

# Vocabulary Proficiency And Language Skills Development Of English Majors: Various Factors And Significant Impacts

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## Abstract

English majors should possess vocabulary proficiency and language skills to excel in their field. This study aimed to investigate the various factors and significant impact of vocabulary proficiency and language skills development on the English majors at Cebu Normal University-Main Campus. Using a quantitative approach with a descriptive-inferential design, the research investigates the significance of demographic profiles in language development. A Likert scale, designed by the researchers, gauges factors affecting vocabulary and language skills in 71 randomly selected respondents from three different degree programs. Based on the findings, most of the respondents scored very high, indicating that these factors are likely to improve their vocabulary and language skills. Moreover, most respondents are female, and their socioeconomic status tends to be in the poor and lower-income categories. Findings suggest that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' degree program with a p-value of 0.039608 and socioeconomic status with a p-value of 0.0001 and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development, with gender showing no significance.

**Keywords:** Descriptive-Inferential, Factors, Language, Quantitative, Vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary proficiency and language skills are both fundamental qualities that English majors should possess as these will help them perform well and excel in their area of interest. In language learning, a learner's success is intricately tied to their vocabulary, forming the fundamental building blocks of communication (Goossens et al., 2012). Words serve as the basis for constructing larger linguistic structures like sentences, paragraphs, and complete texts. Understanding how English majors develop vocabulary proficiency and language skills can direct improvements in English language programs and curricula. This, in turn, can enhance the quality of education provided to students majoring in English. As these aspects are influenced by a myriad of factors, with far-reaching impacts. Research in this area can provide essential insights for teachers and language instructors, aiding and supporting them to employ more effective teaching strategies that resonate with English majors' needs, considering that English majors have various needs that can evolve throughout their academic journey and beyond such as writing support, effective and strong communication skills, and critical thinking abilities. Teaching language isn't just about giving speaking exercises; it's guiding students to grasp knowledge, abilities, and speaking methods, as emphasized by Goh & Burns (2012). Students who major in English have more opportunities to delve deeper into the study of linguistics and exposure to a wide range of literary works from different genres, time periods, and cultures; thus, vocabulary proficiency and language skills are crucial for the understanding of these aspects in the English curriculum.

Internationally, according to Guevara-Betancourt and Albuja (2022), the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has had a significant impact on the way that language is taught throughout the world. The English Majors students at Universidad Técnica del Norte who are at an intermediate level are influenced by language exposure through teacher-assigned activities or self-study habits like watching movies or reading books

and literature where good pronunciation can be enhanced. Hence, pronunciation practice is made easier, and self-confidence and self-efficacy are increased. However, the absence of interaction both within and outside the classroom is a drawback. Due to the fact that not all of the peers are prepared to respond or ask inquiries in the target language, let alone engage in a casual conversation where daily expressions can be exchanged and learned. Additionally, English majors at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) in Saudi Arabia encounter a number of challenges when learning vocabulary, including difficulties with memorizing and spelling new words as well as difficulties with pronouncing and using new words correctly (Afzal, 2019). This study contends that PSAU students have a small "word repository," which is a problem that should be addressed due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge, communication, writing, and understanding abilities. The student's reading skills are weakened by these issues with vocabulary learning. From the viewpoint of teaching and learning, it also suggests some techniques for resolving problems with vocabulary learning.

From a national and local perspective, it is crucial for education majors, especially those who choose English as their major, to develop their language abilities and reach a high degree of proficiency in it by the time they reach higher education. It provides a solid foundation for success in academic endeavors and better opportunities later in life, especially when pursuing a teaching field. In the research study carried out by Patron and Barrera (2016) among the 386 college students in the chosen state universities and colleges in Luzon, 79% of the results showed that those with adequate knowledge of the English language performed well in the class and were given job opportunities, whereas 21% found it difficult to adjust to their lessons and did not finish their degree program. Despite this encouraging statistic, Patron and Barrera's (2016) study discovered that most college students struggle with grammatical rules, particularly those about subject-verb agreement. Additionally, inadequate usage of the English language in written and spoken discussions was noted. Furthermore, the study by Eborde et al. (2017) at the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture-Sipocot found that most BSEd-English major students have had adequate performance in the English Proficiency Test and literary competence in the past year. Findings revealed that 159 out of 263 test-takers, or 60%, failed the English portion of the exam. They were discovered to have poor literary ability, which was impacted by their linguistic skills. This worrying scenario in the College of Teacher Education is caused by the fact that 32% of these English plus test takers are education students. Due to the aforementioned assertion, the study was planned to ascertain the English proficiency and literary competence of English major students at CBSUA-Sipocot.

English majors are expected to have a high level of language proficiency. With that, investigating factors influencing their vocabulary and language skills can pave the way toward academic excellence. In connection, studying vocabulary proficiency and language skills development among English majors is relevant in a way that the researchers can elicit several beneficial outcomes such as critical insights into language acquisition and findings that may influence curriculum design and educational policies for English majors, ensuring they receive a comprehensive language education. In Cebu City, a study at Cebu Normal University discovered that speaking had the highest overall mean of the four macro skills while listening had the lowest. The majority of English language majors did not meet the band 6 criteria for English proficiency in the four macro skills included in the General Training Module. They were modest users. The study further found that the internal factors that affect students' English competence are anxiety and attitude. On the other hand, when compared to all other external factors, only social media use is a predictor of students' English proficiency. Overall, the results showed that media exposure and subjective emotional expressions have a big impact on language learners' competence or lack thereof. Linguistic intelligence therefore does not play a significant role in increasing language competence when students' poor behaviors take control of the situation (Zarate, 2022).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide empirical evidence regarding the various factors that influence vocabulary proficiency and language skills development among English majors in Cebu Normal University-Main Campus who pursue degree programs such as BA Lit [Bachelor of Arts in Literature], BA ELANG [Bachelor of Arts in English Language], and BSEd-English [Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English], to ascertain the significant impacts that ensue as a result, and to recognize the importance of these aspects to the fields of education, linguistics, and English language studies, with the goal of contributing

to the sphere of expertise in the field of English language education and development, ultimately benefiting English majors, educators, and the academic community.

## **2. Purposes Of The Research**

The study aimed to determine the various factors contributing to the vocabulary proficiency and language skills development among English majors. Specifically, it sought to (a) determine the demographic profile of the respondents

(b) to discover the factors that affect the development of English majors' vocabulary proficiency and language skills (c) examine if there is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development. Results of this study are deemed beneficial to the people in the academe-teachers, students, administrators and the community. Furthermore, it aims to assess the significant impacts of robust vocabulary proficiency on overall language skills, including reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and oral communication. Ultimately, the findings aspire to inform educational strategies, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches to enhance language education for English majors, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate factors influencing vocabulary development and language proficiency in academic contexts.

## **3. Research Design**

This study utilized a quantitative research approach, allowing for the collection of numerical data by using a descriptive-inferential research design. The focus of this study was on obtaining data that could be quantified and measured objectively. In the context of this study on vocabulary proficiency and language skills among English majors, statistical methods such as measures of central tendency (mean), measures of variability or dispersion (standard deviation), and chi-square test were employed to gather specific data points related to vocabulary knowledge, language skills, and other relevant factors.

## **4. Participants**

The study's sample size comprised 71 undergraduates, representing different year levels within the College of Teacher Education (CTE) and College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at Cebu Normal University-Main Campus. Among these, 26 students pursued Bachelor in Secondary Education Major in English in the CTE department, 23 were enrolled in Bachelor of Arts in Literature, and the remaining 22 were from Bachelor of Arts in English Language in the CAS department. The researchers implemented specific criteria for participant selection, requiring participants to be Cebu Normal University-Main Campus undergraduates under the specified degree programs.

## **5. Instruments**

In this study, the instruments used were the following: (1) questionnaire for the demographic profile of the participants consisting of their degree program, gender, and socioeconomic status (2) a Likert Scale to identify the factors influencing the vocabulary proficiency and language skills development of the English majors.

## **6. Data Collection And Analysis**

Data were gathered by utilizing a Likert scale questionnaire via Google Forms. The researchers chose this method for its practicality and accessibility to reach participants without conflicting with their class schedules. Subsequently, the data gathered were analyzed to measure the significant relationship between the participants' demographic profile and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development.

## **7. Results And Discussion**

In this section, the findings of the data analysis and discussion are presented following the study's objectives' sequence.

### a) Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that the survey conducted involved three-degree programs as identification of our research respondents, specifically the BSEd-English with twenty-six (26) respondents, BA Lit with twenty-three (23), and BA ELANG with twenty-two (22). Totaling seventy-one (71) respondents. The proportionate representation of respondents from each degree program is highlighted in this analysis, enabling a thorough investigation of viewpoints and ideas within the framework of the study. It also lays the groundwork for a more thorough investigation of possible differences or similarities in responses depending on the various academic backgrounds, which enhances the overall validity and reliability of the study findings. The findings, which were based on a survey, are shown in the analysis that follows.

**Table 1. Degree Program of the Respondents**

Degree Program	F	Percentage	Rank
BSEd - English	26	37%	1
BA Language	22	31%	3
Ba Literature	23	32%	2
<b>Total</b>	71	100%	

Table 2 illustrates respondent gender distribution, with fifty-four (54) females and seventeen (17) males. This suggests a significant female majority among all participants. The data implies potential gender-related variations in the study's outcomes, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive analysis.

**Table 2. Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	F	Percentage	Rank
Female	54	76%	1
Male	17	24%	2
<b>Total</b>	71	100%	

Table 3 offers a complex and interesting interpretation of the respondents' socio-economic status. The distribution across economic levels is diverse, with only marginal differences observed: forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents are under the category of low income, followed by the category poor which is thirty-one percent (31%) and rich with only one percent(1%). Surprisingly, the majority of respondents with high vocabulary proficiency fall within the low-income and poor categories, challenging stereotypes and suggesting that factors beyond economic standing play a more influential role. This unexpected insight gives rise to a reevaluation of conventional assumptions about the relationship between socio-economic status and language skills, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

**Table 3. The graph shows the socioeconomic status of the respondents**

socioeconomic Status	F	Percentage	Rank

Poor	22	31%	2
Low Income	29	41%	1
Lower Middle Income	12	17%	3
Middle Income	3	4%	4
Upper Middle Income	2	3%	5
Upper Class	2	3%	6
Rich	1	1%	7
<b>Total</b>	71	100%	

**Factors affecting the development of English majors' vocabulary proficiency and language skills.**

Table 4 shows that the findings from the survey reveal how English Majors see various ways of improving their vocabulary and language proficiency.

**Table 4. The factors that affect the development of English majors' vocabulary proficiency and language skills**

Questions	S A	A	D	S D	Standard Deviation	Mean	Interpretation
1. Reading classic and contemporary texts exposes me to diverse vocabulary and writing styles.	56 %	41 %	1 %	1 %	0.61	<b>3.54</b>	Very High
2. Watching films and tiktok/youtube videos helps me discover new sets of vocabulary.	52 %	41 %	4 %	3 %	0.71	<b>3.42</b>	Very High
3. Listening to podcasts and songs helps me discover new words.	51 %	44 %	3 %	3 %	0.58	<b>3.51</b>	Very High
4. Playing games like scrabble and Wordscape enhances my vocabulary.	56 %	39 %	3 %	1 %	0.69	<b>3.46</b>	Very High

5. Using the English language in daily conversations helps me improve my language skills.	59 %	39 %	0 %	1 %	0.58	<b>3.58</b>	Very High
6. I have a hard time developing my English language skills at home.	4 %	55 %	35 %	6 %	0.67	<b>2.55</b>	High
7. I am good at pronouncing words and spelling.	7 %	77 %	15 %	0 %	0.49	<b>2.96</b>	High
8. I am confident and relaxed when I showcase my vocabulary or language skills in school or at home.	7 %	38 %	51 %	4 %	0.69	<b>2.51</b>	High
9. My teacher helped me develop my vocabulary and language skills.	35 %	58 %	4 %	3 %	0.63	<b>3.25</b>	High
10. I am having a hard time developing my vocabulary and language skills due to the limited use of the people around me.	11 %	54 %	30 %	6 %	0.74	<b>2.70</b>	High

**Parameter:**

**1.00 - 1.75 Very Low**

**1.76 - 2.50 Low**

**2.51 - 3.25 High**

**3.26 - 4.00 Very High**

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the respondents find reading various types of books helpful for learning new words and writing styles. Watching movies, TikTok, and YouTube is considered a good means to discover new words, almost as useful as listening to podcasts and songs. Playing word games like Scrabble and Wordscape can help them enhance their vocabulary. Using English every day is highly effective for getting better at the language, but fifty-nine percent (59%) of the respondents have trouble learning at home because they don't hear or use English medium much there.

Furthermore, fifty-five percent (55%) of English Majors generally feel less confident showing their language skills at school or home, in contrast to the study of Zarate (2022) titled "Influential factors affecting students' English Proficiency" with the findings of speaking had the highest overall mean. However, ninety-three percent (93%) of the respondents recognize the important role teachers play in improving language skills,



whereas sixty-five percent (65%) find it challenging to develop their language skills due to limited English language use among their peers or surroundings.

Therefore, the researchers agree with Bartlett's Schema Theory. In alignment with the said theory, this research emphasizes the importance of various factors, including reading diverse genres, watching movies, TikTok, and

YouTube, listening to podcasts and songs, playing word games, and engaging in daily English usage. These factors exhibit predominantly 'Very High' and 'High' interpretations. This pattern suggests that English Majors, who possess a higher baseline of vocabulary knowledge, find it evidently easier and more accessible to encounter new words through these experiences and exposures.

**b) Significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development.**

The following analysis reveals the table of significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and their proficiency in vocabulary and the development of language skills. Chi-square is a statistical test that assesses the association between categorical variables. When the chi-square value is higher than the chosen significance level, it shows statistical significance. On the other hand, if the significance level calculated from the degree of freedom is higher than the chi-square value, the result is considered non-significance.

Table 5 shows the inferential results of the relationship between English majors' degree programs and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development.

**Table 5. Relationship between the degree program and the vocabulary and language skills development of English majors.**

Degree Program	Strongly Agree	Agree Disagree	Disagree	Strong	Row Totals
BSEd-English	106 (91.84) [2.18]	124 (128.28) [0.14]	30 (36.44) [0.70]	4 (7.44) [1.59]	<b>264</b>
BA Literature	70 (77.23) [0.68]	118 (107.87) [0.95]	26 (30.64) [0.70]	8 (6.25) [0.49]	<b>222</b>
BA Language	71 (77.93) [0.62]	103 (108.85) [0.31]	42 (30.92) [3.97]	8 (6.31) [0.45]	<b>224</b>
<b>Column Totals</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>710</b>

The chi-square statistic is 13.2244. The p-value is 0.039608. The result is significant at  $p < .05$ .

The findings suggest that the respondents' degree programs have a significant relationship on the vocabulary and language skills development of the respondents. Hence, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected. According to Bartlett's schema theory, individuals are believed to interpret and remember information based on their existing cognitive structures. The findings show that the respondent's degree programs have specialized curricula tailored to language learning and development. Courses within these programs focus extensively on language structure, literary analysis, and effective communication, contributing to a more comprehensive language education.

Table 6 presents the inferential revelation on the relationship between English majors' gender and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development.

**Table 6. Relationship between the gender and the vocabulary and language skills development of English Majors**

Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree Disagree	Disagree	Strong	Row Totals
Female	166 (176.03) [0.57]	257 (243.74) [0.72]	71 (76.69) [0.04]	12 (14.54) [0.18]	<b>506</b>
Male	81 (70.97) [1.42]	85 (98.26) [1.79]	31 (29.31) [0.10]	7 (5.46) [0.43]	<b>204</b>
<b>Column Totals</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>710</b>

*The chi-square statistic  
 significant at  $p < .05$*

*5.2494.  
 The*

*p-value is .154419. The  
 result is not*

This indicates that the respondents' gender did not have a significant relationship on their proficiency in vocabulary and language skills development. Hence, the H<sub>0</sub> is accepted. Therefore, gender does not play a substantial role in influencing the development of these vocabulary and language skills among the respondents in the study. It signifies that gender has no bearing on the acquisition of new vocabulary or language skills. If one is willing to study, everyone can improve their language and vocabulary skills.

Table 7 shows the inferential findings of the relationship between the socioeconomic status of English majors and their vocabulary proficiency and language skills development.



**Table 7. Relationship between the socioeconomic status and the vocabulary and language skills development of English majors**

<i>Socioeconomic Status</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strong Disagree</i>	<i>Row Totals</i>
Poor	73 (83.73) [1.38]	120 (113.2) [0.41]	31 (32.43) [0.06]	11 (5.62) [5.13]	<b>235</b>
Low Income	104 (111.53) [0.51]	160 (150.77) [0.57]	46 (43.20) [0.18]	3 (7.49) [2.69]	<b>313</b>
Lower Middle Income	41 (27.79) [6.27]	20 (37.57) [8.21]	16 (10.76) [2.54]	1 (1.86) [0.40]	<b>78</b>
Middle Income	12 (12.11) [0.0011]	22 (16.37) [1.93]	0 (4.69) [4.69]	0 (0.81) [0.81]	<b>34</b>
Upper Middle Income	10 (7.48) [0.84]	9 (10.1155) [0.12]	2 (2.89) [0.27]	0 (0.50) [0.50]	<b>21</b>
Upper Class	5 (6.77) [0.46]	11 (9.15) [0.37]	3 (2.62) [0.05]	0 (0.45) [0.45]	<b>19</b>
Rich	8 (3.56) [5.52]	0 (4.81) [4.81]	0 (1.38) [1.38]	2 (0.23) [12.94]	<b>10</b>
<b>Column Totals</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>710</b>

The chi-square statistic is 63.4611. The p-value is 0.0001. The result is significant at  $p < .05$

On the other hand, table 7 indicates that the respondents' Socioeconomic status has a significant relationship on their vocabulary and language skills development. Hence,  $H_0$  is rejected. Stanovich's theory of the Matthew effect supports that Socioeconomic status made a significant difference in vocabulary proficiency and language skills development suggesting that the initial advantage or disadvantage associated with socioeconomic status may have a compounding effect on language skills. Individuals with a higher socioeconomic status might have early advantages, such as access to enriching educational resources and experiences, which could accumulate and contribute to enhanced vocabulary proficiency and language skills over time. Conversely, those with lower

socioeconomic status may face initial disadvantages that, if not addressed, can accumulate and lead to challenges in language development.

## 8. Conclusions And Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) Following Bartlett's Schema Theory, which highlights the influence of prior knowledge on language acquisition, the theory posits that increased exposure to words facilitates easier learning. Therefore, incorporating workshops in schools is essential for students' vocabulary and language skills improvement.
- 2) To strengthen the collaboration between schools and families, it's crucial to create opportunities for parents to learn about their children's vocabulary and language skills, fostering a supportive environment for skill development.
- 3) The student survey indicated a noteworthy discovery, engaging in activities like watching TikTok, movies, and YouTube videos positively influences vocabulary and language skills. This suggests multimedia consumption not only entertains but also aids language growth.
- 4) Future researchers should explore unanswered questions by examining English major students' varying levels of vocabulary and grammar proficiency, considering socio-economic factors' influence on these skills. This contributes to understanding students' socio-economic status and their efforts to excel despite challenges.
- 5) Encourage a reading culture in English majors through literature circles, book clubs, and reading challenges. Diverse genres and writing styles enhance vocabulary and language skills. A well-equipped library and literary events support this initiative.
- 6) Forge partnerships with linguists, language specialists, and English language professionals. Arrange guest lectures, seminars, and specialized workshops hosted by experts to give students valuable exposure to advanced language skills and real-world applications of language proficiency.
- 7) Establish an ongoing evaluation system, incorporating regular assessments, language tests, and feedback loops to consistently gauge students' vocabulary and language skills. The feedback should pinpoint areas for enhancement and provide personalized suggestions and resources for targeted language development.
- 8) Promote teamwork among English departments and other academic disciplines, fostering cross-disciplinary projects. Such collaborations offer English majors chances to use language skills in varied contexts, enhancing holistic language proficiency applicable across academic and professional realms.

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