

English Proficiency Level Of BTLED Students Of Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

This study examines the English proficiency levels of Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED) students in higher education, with a focus on various language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and listening across different year levels. The research aims to pinpoint specific areas of strength and weakness, shedding light on the effectiveness of the current English language curriculum. Data were gathered from 176 students, and the results showed that overall proficiency was rated as moderate, but there were notable differences between different language skills. Grammar consistently ranked as the strongest skill, particularly among second-year students, indicating moderate to high proficiency. However, writing and reading comprehension were frequently rated lower, reflecting ongoing difficulties in both productive and receptive skills. While proficiency levels generally improved from first to fourth year, progress was inconsistent across skill areas. These findings suggest a need for a more well-rounded approach to language instruction, with an emphasis on targeted support for writing and speaking to address the identified gaps. The study recommends curriculum improvements that promote balanced skill development through interactive teaching methods that encourage active English use in practical settings. It emphasizes the importance of meeting the varied language needs of BTLED students to better prepare them for future academic and professional challenges. Overall, the research contributes to the understanding of language proficiency trends in higher education and advocates for teaching practices that foster comprehensive language development.

Keywords: English Proficiency, BTLED Students, Higher Education, Language Skills, Curriculum Development

INTRODUCTION:

Proficiency in English is vital for success in higher education as it gives students access to a broader range of learning resources, allows them to engage in academic discussions, and prepares them for future teaching careers. Santos (2020) suggests that higher education institutions must continually evaluate and enhance students' English proficiency to ensure they are well-prepared for their professional responsibilities.

Many scholars have highlighted the significant impact of English language proficiency on students' academic success. Wang (2020) argues that strong English skills are linked to improved academic performance and greater employability in countries where English is not the first language. Similarly, Li (2020) contends that fostering a supportive environment for English learning can greatly enhance students' language abilities and academic achievements. Ahmad (2020) stresses the importance of personalized language interventions to help students address specific language challenges. Sun and Fan (2020) warn that limited opportunities for practical language use can impede students' ability to apply English in real-world situations, while Lee (2020) suggests that integrating English programs into higher education can improve language skills and better prepare students for their future careers. Collectively, these studies highlight the essential role of English proficiency in both higher education and beyond.

However, there remains a lack of research specifically focused on the English proficiency challenges faced by BTLED students in higher education institutions. Most studies tend to concentrate on general English learners or students in other academic disciplines, leaving a gap in understanding the specific language needs of BTLED students. These students often require specialized language skills to effectively teach technical and vocational subjects. Yet, the impact of factors such as institutional support, curriculum design, and teaching practices on their English proficiency has not been adequately explored. This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the English proficiency levels of BTLED students and identifying the key factors that influence their language learning.

The results of this study will be valuable to various stakeholders, including students, educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. BTLED students will gain a clearer understanding of their language strengths and areas for improvement, which will help them enhance their skills more effectively. Educators can adjust their teaching strategies to provide more targeted language support, while curriculum designers may consider integrating more robust English language components into the BTLED program. Additionally, policymakers can use the findings to implement language programs that better support students' language development, ultimately improving the quality of education and equipping graduates with the communication skills necessary for the workforce.

Theoretical Framework

The study titled "English Proficiency Level of BTLED Students of Higher Education Institutions" draws on modern theories and models of language acquisition that explore the factors affecting English language learning in academic settings. Central to the research are the concepts of language proficiency and communicative competence, which encompass the ability to effectively use language for both social communication and academic tasks. The study's framework incorporates theories that stress the importance of language input, interaction, and sociocultural factors in second language acquisition, offering a comprehensive understanding of what influences English proficiency among Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED) students.

Ellis's (2020) updated view on input and interaction highlights the importance of exposure to understandable language input, along with opportunities for meaningful interaction. Ellis emphasizes that language proficiency improves when students are exposed to language that is slightly beyond their current level ($i+1$), a concept that builds on Krashen's input hypothesis, but with more focus on interactive environments where learners can negotiate meaning. For BTLED students, this suggests that their academic environment should provide

plenty of exposure to English through learning materials and peer interactions, allowing them to gradually enhance their language skills.

Additionally, Lantolf and Poehner's (2020) revisited sociocultural theory is crucial for understanding language proficiency development. This theory focuses on the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning, especially through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Lantolf and Poehner, learners can reach higher levels of proficiency through guided interactions with more knowledgeable individuals. In the case of BTLED students, collaborative learning, scaffolded instruction, and feedback from teachers can greatly impact their language development by supporting progress beyond their current abilities.

The Communicative Competence framework, as expanded by Canale and Swain and revisited by Bachman and Palmer (2020), also plays a key role. This model suggests that language proficiency extends beyond grammar and includes the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts with fluency. For BTLED students, building communicative competence involves not only linguistic knowledge but also the strategic, discourse, and sociolinguistic skills necessary to effectively use English in academic and practical situations. This model supports the idea that English language programs for BTLED students should include tasks that simulate real-world applications to improve their overall language proficiency.

Research Design and Methods

The study titled "English Proficiency Level of BTLED Students of Higher Education Institutions" will employ a descriptive quantitative research design. This approach is appropriate for assessing and measuring the current English language proficiency of students enrolled in Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED) programs. The descriptive design will allow for a systematic observation and numerical description of proficiency levels across reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The quantitative method will enable the collection of numerical data, which will be statistically analyzed to provide a detailed understanding of the English proficiency levels among the student population.

Sampling Procedure

The study will use stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different year levels (first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year) in various higher education institutions offering the BTLED program. Stratified sampling will allow for the inclusion of participants from different academic stages to capture variations in English proficiency. The sample size will be calculated using Cochran's formula for sample size determination, targeting approximately 200-300 students to ensure adequate representation. The selection process will involve identifying BTLED students from each stratum and randomly selecting participants based on their proportion in the total student population.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument will be a standardized English language proficiency test designed to measure students' skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The test will be adapted from validated English proficiency exams, such as the International English

Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), ensuring reliability and validity in measuring language skills. The proficiency test will consist of multiple-choice questions, essay writing, listening comprehension exercises, and oral speaking tasks. Additionally, a demographic questionnaire will be used to collect information on participants' background, such as age, gender, year level, and previous English language exposure.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection will begin once ethical clearance and approval from the participating higher education institutions have been obtained. The researcher will work with program coordinators to arrange testing sessions. Prior to the test, participants will be informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical guidelines, including confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. The English proficiency test will be administered in a controlled classroom setting to maintain consistency in testing conditions, with proctors overseeing the process. Participant responses will be gathered, and the tests will be evaluated using a standardized scoring rubric. Additionally, participants will complete a demographic questionnaire to provide relevant background information, which will be compiled for data analysis.

Statistical Treatment

The data gathered was treated statistically for the researcher to analyze easily. Frequency counting and simple percentage was used to analyze the data gathered through the query of problem number 1. The ratings revealed in the English Proficiency test was treated with mean and came up with a qualitative description based on the scale of parameter.

Scale of Parameter for Speaking Rubric

4.20 – 5.00 -excellent 3.40 – 4.19 – very good 2.60 – 3.39 -good 1.80 – 2.59 -poor 1.00 - 1.79 – very poor

Scale of Parameter for Writing Rubric

3.25 – 4.00 Highly proficient 2.50 – 3.24 Moderately proficient 1.75 – 2.49 Less proficient 1.00 –1.74 least proficient

Scale of Parameter for Level of Proficiency

81 - 100% Very High Proficiency 61–80% High Proficiency 41-60% Moderate Proficiency 21–40% Low Proficiency 1 - 20% Very Low Proficiency

Results and Discussions

Table 1
Profile of the Secondary Students

Specific Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Age			
18-19	45	25.6	2
20-21	95	53.9	1
22-23	30	17	3
24 and above	6	3.5	4
Total	176	100	
Sex			

Male	20	11.36	2
Female	156	88.64	1
Total	176	100	
Mother tongue			
Surigaonon	39	22.15	2
Ilocano	15	8.53	3
Ilongo	10	5.68	4
Tagalog	2	1.14	5
Manobo	110	62.5	1
Total	179	100	
Year level			
1st	44	25	2.5
2nd	52	29.54	1
3rd	36	20.46	3
4th	44	25	2.5
Total	176	100	
Curriculum Graduated from Basic Education			
K-12	150	85.22	1
ALS	20	11.37	2
BEC	6	3.41	3
Total	176	100	

The data provides an overview of the demographic and educational profiles of 176 respondents, offering details about their age, gender, mother tongue, year level, and educational background. The age distribution reveals that the majority (53.9%) are between 20-21 years old, followed by those aged 18-19 (25.6%), with only a small percentage (3.5%) being 24 years or older. This indicates that the sample is primarily composed of young adults in their early twenties, which aligns with the typical age range of college students, usually between 18 and 23 (Stewart, 2020).

In terms of gender, there is a notable imbalance, with 88.64% of respondents being female and only 11.36% male. This disparity suggests higher female enrollment in the program or course being studied, consistent with broader trends in fields like education or health sciences, where female students tend to outnumber males (Hussain, 2021). Additionally, the data shows linguistic diversity, with 62.5% of respondents speaking Manobo and 22.15% speaking Surigaonon. This variety of mother tongues reflects the multicultural makeup of the sample, underscoring the importance of culturally responsive educational approaches (Garcia & Wei, 2020).

Looking at year levels and curriculum backgrounds, most respondents are second-year students (29.54%), with both first-year and fourth-year students making up 25% each. This distribution suggests a fairly even representation of students at different points in their academic progress. Furthermore, a large proportion of the participants (85.22%) graduated from the K-12 curriculum, highlighting the widespread adoption of this educational reform in recent years. In contrast, those who completed the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) represent a smaller portion, reflecting the transition from older educational frameworks to the K-12 system (Llego, 2020).

Table 2

Students' Level of Proficiency in the Written English

Language Area	Average Rating	Adjectival Rating	Rank
First Year			
English Grammar	44%	Moderate Proficiency	1
English vocabulary	40%	Low Proficiency	2
Reading Comprehension	25%	Low Proficiency	6
Speaking	38%	Low Proficiency	4
Listening	35%	Low Proficiency	5
Writing	39%	Low Proficiency	3
Total Mean	36.83%	Low Proficiency	
Second Year			
English Grammar	70%	High Proficiency	1
English vocabulary	56%	Moderate Proficiency	2
Reading Comprehension	49%	Moderate Proficiency	3
Speaking	38%	Low Proficiency	5
Listening	43%	Moderate Proficiency	4
Writing	29%	Low Proficiency	6
Total Mean	47.5%	Moderate Proficiency	
Third Year			
English Grammar	56%	Moderate Proficiency	1
English vocabulary	46%	Moderate Proficiency	3
Reading Comprehension	38%	Low Proficiency	5
Speaking	48%	Moderate Proficiency	2
Listening	40%	Low Proficiency	4
Writing	34%	Low Proficiency	6
Total Mean	43.66%	Moderate Proficiency	
Fourth Year			
English Grammar	58%	Moderate Proficiency	1
English vocabulary	40%	Low Proficiency	4
Reading Comprehension	39%	Low Proficiency	5
Speaking	45%	Moderate Proficiency	3
Listening	48%	Moderate Proficiency	2
Writing	38%	Low Proficiency	6
Total Mean	44.66%	Moderate Proficiency	
Gran Mean	43.16	Moderate Proficiency	

The data illustrates the English proficiency levels across various skill areas (grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, listening, and writing) for students from the first to fourth year. In the first year, the overall mean rating is 36.83%, categorized as "Low Proficiency," with English grammar being the highest-rated skill at "Moderate Proficiency" (44%). Other skills, including vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, listening, and writing, were rated as "Low Proficiency," suggesting that first-year students face challenges in most language aspects, likely due to limited exposure to academic English or formal language use (Larsen-Freeman, 2020). This indicates a need for foundational language support at the start of their academic journey.

By the second year, there is a noticeable improvement in proficiency, with an overall mean of 47.5%, classified as "Moderate Proficiency." English grammar shows significant progress, reaching "High Proficiency" (70%), while vocabulary and reading comprehension also improve to "Moderate Proficiency." However, speaking and writing remain areas of concern, highlighting a gap between receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). This moderate improvement may be due to increased exposure to English courses and greater involvement in academic activities that require English use (Lightbown & Spada, 2020).

In the third and fourth years, proficiency remains at a "Moderate" level, with slight variations across different skills. Grammar continues to be the strongest skill, while reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing consistently score lower. The ongoing "Low Proficiency" in writing across all year levels suggests the need for focused interventions to improve students' writing abilities, which are crucial for both academic and professional success (Hyland, 2020). The overall grand mean of 43.16% reflects that while there is some progress over time, a more comprehensive approach to language instruction that addresses both receptive and productive skills is essential to achieve higher proficiency levels.

Conclusion:

The study on the English proficiency levels of Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED) students in higher education shows varied skill levels across different years and language areas. The findings reveal that while there is a moderate increase in overall proficiency from the first to fourth year, significant gaps remain in critical areas such as reading comprehension, writing, and speaking. The highest proficiency is seen in English grammar, particularly among second-year students, indicating that foundational language skills receive more attention. However, the lower proficiency in productive skills like writing and speaking highlights the need for a more balanced approach to language instruction that emphasizes both receptive and productive skills.

The research emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions to improve underdeveloped skills, ensuring that students are better prepared for academic and professional communication. The results also suggest that adjustments to the current English curricula may be necessary to promote more comprehensive language development. Addressing these gaps will be key to improving the overall English proficiency of BTLED students, enhancing their educational outcomes and increasing their future career prospects in a global environment where English is dominant.

Recommendations:

Based on the study's results on the English proficiency of BTLED students in higher education, several suggestions can be made to enhance language learning outcomes. First, it is recommended to revise the English curriculum to integrate a more comprehensive approach that equally addresses all language skills—grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This would provide a more balanced education, improving both receptive and productive skills, and addressing the weaknesses identified in writing and speaking.

Second, higher education institutions should implement targeted support programs, such as remedial English courses or language workshops, designed to assist students struggling in specific areas. Creating writing centers or peer-tutoring programs could offer individualized

feedback and practice, especially for writing skills, while language labs could focus on enhancing speaking abilities. These interventions should be tailored to the academic levels of the students to ensure effectiveness and appropriateness for their development.

Lastly, it is suggested that instructors use more interactive and communicative teaching methods in their classes. Techniques like group discussions, debates, role-playing, and project-based learning can create a more dynamic learning atmosphere, motivating students to use English actively in both formal and informal situations. By making language learning more practical and engaging, students are more likely to develop the confidence and skills necessary for proficient English use in both academic and professional contexts.

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