4 Reading materials available at home
2. What is the English Proficiency Level of the respondents relative to:
 - 2.1 Vocabulary
 - 2.2 Reading Comprehension
 - 2.3 Grammar
3. What is the semestral grade of the respondents in their English proficiency course?
4. Is there a significant difference on the English proficiency level of the respondents when grouped according to their profile variables.
5. Is there a significant relationship between the English proficiency level of the respondents relative to their semestral grade in English Proficiency course?
6. What action plan can be proposed to improve the English proficiency of the respondents.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The study was a Quantitative research with descriptive-inferential (comparative and correlational) research design, descriptive since it assessed the profile and English proficiency level of the respondents, and inferential since it assessed the significant difference on the English proficiency level of the respondents and the relationship between student's English proficiency levels relative to their semestral grade in their English proficiency course.

Respondents of the Study

The study's respondents were the first-year college students in the University of Cagayan Valley's School of Liberal Arts and Teacher Education, specifically the officially enrolled regular students during the first semester of the academic year 2025–2026.

Total enumeration was used in selecting the respondents, but it is delimited to students who only, passed the English proficiency course and does not included students with the following remarks such as incomplete, failed or dropped. Table 1 showed the distribution of respondents.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents of the Study

Respondents	Population (N)
BPED	76
BSED	75
BEED	56
BAPS	31
Total	238

Data Gathering Tool

The researcher used a questionnaire adopted from the study of L. Quilang (2021), the tool consisted of two parts, the first part assessed the profile of the respondents, while the second part of the questionnaire assessed the English proficiency level of the respondents, and it is categorized into three (grammar-25 items, vocabulary-25 items and reading comprehension-50 items) with a total of 100 items. The adopted questionnaire came from EPT reviewer and undergone through pilot testing and validation to ensure its validity and reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

To gather the data needed for the study, the researcher wrote a letter addressed to the university president through the chairman of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), seeking permission to gather data needed for the study. After the permission to conduct the study is approved and the issuance of ethical clearance, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the respondents, with time allotment to answer 40-60 minutes and personally retrieve the questionnaires to ensure a hundred percent retrieval. To request the previous grades of the respondents in their English proficiency course, the researcher also wrote a letter addressed again to the university president through the University Registrar, requesting for the

grades of the respondents in their English proficiency course to assess their academic performance.

Moreover, after the retrieval of the questionnaires and getting the grades of the students done, the data gathered was organized, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted.

Statistical Tools

The following statistical tools were utilized in the analysis of the data that will be gathered:

Frequency and percentage counts was used to analyze the profile variables of the respondents and to assess the English proficiency level of the respondents.

The level of performance of the respondents along vocabulary and reading comprehension was measured using the numerical scale below:

Score Intervals	Proficiency Level	Description
21-25	Expert	Very High
16-20	Advanced	High
11-15	Proficient	Average
6-10	Basic	Low
5 below	Limited	Very Low

The level of performance of the respondents along grammar was measured using the numerical scale below:

Score Intervals	Proficiency Level	Description
41-50	Expert	Very High
31-40	Advanced	High
21-30	Proficient	Average
11-20	Basic	Low
10 below	Limited	Very Low



The overall English language proficiency of the respondents was measured using the numerical scale below:

Score Intervals	Proficiency Level	Description
81-100	Expert	Very High
61-80	Advanced	High
41-60	Proficient	Average
21-40	Basic	Low
20 below	Limited	Very Low

Weighted Mean was used to assess the semestral grade of the respondents in their English proficiency course.

Moreover, Kruskal Wallis Test and Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the significant difference and the English proficiency level of the respondents when grouped according to their profile variables.

Furthermore, Spearman's rho correlations were also used to test the significant relationship between the English proficiency level of the respondents relative to their semestral grade in English Proficiency course.

Summary of Findings

1. Profile of the respondent's
 - The average age of the respondents is 18-19.
 - Majority of the respondents were females.
 - Majority of the respondents were enrolled in the BPE program.
 - Most of the respondents reading materials available at their own homes is books.
2. English proficiency level of the respondents along vocabulary, reading comprehension and grammar.
 - The respondents obtained basic level of proficiency in vocabulary, with a frequency of 106 or 44.5 percent, 136 or 57.1 percent still in basic level on reading comprehension, and 135 or 56.7 percent still in basic level on grammar.
 - The overall mean percentage of English proficiency level of the respondents is 79.4 which is still under basic level.
3. Semestral grade of the respondents.
 - The respondents fall under the Accomplished level with a mean grade of 83.30.
 - Overall, the respondents possess a moderately high level of English proficiency. This implies that most of the respondents can understand and use English effectively in their academic activities, although some may still need improvement to reach a more advanced level of proficiency.



4. Significant difference on the English proficiency level of the respondents when grouped according to their profile variables.
 - There is no significant difference on the English proficiency level of the respondents when grouped according to age and sex.
 - There is a significant difference between the respondent's English proficiency level and program they enrolled.
 - Reading materials available at home are not significantly associated with student's English proficiency, results suggest that functional and actively used resources, such as dictionaries, have a more meaningful impact on English proficiency than general reading materials.
5. Significant relationship between the English proficiency level of the respondents relative to their semestral grade in English Proficiency course.
 - There is a significant relationship between the English proficiency level of the respondents and their semestral grades in their English proficiency course. These indicated that students who perform better in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar tend to achieve higher English proficiency grades.
6. Proposed action plan to improve the English proficiency of the respondents.
 - The findings emphasized that while students demonstrated moderate academic performance, their English proficiency remains at basic level. This gap highlights the need for structured and target action plan. Hence, the proposed V.O.I.C.E Program is designed to address these gaps by focusing on vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and grammar enhancement to improve students' overall English proficiency and academic success.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the respondents possessed a basic level of English proficiency in terms of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar, despite achieving an accomplished level in their semestral English grades. This indicated that students could meet academic requirements, their actual language competence remains limited and required further enhancement, particularly in higher-order language skills. The study further concluded that demographic factors such as age and sex do not significantly influence English proficiency, suggesting that language ability develops similarly across these groups when exposed to comparable learning environments. However, the program in which students are enrolled significantly affected their level of proficiency, implying that differences in curriculum, academic exposure, and language demands contributed to variations in English skills.

In terms of reading materials available at home, most resources such as books, magazines, newspapers, journals, and encyclopedias do not significantly impact English proficiency. In contrast, the availability and use of dictionaries showed a significant positive effect, highlighting the importance of functional and actively utilized learning tools in language development. Moreover, there is a significant positive relationship between English proficiency and academic performance, indicating that students with stronger vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar skills tend to achieve better semestral grades. Among the three, vocabulary appeared to be the strongest predictor of academic success.



Overall, the study concluded that there is a need for structured and targeted instructional interventions to improve students' English proficiency. Hence, the implementation of the V.O.I.C.E. Program is strongly recommended, as it focuses on enhancing vocabulary, organizing ideas through reading comprehension, and strengthening communication through grammar. This program is expected to bridge the gap.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Administrators are encouraged to provide adequate resources, particularly functional tools like dictionaries, which were found to have a significant positive effect on proficiency.
2. Teachers may continuously adopt targeted and data-driven instructional strategies that address the specific weaknesses identified in the study.
3. Students may take an active role in participating improving their English proficiency by engaging in consistent and purposeful language practice
4. Future researchers, it is recommended to further investigate other factors that may influence English proficiency, such as teaching methodologies, motivation, and exposure to English in digital environments.
5. The action plan may be implemented for the enhancement of the English proficiency of the students.

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