

Influential Factors Affecting Students' English Proficiency

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Abstract

The primary goal of the study was to examine the interrelationships that support Cebu Normal University (CNU) English Language major students' English competency. It sought to ascertain the students' level of English proficiency in relation to the four fundamental communication skills, their profile with regard to internal factors like anxiety, attitude, motivation, and multiple intelligences, as well as their level of English proficiency with regard to the following external factors like teaching effectiveness, media exposure, and pedagogical approaches. The instructional guidelines for tertiary English language instruction were also identified, along with the contributing elements to students' English competency.

This study used a descriptive survey method as part of a quantitative-qualitative research design. One hundred fifty (150) students and ten (10) English language instructors participated in the study at CNU. The students' proficiency in the English language was assessed using the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). In order to ascertain students' profiles in internal and external elements as well as the contributing factors to their English proficiency, validated sets of questionnaires from various sources were also utilized. A standardized answer key was used to objectively grade the students' responses on the Listening and Reading exams. Different standards were used to evaluate the students' responses in the Speaking and Writing assessments. The results were translated into particular band scores on the nine-band IELTS test. The linguistic level of the students was indicated by each band. To determine the components that contribute to students' proficiency, the numerous sets of questionnaires on both internal and external factors were tallied and evaluated using percentages, ranking, weighted mean formula, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

The general level of competency required of English Language major students in the General Training Module, which is supposedly simpler than the Academic Module, was band 6, but they fell short of that mark. They fell under the category of Modest Users. They were found to be weak in speaking, reading, and writing before deficient in listening. Overall, the findings demonstrated that subjective emotional expressions and media exposure have a significant impact on language learners' competency or lack thereof. As a result, when students' bad behaviors take control of the circumstances, linguistic intelligence does not play a major role in promoting language proficiency. Learners who have a "low affective filter receive more input and interact with confidence," according to Krashen.

Key words: English Proficiency, Fundamental Communication Skills, Internal Factors, External Factors, Instructional Directions

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

A multifaceted concept, language proficiency is made up of several domains and levels of ability (Carrasquillo, 1994). It combines academic and nonacademic language, as well as oral (hearing and speaking), written (reading and writing), and

visual components (Hargett, 1998). The four core linguistic ability categories are frequently referred to as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Oral abilities are comprised of listening and speaking, whereas literacy abilities are made up of reading and writing. Speaking and writing

are productive or active skills, whereas listening and reading are receptive or passive (teachingenglish.org.uk)

Nowadays, academic intellectuals are quite concerned about the fall in English proficiency among university students. This is because English language proficiency is not established for students when they are enrolled in higher education. As a result, it has a negative impact on the standard of higher education and its graduates. The majority of learners' low levels of English competence are caused by two factors: internal ones, like lack of confidence in speaking English and a negative attitude toward the language, and external ones, like the sparse opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom. The majority of these students lack confidence when using the English language.

One of the contributing variables that has an impact on someone's English competence is their negative attitude toward the English language. The definition of attitude is the propensity to do something or the state of being "ready" to do something (Gagne, 1985). A language can be viewed in either a favorable or unfavorable light (Youssef, 2012). A person with a pessimistic outlook on life will learn a second language to gain the upper hand in their community, whereas someone with a positive outlook will reinforce their reason for learning the language. Youssef (2012) asserts that in order to learn a language successfully, attitude is a key component. Young (2006), referenced in Yu (2010), provides more evidence for this claim, stating that students who have a good attitude toward language acquisition will engage in more input and have better interactions in their second language.

English is no longer taught to students as a second language; rather, they learnt it to pass exams. Since they do not view learning English as being necessary for anything other than passing an exam, university students typically find it challenging to keep their interest in the subject. Unawareness of the target language's culture contributes to many undesirable attitudes (Tucker and Lambert, 1973).

In addition to attitude, motivation is a contributing component. According to Gardner

(1985), referenced in Zhang, it is the motivation that propels someone to strive and put out significant effort to acquire a language out of a desire to do so and the satisfaction it will bring (2001). According to Gardner (2007), motivation in a variety of elements will make learners enthusiastic to acquire a second language, and motivation also plays a significant part in determining effective language learning. Yashima (2002) emphasized that motivation and one's ability to communicate in a second language are influenced by one another.

According to Stipek (1998), who was quoted by Decierdo (2012), the character of the teacher's instruction and the tasks they assign have a significant impact on the motivation of the students. It is also influenced by the social environment, such as how much students value themselves as individuals and how much support they receive from peers and professors in their educational endeavors. It also depends on how comfortable they feel making mistakes in front of others. Additionally, Davies (1999), as cited in (Decierdo, 2012), stated that there are a variety of factors that influence a student's motivation to work and learn, such as interest in the subject matter, perception of its utility, a general desire to achieve, self-confidence, self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. In a similar vein, not every student is driven by the same ideals, needs, desires, or wants. Others' approbation and success in conquering obstacles are what drive some of them.

One of the things that affects one's ability to speak English fluently is anxiety. According to Ellis (1999), anxiety can be categorized into two types: facilitative anxiety and debilitating anxiety. Facilitating anxiety is thought to encourage language learners to put out effort in their language learning, whereas debilitating anxiety is the kind of anxiety that encourages language learners to avoid the practice (Zhang, 2001). According to McIntyre and Gardner (1994), speaking, listening, and learning are just a few of the second language skills that are associated to anxiety (McIntyre and Gardner, 1994; quoted in Gregersen) (2007). Du (2009), who asserted that anxiety sensations happen

when one is not entirely skilled in the second language, provided additional support for this. Du (2009) went on to emphasize that the three aspects of language anxiety are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of receiving a bad grade, and that each worry depends on the circumstances the learner is in at the time. However, it was also noted that ESL students experience language anxiety as a result of the intricacies and challenges in the second language acquisition process (Tanveer, 2007).

It is evident that a variety of elements are significant in the learning of a second language. The goal of this study is to uncover the different internal and external elements that either hinder or support tertiary students' language acquisition as they strive to become proficient in English.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary goal of the study was to examine the interrelationships that support Cebu Normal University (CNU) English Language major students' English competency. It sought to ascertain the students' level of English proficiency in relation to the four fundamental communication skills, their profile with regard to internal factors like anxiety, attitude, motivation, and multiple intelligences, as well as their level of English proficiency with regard to the following external factors like teaching effectiveness, media exposure, and pedagogical approaches. The instructional guidelines for tertiary English language instruction were also identified, along with the contributing factors to students' English competency.

III. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey methodology was used in this study as part of a quantitative-qualitative approach. It was done at CNU with 150 students and 10 English language instructors. To ascertain the students' proficiency in English, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) was employed. Examining students' profiles in internal and external aspects as well as the contributing factors to their English proficiency also involved the use of validated sets of questionnaires from diverse sources. The Listening and Reading exams were

graded based on the standardized answer keys, and the students' responses were evaluated objectively. Different criteria were used to score the students' responses in the Speaking and Writing examinations. The results were translated into particular band scores on the nine-band IELTS test. The linguistic level of the students was indicated by each band. To determine the components that contribute to students' proficiency, the numerous sets of questionnaires on both internal and external factors were tallied and evaluated using percentages, ranking, weighted mean formula, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

IV. FINDINGS

The participants received an IELTS band of 4, denoting Limited User in the Listening section, and an equivalent IELTS band of 5, denoting Modest User in the Reading section. Their comparable IELTS band of 6, or Competent User, gave them an edge in the Speaking and Writing tests. They scored averagely in speaking and writing and weak in reading and listening. Among the four macro skills, speaking had the highest overall mean, while listening had the lowest. Most English Language major students fell short of the standard level of English competence required of them in the four macro-skills utilizing the General Training Module, which is band 6. They were Modest Users. Additionally, the study found that anxiety and attitude are the internal elements that have an impact on students' English proficiency. On the other hand, only social media usage is a predictor of students' English proficiency when compared to all other external factors.

V. CONCLUSION

The degree to which language learners are proficient or not is significantly influenced by affects, which are irrational emotional expressions, and media exposure.

When students' negative effects are in charge of the settings, linguistic intelligence does not play a leading role in promoting language

competence. According to Krashen, students who have a "low emotional filter" receive more information and engage with confidence.

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