RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERFORMANCE AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH SUBJECTS: BASIS FOR A LANGUAGE SKILLS PROGRAM

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The study aimed to find out the performance of Teacher Education students in their English subjects. It also determined the significant differences in the performance of the respondents when they were grouped as to sex, course and year level. It utilized the descriptive method in describing students' performance and attitude towards English subjects at West Visayas State University – Janiuay Campus (WVSU-JC). One hundred ninety-one randomly selected Teacher Education students taking English subjects from WVSU-JC first semester of school year 2013-2014 were utilized as the respondents of the study. A standardized attitudinaire test adopted from the study of Gemora (2001), was utilized to gather data. Means and standard deviation were used to describe the performance and attitude of the respondents in their English subjects. The t-test and ANOVA were used to determine the significant difference on the performance and attitude of the respondents. Pearson-r correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between the respondents' performance in English and their attitude towards English subjects. Results revealed that the performance of the Teacher Education students in their English subjects was average when they were taken as an entire group and when they were grouped as to sex, course and year level. Further, the attitude of Teacher Education students towards English when they were taken as entire group and when they were grouped as to sex, course and year level was positive. The t-test results revealed no significant difference on the performance of the respondents in their English subjects and their attitude towards English when they were grouped as to sex and course, however, the ANOVA results disclosed that when they were grouped as to year level, there was a significant difference on their performance in their English subjects but no significant difference on their attitude towards English courses. Pearson-r correlation revealed no significant relationship between the Teacher Education students' performance in English and their attitude towards English courses.

INTRODUCTION

English is regarded chiefly as a skill, as a tool-subject and as a discipline. In fact, it is the foundation substance of thought and experience upon which the rest of the academic knowledge is built [1]. Gibbons [2] posited that one needs to be proficient in the use of English among non-native speakers has become a large-scale phenomenon. As of current, teachers are faced with the challenge of taking in hand the needs of the growing number of students whose chief language is not English. While mastering other skills and content in other subject areas, there is the necessity for these learners to gain proficiency in English.

Berriz [3] underscores that even in the United States of America where immigrants continue to increase in number; studies show that this is a predicament. Public schools in the U.S. have been developing instruction for their students learning English as a second language for the past 25 years and the challenge has remained. Blake and Van Sickle [4] identified code-switching from the local dialect to standard teaching, one such strategy for instruction, which seemed to work well as the students improved their academic achievement in science and mathematics.

In contrary, according to Rossell [5], this may not be true, however, for other states which do not adhere to code-switching and find immersion or sheltered-approach as workable. The pursuit for the "right" approach seems elusive as they continue to experiment with other formulas to meet the growing and changing needs of learners.

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Miller [6] studied the academic performance of students in Mathematics and English. Their findings show that the second language, which is English, rather than being the direct cause of under-preparedness of university students, serves to exacerbate a more fundamental educational or cognitive problem. Mathematical concepts are acquired through language and the problem arising from the use of the language has truly affected the learning of these concepts.

Despite the present and rich sources of data for English as a Second Language across the curriculum, the need to respond to the challenge of both attaining mastery of the content and the English language is an issue that science and mathematics teachers should address.

Academic performance, one of the variables in this study, is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important — procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts [7].

Magnuson [8] stated that children's first few years of life are crucial to the development of language and social skills. School preparedness in these areas help students adjust to academic expectancies.

According to von Stumm [9], individual differences in academic performance have been linked to differences in intelligence and personality. Students with higher mental ability as demonstrated by IQ tests and those who are higher in conscientiousness (linked to effort and achievement motivation) tend to achieve highly in academic settings. A recent meta-analysis suggested that mental curiosity (as measured by typical intellectual engagement) has an important influence on academic achievement in addition to intelligence and conscientiousness.

On the other hand, Baker [10] believes that the attitudes, another variable in this study, of students come to the fore as they reflect upon the language that they learn in English as a subject. Consciously or unconsciously, their attitudes play a crucial role in language's "growth or decay, restoration or destruction".

Shameem [11] states that teachers' attitudes, too, as part of their cultural orientation, influence heavily their younger students. What kind of attitudes towards English should teachers have in order for them to teach English concepts successfully? Can these attitudes be reflected even during their student training period? What attitudes do students have towards English as a subject?

Similar studies made by Amamio [12] on attitudes of students, teachers and parents toward English and Filipino as media of instruction provided an interesting comparison. Students and teachers prefer the use of English as the medium of instruction with the teachers finding English as a more comfortable language for explaining ideas and concepts. Teachers further noted that English is an intellectualized language and a valuable tool to source information technology.

Students, like the respondents in this study, to be in the same way prepared to perform their undertakings as future mentors must not only need to master their own subject area but also by achieving competence in the use of the medium of instruction. Language is considered an indispensable tool in the promotion of learning. In our bilingual educational system, English is considered a second language in the country. English takes the central role of bridging knowledge and skills to learner competency in these areas. The teacher's preparation should not just be in terms of knowledge and skills in their specialization but also in their attitude towards the tools that they will use in teaching this subject. Attitude towards the use of English as a medium of instruction plays a pivotal role in determining the feat of the language program of the schools like the School of Teacher Education (SOTE) at the West Visayas State University – Janiuay Campus (WVSU-JC); hence this study. This study aimed to ascertain the performance of Teacher Education students in their English subjects. Also, it sought answers to the following: *If significant differences exist in the performance of the respondents when they were grouped as to sex, course and year level; if significant differences exist in the attitude of the respondents when they were grouped as to sex, course and year level; and if significant relationship exists between the Teacher Education students' performance in English and their attitude towards English courses.*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Of the 191 students enrolled in Eng. 101, Eng. 102, Eng. 103 and Eng. 104, of the School of Teacher Education (SOTE), SY 2013 – 2014, all of them (100%), were utilized as the respondents of the study.

The descriptive-correlational type of research was employed in this study and described were their performance and attitude towards English courses at WVSU-JC when they were classified as to sex, course and year level. According to Gay [13], the descriptive method of research involves collecting data to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject under study. Correlation studies, on the other hand, determine whether or not two variables are correlated. This means to study whether an increase or decrease in one variable corresponds to an increase or decrease in the other variable [14]. This study involved collecting data to be used in determining whether, and to what degree relationship exists among the given variables.

The independent variables were the respondents' sex, course, and year level. The dependent variables were the respondents' performance and attitude towards English courses.

The respondents were classified as to sex, course, and year level. As to sex, they were classified as to male and female. As to course, they were classified as to BEED and BSED. As to year level, they were classified as to first year, second year and third year. The fourth year were excluded because they were not enrolled in the English courses covered in this study. To gather data from the respondents such as sex, course and year level, a personal data sheet was attached to the attitudinaire checklist. To determine students' performance, their final

grades and in the above-mentioned English subjects were utilized.

A standardized Likert Scale-type attitudinaire checklist adopted from the study of Gemora [15] was utilized to gather data. The respondents were asked to choose the items which correspond to their personal attitude toward English as a subject. This checklist included ten (10) statements each for emotional, informational and behavioral components of attitudes. A five-point scale was used with the following weights and descriptions to the responses: 1 - Strongly Disagree; 2 - Disagree, 3 - Undecided, 4 - Agree and 5 - Strongly Agree.

The data were gathered, summarized, tabulated and subjected to appropriate statistical analysis.

The statistics employed were means and percentages, t-test, standard deviations, analysis of variance and Pearson's r Correlation. Corresponding descriptions were employed to identify the performance and attitude towards English courses when taken as a whole and when classified as to sex, course and year level.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents when grouped as to sex, course and year level.

The total number of respondents was 191 or 100%. Out of 191 respondents, as to sex, 46 (24%) were males and 145 (76%) were females; as to course, 151 (79%) were BEED and 40 (21%) were BSED; as to year level, 91 (48%) were first year, 39 (21%) were second year, and 60 (31%) were third year students. The distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Categories	N	%
Whole	191	100
Sex		
Male	46	24
Female	145	76
Course		
BEED	151	79
BSED	40	21
Year Level		
1st Year	91	48
2nd Year	39	21
3rd Year	60	31

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As to the descriptive and inferential findings of this study, Table 2 shows that as an entire group, the respondents' performance in English courses was *average* (M=2.03, SD=.296).

When they were classified as to sex, their performance was *average* with the male (M=2.10, SD=.316) and the female (M=2.01, SD=.286). When the respondents were grouped as to course, their performance was *average* with those in the BEED (M=2.04, SD=.307), and those in BSED (M=1.99, SD=.250) When they were classified as to year level, their performance was *average* with those in the first year (M=2.04, SD=.310), second year (M=1.99, SD=.263) and third year (M=1.97,

SD=.280). The SDs obtained showed the narrow dispersion of the means for each group, revealing the homogeneity of the respondents concerned in relation to their performance in English subjects. These results proved that the respondents' performance in English subjects was consistent across these variables. Most likely that this average performance may have been a result of their organized study habits and systematic scheduling system in studying their lessons in English, their focus and active participation in teaching-learning process and instructional activities and most of all, their interest and love for learning the English language.

Table 2. Performance of the Respondents in English Subjects

Categories	Mean	SD	Description
Whole	2.03	.296	*Average Performance*
Sex			
Male	2.10	.316	*Average Performance*
Female	2.01	.286	*Average Performance*
Course			
BEED	2.04	.307	*Average Performance*
BSED	1.99	.250	*Average Performance*
Year Level			
1st Year	2.04	.310	*Average Performance*
2nd Year	1.99	.263	*Average Performance*
3rd Year	1.97	.280	*Average Performance*

Legend:
1.00 – 1.67 High
1.68 – 2.34 Average
2.35 – 3.00 Low

Table 3 reveals that as entire group, the respondents had *positive* attitude (M=74.42, SD=.646) towards English courses.

When they were classified as to sex, the respondents had *positive* attitude with the male (M=73.98, SD=5.31) and the female (M=2.01, SD=6.79). When the respondents were grouped as to course, they had *positive* attitude with those in the BEED (M=74.34, SD=6.83), and those in BSED (M=74.75, SD=4.85) When they were classified as to year level, they had *positive* attitude with those in the first year (M=74.74, SD=5.07), second year (M=73.46, SD=8.84) and third year (M=74.57, SD=6.60). The SDs obtained showed the narrow dispersion of the means for each group, revealing the homogeneity of the respondents concerned in relation to their attitude towards English subjects. These results proved that the respondents' attitude towards English subjects was consistent across these variables.

Table 3. Attitude of the Respondents towards English Subjects

Categories	Mean	SD	Description
Whole	74.42	6.46	*Positive Attitude*
Sex			
Male	73.98	5.31	*Positive Attitude*
Female	74.57	6.79	*Positive Attitude*
Course			
BEED	74.34	6.83	*Positive Attitude*
BSED	74.75	4.85	*Positive Attitude*
Year Level			
1st Year	74.74	5.07	*Positive Attitude*
2nd Year	73.46	8.84	*Positive Attitude*
3rd Year	74.57	6.59	*Positive Attitude*

Legend:
Below 72   Negative Attitude
72   Neutral Attitude
Above 72   Positive Attitude

Most likely that this positive attitude may have been a result of their interactive lessons, inspiring teachers, and organized classroom instructional activities and most of all, their attentiveness and passion to learn the English language.

The t-test results on Table 4 revealed that there was no significant difference on the performance of the respondents as to their sex (t = 1.86, p = .065), and course (t = .888; p = .376). Regardless of these variables, the respondents showed average performance in their English subjects, proving that their learning of these subjects are purely personal attribute in nature; hence, both sexes may have been so interested in these subjects and they're performing equally well, too. Sex, represented by male and female, may be an interesting and important variable, yet in this study may not be important at all. This may be due to the mental and emotional interests of both sexes on these language subjects that propelled their performance to average extent. Learning from these subjects may not have much dependence on sex or course but on the respondents' abilities; likewise the positive impact brought about by these subjects. Most likely that these respondents may have enjoyed, imbibed, and appreciated these language subjects on personal note, knowing fully that English is a secondary language and a medium of instruction for majority of the subjects in the education curricula in the country.

Table 4. Differences on the Performance of the Respondents in English Subjects

Categories	Mean	df	t-value	p-value
Sex				
Male	2.10	189	1.86	.065
Female	2.01			
Course				
BEED	2.04	189	.888	.376
BSED	1.99			

p> 0.05 significant at 0.05 alpha

The ANOVA results on Table 5 revealed that there was a significant difference on the performance of the respondents in English subjects as to year level (F=3.480, p = .033). Showing significant difference on respondents' performance in their English subjects, this supported the observation that as one gets to the next higher level, there is improvement in his performance.

Experiential and conceptual learning may have contributed to this observation. This may also be due to the respondents' mental and emotional readiness and preparedness towards these subjects once they get to the subsequent year level. Most likely that whenever they move up, they are exposed to a more stringent teaching-learning process, higher demand and pressure and complex challenges that may result in varying performance; hence, significant difference was noted.

Table 5. Differences on the Performance of Respondents in English Subjects as to Year Level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	.593	2	.296	3.480	.033
Within Groups	16.004	188	.085		
Total	16.597	190			

p> 0.05 significant at 0.05 alpha

The t-test results on Table 6 revealed that there were no significant differences on the attitude of the respondents towards English subjects when classified as to their sex (t =-.536, p =.592), and course (t =-.358; p=.721). Perhaps due to personal preference and appreciation of the English subjects, the respondents showed no significant difference in their attitude towards it, be it on sex or course. Both sexes may have equal meaningful learning experiences afforded by their curriculum along with pleasant classroom atmosphere, inspiring teachers, and active-driven language activities; similarly, their course does not have impact on their high interest and great appreciation of these subjects; hence, their positive attitude towards these English subjects.

Table 6. Differences on the Attitude of the Respondents towards English Subjects

Categories	Mean	df	t-value	p-value
Sex				
Male	73.98	189	-.536	.592
Female	74.57			
Course				
BEED	74.34	189	-.358	.721
BSED	74.75			

p> 0.05 significant at 0.05 alpha

The ANOVA results on Table 7 revealed that there was no significant difference on the attitude of the respondents towards English subjects as to their year level (F= .554, p=.575). It has been observed that attitude varies from one person to another, but in the case of this study, the respondents' year level did not affect their appreciation and interest towards English subjects. They have, in a way, on a par as to understanding the relevance of these subjects in their daily lives and the society as a whole.

Table 7. Differences on the Attitude of the Respondents towards English Subjects as to Year Level

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	46.484	2	23.242	.554	.575
Within Groups	7880.165	188	41.916		
Total	7926.649	190			

p> 0.05 significant at 0.05 alpha

As shown on Table 8, no significant relationship existed between the respondents' performance in and attitude towards English subjects (r=-.052; p=.477). The respondents' average performance was not found to be a product of their positive attitude towards English subjects and vice versa.   The non-significant relationship may have been contributed by other factors, like the respondents were already highly performing with systematic study habits, have built organized system of studying and already acquired positivity towards these language subjects.

Table 8. Pearson's-r Correlation Result for the Significant Relationship between the Respondents' Performance in English and their Attitude towards English Subjects

	r-value	p-value
Performance in English Subjects and Attitude towards English Subjects	-.052	.477

p> 0.05 significant at 0.05 alpha

DMRT (Post hoc) results in Table 9 showed that there was no significant relationship between the respondents' performance in English and their attitude towards English subjects. Simply put, performance and attitude, in this study, proved no significant relationship because each has its own merit. Though as observed, positive attitude may partly impact and assure good performance, this may not be true at all times. The respondents may have other personal factors contributory to performance, but not necessarily their attitude. The latter may have other influences on performance, but not in this study.

Table 9. DMRT Results for the Significant Difference on the Performance in English of Teacher Education Students when grouped as to Year Level

YEAR LEVEL	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
3rd yr	60	1.97	
2nd yr	39	1.99	1.99
1st yr	92		2.09

*DMRT (Duncan Multiple Range Test)
- a post hoc test used to show the significant differences of the means of three or more independent samples

Conclusion

Owing to their contextual understanding, the Teacher Education students yielded positive attitude towards English as a subject. This is more likely attributed to their background, stored knowledge, and frequent use of English as required in their basic education curricula and may sometimes their language used at home. They may have also known its pivotal role in global communication. Perhaps, English becomes an interesting subject to them because it may have provided them varied comprehension, problem solving and critical thinking activities as enhancement to their proficiency of the language. It also serves as a foundation for the rest of the subjects in elementary, high school or college.

The results of the test could serve as bases for the teachers to be more flexible and creative in discussing the topics under the English subjects to arouse the interest of the students towards English which is the medium of instruction in almost all subjects in the Philippines.

While as a whole, the students had a positive attitude towards the use of English as a subject, there is still a need for further strategies in teaching the subject and more interesting language interactive activities to make it more stimulating, appreciating and be loved by students.

Likewise, there is an intense need for the teachers to employ more strategies to develop and improve the performance of the students in English subject. Moreover, they need to provide more enrichment activities like celebrating the "English Week", conducting contests like essay writing, news casting, spelling contests and many more in order to ardently urge involvement and participation of the students.

The results yielded by this study, despite positive attitude and average performance, and the significant differences they had on the respondents, the researches made sure that a Language Skills Program was afforded them to improve their performance and appreciation of the English language subjects. The Language Skills Program was prepared after this study was completely finished.

Language skills program

It aimed to develop holistically the learners in terms of the four basic skills: *listening, speaking, reading and writing*. These basic skills helped develop the learners into good listeners, competent speakers, relating what they read to larger knowledge, improved written and oral vocabulary; were able to speak accurately and fluently using internationally acceptable and intelligible English and equipped with the skill to handle real-life communication. These included the following:

I. *Listening for Understanding Program* ---included sound-symbol recognition, phonemes and morphemes; to use language in a purposeful way for comprehension and for listening critically
II. *English Speaking Skills Program* --- directed the learners towards communicative competence and effective communication skills; to develop better relationship between pronunciation and writing for better language use.
III. *Reading Comprehension Program* ---included word-meaning recognition and relating what they read to a larger knowledge and reading for fluency
IV. *Basic Writing Skills Program*
Controlled to Free Approach
Free writing activities
Communicative approach
Process approach
Using pictures to develop writing skill
Writing-the Integrated Way
V. *Vocabulary in Action Program* ---designed to give students a comprehensive grammar practice in easy area of grammar usage and mechanics and to improve oral and written vocabulary practice, giving them the gift of fluent self-expression

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