Language and Literary Skills of Senior High School Filipino ESL Learners: Basis for Pedagogical Interface

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ABSTRACT

The connection between English Language Proficiency and Literary Competence level of Senior High School students in a selected province of Bicol, Philippines was investigated through this study. The descriptive–evaluative inferential correlation method unveiled the English proficiency level and literary competence of the respondents across parameters while the correlation method asserted the relationship between the said variables. Respondents were chosen from two (2) public schools and two (2) private schools with 303 respondents. The findings revealed that the respondents' English Language Proficiency and Literary Competence performance was at the Developing (D) and Beginning (B) levels, respectively. Moreover, no significant difference exists between the performance of public and private schools regarding English language proficiency and literary competence. However, a significant relationship was found between language proficiency and literary competence levels. The findings served as a basis for a pedagogical interface through an intervention program that stresses the merging of language and literature in teaching to address the difficulties of Senior High School students and capacitate them in maximizing the use of English language.

Keywords: English language competence, literary competence, correlation, pedagogical interface

1) INTRODUCTION

The connection shared by language and literature is a topical discourse that language practitioners cannot ignore. When examining literature closely, one can see that it is deeply intertwined with language. It is because literature presupposes language. Language is the tool that brings literature to life, allowing authors to express their thoughts, emotions, and stories in a way that readers can understand and appreciate.

On the other hand, literature greatly influences and enriches language itself. Literature exposes people to different writing styles, diverse vocabulary, and creative expressions. When people read books, poems, or plays, they encounter new words, phrases, and ways of using language. This exposure to literature helps people expand their language skills and text elements, particularly of how language can convey meaning and evoke emotions.

Despite the connection shared by language and literature, there is often a division of the two in the academe, especially on how they are being operationalized in the universities. They are treated as separate subjects, with different departments and courses dedicated to each. However, this division does not mean that language and literature are completely independent. In practice, the two are closely connected and cannot be fully separated.

Language and literature teaching should not be treated exclusively but rather reinforced since both scaffold each other's competencies. For instance, in developing macro skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing, literature plays a crucial contribution as it enhances the linguistic merits of an individual. **[1].** In reading literature aloud, the speaking prowess is enhanced and the exposure to semantics and syntax helps learners make good progress in their language skills. Moreover, it strengthens students' pronunciation by adopting more integrative and creative teaching will give the students more exercises in using the English Language **[2].**

If the symbiotic relationship between language and literature is harnessed and applied in the classrooms, it can address the problem of the different ESL schools when it comes to the lack of English proficiency, thereby minimizing the high rate of English language failure in different examinations **[3]**. Having a high level of language proficiency is said to be the answered panacea to the intractable challenge when it comes to the low

academic performance of the students currently threatening the educational sector.

Literature teachers cannot ignore linguistic problems because language is the medium through which literature is expressed. They need to understand the nuances of language to analyze and interpret literary works effectively **[4]**. Similarly, language teachers recognize the importance of literature in teaching their students. Literature provides real-life examples of language usage and helps students develop their language skills in a meaningful context.

One of the aims of DepEd is to improve English instruction and to link partnerships with local and international stakeholders. Thus, a nationwide campaign was conducted to raise the language proficiency of public school teachers through reading. Such reading activities are anchored on the aspect of literary interactions with the books that the students read. This is in response to the reality that English language proficiency was sorely lacking among Filipinos of all ages.

Meanwhile, when one engages in reading, he creates a relationship by indulging personal realities and experiences that add new meaning to a literary work **[5]**. However, this cannot be the ultimate source of explaining the merit of a text since the reader might have an intentional fallacy due to biases and might taint the message being relayed by the author. Because of this, language plays a crucial part as it serves as a reference and strong evidence to support the claim of the reader in interpreting the merit of the text.

Needless to say, the connection shared by literature and language is best described as symbiotic. Literature relies on language as its foundation, while language is enriched and given life through literature. Both literature and language play integral roles in understanding and appreciation of each other.

Thus, it is essential for senior high school students who are one step closer to tertiary education to acquire both linguistic and literary skills as they advance in their studies. Due to the foregoing statements, this study explored the language and literary landscape of Filipino senior high school students in the Public and Private Schools in a selected province of Bicol, Philippines. It is used as a reference to develop a pedagogical interface between language and literature.

2) METHODS AND METHODOLOGY
The descriptive–evaluative inferential correlation method was used in the study to unveil the English proficiency level and literary competence of the respondents across parameters while the correlation method asserted the relationship between the said variables. The respondents were chosen from two (2)public schools and two (2) private schools. There were 303 respondents to the study. One hundred fifteen(115) of these respondents were from Public School A, which constitutes 37.95% of the total respondents. There were 96, or 31.68%, from the Private School B. There were 69, or 22.77%, from Public School C and 23 or 7.59% from Private School D.

The instrument was a researcher-made test validated by a set of jurors composed of language professors, school heads of the different schools, and a statistician. Content and face validations were made to ensure the test items were appropriate to the language and literary competencies being evaluated in the study **[6].** Meanwhile, a Table of Test Specification (TOS) was made to establish its validity and reliability. Psychometric property of standardized administration, ensuring the proportionate number of hours the topics taught and the length of time in taking the test were meticulously considered **[7]**. To test the instrument's reliability, the researcher chose 15 Senior High School students who were not included in the roster of respondents. The researcher used the test–retest method to establish the reliability which was backed up by Cronbach's Reliability Test. The rule of thumb is that for an instrument to be considered reliable, a Cronbach alpha must be at least 0.80 **[8].** With the pre-test results having a reliability coefficient of 0.923, it indicates that the instrument was highly reliable.

The scores were interpreted using the most appropriate statistical tool to qualify and quantify the test result. The PL was set to a 75% target; the scores were computed using average mean and judged according to the Likert scale prepared and the descriptive and adjectival rating. Cronbach's reliability formula was utilized to validate the reliability of the test items, aided by the interpretation based on the reliability coefficient value. Kruskall – Wallis One Way ANOVA was applied to ascertain the significant difference between the performance of private school and public school test takers along with vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension **[9]**. The alpha was set at a 0.05 level of significance. Conversely, Spearman Rho (r_s) was used to correlate the respondents' scores and English Proficiency and Literary Competence.

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Presented in this section is the proficiency level of the respondents along with its identified parameters. Table 1 conveyed the test results regarding language proficiency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar. It was clear that the following mean percentage was 48.22% for vocabulary, 43.38% for reading comprehension, and 42.61% for grammar convention, all directed towards a general description of the Beginning (B) level. This

proves no evidence of language proficiency in the respondents' performance. This achievement is too far from the confidence level of 75%. The general mean percentage of 34.65%, denoted as Beginning (B), clearly showed that the respondents' performance on the test proved no evidence of proficiency.

Table 1: Level of Proficiency in Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, and Grammar Convention

SKILLS	Public School A	Public School B	Private School C	Private School D	Average	Rank	Description
Vocabulary	55.11	44	55.11	38.67	48.22	1	Developing
Reading Comprehension	57.25	38	39.83	38.42	43.38	2	Beginning
Grammar Convention	57.44	27.44	41.56	44	42.61	3	Beginning
AVERAGE	56.6	36.48	45.5	40.36	34.65		Beginning

1.1

This is direct evidence that these respondents encounter certain difficulties that have not been given appropriate action or intervention. The average percentage for public schools was 46.54%, far from the confidence level of 75%. As to the result of private school test takers, the average falls at 42.93% and is interpreted as "beginning." These results only showed that an intervention has to be done, and if it is to be done, do it as soon as possible to help these young people at least perform at the level where they can be more confident in using the language in everyday conversation or at least at the level of academic pursuit. If this predicament is not addressed, the succeeding academic year would also be more challenging for them and the rest of the grade levels with the same problems or difficulties.

This data will be crucial information in the decision-making of the teachers and administrators alike if they decide to conduct an intervention program to help the SHS students ease or lessen the impact of the difficulties they face with language proficiency issues. The study of Ocampo [11] revealed that factors such as teacher attributes, geographical location of the school, population, and school academic status could be a prime influencer of the school performance and the student's performance in particular. In the same context, as mentioned by Bilbao et al. (2015) and cited by Alfelor et al. [12], the prime mover of students' performance is the teacher. Hence, the teacher could resolve this difficulty. They reiterated that the teacher's positive attributes can make a big difference by creating a relevant and helpful environment in language acquisition and mastery.

Ocampo [13] denoted in his work that the symbiotic relationship between vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar cannot be separated. It means that learning one of the skills in the language cannot displace the importance of the others to achieve mastery. In saying so, an intervention program has to be implemented or made as soon as possible to reduce the inadequacy and continuous deterioration of the learners' English language competence. It is hoped that in addressing this problem, the weight of the three skills must be considered greatly. The generic solution may or may not work. However, addressing the problem may or would require immediate action but a long-term solution.

Meanwhile, Table 2 summarizes the mean percentage obtained by the respondents, along with textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills. It was noted that there was a mean percentage of 38.23% for conceptual knowledge, 38.14% for textual knowledge, and 34.02% for literary reading skills, all directed toward the description of the Beginning (B) level.

Table 2: Level of Literary Competence in Textual Knowledge, Conceptual Knowledge, and Literary Reading Skills

SKILLS	Public School A	Public School B	Private School C	Private School D	Average	Rank	Description
Textual Knowledge	41.91	31.18	34	45.45	38.14	2	Beginning
Conceptual Knowledge	39.1	28.2	54.8	30.8	38.23	1	Beginning
Literary Reading	34.44	30.89	34.78	36.22	34.02	3	Beginning
Average	38.48	30.09	41.19	37.49	36.82		Beginning

The total percentage performance of the respondents on the test along the parameters above was far from what is supposed to be the level of competence, considering the age and grade level of these respondents at present [14]. It was a clear denotation that a general poor performance was shown on all parameters or variables tested.

It can be noted that the result was single and similar – all four respondent schools failed to reach the targeted 75% confidence level of competence. It means no schools that have taken the test for textual, conceptual, and literary reading skills are competent and proficient in the abovementioned areas.

In the study conducted by Uccelli et al. **[15]**, they concluded that proficiency and competence in textual, conceptual, and literary reading increase academic success. Accordingly, academic success is more likely to occur when one is good at English because the learning set-up becomes contextualized to the target language. It supports the present study since the mastery of the previous language and communication competencies may likely lead to the effective use of English as a medium of text, conversation, and communication in general.

Karta et al. **[16]** explained that carefully researched intervention programs may reduce the difficulties arising in most public and private schools in the country. They concluded that careful consideration of teacher attributes, facilities, learning materials, sustainable budget, and comprehensive language and communication intervention programs is necessary. With the precedents mentioned, the result obtained from the present study may be attributed to the inadequacy of the school system in preparing and addressing the problem at hand.

The result of the study similarly agreed with the study conducted by Baesa-Alfelor and Ocampo **[17]**, which explicitly expounded that students must be exposed and have sufficient practice in using the English language to be competent since they are not native speakers. They added that the learners must be given interactive and interdisciplinary activities such as simulation, dramatization, narrative, and descriptive writing for them to use English more frequently.

Orejuela et al. **[18]** further explain that the low English Proficiency level of the learners could be a teacher and school-related factor. With this deteriorating condition of English language proficiency, the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP), which trains English Teachers to be proficient and become mentors in their respective schools, has been spearheaded so that all language, reading, and literature teachers, elementary and secondary alike will continue to improve their skills and become more articulate of their craft.

The frequency and availability of reading materials, including the material's content and geographical barrier, are among the prominent concerns after teachers' attributes **[19]**. Most public schools, especially those from remote and coastal areas, have difficulty accessing books or printed materials for their learning. Thus, the English language, in particular, is just a matter of subject for every child who seldom meets teachers to teach them the skill. If there is an available teacher, he may also have the same burden of limited capacity to use, speak, and teach the language. This predicament is true not only in basic education but also at the senior high school level. They need to acquire linguistic skills and advanced proficiency in the language because the industry where they are expected to be placed requires competency in the English language.

The section that follows shows the Kruskall Wallis H Test, which is the test for significant differences. It was utilized to determine the significant difference in proficiency level among the respondent - schools along with vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar convention.

The Kruskall Wallis H Test summary revealed that the standard deviations are scattered close to each other. It proved that there is a lower dispersion of the scores being ranked. With the degree of freedom equal to 2, the H test computed value proved to have categorically accepted the statement under the null hypothesis. With an H test value of 3.28 less than the alpha at 0.10, 0.05, 0.025, and 0.01, none of the critical values had been exceeded by the computed H test.

Table 3: Kruskall Wallis H Test for English Proficiency Level of the Respondents

Particulars	Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension	Grammar Convention
Number of Population (N)	4	4	4
Mean Rank	6.25	7.5	5
Standard Deviation (SD)	3.33	2.96	3.74
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2	2	2
H – Test Value	3.28	3.28	3.28
Significant Level(α) 0.10 0.05 0.025 0.01	 4.654 5.692 6.615 7.654	 4.654 5.692 6.615 7.654	 4.654 5.692 6.615 7.654
Decision	Accept H_o	Accept H_o	Accept H_o
Significant Difference	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

1.2

Therefore, the researcher rejected the alternative hypothesis and favored the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant difference between the performances of the participating schools regarding English proficiency level, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar convention. Conversely, the result stated that both public and private schools perform poorly or below the expected confidence level of 75%.

Meanwhile, presented in Table 4 is the significant difference in the literary competence of the senior high school students. The data showed that the standard deviation is scattered within the normal value. The H test result 5.56 could not reject the null hypothesis at significance levels 0.05, 0.025, and 0.01. However, with a significant value of 0.10 or 10%, the H test rejected the null hypothesis. With the result above, three (3) out of four (4) significant levels, only one has shown the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 4: Test of Significant Difference for Literary Competence of the Respondents

Particulars	Textual Knowledge	Conceptual Knowledge	Literary Reading Skills
Number of Population (N)	4	4	4
Mean Rank	9	6.5	4
Standard Deviation (SD)	1.58	4.15	1.87
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2	2	2
H – Test Value	5.56	5.56	5.56
Significant Level(α) 0.10 0.05 0.025 0.01	4.654 5.692 6.615 7.654	4.654 5.692 6.615 7.654	4.654 5.692 6.615 7.654
Decision	Reject H_o	Reject H_o	Reject H_o
Significance Difference	Significant at 0.05	Significant at 0.05	Significant at 0.05

Therefore, the researcher concluded that generally, the result of the literary reading competence level of the respondents has a significant relationship. The performances do not necessarily vary or significantly differ; the respondents have shown the same or almost similar performances in relation to the literary competence level.

In Table 5, the Spearman Rho(ρ) Formula was utilized to see the significant relationship between the responses made by the respondents – schools coming from private and public schools, respectively. It was likewise used to determine the nature of correlation and how concrete a predictor of effective language and literary teaching is.

Table 5: Test of Correlation of the Respondents' Performance in Language Proficiency and Literary Competency

Parameters	n	df	r_s	T_c	Alpha	T_v	Interpretation	Decision
Language Proficiency	4	2	0.82	2.03	0.01	9.925	$T_v > T_c$ rejects H_o	significant
					0.02	6.965	$T_v > T_c$ reject H_o	significant
					0.05	4.323	$T_v > T_c$ reject H_o	significant
					0.10	2.920	$T_v > T_c$ reject H_o	significant
Literary Competency					0.20	1.886	$T \le T_c$ Accept H_o	Not significant

The result of the Spearman rho (r_s) computation for Language Proficiency and Literary Competency was directed towards rejecting H_o. It confirmed a significant relationship between the performances or difficulties encountered by private and public school respondents in English Proficiency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar convention, textual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and literary reading skills. The level of their performance is the same. Therefore, the H_a is accepted.

It means that the test result cannot predict effective language and literature teaching well. This further implied that the difficulties encountered by public school respondents may or may not necessarily be the same as what the private school respondents did. This indicated that the level of language proficiency with grammar,

vocabulary, and reading comprehension does not meet the confidence level set to 75%, and it is, by far, a difficulty that needs to be addressed.

4) CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study is directed towards determining the English Language Proficiency and Literary Competence level of Senior High School students in a selected province of Bicol, Philippines. It was revealed that the performance of both public and private schools in English Language Proficiency and Literary Competence was at the Developing (D) and Beginning (B) levels, respectively. There is no indicator of mastery and proficiency in using English as the medium of instruction in literature. Meanwhile, the literary competence of the respondents' schools was at the Beginning (B) level. It was also found that there is no significant difference between the performance of public and private school respondents in the two variables. However, a significant relationship exists between language proficiency and literary competency levels among the respondent schools. Both are not language proficient nor literary competent. Senior high school students encounter difficulties in English proficiency and literary reading competence. These difficulties vary from school to school in terms of frequency, nature, and characteristics. The study's findings served as a basis for a pedagogical interface through an intervention program that stresses the interfacing of language and literature in teaching to capacitate the students in maximizing the use of English language. The intervention highlights the components and competencies, considering the curriculum guide being followed by the Department of Education, that must be targeted along with the different strategies and activities that can be used to strengthen the link between language and literature to help its target beneficiaries.

7) CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is **no conflict of interest** in the development and completion of this study.

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