

Language Proficiency and Its Influence on Academic Motivation

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ABSTRACT: This research focused on language proficiency and its influence on academic motivation. Specifically, this study investigated whether language proficiency has a significant impact on the academic motivation of learners across four language domains. Likewise, it also looked into the language proficiency performance level of the learners. Correlational and causal research design was used in the study. Stratified random sampling procedures were also employed to identify the 159 learners as respondents from the three identified public elementary schools. A standardized questionnaire on language proficiency in four domains - reading and literacy, language application, cultural and social context, and literary appreciation—was used to gather the data. Academic motivation was also evaluated. Frequency, Mean, Percentages, Standard Deviation, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis were used to treat the data collected. The study revealed no significant relationship between language proficiency in the four domains mentioned and academic motivation; the learners exhibited a moderate level of academic motivation and a satisfactory level in language use and literary appreciation. It was also found that none of the independent variables influence the learners' academic motivation. It is highly recommended that teachers consider giving more attention to helping learners develop their language skills. Perhaps, teachers need to integrate technology into their classroom activities as this can surely capture learners' interests.

KEYWORDS: academic motivation, correlation, language proficiency, performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency plays a significant role in fostering learners' academic motivation and overall success. It enhances their ability to understand academic materials, communicate effectively, and engage fully in both oral and written classroom activities. Skills in speaking, writing, listening, and reading enable learners to tackle academic challenges, thereby boosting their self-esteem and increasing their participation in class. When learners feel capable of using language effectively to support academic tasks, they are more likely to set relevant goals and sustain motivation throughout their educational journey. Language proficiency serves as a powerful academic motivator by equipping learners with the necessary resources to engage actively in their studies and achieve their goals.

More importantly, language proficiency is a crucial skill that helps learners understand, assimilate, and apply knowledge, fostering their interest, confidence, and motivation. Many learners struggle with language, which can hinder their progress, lower their self-esteem, and undermine their determination to learn. To grasp the difficulties that learners face, teachers must have a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language ability and academic motivation. Academic success is closely linked to learners' proficiency in English. Nonetheless, learners continue to struggle with reading comprehension, which negatively impacts their academic performance and motivation.

Learners' inability to understand reading materials can decrease their likelihood of participating in the classroom. Although bilingual education policies in the Philippines aim to enhance learners' fluency in both Filipino and English, many still struggle with comprehending simple text. Significant gaps in reading proficiency remain despite ongoing curriculum adjustments and a strong emphasis on oral and written fluency. These challenges become particularly evident as learners progress into higher grade levels without mastering essential literacy skills. Poor reading comprehension continues to undermine learners' academic motivation and their capacity for effective learning (Melegrito, 2022).

Moreover, low language proficiency often leads learners to withdraw from school activities and learning. This results in poor performance and decreases one's interest in studies. Disengagement can further reduce their motivation in classroom learning. Adding to these challenges is the poor quality of the language learning environment, making it more difficult for learners to gain the necessary skills for academic success. Limited access to technology and educational resources reduces learners'

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opportunities to become more proficient in the language. When combining these problems, it creates a significant barrier to achieving positive academic results and sustaining learners' motivation (Naeem, et al., 2022).

Hence, this study examined the relationship between language proficiency and its influence on academic motivation and offered observed evidence to help develop interventions that may enhance both language proficiency and motivation for better academic performance.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) developed by Albert Bandura (1997), highlights self-efficacy as an essential part of motivation, the extent to which a person believes they can do certain tasks. Self-efficacy refers to language learners' confidence in their capabilities. It was found that learners who believed they could improve their language proficiency were far more likely to engage in effective and self-motivated practices in the learning process. Learners with high self-efficacy in language learning are more likely to participate actively, set high goals, and remain positive through challenges. This often results in better performance in school. Developing self-efficacy may be crucial to increasing academic motivation, as many learners struggle with language and reading skills. Learners are more likely to use effective strategies that foster language development and engagement when they feel confident in their ability to succeed. According to Mahalingam (2022), self-efficacy plays a significant role to foster competence and commitment in the learning process.

Additionally, learners' confidence in their ability has a significant impact on their writing and reading comprehension abilities. As described by Garcia et al. (2023), Filipino learners who had confidence in their skills to accomplish reading assignments exhibited academic motivation by embracing challenging books and persevering through challenges. Along with better reading proficiency, these learners also demonstrate increasing engagement in class activities and peer collaboration, which are significant components for academic motivation. In contrast, learners who lack confidence in their language skills tend to avoid difficult reading assignments, prefer simpler alternatives, or disengage from participating in school activities.

Research consistently revealed the significance of Social Cognitive Theory in understanding the crucial role of self-efficacy in academic motivation and language learning (Bandura, 1982). By presenting beneficial models, highlighting the external relevance of language skills beyond the national curriculum, and setting up an inviting and supportive environment in the classroom, teachers assisted learners in developing their confidence and nurturing a positive attitude towards language learning. These strategies are aligned with other overall educational goals to promote universal access to high-quality and equitable education. Likewise, they support the Department of Education's ongoing efforts to improve Filipino learners' reading proficiency.

Reading and literacy, language use, cultural and social context, and literary appreciation are the key areas utilized in this study to measure the learners' language skills. It was observed that the skills of learners to decode, comprehend, and critically evaluate texts are very important, but the learners experienced a lot of challenges in these areas. The cultural and social context examined how learners' experiences and background influence their language use. Language usage explored how learners use language in varying contexts, including speaking, writing, and listening. Together, the two form a picture of overall language proficiency, which the diagram on the next page shows. Hence, this study aimed to determine the relationship between language proficiency and learners' academic motivation.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative correlational and causal research designs to explore the relationship between language proficiency and academic motivation among Grade 6 learners. This design is particularly appropriate in identifying how the independent variables—such as reading literacy, language use, cultural and social context, and literary appreciation—are related to the dependent variable, academic motivation. A causal research design is used to determine whether a cause-and-effect relationship exists between variables, without directly manipulating the variables (Alamer et al. 2022).

This is particularly significant in educational settings, where manipulating variables like language proficiency would be both impractical and potentially unethical. By using this research design, the study can focus on identifying naturally occurring relationships between language proficiency levels and academic motivation.

The study employed fundamental statistical tools in the analysis and interpretation of data. Frequency, Percentages, Mean, and Standard Deviation were used to address Problems 1 and 2. For Problem 3, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. Problem 4 employed Multiple Linear Regression to determine the best predictor of motivation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. What is the language proficiency level of the respondents in terms of:

- 1.1 reading and literacy;
- 1.2 language use;
- 1.3 cultural and social context; and

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1.4 literary appreciation?

Table 1 presents the summary table of language proficiency of the respondents across the four domains. It shows that the three variables (reading and literacy, language use, and cultural and social context) showed a variation in their Mean and SD ratings, but all of them fall under the Unsatisfactory level. This means that understanding of texts, critical thinking, and understanding of words were among the essential reading skills that respondents were not able to master. These results are likely due to their inability to understand and absorb academic content effectively. Furthermore, this may have caused problems in another domain that requires proficient reading skills. This may also imply that some learners struggle to comprehend the cultural and social aspects needed for a better understanding of the language. The deficiency could affect their ability to engage in culturally relevant interactions (Gay, 2020).

Table 1: Summary Table of Language Proficiency

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Reading and Literacy	4.36	2.26	Unsatisfactory
Language Use	4.36	2.27	Unsatisfactory
Cultural and Social Context	2.81	1.24	Unsatisfactory
Literary Appreciation	2.81	1.25	Needs Improvement
Overall, 3.56	1.76	Unsatisfactory	

In the same table, literary appreciation had a Mean of 2.81 with SD=1.25, interpreted as Needs Improvement and the overall mean score 3.56 and with a SD of 1.76 falls under the Unsatisfactory. This indicates that each respondent may have little interest or drive in reading literature. As such, it limits their ability to think critically and generate creative ideas. These finding generally reveals that all domains of language proficiency are below the ideal threshold, underlining the need for overall interventions aimed to strengthen learners' language skills in all domains.

Problem 2. What is the level of academic motivation of the respondents?

Table 2: Academic Motivation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I can confidently express my thoughts, opinions, and ideas in Eng during oral recitations, class discussions, & presentations.	3.12	1.23	Sometimes	Moderately Motivated
2. I can follow and comprehend Eng. instructions from my teachers, whether they are spoken or written, across different subjects.	3.66	1.17	Most of the Time	Highly Motivated
3. I am eager to expand my vocabulary by learning new words and phrases every day to improve my Eng. proficiency.	3.69	1.32	Most of the Time	Highly Motivated
4. I feel a sense of accomplishment & pride when I complete tasks and assignments in English.	3.51	1.28	Most of the Time	Highly Motivated
5. I am performing well academically, especially in my Eng class, and I continuously strive for further improvement.	3.06	1.28	Sometimes	Moderately Motivated
6. I challenge myself to excel in English by putting extra effort into studying, practicing, and improving my language skills.	3.42	1.24	Most of the Time	Highly Motivated
7. I can easily understand & solve problems, especially when the instructions and questions are presented in English	3.18	1.12	Sometimes	Moderately Motivated
8. I actively participate in English-related activities such as debates, storytelling, speech contests, and writing competitions.	2.22	1.10	Seldom	Less Motivated

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9. I feel confident when communicating w/ my teachers, classmates, & other people in Eng, both in formal and informal settings.	2.22	1.10	Seldom	Less Motivated
10. I believe that mastering Eng will open many opportunities for me in academics, future career paths, and personal growth.	4.71	0.78	Always	Very Highly Motivated
Overall	3.23	1.15	Sometimes	Moderately Motivated

Note: 4.20-5.00 very highly motivated; 3.40-4.19 highly motivated; 2.60-3.39 moderately motivated; 1.80-2.59 less motivated; 1.00-1.79 Least Motivated

Table 2 shows the level of academic motivation of the respondents. It displays an overall Mean of 3.23 with an SD=1.15, described as Sometimes and interpreted as Moderately Motivated. These results justify that learners were less interested in their academic events; they were not well-motivated to get involved in their classroom events, which may require them to use the English language. More likely, these learners were also not confident in using the language; they were not exposed to different activities. Perhaps, these learners have a weak language facility.

Indicator 10 in the same table, *I believe that mastering English will open many opportunities for me in academics, future career paths, and personal growth*, got the highest Mean of 4.71 and SD=0.78, described as Always and interpreted as Highly Motivated. This revealed that the learners showed interest by their belief that their skills in the English language could be of great advantage to their future educational goals, career possibilities, and personal development. Regardless of any issues with their language usage, they have great drive because they recognize that English, as a global language, can unlock their doors to greater educational and career opportunities.

Likewise, indicators 8 and 9, *I actively participate in English-related activities such as debates, storytelling, speech contests, and writing competitions*; and *I feel confident when communicating with my teachers, classmates, and other people in Eng, both in formal & informal settings*, respectively, got a Mean of 2.22 and 3.69 with SD=1.10, described as Seldom and interpreted as Less Motivated. These results validate that the respondents were not active in their involvement in these activities. This may also prove that they do not have the confidence to communicate their ideas or opinions using the English language. Perhaps, the learners lack some exposure to show their skills in the language. Also, they may have concerns about making mistakes, an inferiority mindset, or a lack of experience in practical communicative activities, which could be some of the possible causes of low interaction. These findings emphasize the importance of motivating, low anxiety settings whereby learners can interact and use English in a meaningful manner, while gradually developing their confidence and willingness to take part in social and academic language activities.

This supports the study of Dewaele. et al. (2022) as well as Maagad and Oco (2025), who found that learner motivation is strongly influenced by confidence and anxiety levels, with increased motivation linked to supportive environments that encourage risk-taking and active language use. Their research emphasizes the importance of reducing communication apprehension to enhance language learning outcomes.

Likewise, indicators 8 and 9, *I actively participate in English-related activities such as debates, storytelling, speech contests, and writing competitions*; and *I feel confident when communicating with my teachers, classmates, and other people in Eng, both in formal & informal settings*, respectively, got a Mean of 2.22 and 3.69 with SD=1.10, described as Seldom and interpreted as Less Motivated. These results validate that the respondents were not active in their involvement in these activities. This may also prove that they do not have the confidence to communicate their ideas or opinions using the English language. Perhaps, the learners lack some exposure to show their skills in the language. Also, they may have concerns about making mistakes, an inferiority mindset, or a lack of experience in practical communicative activities, which could be some of the possible causes of low interaction. These findings emphasize the importance of motivating, low anxiety settings whereby learners can interact and use English in a meaningful manner, while gradually developing their confidence and willingness to take part in social and academic language activities.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between language proficiency and the academic motivation of the respondents?

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Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Independent Variables	r-value	p-value	Description	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Reading and Literacy	-0.124	0.120	Negligible	Accept	Not Significant
Language Use	-0.077	0.336	Negligible	Accept	Not Significant
Cultural and Social Context	-0.030	0.649	Negligible	Accept	Not Significant
Literary Appreciation	0.099	0.542	Negligible	Accept	Not Significant

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

Table 3 displays the correlation analysis of language proficiency and motivation. Results revealed that not one of the variables is correlated with motivation. This further means that the hypothesis on significance is accepted; that is, the variables mentioned do not and cannot affect the respondents' motivation toward language proficiency. The implication is that learners' various levels of language skills may not match their degree of interest in studying. Consequently, to foster the learners' holistic development, intervention must address motivational strategies, socioemotional support, and learners' participation strategies in improving language skills.

This supports the study by Dörnyei. et al., (2021). which highlights that language learning motivation is multifaceted and influenced by a range of psychological, social, and contextual factors rather than language proficiency alone. Ushioda emphasizes the importance of learner identity, emotions, and classroom dynamics in shaping motivation, suggesting that motivation and proficiency do not always correlate directly.

Problem 4. Which of the independent variables singly or in combination influence the academic motivation of the respondents?

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficient Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	3.346	0.133		26.089	0.000
Reading and Literacy	-0.036	0.027	-0.141	-1.323	0.188
Language Use	-0.008	0.046	-0.021	-0.0174	0.862
Cultural and Social Context	0.000	0.046	0.001	0.005	0.966
Literary Appreciation	0.045	0.039	0.100	1.140	0.256
		R=0.155	R ² =0.024	F=0.944	Sig=0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Reading & Literacy, Language Use, Cultural & Social Context, Literary Appreciation

Table 4 presents the multiple linear regression analysis employed to assess the combined impact of the four areas of language proficiency on academic motivation. The non-significant p-values for all four variables in the analysis revealed that none of the independent variables significantly influenced academic motivation. This proves that reading and literacy, language use, cultural and social context, and literary appreciation do not influence motivation; they are not important to develop the interest of the learners' academic motivation. The language proficiency domains' insignificant contribution was reinforced further with the entire regression model's very low R-squared value, which shows that the combined predictors only make up for a small portion of the variance in academic motivation.

The result presented that despite proficiency in the language being an important academic skill, it is not the primary factor influencing learners' academic motivation in this scenario. Such could indicate that psychological, social, and contextual factors hold a bigger influence on learners' motivation level compared with explicit language skills. Additionally, the model's weak predictive value highlights the potential that, if attention primarily focuses on this variable, enhancing language skills might not always turn into improving academic motivation. This points out to teachers and curriculum designers the importance of integrating language enhancement programs with motivational strategies centered on learners' interests, needs, and socioemotional well-being to develop a broader approach to academic achievement and motivation (Alamer et al. 2022).

This supports the study by Dörnyei. et al. (2021), who argued that motivation in language learning is influenced by a complex interplay of affective, social, and contextual factors rather than by proficiency levels alone. Their research emphasized the role of motivational dynamics and learner psychology as crucial elements for sustaining engagement and achievement.

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IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The respondents manifested weak language skills in all areas covered in the assessment, such as reading and literacy, language use, cultural and social context, and appreciation of literature
2. The respondents were less interested in those language domains; they had some difficulties mastering their skills.
3. The language proficiency domains in this study did not affect the learners' academic motivation.
4. None of the independent variables in the study influenced the learners' academic motivation.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. Teachers may give the learners real-life situation opportunities/activities to practice using English in any situations.
2. Teachers may prepare very stimulating, inspiring, and exciting activities to encourage the learners to use the English language to develop their skills.
3. Teachers shall consider giving more attention to how these learners can be helped to develop these skills. Perhaps teachers need to integrate the use of technology into their activities, as this can surely capture learners' interest in the English Language.
4. Perhaps other factors, such as psychological, social, and contextual factors, may have a bigger influence on the learners' academic motivation, which must be given focus by the teachers.

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