



ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF EARLY GRADE IP LEARNERS: BASIS FOR A BRIDGING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this study is to look into the language proficiency level of the Early Grade IP learners which eventually be the basis of a bridging program that will be designed. This study employed the non-experimental descriptive survey research design in investigating the research problem. It is descriptive because the data are presented in quantitative descriptions on the "Language Competence of IP Learners: Basis for a Bridging Program. According to Good (2020), this method of research shows merely description of tasks presenting the conditions regarding the nature of the group of persons or class of events that involved procedure of analysis, classification, and measurement. It involves varied information regarding the current or present condition (Deauna, 2021). This study was conducted in the schools of Sulop district. The respondents in this study were the 210 IP learners of the research locale. The respondents answered a researcher made assessment test on their oral and comprehension skills. This study makes use of the universal sampling procedure considering the manageable number of respondents in the research locale. This revealed that Early Grade IP learners display basic skills in reading which means that their reading skills need to be developed further so that when reading stories, they do not comprehend the stories literally but they will read between the lines in order to have a broad understanding of the literary piece that eventually brings lesson and new insights.

KEYWORDS: english language, proficiency of early grade, learners, basis for a bridging program

INTRODUCTION

The concept of proficiency combines fluency and accuracy. Proficient second language learners are able to speak, listen, read, and write confidently in the new language over a range of topics, with native-like speed and pauses and using native-like rules of correctness. Proficient language learners may have developed their skills through formal instruction. Others may have acquired them through living in the target culture, being raised bilingually, or some combination of these.

Language literacy involves the process of acquiring and learning a target language that is used for real communication (Honigsfeld, 2020). It is fundamental to the learners since learning a specific language is a vehicle to convey one's feelings, thoughts, and experiences; this, in turn, would allow him or her to build relationships and harmony with other people. Thus, language acquisition and learning are an overriding domain of language literacy enhancement as it enables the learners to engage in various communicative settings and learn how to function effectively within society (Kalantzis et al., 2021).

In the Philippine context, enhancing language literacy is accompanied by several challenges that impede the learners from acquiring and learning a target language (Leaño et al., 2020). Although language literacy enhancement in the country was reflected in the K-12 curriculum through Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum (LAMC) (DepEd, 2016), it is still a challenging task for Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) teachers to integrate some pedagogical strategies into language teaching given the diverse needs of the indigenous learners (Protacio, 2021).



The last twenty years or so have seen tremendous changes in policy shift both in Australia and overseas, regarding the ways in which universities can offer places to overseas students. The first paper of this volume begins by tracing the chain of historical events leading to the current position regarding international students studying in Australian universities. The pressure to recruit such students has created fierce competition in the global marketplace, with the targeted destinations expanding each year. As a consequence, economic constraints put pressure on those universities to offer more full-fee paying places, most of which will come from international students (Al Othali S, 2021). The irony is that this creates a spiral effect, in that the more they rely on revenue from those students, the less is forthcoming from government coffers. Universities need to work much harder to satisfy the discerning market by offering diversity in their programs, flexible delivery and the provision of courses in offshore locations. This has required positive relationships with all of the partners involved in order to ensure quality and maintain appropriate standards. In situations where these relationships fail, the quality suffers too. Finally, lack of English proficiency can be an inhibiting factor when students are admitted into courses for which they are not prepared (Zainudin W. Z. W, 2020). For students to be ready to cope in an English-medium academic environment, the capacity to do so cannot be measured on the basis of a proficiency test alone. This is a double-edged sword, for on the one hand, there are minimum standards to be reached before international students can even commence their studies, but on the other hand, the attainment of such scores is only a starting point in their progress towards academic literacy. This fact needs to be clearly communicated to potential students for whom a required score on an English language test such as IEL TS is the final frontier along their arduous journey onto a degree course in an Australian university. In other words, it represents the beginning, rather than the end (Razali A. B., 2021).

Once the major hurdle of achieving the minimum language score to enter university has been overcome, international students often mistakenly believe that their English is now 'good enough'. Often, they are not aware of the fact that the process of developing literacy for an academic environment, in a new culture, has only just begun. At the same time Australian universities operate under a monolingual system where mastery of the English language is the key to success. However, such mastery goes far beyond simply reaching a minimum score on a language test. Most universities are often (at least initially) willing to exercise some flexibility with regard to students' English proficiency, however, there is also a need for ongoing English language support throughout the student's academic life. Secondly, even where minimum language thresholds are met, what is not always taken into account is the fact that the sociolinguistic and cultural models which dominate life in western universities usually present a stark contrast to those to which our overseas students have been accustomed, for undergraduate students in their schooling, and for postgraduate students, in their previous tertiary study experience (Adams J., 2020).

Specific language problems faced by international students, much attention has been focused on the four macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking; in fact, those are the skills tested by IELTS. Skills of writing and reading have been the subjects of more extensive investigation than listening and speaking (Bacon-Shone J., 2020).

Phonics and Word Recognition stress pupil's competence in sight word recognition and phonic analysis. The learner is assumed to decipher unfamiliar words and use patterns of sounds in words for correct meaning and precision (Department of Education, 2016). Phonics is a technique to have pupils follow connections between letters and sounds. In phonemic awareness, the child's capacity to sense sequence of sounds is significant to his/her comprehension of alphabetic rule (Chard & Osborn 2021).

It depicts one's ability to distinguish phonemes or sounds that make up a spoken word. If Grade 1 or 2 indigenous learner cannot identify rhyming words s/he lacks phonological cognizance, since rhyming skill marks a child's rigorous phonological knowledge (GEMM Learning, 2022).

In the division of Davao Del Sur particularly in the schools of Sulop district, learners show low language proficiency of Early Grade IP learners in English that eventually affects their oral and written communication skills. The researcher being a teacher in the early grades encounters this dilemma, thus, conduct this study hoping this problem will be resolved.



The general purpose of this study was to look into the language proficiency level of the IP learners which eventually be the basis of a bridging program that will be designed. Specifically, this research study aims to answer the following research objectives.

1. What is the language proficiency level of the Early Grade IP learners in terms of
 - 1.1 Oral communication,
 - 1.2 Comprehension
2. Based on the findings generated from the study, what bridging program can be designed and proposed?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed the non-experimental descriptive survey research design in investigating the research problem. It is descriptive because the data are presented in quantitative descriptions on the “Language Competence of IP Learners: Basis for a Bridging Program. According to Good (2021), this method of research shows merely description of tasks presenting the conditions regarding the nature of the group of persons or class of events that involved procedure of analysis, classification, and measurement. It involves varied information regarding the current or present condition (Deauna, 2020).

Participants and Sampling

This study was conducted in Sulop district Division of Davao Del Sur. The respondents in this study are the 210 IP learners of the research locale. The respondents answered a researcher made assessment test on their oral and written communication skills. This study made use of the universal sampling procedure considering the manageable number of respondents in the research locale.

Distribution of Respondents

Name of School	No of Respondent
Parami Elementary School	45
Osmeña Elementary School	40
Laperas Elementary School	42
Waterfall Elementary School	41
Luparan Elementary School	42
TOTAL	210

Research Instrument

This study utilized the researcher developed assessment test which items and indicators are focused on the language proficiency of the IP Learners. The respondents gave their responses on the items in the assessment test. To measure its validity and reliability of the test, a pilot test conducted in a school that is not a part of the research locale using Cron Bach alpha.

To determine the level of language competence of the IP learners, the following continuum used.

Interval	Scale	Level	Criteria
96 and above	5	Advanced	The student at this level exceeds the core requirements in terms of knowledge, skills and understandings and, and can transfer them automatically and flexibly through authentic performance tasks.
89 – 95	4	Proficient	The student at this level has developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and core understandings and, and can transfer them independently through authentic performance tasks The student at this level has developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and core understandings and, with little guidance from the teacher and/or with some



82 – 88	3	Approaching Proficiency	assistance from peers, can transfer these understandings through authentic performance tasks.
75 – 81	2	Developing	The student at this level possesses the minimum knowledge and skills and core understandings, but needs help throughout the performance of authentic tasks
Below 75	1	Beginning	The student at this level struggles with his/her understanding; prerequisite and fundamental knowledge and/or skills have not been acquired or developed adequately to aid understanding

Data Gathering Procedure

At the outset of data gathering procedure, the researcher will draft a letter signed by the Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Pablo F Busquit seeking for permission that this research study be conducted and will be sent to the Dr. Lorenzo Mendoza, CESO V, the Schools Division Superintendent in the Division of Davao Del Sur.

While letters seeking for permission were delivered to the DepED Schools Division Superintendent and principal concerned, the researcher constructed a questionnaire and have it validated by the experts preferably the experts of the study.

After permission has been granted that this study be conducted in 5 Schools of Sulop District, Parami Elementary School, Osmeña Elementary School, Laperas Elementary School, Waterfall Elementary School and Luparan Elementary School which are and after the research questionnaire has been thoroughly examined by the expert validators, the researcher launched the questionnaire to the respondent. Responses of the respondents submitted to the statistician for statistical computation after which the researcher made analysis and interpretation on the data gathered.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools will be used in the analysis and interpretation the responses in this study.

Mean will be used to describe the level of language competence of the IP learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed the non-experimental descriptive survey research design in investigating the research problem. It is descriptive because the data are presented in quantitative descriptions on the “Language Competence of IP Learners: Basis for a Bridging Program. According to Good (2020), this method of research shows merely description of tasks presenting the conditions regarding the nature of the group of persons or class of events that involved procedure of analysis, classification, and measurement. It involves varied information regarding the current or present condition (Deauna, 2021).

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Conclusions

Based on the collective findings on this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

The level of English language proficiency in terms of Oral Communication Skills is at the level of Approaching Proficiency. The level of English language proficiency in terms of Comprehension Skill is at Approaching proficiency level. This data led to conclusion that Early Grade IP learners are still categorized as struggling readers who need an intervention program in order to improve their reading proficiency.



Research has shown that English language proficiency is a critical factor in academic and professional success, with those exhibiting higher levels of proficiency often experiencing greater academic achievement and employability (Cosmiano, 2023)(Graham, 2021)(Stephen et al., 2021). However, the relationship between English proficiency and academic success is not straightforward, with numerous other factors, such as cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, also playing a significant role.

While early studies suggested that English proficiency did not necessarily predict high academic performance or employment aptitude, more recent evidence indicates that English proficiency is a key asset in areas of academic success and employment, particularly in highly competitive and demanding industries, (Graham, 2020)(Cosmiano, 2023). This is especially true for indigenous populations, where historical and ongoing challenges, such as limited access to educational resources and language barriers, can contribute to lower levels of English proficiency.

This is an important distinction to make as recently, with the globalization of education and the trend of English as the so-called international language, the term bilingual or multilingual education has been co-opted by elites as a means to acquire another dominant language to build their elite status, disregarding the more nondominant L1s of the students. However, it is worth noting that even in the so-called Global North, in countries such as the United States or Canada, the origins of bi-/multilingual education are rooted in valuing nondominant students' languages and cultures in a predominantly white Anglosaxon culture and language to combat submersive, assimilationist pedagogies, and educational programs (Francis & Reyhner, 2021;History of Bilingual Education, 2020;Nieto, 2021)

Recommendations

In the light of the findings drawn out by the researcher in this study, the following recommendations are offered: The Department of Education a more intensified reading program will be designed and to be implemented in the field. This program should be inclusive that it would address all learners regardless of status, religion, belief and gender. A monitoring mechanism should be developed also to monitor the implementation of the said program.

The School Heads in their capacity as school leaders should conducted assessment in reading to identify least learned competencies in reading which will be the focus of the reading program in the school context. This program should have its own process flow and guidelines which will be the basis for its proper implementation.

The teachers should have developed materials that would be used by the reading teachers who will handle the reading program. It is much easier to implement a reading program if all materials are already available at the possession of the reading teacher.

Parents encourage and participate in cultural activities to preserve indigenous traditions and languages. The integration of English language education for indigenous children presents both opportunities and challenges. This thesis explores effective strategies and recommendations for parents of indigenous children to support English language acquisition while preserving their native languages and cultural heritage. The goal is to enhance academic and social outcomes for indigenous children in a globalized world. Barangay Officials explores the role of barangay officials in promoting English language education among indigenous communities while preserving their native languages and cultural heritage. Establish programs that integrate English learning with the Indigenous language, ensuring cultural relevance and inclusivity. Work with local schools to develop and support bilingual education programs.

Students acquiring English Proficiency is essential for broader educational and socio-economic opportunities, yet it is crucial to maintain and celebrate their native languages and cultural identities. Indigenous learners can achieve bilingualism, fostering a sense of pride and belonging in both their indigenous and broader global communities.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar study that would venture on the proficiency of Early Grade IP learners in other discipline.



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