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## STUDENTS' SKILL LEVEL ON LANGUAGE USAGE IN RELATION TO ENGLISH PERFORMANCE

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**Abstract:** *The performance of the freshmen students in the tertiary level can be ascribed to several factors. How students perform in their Differential Aptitude Test on Language Usage can be attributed with their English performance. This study determines the relationship between the students' skill level on Language Usage and English performance among forty seven freshmen students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy of the Cagayan State University Andrews Campus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester of the Academic Year 2013-2014. The result of the study shows that the students' skill level on Language Usage is directly proportional to their English performance. It means that students who got high score in the Differential Aptitude Test on Language Usage are the students who usually excel in English subject. Second, it can also be concluded that the English performance of block L can be used as predictors in their performance in any test they take like the DAP-Language Usage.*

**Keywords:** *Skill Level, Language Usage, English Performance, Differential Aptitude Test, English Subject*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education in the early times is not imperative to one's life. Finishing elementary and high school is enough for the people believe that they have acquired the skills necessary in life. It is also viewed as selective for only male members of the family are sent to formal education because they are the bearers of the family's name while the female children stay home for household chores. Also, education is for the rich people because they all have the means to send their children to school.

Today, education is deemed vital. Children are no longer bound to stay home, they are sent to schools which lay the foundation of child's development, which nurture and recognize young talents. Education is seen in the perspective that it provides knowledge about the world, helps build character, leads enlightenment and paves the way for good careers.

Kantilya, an Indian philosopher underlined the importance of education. He highlighted that education enriches people's understanding of themselves, an investment in human capital and can have a great impact on the country's growth and development. In this light, the Filipino people continue to thirst for knowledge, leading them to pursue higher education.

In the view of most Americans, college education has now taken on the importance that a high school education had in the past and had become a necessary ingredient for a good job and comfortable life style. This value is shared even more widely among African-Americans and Hispanic parents. Statistics even show that 84% of the respondents say that is extremely important to have a college degree in order to get ahead, 87% agree that a college education has become as important as a high school diploma used to be and 77% say that getting a college education today is more important than ten years ago. This only proves that college education is now essential.

College education in the Philippines is now valued by every Filipino family. It is the pride of the family when children graduate from college. It is a guarantee for them that their children will land into a stable job which in turn help them raised their economic status. The desire to life's success is too great that parents themselves push their children to college. But are they ready to face the challenges of college education?

Students' readiness in college is said to be dependent by his or her preparation in the basic education. Secondary education in the Philippines has been considered the foundation of education. It is the country's major program for the delivery of mass and universal



education to the people. It is then expected that under the said program, students at the end of the course are expected to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to compete with the fast changing world. However, Commission on Higher Education (2012) pointed out that Philippine education is declining continuously as it is observed throughout the country. Complaints are overheard about the quality of high school graduates the country has now. It was noted that poor education is what students gained. Recently several reports were made to evidence poor performance of Filipino students. Senator Edgardo Angara pointed out that in the National Achievement Test 97.9% of high school students failed and the average score for English is 50%. This may only prove that students are not that prepared to perform academic tasks related to English.

Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar used the same English Language Syllabus at O level secondary schools, and it is expected that at the end of the course students will have acquired and developed skills of the language, both written and spoken so as to cope with English language demands at higher levels of education and the world at large. (UTR, 2005). Moreover, various studies from Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar reported that students' performance in English Language National Examinations has been consistently poor and nearly half of the students fell into divisions four and zero both rural and secondary schools students (Roy Campbell and Qorro; 1997; Nyamubi, 2003; Yohana, 2012). That means, students graduated and left school with little Proficiencies in English.

Bloom (1982) points out that learners who do not possess the required previous knowledge for a specific task, will show lower level of achievements and slower rate of progress than learners who do possess the prerequisite knowledge. Learners, who may have had an opportunity to gain the knowledge, but who cannot remember the information or lack the skills to apply the necessary information, will not be able to achieve as well or as fast as more effective learners.

As a result of the study on "Some Factors Correlated to Academic Achievement Among Freshmen Student" by Estela X. Flores, aptitude interest and anxiety had an effect on the achievement of college freshmen students. The descriptive correlation method of research was used with questionnaires and two standardized tests as data gathering tools.

Restituto R. Gabriel studied for two consecutive years the correlation between the NCEE results and the academic achievement scores of the senior students of Southern University



from school year 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. His investigation revealed that there was no significant difference between mean scores in Mathematics and Science subjects while in English, the mean difference is significant.

Therefore, if students in their secondary level have set back in their learning, it is expected that they won't be ready to take college education. However, Cagayan State University through its Guidance Program has device a way to perceive the readiness of the students for learning by the administration of a Differential Aptitude Test.

At entry level, an aptitude test is called a readiness test as the test is being used to measure the individuals' readiness for learning(Cohen and Swerdlik 2002:301). This can be used to assist the learner in deciding which subjects to take and to assess potential success in a course or career. Aptitude tests administered at school level appear to predict future school performance as well as achievement in Tertiary education. In a study carried by Stumpf and Stanley (2002:1042-1052), it was found out that College Board Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores correlated positively with their graduation from college. Thus, knowledge and achievement appear to be strongly related. The correlation between previous achievement or knowledge that has already been gained, and later achievement becomes higher as the learner progress through school (Bloom 1976: 39). This shows the importance of an increasing body of knowledge to continued leaning and achievement at school.

The Aptitude Test given by the Cagayan, State University consists of four sub-tests.

1. The Verbal Reasoning. This test measures the ability of students to see relationships among words. The test consists of analogies. This test assesses the ability to infer the relationship between the first pair of words and apply the relationship between the second pair of words. Verbal reasoning maybe useful in helping to predict success in academic courses as well as in occupations where accurate communication is important. This includes business, law, education, marketing, public relations, the arts and journalism. It has particular relevance for English and other languages. In this area of study a great deal of reading is involved. Those with well-developed verbal reasoning will be usually be good at finding the words to explain ideas and will be able to interpret written and spoken instructions. They will also be able to absorb lectures without losing concentration to becoming confused or left behind.



2. **The Language Usage.** This test measures the ability to detect errors in grammar, punctuation and capitalization. The test consists of sentences divided into four parts. The student must choose whether one part has an error in punctuation, capitalization or grammar or whether the sentence is correct as written.
3. **Numerical Ability.** This test measures the ability to perform mathematical reasoning tasks. In order to ensure that reasoning rather than computational facility is stressed, the computational level of the problem is low. Numerical reasoning is important for success in courses such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, accounting, insurance, surveying, economics and engineering. Those with high numerical reasoning will enjoy using numerical data and use this creatively and accurately.
4. **The Abstract Reasoning.** This test is a non-verbal measure of reasoning ability. It assesses how well individuals can reason geometric shapes or design. Each test item is a geometric series in which the elements change according to a given rule. This type of reasoning is a measure of an individual's logical, analytical and conceptual skills. This skill is important in courses of occupations that require the ability to analyze dynamic changes and project them forward in time.

Bachelor of Science in Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy in the Cagayan State University is a program designed to provide students accounting, business, Entrepreneurship, and legal management a foundation of professional knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and ethics that enables them to continue to innovate, learn and adapt to changes throughout their professional lives and to equip students with a common foundation of knowledge through a core cluster of general, accounting, business and legal course. Thus, English courses are included in the curriculum. Grammar and Composition 2 is the English course offered in the curriculum of first year college students during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester. The topics that are discussed in Grammar and Composition 2 are covered in the Language Usage Test, one of the sub-tests in DAP.

It is in this context that the researcher will embark on this study to ascertain the relationship of student's skill level on Language Usage and their performance in English.



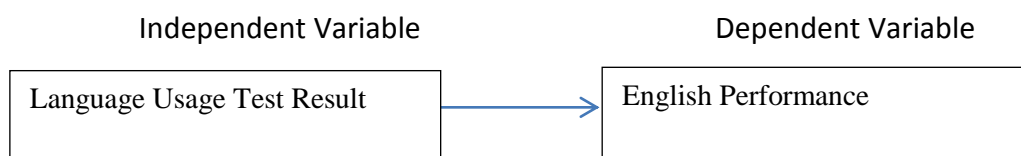
## CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the education system, tests are valued for they provide a mean of discovering the specific characteristics and difficulties of students. It is also an integral part of teaching and learning because through it, strengths and weaknesses of the learners are elicited.

There are two main goals of testing. First, to provide feedback during the process of acquiring good proficiencies and second, to assign a good grade or score for the product of one's work which is referred to as evaluation. (Forum, English Teaching, 2002.)

Tests are also designed to estimate probable future performance of students, thus the results are often correlated with performance in the classroom. In this premise, the study is conceived to focus on the relationship of students' skill level on Language Usage and their Academic Performance in English.

### Paradigm of the Study



As shown in the paradigm, the students' test result in language Usage is assumed to influence English Performance. The independent variable is the students' Language Test Result, whereas the dependent variable is the students' English Performance.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study aimed to ascertain the relationship of the Students' skill level on Language Usage and English performance of the freshmen students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy of the Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus.

Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of respondents with respect to:
  - 1.1.1 gender
2. What is the skill level of the respondents on Language Usage?
3. What is the mean performance of the respondents in English?
4. Is there a significant difference in the skill level on Language Usage of the respondents when grouped according to gender?



5. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' skill level on Language Usage and their English performance?

## HYPOTHESES

The study is anchored on the hypotheses that:

1. There is no significant difference in the skill level on Language Usage of the respondents when grouped according to gender.
2. There is no significant relationship between the skill level on Language Usage and English performance of the respondents.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher embarked on this study in the hope that said study may be in significance and use to the following:

**School Administrators.** The findings of this study will serve as a guideline in making necessary policies for the improvement of instructions which give emphasis on the teaching of academic subjects especially in English.

**Teachers.** This enables the teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of the students. In this case, they will use various remedial measures to address those difficulties. The teachers are also made aware of the teaching strategies that would provide rich and meaningful experience to develop the necessary skills and competencies needed by the students.

**Students.** This will help the students determine their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, they will be encouraged to make rooms for improvements so that failures will be minimized.

**Parents.** A knowledge of their children's performance in school as well as in the Language Usage Test Result will help them know what assistance to give to their children.

## SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on determining the relationship between the skill level on Language Usage and English performance of the first year college students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy of the Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester of School Year 2013-2014.

### Definition of Terms

To provide the reader a clearer grasp of the contents of this study, the following words are defined:



**Language Usage** – refers to the score of students in their Differential Aptitude Test in English.

**Differential Aptitude Test**- a test given to incoming freshmen students to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses and further help them choose what course or career to take.

**English Performance** – refers to the students' grade in English.

**Respondents**- refer to any recipient of a questionnaire who actually replies and answer.

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study. Specifically, it deals with the research design, selection and sampling of respondents, the research instruments, the data gathering procedures and data analysis undertaken in this study.

### Study Design

Since the study tries to establish the relationship between the students' skill level on Language Usage and English performance, the researcher made use of the descriptive correlation design.

The correlation treatment established the existence of a relationship between the students' skill level on Language Usage and their English performance.

### Participants

The study was conducted among the 47 freshmen students of block L enrolled in the college of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of the academic year 2013-2014.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of the Respondents' Gender

GENDER	NUMBER
Male	12
Female	35
TOTAL	47

Table 1 reveals that of the forty seven respondents, 12 are male students and 35 are female students. This gives a picture that there are more female students than male in block L.





## Measures

To obtain the needed information for the study, a questionnaire for the students was used to gather the needed information on the personal profile of the 47 BSBA students as to age and sex.

## Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study was gathered through the questionnaire for the students. The instrument was designed to gather the needed information on the personal profile of the 47 freshmen students in CBEA as to:

- a. gender

Before the questionnaire was floated, the researcher asked permission from the Dean of the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy to administer the questionnaire.

The respondents' grade in English is acquired from the registrar's office and the scores of the respondents in the Differential Aptitude Test on Language Usage is obtained from the guidance center to ensure 100% reliability.

## Data Analysis

The following instruments were used to analyze the data gathered.

Frequency and Percentage. This is used to analyze the profile of the students in terms of age, sex, parents' educational attainment and economic status.

Weighted Mean. This is used to find the average grade of students in English and Language Usage Test. The formula is  $M = \frac{\sum fd}{N}$  where  $M$  = mean,  $\sum fd$  = algebraic sum of the scores,  $N$  = number of respondents.

To interpret the students' grade in English, the given scale was used.

Grade	Qualitative Interpretation
97-100	Excellent
94-96	Very Outstanding
91-93	Outstanding
88-90	Very Good
85-87	Good
82-84	Very Satisfactory
79-81	Satisfactory
76-78	Fair
75	Passing
Below 75	Failing



To interpret the scores of the students in Language Usage, the given scale was used.

Percentile Rank Range	Stanine	Qualitative Description
39-40	8	Outstanding
37-38	7	Very High
33-36	6	Above Average
24-32	5	Average
19-23	4	
14-18	3	Below Average
9-13	2	
8 and below	1	Low

T-test for Independent Samples. This was used to determine the significant difference in the skill level on Language Usage and English performance of the male and female respondents.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation(r). This was employed to determine the significant correlation between the level of Language Usage and English Performance. The formula for t value in terms of r is:

$$t = \frac{r \sqrt{n-2}}{1-r^2}$$

## RESULTS

- The respondents obtained the mean score of 17.45% in the Language Usage Test which means that the Students' Skill Level on Language Usage is Below Average.
- The respondents' mean grade in English is 82.13% .It reveals that the students performed very satisfactory in English.
- The result shows that there is a significant difference between the Language usage and English Performance of the respondents when grouped according to gender. The data further means that gender affects one's performance in English and in Language Usage Test.
- When the Skill Level on Language Usage and English Performance of the male were correlated, the result reveals that there is a significant correlation between the two variables.
- When the Skill Level on Language Usage and English Performance of the female respondents were correlated, it has shown that there exist a significant relationship between the two variable. It further implies that female respondents who have higher Skill level on Language Usage have a better performance in English.



## DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data on the skill level on language Usage and English performance of freshmen students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy, Cagayan State University.

Table 2  
Skill Level of the Respondents on Language Usage

Score	Stanine	Frequency	%
39-40	8	0	0
37-38	7	0	0
33-36	6	0	0
24-32	5	3	6.38%
19-23	4	18	38.30%
14-18	3	19	40.43%
9-13	2	6	12.77%
8 and below	1	1	2.13%

n=47

Mean Score = 17.45

Table 2 shows that 19 or 40.43% of the respondents got a score of 14-18, 18 or 38.30% obtained the score of 19-23, 6 or 12.77% garnered the score of 9-13 , 3 or 6.38% got the score of 24-32 and 1 or 2.13% reaped the score of 8 and below. The respondents gained a mean score of 17.45. This reveals that Students' Skill Level on Language Usage is below Average.

Table 3  
Mean Performance of the Respondents in English

Grade	Qualitative Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
97-100	Excellent	0	0
94-96	Very Outstanding	0	0
91-93	Outstanding	0	0
88-90	Very Good	5	10.64%
85-87	Good	13	27.66%
82-84	Very Satisfactory	12	25.53%
79-81	Satisfactory	5	10.64%
76-78	Fair	4	8.51%
75	Passing	6	12.77%
Below 75	Failing	2	4.26%

N=47

Mean grade= 82.13%



As shown in Table 3, 13 or 27.66% obtained a grade of 82-84, 12 or 25.53% had a grade of 82-84, 6 or 12.77% got a grade of 75, 5 or 10.64% obtained a grade of 88-90 and 79-81 respectively, 4 or 8.51% garnered a grade of 76-78 and 2 or 4.26% got a failing grade. The mean grade of the respondents is 82.13% which means that students performed very satisfactory in English

Table 4

Test of Difference in the Language Usage and English Performance of Respondents  
according to Gender

Group	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-ratio
Male	16.57	4.43	2.156	1.69
Female	18.73	3.8		

Tt=1.645

Df=45

LS=0.05

The table shows the difference in the Language Usage and English Performance of the respondents according to gender. The obtained mean language usage of male was 16.57 with SD of 4.43 while the female group obtained an average mean of 18.73 with SD of 3.8. The two groups have a mean difference of 2.156.

When scores were subjected to statistical treatment, the t-test was used to determine if there exist a significant difference between the two groups. The computed t-ratio of 1.69 is greater than the tabular value of 1.645at 5% level of significance. This implies that a significant difference exists between the Language Usage and the English Performance of the male and female respondents.

Therefore, the hypothesis stated above is rejected. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the Language usage and English Performance of the respondents when grouped according to gender.

The data further means that gender affects one's performance in English and in Language Usage Test.



Table 5

The Correlation Between the Skill Level on Language Usage  
and English Performance of Male Students

Variables	r	Critical ratio(t)	LS
Academic Performance	0.532	Tabular value=1.761	0.05
Skill level on Language Usage		Computed Value=2.27	

The table presents the relationship between the Skill level on Language Usage and English Performance of male respondents. The coefficient correlation (r) obtained is 0.532 which was subjected to t-test in order to determine if there exist a significant correlation between the obtained t-value of 2.27 and the tabular value of 1.761. The t-value is greater than the critical value of 1.761 which shows that the correlation is significant at 5% level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that that there is a significant correlation between the skill level on language usage and English performance of the male respondents.

Table 6

The Correlation Between the Skill Level on Language Usage  
and English Performance of Female Students

Variables	r	Critical ratio(t)	LS
Academic Performance	0.649	Tabular value=1.761	0.05
Skill level on Language Usage		Computed Value=3.99	

The table shows the relationship between the Skill level on Language Usage and English Performance of female respondents. The coefficient correlation (r) obtained is 0.649 which indicates that there is a strong correlation between the two variables. When r is subjected to t-test in order to determine the if there exists as significant correlation between the two variables, the data shows that the t-value computed which is 3.99 is greater than the tabular value of 1.761. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, thus; accepting the



alternative hypothesis that there is a significant correlation of the Skill level on Language Usage and the English performance of the female respondents.

This implies further that female respondents who have higher Skill level on Language Usage have a better performance in English.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based from the findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions: First, the Skill level of the students on Language Usage is directly proportional to their English Performance. It means that students who got high score in DAP on Language Usage Test are the students who usually excel in English. Second, it can also be concluded that the English Performance of the students in block L can be used as predictors in their performance in any test they take like the Language Usage Test.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To further increase the performance of the students in any assessment they take and will take as well as to improve the instructions in English area, the following recommendations are endorsed:

1. That the freshmen students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy be more exposed to variety of test papers similar to that of the Language Usage test items.
2. Major examinations in English specially in grammar should be patterned after the Language Usage Test. By doing so, the students will get used to the types and styles of tests they take now and in the future.
3. Instruction in English specially in grammar should be revitalized from time to time to improve the students' linguistic competence.

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