

## Acquisition of Language Proficiency in English Among Senior High School Students from the Different Strands

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### ABSTRACT

Using a quantitative-comparative design, this study compares the language proficiency of the Senior High School Students of a certain University from the five (5) different strands; Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM), Humanities-Education-Social Sciences (HESS or HUMSS), Business-Accountancy-Management (BAM or ABM), Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) and General Academic Strand (GAS) and determine on which of these strands excels in the language proficiency test. There are 40 students randomly selected per strand. They are tested using the Language Proficiency Test in English. The one-way Analysis of Variance was utilized in the study. The findings reveal that there is a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the English language proficiency of the students from the five (5) strands. Moreover, the students from the STEM strand excel from the other strands. This further indicates that the STEM students are more superior and developed on the academic literacy, alternative understandings and adequate formulation of theories and concepts in dealing with different variations of linguistics skills.

### KEYWORDS

Acquisition of language; language proficiency; English; senior high school; strands; Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM); Philippines; Asia

### INTRODUCTION

K to 12 Curriculum is an education system under the Department of Education that aims to enhance learners' basic skills, produce more competent citizens, and prepare graduates for lifelong learning and employment (K12philippines.com, 2015). In the Philippines, President Benigno Aquino III approved Republic Act (RA) 10533, signing into law the K to 12 Curriculum last May 15, 2013 (Teachfortheiph.org, 2013). With its implementation, the old system of high school is disregarded and changed into 4 years of Junior High School and 2 years of specialized upper secondary education or the Senior High School. Senior High School refers to Grades 11 and 12, a secondary school that provides sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skill and to develop lifelong learners (Inquirer.net, 2016). In this study, the Grade 11 is only grade being tested due to the deficiency of time in regards with the Grade 12. Unanimous of the students are very busy complying their final requirements and do not have time to participate. Each student in Senior High School can choose among the five strands: Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM) that focuses on the advanced concepts and topics especially in mathematical operations, Humanities-Education-Social Sciences (HESS or HUMSS) that is designed for those who want to talk to a lot of people, Business-Accountancy-Management (BAM or ABM) that focuses on financial, business and corporate operations, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) that will equip a learner with job-ready skills such as electronics, agriculture and trade, lastly, General

Academic Strand (GAS) that is great for those who are still undecided on which track to take (Officialgazette.gov.ph, 2013). However, despite of the different strands that a student can take, they are already equipped on having knowledge on the language that makes them a language proficient. Being a language proficient is having the ability to speak or perform the language spontaneously for real word purposes (Stacieberdan.com). It is tested in both written and oral proficiency. Thus, the study claims that the senior high school students from the different strands may have the difference on the acquisition of written language proficiency in English as it varies in the understanding of an individual from the environment of the taken strand.

It has been established by Peters (2006) that learners are responsible for their own learning and developing their competent skills through language. Language is important for learners to be competent with the help of language services though most of the learners are independent and can learn their own way as claimed by Divi, Koss, Schmaltz and Loeb (2007) but for Cruickshank, Chen and Warren (2012), language proficiency is assessed through individualization or by peers. Learners are exhibited on oral and written assessment which finds that they differ on attitude and interest on learning the language. Also stated by Droop and Verhoeven (2003) that reading and writing abilities of learners builds a more language proficiency. Learners have different perceptions on what they want to become and what field they want to take to but, for Lyons and Quinn (2010) that graduates of Junior High School has the perception to study on what they are specialized to despite of their skills in the other fields.

The principle which had been studied in the past claimed that language affects the competent skills of the learners by learning in their selves or with the connection of group or people. It was also observed that learners have different perceptions, attitudes, interests and skills on what they want to become and what field they want to take to even they have the specialization on the other fields. Hence, the different strands in Senior High School doesn't conclude that whenever a student studied a certain strand, he/she isn't qualified in the other strands but, it is her/his will to take the strand based on her/his perception, attitude, interest and skills.

This study is achieved by addressing the differences of the students from the different strands in Senior High School. It is developed through written testing and can be determine if which of the different strands excels on the language proficiency test and with that, the perception of the people will now be equal and there is no strand that will be left behind.

### **Research Objectives**

The objective of the study is to compare the acquisition of written language proficiency in English among Grade 11-Senior High School Students from the different strands in a university for the Academic Year 2018-2019.

### **Null Hypothesis**

**Ho:** There is no significant difference in the acquisition of written language proficiency of the Senior High School Students from the five (5) different strands.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study utilized a comparative research design which is under the quantitative method that seeks and finds the comparison of the variables. As for Richardson (2018), comparative design essentially compares two groups in an attempt to draw a conclusion about them. The researchers attempt to identify and analyze similarities and differences between groups and

used to increase understanding on the society and create a foundation for compromise and collaboration. Senior High School Students from the different strands have different level of understanding and competency obtained in studying the English subject.

The study was conducted in a university in the Philippines. It is a research driven university and currently celebrating its centennial year of existence and was considered as one of the pioneering universities in the region.

The respondents of the study are the Grade 11-Senior High School students. They are from the five different stands, mainly; Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM), Humanities-Education-Social Sciences (HESS or HUMSS), Business-Accountancy-Management (BAM or ABM), Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) and General Academic Strand (GAS). Currently, the population of the Grade 11 students is 416 however the researchers only catered the 200 students as the sample size. This is derived from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula with 5% margin of error. There are 40 students randomly selected from each stand. The researchers considered the following inclusion criteria: must be an active senior high school student, willing to voluntarily participate, and has a parental consent. All the respondents were informed that they were allowed to withhold information or withdraw from their participation in the study.

The researchers utilized a self-made questionnaire. The questionnaire is a multiple choice type with 10 items which primarily measures the written language proficiency of the students. The language and grammar are the areas tested in the study. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, five (5) experts were asked to check and rate. Then, the questionnaire gained an average content validity index (ACVI) of 0.912. Afterwards, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked by letting 50 students to answer the dry run. The reliability coefficient was measured using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21 and gained a coefficient of 0.89.

Considering that the psychometric tests of the questionnaire were done and found out that it's valid and reliable. The researchers then obtained all the approvals from the authority including the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of the Visayas. Afterwards, the names of the prospect respondents were asked from the registrar's office. The names were coded and random selection of respondents was done using the Table of Random numbers. All the chosen respondents were provided with informed consents and were informed that they can withhold information or withdraw their participation in the study. All the randomly selected respondents were gathered in a tested venue and were asked to answer the test questionnaire for 10 minutes. After answering, the respondents were given a simple token which served as an appreciation for their participation.

The gathered data were tabulated and kept privately by the researchers. Afterwards, the data were analyzed. The normality and homogeneity of the data were measured. The researchers found out that the data were normal ( $p > 0.05$ ) and homogenous ( $p > 0.05$ ) using the Shapiro-Wilk test and Levene's test, respectively.

After gathering the data, the researchers made sure that the data collected must undergo the Normality Test. It is then analyzed through frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to determine the number of points per strand and to measure the dispersion of the data relative to its mean. After which, it is calculated through Analysis of Variance to analyze the potential differences among the five strands and to determine if which strand excels in the written language proficiency test.

The beneficiaries of this study are the researchers, respondents and the research environment. Through this, they can acquire knowledge on the comparison between the five strands. The researchers conducted a study that is intended to the fair and equal treatment of the respondents without any harm or risk to respect their dignity, opinions and thoughts and

didn't force the respondents to answer the survey questionnaire without their consent, permission and approval. To avoid conflict in selecting the respondents, it is randomize to have the fairness innate in the study. The research materials are designed through coding to restrict the personal information of the respondents and placed in an area where no one can reach out and will be burn after a year of processing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Language Proficiency of the Senior High Schools Students

Score	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than 4 (Below Average)	95	47.50
4 – 6 (Average)	96	48.00
Greater than 6 (Above Average)	9	4.50

*Note. n = 200.*

Table 1 reveals that the Senior High School Students got more scores on the average level compared to the higher and lower levels. This indicates that there are several students who excel in general without the dispersion from their different strands.

As per stated by Admiraal, Westhoff, and De Bot (2007) that the effects of the usage of the English subject as language of instruction may affect the achievement of the students particularly on being a language proficient. This simply shows that despite of the differences of the students per strand, they still excel in general in terms of understanding within themselves and achieving their core goal in their respective learning environment.

**Table 2.** Language Proficiency Across Senior High School Strands

Strand	n	Mean	SD	Interpretation
STEM	40	4.50	1.754	Average
ABM	40	4.18	1.483	Average
HUMSS	40	3.93	1.141	Below Average
TVL	40	3.13	1.636	Below Average
GAS	40	2.30	1.137	Below Average

*Note. n = 200.*

Table 2 reveals that the strand Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM) gained higher scores compared to other strands based on the findings mentioned above. Although Business-Accountancy-Management (BAM or ABM) got it to the average level together with STEM, but still, STEM is considered as the excelling strand in the Language Proficiency Test in English. Moreover, the strands Humanities-Education-Social Sciences (HESS or HUMSS), Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) and General Academic Strand (GAS) placed on the below average level considering also their performance on the said test.

Since Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM) is the excelled strand in the Language Proficiency Test in English, according to Martirosyan, Hwang, and Wanjohi (2015) that the academic performance of the students can greatly affect on being a language proficient and there are differences that is to be considered as one way of developing one's academic performance, but for Mattern, Burrus, and Shaw (2010) that most of the skilled students are highly underestimated related to their academic performance where they are compared to the unskilled students. They may appear as highly-skilled individuals but still they can pursue their academic goals. Benzie (2010) stated that students' English skills are

not just developed by higher education experience and rapid communication but rather, it is also the increased of academic literacy, alternative understandings and adequate formulation of theories and concepts in dealing with different internationalized higher education. Thus, Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM) students may have the larger perspective not just in mathematical related computations but, also in dealing with variations of English language.

**Table 3.** Difference in the Language Proficiency of the SHS Students When Grouped According to Strands

	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Between Groups	126.470	4	31.618	14.989	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Within Groups	411.325	195	2.109				
Total	537.795	199					

*Note. Significant if p-value <  $\alpha$  0.05*

Table 3 reveals that there is a significant difference in the written language proficiency of the senior high school students from the different strands based on their potential differences as it differs largely in the gap per numerical result ( $p < \alpha 0.05$ ).

As stated in the studies of Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, Humbach and Javorsky (2006) that students determine themselves as “best” on the varieties of testing on the language proficiency. They are more on the achievement in general were it is predicted as a strong form of intelligence. Also, it is provided by the big support for connections between students on their respective level of understanding, development and growth per individual.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the sole purpose is to compare the Written Language Proficiency of the Senior High School Students from the Different Strands and to determine if which of the different strands excels on the language proficiency test. This can somehow end the speculations and different perceptions of people which commonly stated that there is a specific strand that is above all the other strands. Through this study, it finally revealed on which strand excels in the Language Proficiency Test in English. Thus, the learning environment and training largely affects the performance of every student from the different strands.

Based on the attainment of the study, the researchers believed that Senior High School Students have different Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles as it is influenced in their respective learning environment. This study may conclude that there is one (1) strand that excels but, the future intention of this study is to address the different perceptions, attitudes, interests and skills that the student's prevail. This is being recommended for the future researchers to utilize the oral proficiency testing as well as the written to basically test the proficiency of an individual as a whole and to have an effective research study.

Learning with caricature media has a significant effect on the ability to write anecdote text on 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Students of SMA Swasta Swakarya Binjai in the 2018/2019 academic year with the results of the hypothesis, namely  $t_o > t_$  (table) and  $7.23 > 2.03$  which means that  $H_a$  is accepted. Because this media can provide suggestions in increasing children's attention in participating in the teaching and learning process.

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