

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND LITERARY COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS: PREDICTOR FOR EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHING

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the English proficiency and literary competence of English major students of CBSUA-Sipocot. The third and fourth-year college students were the respondents of the study. The evaluative-correlational method was employed in the research. Frequency count and percentage technique were used to describe levels of proficiency of the students, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine if there was a significant relationship between the two variables. The researcher-made test validated by language experts was used to test the students' English proficiency and literary competence. Data disclosed that the general English proficiency level of the students was approaching proficient. Meanwhile, their literary competence and textual and conceptual knowledge were both approaching competent, while their literary reading skills were considered developing competent. Furthermore, the statistical data revealed a significant relationship between the students' English proficiency and literary competence. Hence, the pedagogical shift in delivering language and literature as separate discourses to interfacing the two fields may be adopted by the teachers in promoting effective language and literature teaching. Moreover, creative and innovative activities that link the two discourses may be given more to the learners.

Keywords: English Proficiency, Literary Competence, Effective Language and Literature Teaching.

Introduction

Language and literature are two different words that appear similar in their purport. These two words are not only intertwined but also interrelated because of their symbiotic relationship. Literature presupposes language since it is within the periphery of language that the merit of literature is shaped, formed, and concretized. Furthermore, in divulging the merit of a literary text, one must be well adept in the language (Singh, et al., 2020) [21]. To immerse in exploring the merit of literature, knowledge and language competence should be at its core (Benzie, 2010) [3]. Thus, the English teacher needs to be proficient in the language and competent in literature since they are meant to teach language and literature.

A person is a language proficient if he can spontaneously apply the rules and components of language in real-world contexts in a non-rehearsed manner (Rubio & Hacking, 2019). This proficiency further demonstrates the extent of the language user's knowledge of where, when, or how the language will be used and acquired (Ocampo, 2021) [14]. The Philippines was once recognized as a country that performs well and professes mastery in using the English language. Filipinos were proficient in English in a wide array of speech situations. Its application can be widely observed in education, where it is considered a major subject and is being taught from primary education to tertiary. Moreover, it is also the medium of instruction in private and public schools.

However, various studies revealed that Filipinos' competence in the English language is rocketing down the slope. The study by San Juan (2019) [20] showed that Filipinos scored a mean of 7.18 for listening, writing, speaking, and reading, a very low number based on international standards. In the study conducted by Alviz (2019) [1], findings revealed that only one out of 5 public high school

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teachers is proficient in the language. Accordingly, 13% or 13,200 public school teachers in the elementary lacked English Proficiency, while around 1% or 1,300 of the total high school teacher were not proficient in English. It only shows that even teachers have a problem with their English proficiency. Meanwhile, students' language proficiency in State Universities and Colleges shows the same results. Tendero (2019) [22] study revealed that the average score of Filipino college students in English receptive skills is tantamount to the target passing score of Thai and Vietnamese high school graduates.

It is essential for education students, especially those who choose English as their major, to acquire linguistic skills and have advanced proficiency in the language at the tertiary level. It serves as one good foundation to excel in academic pursuits and have a better opportunity later in life, particularly in applying for a teaching career. In the research study conducted by Patron and Barrera (2016) [16], among the 386 College Students in the selected State Universities and Colleges in Luzon, 79% showed that those have a good grasp of the English language performed well in the class and were provided with job opportunities; whereas, the 21% found difficulty to adjust in their lessons and did not finish their courses. Amidst this positive figure, the study conducted by Patron and Barrera (2016) [16] found that most college students have difficulty with grammar conventions, especially in the rules of subject-verb agreement. Moreover, poor English language application in written and spoken discourses was observed.

Meanwhile, in terms of literary competence, Reyes and Bird (2015) [17] defined the term as a subset of skills, knowledge, attitude, values, and interest that an individual has for reading and understanding literature. To be competent in literature, one should first be proficient in the language. Hence, acquiring literary competence will not be difficult if language competence is ensured. Van der Pol (2012) [23] argues that when the students are involved in a reading activity, their experiences and background knowledge interact with the text they are reading, creating a relationship that helps build the merit of the text. However, he explained that this stage does not suffice the process of revealing the actual merit of the text since the reader might have an intentional fallacy in reading the literary work and fail to convey the meaning intended by the author.

Moreover, in unveiling the meaning embedded in a literary work, Hapsari (2011) [8] argues that it requires an exquisite approach with a certain degree of preconception; thus, merely relying on the reader's experience and background knowledge will not be enough to excavate the essence of a text. Consequently, literature teachers should introduce

and develop the learners' skills that make up literary competence (Mozafari & Barjesteh, 2016) [11]. This competence includes distinguishing and decoding figurative languages, poetic, rhetorical devices, text features, literary trends, form, and genre. Furthermore, it requires the application of knowledge of literary notions needed in deciphering the meaning of a text; hence, students should be taught to discover literary significance for themselves in the very art of reading. These calls for the language teacher to be proficient and competent in literature.

In the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture-Sipocot, where the present study was conducted, Eborde, et al. (2017) [6] found out that most BSEd English major students have adequate performance in the English Proficiency test and literary competence in the past year. Findings showed that 60% or 159 out of 263 takers failed the examination in English. It was found that their literary competence was low, and it was affected by their language proficiency. The 32% of these English plus takers are education students, making it an alarming situation in the College of Teacher Education. Due to the preceding statement, this study was conceptualized to determine the English proficiency and literary competence of English major students of CBSUA-Sipocot, which can serve as a baseline to draw implications that can help improve language and literature teaching.

Objectives

The study determined the correlation between English proficiency and literary competence of English major students at Central Bicol State University of Agriculture-Sipocot Campus. Specifically, it aimed to determine the respondents' English proficiency level and literary competence based on a teacher-made test; analyze the relationship between the English proficiency level and literary competence of the respondents, and make implications of the findings that may help enhance the aspect of language and literature teaching.

Materials and Method

Research Design

The evaluative-correlation method was used in the study. The evaluative method was used to determine proficiency in English along with vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and literary competence along with textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills. The correlation method was used to determine the relationship between the level of English proficiency and literary competence of English major students.

Research Participants

The research was conducted at the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture- Sipocot. It included the total population of the third-year and fourth-year English major students. The third-year and fourth-

year students were selected because they were the most suited respondents for the study, considering that they are on the higher levels of the academic ladder, and it is assumed that they already have the expected language and literary competencies needed by soon are English teachers.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondent

| Curriculum Level | No. of Respondent | Percentage |
|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Third Year | 9 | 21 |
| Fourth Year | 33 | 79 |
| Total | 42 | 100 |

Research Instruments

The research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made test to determine the English Proficiency level and Literary Competence of English major students. The test was composed of 60-questions, having two parts; test one was for the language proficiency and the second was for the literary competence. Part one covered vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar. Each area has ten questions, each prorated along with the questions. Test II was for literary competence, whose questions were anchored in the three components of literary competence: textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills. Each component has ten questions, each prorated along with the questions. The test followed a modified Table of Specifications guided to ensure that there was an equal distribution of items and that the questions were appropriate and within the scope of the study. The English proficiency has five levels: students who score between 1-6 fall under Beginning Proficient; 7-12 is Developing Proficient; 13-18 is Approaching proficient; 19-24 is Proficient; and 25-30 will be the Advanced Proficient. Meanwhile, for literary competence, students who got a score between 1-6 falls under Beginning Competent; 7-12 is Developing Competent; 13-18 is Approaching Competent; 19-24 is Competent; and 25-30 will be the Advanced Competent.

Research Procedure

The data were collected from the total population of third-year and fourth-year English major students. The basic gathering device used was a teacher-made test to determine the students' level of English proficiency and literary competence. The researcher constructed the teacher-made test items and validated by five language and literature university professors. The data needed for determining the level of language proficiency and literary competence came from the result of the teacher-made test. After which, the researcher gave the test

to the respondents. The data were subjected to analysis and interpretation to determine the level of English Proficiency and literary Competence as the predictor for effective language and literature teaching. Pedagogical implications were drawn after the treatment of the data.

Statistical Treatment

The researcher used various statistical tools to analyze and interpret the data gathered for the accuracy and truthfulness of the results. Frequency Count and Percentage Technique were used to describe the respondent's representation belonging to the descriptive rating of advanced proficient, proficient, approaching proficient, developing proficient, and beginning proficient. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine if there was a significant relationship between English proficiency level and literary competence of the students.

Results and Discussions

English Proficiency

It is necessary for a teacher, especially an English teacher, to have advanced proficiency in the language since English is being used as the medium of instruction in many schools in the Philippines. According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), proficiency is the ability to use language in real-world situations in a spontaneous interaction and non-rehearsed context and in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language. Proficiency demonstrates what a language user can do regardless of where, when, or how the language was acquired. Hence, to develop proficient students in the language, a teacher must be one for the learning to transcend.

Presented in Table 2 is the English proficiency level of the English major students and vocabulary based on the result of the researcher-made test conducted.

Table 2: English Proficiency Level of English Major Students along with Vocabulary

| | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|---------------|---|
| Advanced Proficient | 1 | 2.38 | 5 |
| Proficient | 6 | 14.29 | 3 |
| Approaching Proficient | 17 | 40.48 | 1 |
| Developing Proficient | 14 | 33.33 | 2 |
| Beginning Proficient | 4 | 9.52 | 4 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Legend:

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Advanced Proficient | 9-10 |
| Proficient | 7-8 |
| Approaching Proficient | 5-6 |
| Developing Proficient | 3-4 |
| Beginning Proficient | 1-2 |

Data revealed that 1 or 2.38 percent of 42 respondents were advanced proficient and ranked fifth, 6 or 14.29 percent were proficient and ranked third, 17 or 40.48 percent were approaching proficient and ranked first, 14 or 33.33 percent were developing proficient and ranked second, and 4 or 9.52 percent were beginning proficient and ranked fourth.

From these findings, it can be implied that most of the respondents were approaching proficiency in terms of vocabulary. These also implied that English major students are baffled when they encounter highly academic words presented in a specific context and fail to grasp their meaning because they do not have a certain mastery of vocabulary skills such as context clues to unlock difficult words. These findings can also be attributed to the different reading habits, reading strategies, and the materials they are reading. Furthermore, the schema or prior knowledge of the students has something to do with their low performance in vocabulary. This finding validated the study conducted by Baeta et al. (2012) [2], in which they found out that first-year college students are lacking in terms of vocabulary, having

an average score of 4.98, described as hardly proficient. They concluded that most of their respondents have difficulties in word meanings and using particular words. Consequently, Nayan and Krishnasamy (2015) [12]. the study disclosed that the students' limited vocabulary hampered them from exploring and understanding the meaning of individual words.

Grammar

In the study of language, grammar plays a very crucial part. Hashemi and Daneshfar (2018) [9] believe that grammar is essential not because the curriculum and national tests require it to be taught but because it is an essential element of knowledge about language. In Philippine education, most schools typically teach grammar as a separate lesson focusing on definitions, exercises, and labeling. Hence, an English teacher needs to have proficiency in the language, specifically in grammar, to teach grammar explicitly. Presented in Table 3 is the English proficiency level of the students and grammar based on the result of the researcher-made test.

Table 3: English Proficiency Level of English Major Students along with Grammar

| Category of Proficiency Level | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------------|------|
| Advanced Proficient | 2 | 4.76 | 4 |
| Proficient | 7 | 16.67 | 3 |
| Approaching Proficient | 25 | 59.52 | 1 |
| Developing Proficient | 8 | 19.05 | 2 |
| Beginning Proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Data showed that 2 or 4.76 percent of 42 respondents were advanced proficient, 7 or 16.67 percent were proficient, 25 or 59.52 percent were approaching proficient, 8 or 19.05 percent were developing proficient, and none were beginning proficient. According to Ocampo (2021) [15], there is a need to

teach learners to use correct, precise, grammatical, coherent, and accurate language. It can be concluded that the majority of English major students belong to the level of approaching proficiency, which means that they already have the background knowledge when it comes to grammar.

It can also be inferred from the findings that English major students have difficulties with the different rules that govern the language, specifically those of syntactical rules. This finding is similar to Magbanuna (2016), who revealed that almost half of the college students from a public university belong to the qualitative description of very good grammar and that the College English teachers should strengthen their strategies in grammar teaching since their respondents got an average score of 4.98, which was interpreted as hardly proficient.

Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is the capacity of the mind to perceive and understand. Reading comprehension is the competence to perceive and understand the meanings communicated by the text (Webster Dictionary). For a language teacher, the most common definition of comprehension is the process in which the readers construct meaning by interacting with the text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experiences, information in the text, and the stance the readers take in relationship to the text (Ocampo, 2018) [13]. Table 4 shows the English proficiency of the respondents, along with reading comprehension.

Table 4: English Proficiency Level of English Major Students along Reading Comprehension

| Category of Proficiency Level | Frequency | Percent | Rank |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|------|
| Advanced Proficient | 3 | 7.14 | 4 |
| Proficient | 22 | 52.38 | 1 |
| Approaching Proficient | 13 | 30.96 | 2 |
| Developing Proficient | 4 | 9.52 | 3 |
| Beginning Proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Legend:

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|------|
| Advanced Proficient | | 9-10 |
| Proficient | | 7-8 |
| Approaching Proficient | 5-6 | |
| Developing Proficient | | 3-4 |
| Beginning Proficient | | 1-2 |

According to the data, 3 or 7.14 percent of the 42 respondents were advanced proficient and ranked fourth, 22 or 52.38 percent were proficient and ranked first, 13 or 30.96 percent were approaching proficient and ranked second, 4 or 9.52 percent were developing proficient and ranked third, and no student belonged to the beginning proficient. According to the findings, 52 percent of respondents were proficient in reading comprehension. The findings indicate that their vocabulary and grammar knowledge have influenced their reading comprehension.

General English Proficiency Level of English Major Students

Presented in table 5 is the overall English proficiency level of English major students. It was discovered that 1 or 2.38 percent of 42 students were ranked as advanced proficient and ranked fourth, 14 or 33.33 percent were ranked as proficient and ranked second, and 22 or 52.39 percent were approaching proficient and ranked first. Among the five proficiency level categories, 5 or 11.90 percent were developing proficient and ranked third, with no student falling into the beginning proficient category.

Table 5: Over-All English Proficiency Level of English Major Students

| Category of Proficiency Level | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Advanced Proficient | 1 | 2.38 | 4 |
| Proficient | 14 | 33.33 | 2 |
| Approaching Proficient | 22 | 52.39 | 1 |
| Developing Proficient | 5 | 11.90 | 3 |
| Beginning Proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Legend:

| | | |
|------------------------|--|------|
| Advanced Proficient | | 9-10 |
| Proficient | | 7-8 |
| Approaching Proficient | | 5-6 |

Developing Proficient
Beginning Proficient

3-4
1-2

Based on the findings, it can be deduced that the majority of the English major students were approaching proficiency; thus, they can understand and communicate academic content with more sophisticated vocabulary and varied verb tenses, implying that they need to improve their skills in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and especially grammar.

It is supported by Ocampo's (2021) [14] study, which emphasized that learners should be given more time to practice English to be proficient in various learning areas such as reading, grammar, and written skills. Also, they must be exposed to communication language situations such as storytelling, role-playing, activity cards, dramatization, narrative and description writing, and other interactive and interdisciplinary activities.

These activities allow them to apply their skills since a skill without an opportunity is useless.

English Proficiency Level of English Major Students based on Mean

Presented in table 6 is the English proficiency level of English major students based on the mean score that the respondent got in the three components of English proficiency. Disclosed in table 6 is the respondents' mean score in the three indicators of English proficiency level: vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. Data revealed that the English major students of CBSUA-Sipocot have a mean score of 4.18 in terms of vocabulary, which is interpreted as developing proficiency, and they are both approaching proficiency in terms of grammar and reading comprehension having mean scores of 5.64 and 6.64, respectively.

Table 6: English Proficiency Level of English Major Students Based on Mean

| Indicator of English Proficiency Level | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------|------------------------|
| Vocabulary | 4.18 | Developing Proficient |
| Grammar | 5.64 | Approaching Proficient |
| Reading Comprehension | 6.64 | Proficient |
| Over-all | 17.07 | Approaching Proficient |

The data revealed that the English major students have an overall mean of 17.07, interpreted as approaching proficient. Based on the findings, one can infer that among the three indicators of English proficiency levels, the students have difficulty when it comes to vocabulary. This finding validated the study of Wu (2013) [24] in which of all the components of language proficiency, college students in a public university got the lowest mean score of 4.98 in vocabulary, interpreted as hardly proficient. This finding implies that language teachers of CBSUA-Sipocot should adopt more engaging teaching pedagogies that would help learners be more proficient in vocabulary.

Literary Competence

Literary competence is a fundamental concept in literature education. Students of literature are expected to have an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse, which tells them what to look for. This ability allows a person to interpret meaning beyond what is written in the text. As a result, it is the responsibility of the literature teacher to ensure that their students understand the semiotic signs and culture that are implicitly written for them to grasp the meaning of literary work (Hapsari, 2011) [8]. Table 7 shows the level of literary competence and textual knowledge of English major students based on the results of a researcher-created test.

Table 7: Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students along with Textual Knowledge

| Category of Competency Level | Frequency | % | Rank |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------|------|
| Advanced Competent | 2 | 4.76 | 4 |
| Competent | 8 | 19.05 | 3 |
| Approaching Competent | 17 | 40.48 | 1 |
| Developing Competent | 15 | 35.72 | 2 |
| Beginning Competent | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Advanced Competent 9-10
Competent 7-8
Approaching Competent 5-6
Developing Competent 3-4
Beginning Competent 1-2

As gleaned from the table, data findings revealed that only two students were advanced competent in textual knowledge in literature. It also showed that there were large numbers of respondents who needed the proper attention of the teacher to improve their knowledge of literary characteristics and narrative structures. Thus, the fluctuation in the level of literary competence will be resolved. These findings confirmed the study of Dey (2009), concluding that learning literary competence is largely teacher-dependent.

Conceptual Knowledge

Conceptual knowledge is one of the three areas of literary competence. Conceptual knowledge helps the student expand their referential database, which will expand their inter-textual competence and help them in their analytical work. Presented in Table 8 is the result of the respondents in the literary competence test along with conceptual knowledge, which covers the genre of the text, author, and historical background.

Table 8: Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students along with Conceptual Knowledge

| Category of Competency Level | Frequency | % | Rank |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------|------|
| Advanced Competent | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Competent | 11 | 26.19 | 3 |
| Approaching Competent | 15 | 35.72 | 1 |
| Developing Competent | 13 | 30.95 | 3 |
| Beginning Competent | 3 | 7.14 | 4 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Legend:

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Advanced Competent | 9-10 |
| Competent | 7-8 |
| Approaching Competent | 5-6 |
| Developing Competent | 3-4 |
| Beginning Competent | 1-2 |

Gleaned in Table 8 is the frequency distribution of the respondent's results in the literary competence test and conceptual knowledge. Data revealed that out of 42 respondents, no one belonged to the category of advanced proficient, 11 or 26.19% were competent and were ranked 3rd, 15 or 35.72% were approaching competent and were ranked 1st, 13 or 30.95% were developing competent and ranked 2nd, and 2 or 7.14% were beginning competent and was ranked 4th. Based on the findings, one can conclude that the English major students are still achieving a higher level of competencies in terms of literature. The findings aligned with Yimwilai's (2015) [25] study, which said that the literature teachers should plan strategically to present lessons in literary

competence since language competence alone will not suffice to achieve higher literary competence. Thus, a well-structured lesson plan will help boost the students' competence.

Literary Reading Skills

Literary reading skill is reading between the lines to discover levels of meaning and develop more complex interpretations. It covers the basic and key reading skills that make it the most sophisticated reading level, involving grasping complex texts in all their complexity (Din, 2020) [5]. Presented in Table 9 is the level of literary competence of English major students and literary reading skills.

Table 9: Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students along with Literary Reading Skills

| Category of Competency Level | Frequency | % | Rank |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------|------|
| Advanced Competent | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Competent | 2 | 4.76 | 4 |
| Approaching Competent | 20 | 47.62 | 1 |
| Developing Competent | 16 | 38.10 | 2 |
| Beginning Competent | 4 | 9.52 | 3 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Legend:

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Advanced Competent | 9-10 |
| Competent | 7-8 |
| Approaching Competent | 5-6 |
| Developing Competent | 3-4 |
| Beginning Competent | 1-2 |

As gleaned from the table, it disclosed that out of 42 respondents, 2 or 4.76% were competent, 20 or 47.62% were approaching competent, 16 or 38.1% were developing competent, and 4 or 9.52% were beginning competent, and no student belonged to the advanced competent level. With these results, one can infer that the respondents have a weak foundation of knowledge when reading literary text. Results revealed that the respondents need reinforcement in dealing with reading literary text. A stylistic approach to reading literature is highly recommended because the respondents are unfamiliar with literature and the conventions by which a literary text should be read; hence, they are baffled when presented with a literary work. These findings conform to the idea of Culler (2002) that the respondents have not able to internalize the

“grammar of literature,” which forbade them to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meanings.

Over-All Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students

Table 10 displays the overall level of literary competence of English major students. Table 10 revealed that no English major student belonged to the advanced or beginning categories, but there were 9 or 21.43 percent who belonged to the category of competent and were ranked third, 19 or 45.24 percent who belonged to the category of approaching competent and were ranked first, and 14 or 33.33 percent who were developing competent and were ranked second.

Table 10: Over-All Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students

| Category of Literary Competence | Frequency | % | Rank |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|------|
| Advanced Competent | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Competent | 9 | 21.43 | 3 |
| Approaching Competent | 19 | 45.24 | 1 |
| Developing Competent | 14 | 33.33 | 2 |
| Beginning Competent | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 100.00 | |

Based on the findings, it can be deduced that most of the students belonged to the category of approaching and developing competent in terms of literary competence. It can also be implied that most students need scaffolding in developing their literary competence. Thus, the teacher should adhere to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development theory, which states that the teacher should identify the ZPD of their students to provide proper assistance, thereby encouraging and advancing their learning (Gredler, 2012) [7].

Table 11 shows the level of literary competence of English major students based on the mean score obtained in the three components of the literary competence test. The mean score in the three indicators of literary competence, textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills is shown in table 11. Data revealed that English major students at CBSUA-Sipocot had a mean score of 5.36 in textual knowledge and 5.12 in conceptual knowledge, which was interpreted as approaching proficiency, and they had a mean score of 4.45, which was interpreted as developing competent.

Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students based on Mean

Table 11: Level of Literary Competence of English Major Students Based on Mean

| Indicator of Literary Competence | Mean | Interpretation |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Textual | 5.36 | Approaching Competent |
| Conceptual | 5.12 | Approaching Competent |
| Reading Skills | 4.45 | Developing Competent |
| Over-All | 14.79 | Approaching Competent |

The data disclosed that the English major students have an overall mean of 14.79, interpreted as approaching competent. Based on the findings, one can infer that the students got the lowest mean score in literary reading skills among the three indicators of literary competence.

It only implies that the students cannot wholly deduce all the elements of prose or poetry and that they have difficulty decoding and appreciating the essence of a literary text.

Correlation between English Proficiency Level and Level of Literary Competence in English Major Students

Literature is rooted in language, and language gets life through literature, making them interconnected. According to Carter and McRae (2014) [4], literature should be used with students because it is a motivating stimulus for language acquisition. Literature, a convenient source of content for a course in a foreign language, provides motivating materials for language teaching. Khatib and Rahimi (2012) [10], equally agreed that literature is a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching. In the same vein, through the creative methods of teaching literature, students can be helped to develop confidence in producing coherent and cohesive spoken discourses, organizing sentences into paragraphs with useful linkers, and organizing paragraphs into coherent, meaningful written discourse.

Moreover, the study of literature mainly enhances extensive reading skills development. Research findings overwhelmingly support the fact that there is a correlation between extensive reading and language acquisition, especially effective writing. For instance, You (2011) [26] posited that reading could provide a ready means for acquiring vocabulary and effective writing in a second language. The source further stated that reading brings to the reach of the learner large repertoires of lexical items in their natural linguistic contexts. It means that an individual could only unfold the merit of specific literary text if they have mastery of the language. Thus, the present study tries to correlate the students' English proficiency and literary competence to derive pedagogical implications relevant to language and literature teaching. Presented in Table 12 is the relationship between the English proficiency and literary competence of English major students.

Table 12: Relationship between the English Language Proficiency & Literary Competence of English Major Students

| Variables | Over-All Mean | r | <u>tcom</u> | <u>ttab</u> | Decision | Interpretation |
|---------------------|---------------|------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| English Proficiency | 17.07 | 0.58 | 4.503 | 2.021 | Reject Ho | There is Significant Relationship |
| Literary Competence | 14.79 | | | | | |

Gleaned on the table is the relationship between the English proficiency and literary competence of English major students. Data disclosed that the computed value is 4.503 with a critical value of 2.021 and was interpreted as moderate correlation. Since the computed value is greater than the critical value at a 5 % level of significance, the decision on the hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is a significant relationship between the English proficiency level and the level of literary competence of English major students.

Conclusion

The study focused on English proficiency and literary competence of English major students of the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture-Sipocot. Specifically, it focused on the following problems: (1) What is the English proficiency level of the respondents in vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, (2) What is the level of literary competence of the respondents along with textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills, (3) Is there a significant relationship between the English proficiency and literary competence of the respondents.

It used the evaluative-correlational method to evaluate and determine the students' level of English

Proficiency and literary competence. The accumulated score of the respondents in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar was used to determine the English proficiency level belonging to the descriptive rating of advance proficient, proficient, approaching proficient, developing proficient, and beginning proficient. Likewise, to determine the level of literary competence of the respondents, the accumulated score of the students in textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills were used. Pearson r was used in testing the significant relationship between the English proficiency level and literary competence of the respondents.

The findings showed that most of the students have a proficiency level of approaching proficient both in vocabulary and grammar. The majority of the students have an English proficiency level in reading comprehension. Moreover, the data revealed that most students are approaching competent in terms of textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills. The statistical data showed a significant relationship between English proficiency and literary competence of English major students of Central Bicol State University of Agriculture-Sipocot College of Education.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the English major students be given seminars and workshops to improve their English proficiency in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. The teachers are encouraged to give ample time to discuss the basics of grammar, especially in the rules of subject-verb agreement, the basic sentence patterns, and the different tenses of the verb, which are crucial to developing language proficiency in students. They may provide activities to improve the students' creativity in dealing with the literary text. They may think of other ways to strengthen and intensify the students' love for reading. They may provide concrete examples of how to deal with a different literary text, wherein students may be able to overcome the problems in appreciating literary texts. The pedagogical shift in delivering language and literature as separate discourses to interfacing the two fields may be adopted by the teachers in promoting effective language and literature teaching. Creative and innovative activities that link the two discourses may be given more to the learners and may also be adopted. Supplementary reading may be given to the students to trigger their emotional and personal life leading to the appreciation of the text since literary appreciation is an indispensable aspect of developing literary competence. On the part of the school administration, they may provide opportunities to the teachers handling English and literature subjects to access the new trends in teaching by sending them to different local, national, and international conferences and seminars. Moreover, other researchers are recommended to conduct similar research to aid the university's existing language curriculum that will eventually address the problems in language proficiency and literary competence.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors in this manuscript.

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