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**INFLUENCE OF STUDENT ENGLISH UTILITY AND TEACHER EFFICACY ON ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Learning second language considers a number of factors that influence the manner in which the language is taught. Understanding of the learners' goals and motivation for learning is one. Using descriptive-correlational research design, this study determined the influence of student English utility and teacher efficacy on the students' English proficiency. A total of 101 students from first year to fourth year level served as the respondents of the study. The study quantified the students' perception towards English utility and their evaluation of English teacher efficacy which employed a researcher-made survey questionnaire. Results revealed high positive perceptions of students towards English utility. Analysis of variance revealed significant differences in the perceptions of high school students on the efficacy of their English teachers. Correlation coefficients indicated a positive linear relationship among the given variables. The p-value revealed significant relationship of teacher efficacy ( $r = .691$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000$ ) and English utility ( $r = .467$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .000$ ) to students' English proficiency. Results of regression statistics revealed that English utility has no significant influence on the student English proficiency. Therefore, the main factor that must still be considered then should be the teacher. Finally, there is an explicit indication that high level of teachers' efficacy performing in teaching has much powerful influence on the English proficiency of high school students. Thus improving the methods of teaching English provides a better way of motivating students to achieve higher levels of proficiency in the future.

**Key words:** English proficiency, English utility, high school students, teacher efficacy

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**1. Introduction**

The Philippines' predominance in English-based industries (e.g. education, call centers, business process outsourcing, software development, medical transcription, etc.) is due mainly to the relatively high command of the language by the Filipino employees. However, the country's edge in English proficiency is said to be declining.

This fading English proficiency glory of the Filipinos has been one of the reasons why the influence of English utility and teacher efficacy on the student's English proficiency became a critical issue nowadays. In one of the Philippine Daily Newspaper reports, it is stated that the dominance of the Filipinos in English language is now in the brink of becoming a myth (<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/> 09 March 2010).

The Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP), which represents the bulk of the Offshoring & Outsourcing (O & O) industry, says it is increasingly difficult to find people with adequate English (McLean, 2010). Today, there are anecdotal reports of call centers accepting a very small portion of those who apply because only three of 100 applicants are proficient in

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English (Macasinag, 2011). Even the University professors lament the inability of college students to comprehend and express themselves in English. The most alarming, however, is the Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey commissioned by Promoting English Proficiency (PEP) in March 2006. The largest deterioration was in the self assessment of ability to speak in English which fell from 54% in September 2000 to 32% in March 2006, a deterioration of 22% in six years (Macasinag, 2011).

Neighboring Asian countries which have willfully adopted no-nonsense measures to learn the English language are now catching up and have even overtaken the Philippines (<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/> 09 March 2010). Filipinos' English-language skills are falling precipitously, and most notably their ability to speak and write English competently, says the study commissioned by the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and made by the research firm SWS (Hult, 2006).

Filipinos nowadays are no longer specific and sensitive to the standard and proper way of how English is used as second language. Most Filipinos tend to use "Taglish" i.e., a combination of Tagalog and English or "Englog" i.e., English and Tagalog, *a non-language that is variously labeled as code-switching, pidgin, or a lingua franca, featuring a still-unsystematized mixture of Tagalog, English, and vernacular languages of various regions*, instead of using pure English or pure Tagalog/Filipino depending on what they want to express through verbal or written communication. This culture of Taglish that has emerged in the last few years has contributed to the problem (Hidalgo, 2006 as cited in Ostler, 2010).

The researcher believes that students' perception towards English utility and teacher efficacy has to do with the development of student English proficiency. Another reason is the nation-wide concern with accountability of education that requires teachers to demonstrate the efficacy of their practices in terms of demonstrated student learning outcomes. Thus, the quality of education particularly the learning outcomes the students receive depends largely upon the skill and competence of the teachers.

For both practical and theoretical reasons, therefore, there is a pressing need to examine and consider the influence of the utility of the subject and the efficacy of the teachers to the development of English proficiency of the students in English. Inasmuch as English is Filipinos' bridge to the outside world of wisdom, knowledge and people. It is a means of interacting socially, intellectually, and economically; to learn other people's values, history and traditions.

Specifically, the study reported in this paper answered the following research questions:

1. What is the level of English proficiency of high school students as depicted by their final grade in English?
2. What is the students' perception towards English utility?
3. What is the efficacy level of the English teachers based on the evaluation of the student respondents?
4. Are there significant relationships among language utility, teacher efficacy and the proficiency of students in English?

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 95% level of significance:

Ho1: Language utility has a significant influence on the proficiency of high school students in English.

Ho2: Teacher efficacy has a significant influence on the proficiency of high school students in English.

## **2. Method**

This section presents the respondents of the study, sampling procedures, sample size, data gathering instrument, research design, and the tools used for data analysis.

### **2.1 Respondents of the Study**

The subjects of the study were the Laboratory High School students of the Laguna State Polytechnic University Los Baños (LSPU-LB). The Laboratory High School has a total of 136 students from first year to fourth year level.

### **2.2 Sampling Procedures**

The study employed the stratified random sampling in selecting the respondents. A total of 101 students from first year to fourth year level served as the respondents of the study. The respondents from first year to fourth year level represent 74% of the total research population. This was done to give opportunity for the population considered in the study to be selected randomly.

### **2.3 Sample Size**

Table 1 shows the proportional distribution of student respondents with a total research population of 136 students from first year to fourth year level.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Year Level	Student Population	Student Respondents
1 <sup>st</sup>	44	33
2 <sup>nd</sup>	35	26
3 <sup>rd</sup>	29	21
4 <sup>th</sup>	28	21
Total	136	101

Source: LSPU-LB, Office of the Registrar, School Year 2010-2011

### **2.4 Data Gathering Instrument**

To realize the objectives of the study, the researcher utilized the descriptive survey and quantitative research method. For the purpose of obtaining data that determine the influence of English utility and teacher efficacy on the English proficiency of high school students, the

researcher conducted this study by using the final grade of the student respondents in English and the following tools for data collection:

-A researcher-made questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part evaluates the efficacy of the English teachers. This part of the questionnaire contains 15 items reflecting the overall teacher efficacy rating as indicated by the quality of teaching procedures, classroom management and professional qualifications in teaching English. The second part measures the student's perception towards utility of English or the respondents' utilitarian reasons for studying English beyond academic reasons. This part of the questionnaire contains 8 items and a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) was used.

### 2.5 Research Design

The study used descriptive–correlational research design to determine the influence of students' English utility and teacher efficacy on English proficiency of high school students.

### 2.6 Tools Used for Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics/analysis was used to compute the means, correlation analysis (Pearson Correlation) in determining the relationship of the variables and multiple-regression analysis to determine which variables (English utility and teacher efficacy factors/indicators) have greater influence on the students' English proficiency.

## 3. Findings

Based on the data gathered among the student respondents, second year level reveals the low performing group of learners in English. Most of these students' proficiency levels were categorized Below Average and Poor, same with the third year level whose English proficiency indicated that most of the students experience problems and difficulties in English. While, the first year and fourth year students indicated Above Average and Average proficiency levels.

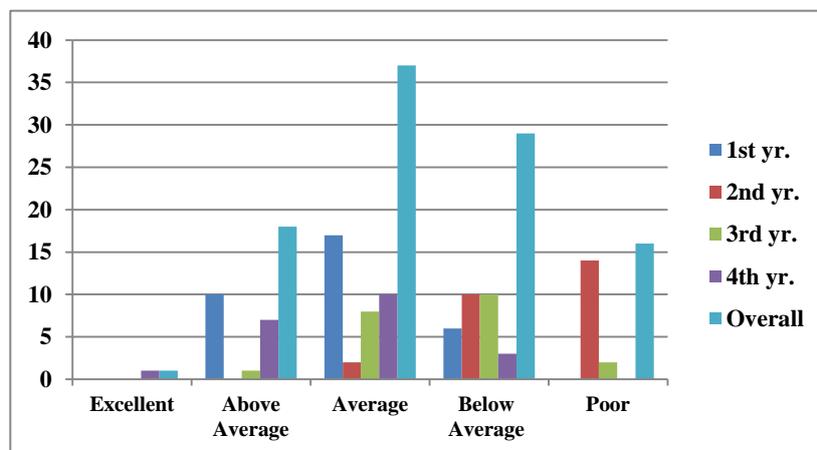


Figure 1 English Proficiency Level of High School Students

The following section presents the quantified data based on the order of overall weighted mean from the highest to lowest value/s.

Comparison among the mean scores of all year levels revealed that high school students show high positive perceptions towards utility of studying/learning English. Results showed that most of them believed and they strongly agreed with the given set of statements regarding English utility. Although, in some variables, it is clearly revealed that there are more number of students in first year, second year and third year who felt quite uncertain with their utilitarian reasons for studying English. Particularly statements regarding the usefulness of English in becoming more comfortable with other English speakers, participating more freely in the activities of other cultural groups and in making other people respect them more for having knowledge of Second Language. This indicated how the perceptions of high school students vary as they go through the higher level of education. In most cases students’ perception towards utility of studying English or their goals and motivations in learning are gradually influenced by their environment for instance, by this widespread use and culture of Taglish/Engalog.

Table 2 Student English Utility

ITEM no.	STATEMENT English Utility	YEAR LEVEL Mean Scores				OVERALL n=101
		1 <sup>st</sup> n=33	2 <sup>nd</sup> n=26	3 <sup>rd</sup> n=21	4 <sup>th</sup> n=21	
Xa5	Studying English is useful to me as it will help me in my future career.	4.79	4.77	4.29	4.95	4.70
Xa7	Studying English is useful to me as it will be functional in getting a good job.	4.64	4.69	4.52	4.81	4.67
Xa6	Studying English is useful to me as it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	4.76	4.62	4.52	4.76	4.66
Xa3	Studying English is useful to me as it will enable me to better understand and appreciate all subjects in which English is the medium of instruction.	4.79	4.58	4.43	4.67	4.62
Xa1	Studying English is useful to me as it will allow me to be comfortable with other people who speak English.	4.73	4.73	4.33	4.67	4.61
Xa2	Studying English is useful to me as it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.	4.64	4.58	4.29	4.62	4.53
Xa8	Studying English is useful to me as it will make other respect me more for having knowledge of Second Language.	4.67	4.15	4.29	4.52	4.41
Xa4	Studying English is useful to me as it will enable me to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.	4.55	4.27	4.33	4.48	4.41

Range: 4.45-5.00 –Strongly Agree; 3.45- 4.44 - Agree; 2.45-3.44- Uncertain; 1.45-2.44- Disagree; 1.00-1.44- Strongly Disagree (Velez, et.al., 2012)

Results revealed that both first year and fourth year high school students have higher level of perception towards efficacy of their English teachers. Most of them gave an Excellent and Above Average rating of their English teachers as compared to the rating given by both second year and third year level that have the same English teacher. Their perceptions do not vary in a sense that

most of them noted that their English teacher performs just Average. Some perceived Below Average and even Poor in a way of looking at the individual analysis of each efficacy factors/indicators as indicated in the efficacy evaluation instrument. Analysis of variance in the combined all year level revealed significant differences in the perceptions of each high school student towards efficacy of their English teachers.

Table 3 Teacher Efficacy Rating

ITEM no.	STATEMENT Efficacy Factors	YEAR LEVEL Mean Scores				OVERALL n=101
		1 <sup>st</sup> n=33	2 <sup>nd</sup> n=26	3 <sup>rd</sup> n=21	4 <sup>th</sup> n=21	
Xb15	Demonstrates the ability to use appropriate communication skills.	4.49	3.81	3.57	4.52	4.10
Xb8	Gives students an opportunity to practice or apply skills taught in the lesson.	4.36	3.81	3.62	4.38	4.04
Xb14	Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter.	4.42	3.73	3.52	4.33	4.00
Xb10	Manages classroom procedures and school routines.	4.49	3.69	3.38	4.33	3.97
Xb5	Teaches to the students' ability levels.	4.52	3.62	3.29	4.38	3.95
Xb4	Gives directions clearly and completely.	4.49	3.69	3.33	4.19	3.93
Xb7	Provides feedback on the students' learning outcome/progress.	4.46	3.69	3.14	4.29	3.89
Xb13	Maintains positive interaction with students.	4.27	3.69	3.14	4.43	3.88
Xb2	Reviews previously learned skills/ content as needed.	4.49	3.73	3.14	4.10	3.86
Xb6	Monitors the students' progress and potential.	4.39	3.58	3.38	4.10	3.86
Xb1	Maintains and utilizes lesson plans and instructional materials.	4.42	3.42	3.33	4.14	3.83
Xb11	Uses instructional time effectively.	4.39	3.35	3.14	4.29	3.79
Xb3	Provides motivation for lesson, displays mental alertness, and sound judgment.	4.39	3.50	3.14	4.05	3.77
Xb9	Maintains a functional learning atmosphere in the classroom.	4.18	3.39	3.19	4.29	3.76
Xb12	Uses appropriate strategies to maintain on task student behavior.	4.21	3.15	3.29	4.10	3.69

Range: 4.45-5.00 –Excellent; 3.45- 4.44 – Above Average; 2.45-3.44- Average; 1.45-2.44- Below Average; 1.00-1.44- Poor (Velez, *et.al.*, 2012)

Correlation coefficients indicated positive linear relationships among the given variables. The p-value reveals that students' English proficiency is significantly related to the teacher efficacy and perception towards English utility.

Table 4 Degree of Correlation among Variables in All Year Level

Variables	Coefficient	Teacher Efficacy	English Utility	English Proficiency
Teacher Efficacy	Pearson r		.668**	.691**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000	.000
	n	101	101	101
English Utility	Pearson r	.668**		.467**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		.000
	n	101	101	101
English Proficiency	Pearson r	.691**	.467**	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	n	101	101	101

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

r value : 1.0- Perfect; .70 to .99- Very High; .50 to .69- Substantial; .30 to .49- Moderate; .10 to .29 Low;.01 to .09- Negligible (Alexander, *et. al.*, 2001).

Results of regression analysis (Appendix A) explicitly showed that only the teacher factor has a significant influence on the English proficiency of the high school students ( $b = 4.689$ ,  $p = 000$ ). On the other hand, the students' perception of English utility does not necessarily contribute to the level of their achievement in English subject ( $b = 0.116$ ,  $p = .917$ ).

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore concluded though the students' perception towards teacher efficacy and English utility is significantly correlated with high school students' English proficiency, results revealed that the influence of these two independent variables is relatively different from each other and for each year level.

Results of regression statistics explicitly showed that only the teacher factor influences on the English proficiency of high school students. The students' perception of English utility does not necessarily contribute to the level of their proficiency in English. Although it has something to do with the way they are motivated in studying/learning English as a second language but nonetheless, the efficacy that English teachers have provides greater effect on how the students develop their proficiency. Therefore, the main factor that must still be considered then should be the Teacher.

Since there is a low positive degree of correlation on both the perception of English utility and teacher efficacy on the English proficiency of first year high school students, it can be deduced from the study that the degree of correlation can still be improved.

Although, there are several factors to consider that affect the English proficiency of students. English teacher must know and understand these factors that may affect students' learning of academic content, language, and culture (e.g., age, academic background, socio-cultural factors, home environment, exceptionalities); and the nature of student variation in the classroom,

including variation in developmental characteristics, cultural and language background, academic strengths and needs, and preferred learning styles (e.g., visual, tactile, auditory, cooperative learning, individual learning). They must review previously learned skills/content as needed, maintain a functional learning atmosphere in the classroom, use instructional time effectively, provide appropriate feedback in response to students' English language proficiency all the time; and apply effective strategies for helping students overcome difficulties in learning English. Teachers need to be creative in facilitating lessons that will help arouse students' attention. This can sometimes be accomplished by the using the combination of teaching strategies, methods and techniques which are not often called upon by other teachers in mainstream subject areas. Encouraging students to become more active participants in a lesson can sometimes assist them to see the purpose for improving their communication skills in the target language. Successful communication using the target language should result in students feeling some sense of accomplishment.

## 5. Implications

An implication of the findings is that teacher efficacy, as a significant factor, should be considered in teaching and learning of an English language. Many teachers believe that by sticking to the language materials and trying to discipline their refractory students, they will manage to create a classroom environment that will be conducive to learning. Nevertheless, these teachers seem to lose sight of the fact that, unless they accept their students' differences and work on those minute details that constitute their social and psychological make-up, they will fail to motivate them. Therefore, teachers can improve their methods of teaching by considering the domain of goals and motivation.

On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that there are some limitations to this study. First, the unequal and limited number of the respondents for each year level might not enhance the generalizability of the findings. Also, since this study was conducted on the public secondary students in a state polytechnic university whose perceptions and motivational needs might be different from those in private schools. The findings might not be applicable in the private school context.

To conclude, no matter what the underlying goals and motivation to study a second language, what cannot be disputed is the fact that the teacher in conjunction with the student goals and motivation is an important variable when examining successful second language acquisition.

The Philippines is perhaps, a unique environment in which to learn English, especially when taking into consideration the many factors which influence the manner in which the language is taught. Although change may be slow to the education system, but continued struggles for introducing the English language in elementary school as a subject and medium of communication particularly in subjects which make use of English as medium of instruction, changes made in methods of teaching and writing new textbooks, designing creative and interactive instructional materials and activities can be really helpful for further motivating students to achieve higher levels of proficiency in the future.

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Appendix A Summary Output of Regression Statistics in All Year Level

Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error			
B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.		
1	(Constant)	65.879	3.867		17.036	.000
	Teacher Efficacy	4.689	.673	.684	6.968	.000
	English Utility	.116	1.107	.010	.105	.917

a. Dependent Variable: English Proficiency