



ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPING TRAINING PROGRAM

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Abstract : Most non-English language teachers around the world speak English as a second or third language, rather than as their first language. For many of these teachers, their level of proficiency in English may not meet the standards expected by school heads, colleagues, and learners, which raises the issue addressed in this research. This study, using a descriptive research design, aimed to explore the perceptions of school heads, teachers, and learners regarding the English proficiency level of Junior High School teachers in terms of academic language and language comprehension. It also examined the level of learner performance in English. The goal was to encourage teachers to continually strive for improvement in their teaching practices, providing learners with a learning environment that inspires them to become better learners. To analyze the data, the researcher employed several statistical methods, including 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 indicated that the English proficiency level of teachers, as well as the learners' performance in academic language and language comprehension, were both proficient. Additionally, the results revealed a significant relationship between the English proficiency level of teachers and the learners' academic performance, based on the components considered in the study. In light of these findings, a training program to enhance the English proficiency level of teachers was proposed, aiming to improve the overall quality of instruction and learners outcomes in English.

Keywords: *English proficiency, academic language, language proficiency*

I.INTRODUCTION

English proficiency is increasingly recognized as a key competency for educators in today's globalized and interconnected world. Teachers' ability to communicate effectively in English is not only critical for delivering subject content but also for fostering an inclusive and dynamic learning environment. As English continues to be the global lingua franca, especially in higher education and international settings, the proficiency of teachers in English directly impacts the quality of education and student outcomes. This rationale aims to explain the significance of investigating the English proficiency of teachers, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts, and how their language skills influence teaching effectiveness, professional development, and student achievement.

The importance of English proficiency for educators is particularly pronounced in non-native English-speaking countries where English is used as the medium of instruction in many academic subjects, especially in secondary and tertiary education. Even in contexts where English is not the primary language of communication, the demand for teachers with high levels of English proficiency is increasing, particularly in countries striving for global competitiveness. Furthermore, English proficiency is essential for teaching English language skills, as well as for engaging with international research, collaborating with colleagues worldwide, and participating in professional development opportunities.

While much research has been conducted on language proficiency in English language teaching (ELT) contexts, less attention has been paid to the broader implications of teachers' English proficiency across diverse subject areas and educational levels. This research aims to bridge this gap by exploring the relationship between teachers' English language skills and their ability to effectively teach, manage classrooms, and foster student success. By doing so, this study seeks to inform educational policies, teacher training programs, and instructional practices.

Moreover, Li and Baldauf (2011) delve into the constraints that hinder effective English language teaching in China, providing a comprehensive analysis of the systemic issues that educators face. Their findings underscore the importance of addressing these challenges to foster a more conducive learning environment for students. The relationship between teacher

proficiency and teaching effectiveness is further examined in the work of Freeman, Katz, Gomez, and Burns (2015), who argue that a rethinking of teacher proficiency in the classroom is essential for improving educational outcomes. Richards (2015) also contributes to this discourse by highlighting the multifaceted nature of teaching effectiveness, which encompasses not only language proficiency but also pedagogical skills and the ability to engage students effectively.

Teacher perception is a process in which one chooses, organizes, interprets information input to create a meaningful picture of this world. This perception will depend not only on physical stimulation but also on the relation between stimuli and the surrounding field and one's personal condition. The process of perception is through three stages, which is: the stage of stimulus receiving, the stage of stimulus processing through selection and organization of information, and the individual's acceptance of stimulus change.

Language is the arrangement of vocal sounds and the combination of sounds associated with meaning used for the articulation or correspondence of the mind and feelings (Agnes, 2002). Hornby (1987), says that language is a non-intensive and human technique for imparting thoughts, sentiments, and wants through the system of voice and symbol. It may be concluded that language is a means of correspondence that is utilized by numerous individuals to communicate their sentiments, thoughts, and wants one has in mind.

When English students procure English as a second language, they progress through five levels of language proficiency: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. The rate of progress in every English capability level fluctuates as per the individual qualities of every English language student (Pizaro & Pilayre, 2010).

Teaching proficiency is an important in any educational setting. The goal of teaching is to analyse the students' need and to drive the students to reach goal. According to Abucayon et al., (2016), state the prime aim of teachers is to help students to learn effectively and efficiently.

The framework describes types of English teachers' proficiency in three broad categories: basic user, independent user, and proficient user. Each category is divided into two sub levels. The descriptors of each subscale provide information about what people can do with the language and with what levels of sophistication (Richards, 2018).

Language is the most amazing and the most effective tool to communicate others. It has a great role in the person's existence. Hence, the ability to put the language into practice is a symbol of life and is vital to the success of any endeavor. Nowadays, English language teaching has been subject to tremendous change, especially throughout the twentieth century.

The decline in English proficiency has been attributed to the skills of the educators handling the other English courses. Students taking up education courses must take note of the English language proficiency at the level of basic working proficiency which indicates that the person hardly understand native English speakers to sustain fluency and accuracy. The existing phenomena and the gap stated above triggers the researcher to conduct the study. With the aim of helping the institution and to contribute in the fund of knowledge, the study is undertaken and therefore initiated.

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 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 (Madrunio, Martin, and Plata, 2016).

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.

Abellano, (2013) states that one is often judged not only by what he says, but how he says it and nothing so instantly reveals one's background, training, self-discipline and education that one's language. With this notion, for man to put on his best should show the desire to succeed depending on his efforts to develop communications skills through formal training and effective communication. Through this said training verbal communication problem which include training includes translation difficulties, misinterpretations due to clouded judgment and many others (Mack, 2010) are avoided. The Job Enabling English Proficiency (JEEP) project was implemented to help college students specifically in Mindanao to develop their English language skills and to equip knowledge, skills, English communication proficiency right attitude and values in technical and professional skills.

Cenoz and Gorter (2008) states that teachers' use of the target language in the classrooms becomes a special communicative activity as its goal is not only to communicate with students but to provide significant input important in developing students' English language proficiency. This implies that teachers need to possess a high level of target language proficiency as their use of target languages serves as a source of language input for the students' acquisition of the second language. The teacher who does not possess a high degree of language proficiency may not be able to provide appropriate input to the students for second language acquisition. Teachers, who are not proficient in English, speak incorrect language and commit errors. These errors are then transmitted to their students. Teachers' limited language proficiency could mean in ability to provide corrective feedback to the students resulting in fossilization of the errors.

Tabula (2010) states that in the Philippines educational system, high school students with ages ranging from 12 to 17 are expected to have already basic knowledge of English and the four communication skills which will enable them to function satisfactorily in certain English communication situations or its basic goal to enhance the students' knowledge and skills to become functional in an English classroom. They need to be able to express their ideas and opinions in speech and in writing and think independently, critically, and creatively which in turn enhance higher order thinking skills. Butler (2013) states that parents' SES backgrounds and their behaviors and attitudes/belief about English education related to their children's earlier stages of English learning differ across different grades levels. Parental indirect behaviors and parental direct behaviors i.e., direct assistance with their child's studying and learning of English were significantly correlated with SES.

According to TeleTech (2013), an offshore and outsourcing company, "...the country's Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Industry showed that for every 100 applicants, only six to ten percent are effectively recruited and deployed for an entry level job." The problem has been pinpointed as to "the majority of college graduate/applicants are unable to be placed in the BPO job market because of inadequate English proficiency." Also, learners' English proficiency in technical colleges in Taiwan (Hsu and Sheu 2008) and in the middle-school and high school students in public schools in the United States of America are lagging behind their education level. (Hsu and Sheu 2008), (Suell, Miller, and Province 2005).

The decline (in English proficiency of Filipinos) stems in part from nationalist campaigns to promote Filipino and from inattention in schools, which the government is taking steps to undo. To reverse its decline the government in 2003 ordered the teaching of English as a second language in elementary schools and made it the medium of instruction for 70 percent of teaching in high schools. It has since mandated remedial English classes for teachers." (McLean 2010) 80% of teachers failed their English proficiency exam and that some Call Centers are closing because of a lack of applicants who have a level of English fluency demanded by the industry. An English Fluency Program was given to English teachers in the private school sector. 80% failed the initial testing. However, later 80% achieved a much higher level of fluency after completing the program. (Admin. 2011).

It seems that the English teacher is the key player in this educational stage. The outcome of the behavior is the student achievement/performance in English Proficiency tests and the behavior as the English teacher in the classroom. "high achieving schools (in English Proficiency) have teachers with sound knowledge of their subject matter, sound pedagogical knowledge and skill, and good classroom management skill." (De Jesus, 2011). A descriptive survey analysis research findings by Garcia (2004) concluded that most teachers are not academically prepared to teach in college (only 20% hold a master's degree, 7.5% were taking PhD courses and only 37.5% were English majors. 85% have more than 1-20 years' experience teaching English. Thus, it seems that English proficiency is not adequate to meet the demands of today's global job market.

Today, in many cases students' knowledge is summarized as a test score, and teachers' effectiveness is perceived as their contribution to that test score. But test scores do not give a full picture of teacher contributions and student circumstances. Definition of teacher effectiveness beyond teachers' contribution to student achievement gains to include how teachers impact classrooms, schools, and their colleagues as well as how they contribute to other important outcomes for students. (Goe, Bell and Little 2008).

Statement of the Problem

This research was conducted to determine the perception of school heads, teachers, and learners on the English proficiency level of Junior High School teachers in terms of academic language and language comprehension in Schools Division Office of Nueva Ecija during the school year 2023-2024.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the level of perception of school heads, teachers, and learners on the English proficiency level of Junior High School teachers in terms of academic language and language comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference on the perceptions made by the school heads, teachers and learners in the assessment of the teachers' level of English proficiency?
3. What is the level of performance of learners in English based from the ratings of teachers?
4. Based on the findings, what training program can be proposed to enhance the level of proficiency among teachers to increase teachers and learners English proficiency?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of the study which includes the research design, sources of data, instrumentation and data collection, and the tools for data analysis.

Research Design

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 subject teachers from select schools were respondents.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

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.

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

Tools for Data Analysis

The results of the dry run were subjected to Pearson R Correlation Coefficient and were found valid and reliable. . 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

This chapter delineates the gathered data, the interpretation and analysis of the findings, and the narrative explanation of the tabulated results providing answers to the problems presented earlier in Chapter 1.

Perception of School Heads, Teachers, and Learners of the English Proficiency Level of the Junior High School Teachers in Terms of Academic Language and Language Comprehension

English Proficiency Levels of the Junior High School Teachers in terms of Academic Language

Table 1 presents the English proficiency level of Junior High School 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 the Junior High School Teachers in Terms of Academic Language

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

The results show that the item "scaffold instruction so that learners can construct meaning and understand complex concepts" received the highest weighted mean of 4.87, indicating that, according to school heads, teachers' proficiency in this area was **highly proficient**. Meanwhile, for teachers and learners, the item also garnered high ratings, with weighted means of 3.99 (interpreted as **proficient**) and 4.52 (interpreted as **highly proficient**), respectively.

On average, the weighted mean scores of 4.19 from school heads, 3.91 from teachers reflect a proficient rating, while the 4.44 from learners reflects a **highly proficient** rating. This result suggests that teachers in the division demonstrate a high level of proficiency in academic language, and this proficiency is evident in their performance as assessed by both school heads and learners.

English Proficiency Levels of the Junior High School teachers in terms of Language Comprehension

Table 2. English Proficiency Level of the Junior High School Teachers in Terms of Language Comprehension

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

Table 2 presents the perceptions of the three groups in terms of language comprehension.

The findings affirmed that, as perceived by school heads, the item "provide instruction which incorporates a high degree of both challenge and support" received the highest weighted mean of 5.0, signifying a **highly proficient** rating. Additionally, two items—**high frequency questioning, hinting, explaining, and feeding back**, and **encouraging learners to say more and reason more with text and language**—received similar weighted means of 3.63, which were ranked lowest in school heads' perceptions but still interpreted as **proficient**.

On average, school heads rated teachers' proficiency with a weighted mean of 4.14, teachers themselves rated it at 3.90, and learners gave a weighted mean of 4.36. Both the school heads' and teachers' ratings were categorized as **proficient**, while the learners' ratings were classified as **highly proficient**.

This suggests that teachers demonstrate proficiency in **language comprehension**, which is likely to positively impact both their own performance and that of their learners in the classroom.

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

CATEGORIES	$\sum R_j$'s	H VALUE	SIGNIFICANCE	DECISION
Academic Language	72,530.4	15.01	P < .01 H.S.	Reject
Language Comprehension	95,348.4	9.53	P < .01 H.S.	Reject

Accordingly, the components identified were academic language, with an h-value of 15.01, and language comprehension, with an h-value of 9.53. From the analysis, it can be inferred that the difference observed in these components reached a significance level of .01, indicating that a highly significant difference was achieved.

The results of the study indicated that the hypothesis was rejected, revealing significant differences in the perceptions of school heads, teachers, and learners regarding the assessment of teachers' English proficiency levels.

Table 4. Level of Performance of Learners in English Subject Based from the Ratings Made by their Teachers

Components	Average	Rating	Interpretation
Academic Language	81.25	4.06	VS
Language Comprehension	83.75	4.19	VS

Table 4 presents the results of the ratings made by the teachers on learners' 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 grade 9 learners. 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 learners 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).

Conclusions

Based from the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The level of the Junior High School teachers' proficiency was highly proficient based on the school heads' perception suggests that according to school heads, teachers are performing at an exceptionally high level in terms of their proficiency. This means school heads perceive teachers as having a strong command of the necessary skills and competencies required for their roles, particularly in the context of teaching and using English.

Highly Proficient indicates that school heads rate teachers' proficiency in areas like language use, instructional techniques, and overall teaching effectiveness as excellent or exceptionally good.

The high rating could reflect school heads' perception that teachers are able to effectively use English in the classroom, engage students, and demonstrate strong pedagogical skills.

This perception aligns with positive educational outcomes, suggesting that teachers have the necessary expertise to create a successful learning environment.

However, it's important to also consider feedback from other stakeholders (e.g., teachers themselves or learners), as their perspectives might differ, offering a more holistic view of proficiency levels across the school system.

This "highly proficient" perception from school heads sets a benchmark for teachers' performance, and could be used for further professional development, assessments, and comparisons within the educational context.

2. The null hypothesis, which typically suggests that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of the groups, was **rejected**. This indicates that the differences in the assessments of English proficiency across school heads, teachers, and learners were statistically significant.

The **significant differences** suggest that the way each group (school heads, teachers, and learners) views the proficiency level of teachers differs in a meaningful way. This could reflect differences in expectations, experiences, or perspectives on what constitutes **proficient** or **highly proficient** English language skills.

School heads may have higher expectations for English proficiency due to their administrative role and broader educational goals. In contrast, teachers may be more focused on daily classroom activities, while learners are more concerned with understanding the content being taught.

The rejection of the hypothesis and the identification of significant differences between the groups' perceptions highlights the importance of considering multiple perspectives when evaluating teacher proficiency. These differences suggest that each group

has unique insights into what constitutes proficiency, and these varying views should be taken into account when planning professional development or making assessments of teacher performance.

Recommendations

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

1. “DepEd 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” suggests that the Department of Education (DepEd) can use the results of the study to inform and enhance the professional development of English teachers.

The findings of the study, which likely include insights into teachers' current proficiency levels, gaps in their teaching practices, and varying perceptions of their performance, can serve as a guide for DepEd in identifying areas for improvement.

The data and conclusions derived from the study, such as the differences in perceptions between school heads, teachers, and learners, or areas where teachers' proficiency was rated lower (e.g., in using academic language or fostering critical thinking), can highlight specific areas where professional development is needed.

In-service training programs are professional development activities that help teachers improve their skills while they are already employed. These programs are crucial for enhancing teachers' abilities in various areas, including language proficiency, teaching strategies, and classroom management.

2. The DepEd 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.

1. The teachers could be encouraged to strive to become better educator so as to provide avenue for students to continuously dream of becoming better learners.

2. Teachers are encouraged to pursue advanced studies and to be licensed for them to be the best qualified particularly for teaching in the secondary level.

3. Teachers are encouraged to undergo training particularly on English language communication skills.

4. While English language proficiency is a factor in effective teaching of subject areas where the medium of instruction is English, learners should likewise be honed on English language proficiency.

5. Future research on the level of English language proficiency of teachers and students of subjects taught in English.

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