Self-Assessed Vs Demonstrated English Language Skills: Exploring the English Language Competency of Filipino University Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the self-assessed competency and actual competency level of students in English vocabulary and grammar. Results reveal a disparity between students' self- perceived competency and their actual proficiency. While students assessed themselves as highly competent in English vocabulary and grammar, objective assessments indicated lower proficiency levels. Analysis of the students' vocabulary and grammar competency tests showed consistently low mean scores, indicating systemic weaknesses in both areas. This underscores the need for targeted interventions to address specific language deficiencies. Despite perceiving themselves as proficient, students' self-assessed English competency did not correlate with their actual competency, highlighting the importance of authentic language activities to bridge this gap. Recommendations include designing activities that enhance students' language skills for effective communication across various contexts. Educators should move beyond traditional approaches to better address students' language deficiencies and improve overall English proficiency.

Keywords: self- assessment, English language competence, Filipino university students

1. Introduction

English plays a predominant role in the field of education all over the world as English has been widely used by the students as well as the teachers and researchers around the world as the main medium used in the various fields of education. The Philippine education system has been using English as a medium of instruction from elementary to university level for decades (Abuga et. al., 2019) and is a tool for learning and a medium of communication. English Language as Medium of Instruction (MOI) plays the central role in the students' learning at university level. Therefore, when students' proficiency in English language is high, it will affect and improve the academic performance of such students (Gomez and Gomez, 2021). Nevertheless, where the proficiency in English is lacking in any academic setting, it will lower the academic performance of such students (Shahzad, et. al., 2023).

Although second language learning is a distressing experience for many learners, students know that language is the most effective way in communicating and in expressing our thoughts and opinion with others. Therefore, evaluating self-perceived competence has its advantages as it indicates the student's

motivation in maintaining and improving the skills concerned, as self-perceived competence is proposed as one component in the concept of self-efficacy (Mamolo, et. al., 2020). Furthermore, motivational factors like interest and self-efficacy appears to have a significant impact on students' success and achievement (Liu, 2022).

The relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievements has been a major focus in the educational field. More and more researchers state that students' self- efficacy has great contributions to increase their academic performances (Bandura, 1997) wherein students' beliefs about their abilities could strongly affect their performances. Based on the research of Hoigaard, et. al., (2014) showed that academic self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic achievement in the aspects of students' perceived task goal structure, perceived ability structure and civic virtue. Huang, et. al. (2016) had also measured academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs in a group of students and the findings demonstrated that prior academic success might positively predict self-efficacy views and that self-efficacy beliefs could also predict future academic performance in the same semester. Additionally, students' self- efficacy beliefs and past academic achievement found to be predicted by their level of self-efficacy of their self-efficacy (Wilson and Narayan, 2016; Lui, 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the role of self-efficacy, and vocabulary and grammar competency in enhancing English proficiency among Filipino university students in order to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential solutions for improving English language education in the Philippines, ultimately contributing to better academic and professional outcomes for students.

Objectives of the Study:

1. Determine the self- assessed English language competency level of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar;
2. Determine the English language competency level of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar; and
3. Identify the significant relationship between the self- assessed English language competency and English language competency level of students.

2. Research Methodology

The study was completed using Descriptive- Correlational Research Design through a researcher- made self- assessed English Competency Survey Questionnaire to determine the students' self- efficacy level in English and a researcher- made English Competency Test to determine the English competency level of students in vocabulary and grammar. The respondents of the study were the 18 male and 78 female randomly selected first year students who were enrolled for the Second Semester, School Year 2022-2023 from the College of Education's Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd).

The face and content validated Self- Assessed English Language Competency Questionnaire for this study was categorized into self- assessed vocabulary and grammar competency of students in English. Each item was scored using a five- point scale with the following numerical values to indicate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement as follows: 5 = Strongly Agree (SA); 4 = Agree (A); 3 = Moderately Agree (MA); 2 = Disagree (D); and 1= Strongly Disagree (SD). The 60-item teacher- made tests in Vocabulary and Grammar were validated by English Language and

Professional Education specialists to technically review the structure and content of the items in the test. The test is divided into two parts: 30 items for the Vocabulary Test and 30 items for the Grammar Test.

Before the distribution of the questionnaires, the students were clearly informed about the purpose of the survey and open- ended questionnaires, how their responses will be used, and any potential benefits. The students were given 30 minutes to answer the survey and the open- ended questionnaires. The students were given 90- minutes to answer the paper-based exam. The rules and instructions were clearly explained to the students. The researcher had also monitored the exam environment to prevent any form of cheating.

Mean and Standard Deviation was used to determine the self- assessed English language competency level of the students in Vocabulary and Grammar. The students' self- assessed English language competency level using a survey questionnaire was described using the following arbitrary scale:

Scale	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1	1.00- 1.50	Strongly Disagree/ Very Low Competency
2	1.51- 2.50	Disagree/ Low Competency
3	2.51- 3.50	Moderately Agree/ Moderately High Competency
4	3.51- 4.50	Agree/ High Competency
5	4.51- 5.00	Strongly Agree/ Very High Competency

Frequency and Percentage Count and Mean and Standard Deviation were also used to determine the English Competency test scores of students in vocabulary and grammar. The students' English competency level based on their vocabulary and grammar competencies were described using the following arbitrary scale:

Vocabulary 30	Grammar 30	Descriptive Interpretation
26-30	26-30	Very High Competency
21-25	21-25	High Competency
16-20	16-20	Low Competency
15- below	15- below	Very Low Competency

Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to evaluate the significant relationship between the students' self- assessed competency and the English Competency test scores of the students using a 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Self- Assessed English Language Competency of the Students in terms of Vocabulary

Student's Response on their Self- Assessed English Language Vocabulary Competency	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I can read and understand vocabulary including subject specific and cross curricular vocabulary.	3.96	0.52	Agree
2. I can understand English words and phrases that consist of	4.14	0.63	Agree

everyday or job- related language.			
3. I can use idiomatic expressions and figurative language in my communication.	3.61	0.62	Agree
4. I can identify and correct common errors in my vocabulary usage.	3.91	0.58	Agree
5. I can use prefixes and suffixes to change the meaning of words.	3.72	0.61	Agree
6. I can recognize and use common word roots to understand new words.	3.86	0.66	Agree
7. I can create new words using affixes (prefixes/ suffixes) and roots.	3.42	0.66	Moderately Agree
8. I can identify and use different word forms (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) appropriately.	4.07	0.64	Agree
9. I can recognize and use different forms of the same word (ex: singular/plural, verb tense) appropriately.	4.14	0.61	Agree
10. I can spell commonly used words correctly.	4.20	0.64	Agree
11. I can spell words with irregular spellings correctly.	3.74	0.72	Agree
12. I can spell words with foreign origins correctly.	3.46	0.63	Moderately Agree
13. I can recognize and correct common spelling errors.	3.98	0.63	Agree
14. I can guess the meaning of unfamiliar English words or idioms (set phrases) in my textbooks or other course materials without using a dictionary.	3.26	0.67	Moderately Agree
15. I can understand English words and basic phrases concerning myself, my family, and my community.	4.23	0.66	Agree
Total Mean	**3.96**	**0.52**	**High Competency**

Table 1 shows the student's response on their self- assessed English language vocabulary competency. Among the English competency skills assessed, the students agreed that they can understand English words and basic phrases concerning themselves, their family, and their community, with the highest mean of 4.23 (SD= 0.66) that indicates a self- assessed strong proficiency in everyday language usage related to personal and social contexts.

On the other hand, the students have moderately agreed on the statement that they can guess the meaning of unfamiliar English words or idioms in textbooks or other course materials without using a dictionary with the lowest mean of 3.26 (SD= 0.67). This suggests that students may encounter challenges in comprehending unfamiliar vocabulary or expressions within academic contexts, which could potentially impact their reading comprehension and overall academic performance.

The finding also shows that the students perceived themselves to have high competency in terms of their English vocabulary (M= 3.96, SD= 0.52). This revealed that the students perceived themselves to have high English vocabulary competency. This indicates that they feel confident in their ability to understand and use a wide range of words effectively, thus, recognizing their positive self-perception can boost their motivation to further develop their language skills.

The students' high self-perceived competency in English vocabulary is a positive finding that can serve as a foundation for further language development and academic success. It reflects their belief in their abilities and can be used as a starting point for building on their existing language skills. This result reinforces Demirbulak's (2022) perspective on the significance of self-assessment practices for cultivating lifelong language skills. The emphasis on students self-assessing their proficiency in using correct word forms, parts of speech, and basic sentence structure aligns with Oscarson's (2012 in Oscarson, 2015) argument. Furthermore, Aguelo's (2017) study, which delves into language competencies encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and writing, supports these findings. Vocabulary is likened to the foundational building blocks of language, highlighting its pivotal role in effective expression of thoughts and ideas. The study underscores the importance of expanding one's vocabulary through learning new words and incorporating them into active usage.

Table 2. Self- Assessed English Language Competency of the Students in terms of Grammar

Student's Response on their Self- Assessed English Language Grammar Competency	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
1. I can use correct word forms and parts of speech when I write and speak.	3.92	0.56	Agree
2. I can use correct basic sentence structure when I write and speak.	4.19	0.49	Agree
3. I can use a variety of sentence types when I write and speak.	3.73	0.59	Agree
4. I can use count and non-count nouns correctly when I write and speak.	3.60	0.62	Agree
5. I can use singular and plural nouns correctly when I write and speak.	4.08	0.61	Agree
6. I can use articles (a, an, the) correctly when I write and speak.	3.83	0.71	Agree
7. I can place adjectives and adverbs in the right place when I write and speak.	3.75	0.62	Agree
8. I can find the errors I make with grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.	3.78	0.70	Agree
9. I can use correct verb tenses in my speaking and writing.	3.86	0.59	Agree
10. I can use subject-verb agreement correctly.	3.75	0.60	Agree
11. I can use pronouns correctly.	4.06	0.50	Agree
12. I can use adjectives and adverbs correctly.	3.84	0.55	Agree
13. I can use prepositions correctly.	3.73	0.55	Agree
14. I can use conjunctions correctly.	3.84	0.51	Agree
15. When writing English compositions, I can edit my writing to improve the wording, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	3.99	0.51	Agree
Total Mean	**3.86**	**0.37**	**High Competency**

Table 2 shows the student's response on their self- assessed English language grammar competency. Among the English grammar competency skills assessed, the students have agreed that can employ proper basic sentence structure in their communication (M= 4.19, SD= 0.49), thus indicating a self-assessed strong proficiency in constructing sentences effectively, which is fundamental for clear and

coherent communication. The students have also agreed that they can utilize various sentence types in their writing and speaking, with the lowest mean score of 3.73 (SD= 0.59).

The finding also shows that the students perceived themselves to have high competency in terms of their English grammar competency (M= 3.86, SD= 0.37). The result shows that the students' self-perceived high competency in English grammar indicates that they feel confident in their ability to use proper grammar rules when speaking and writing in English, thus, the students' high self-perceived competency in English grammar is a positive finding that can be harnessed as a foundation for further language development and academic success.

The students' self-efficacy plays a crucial role in anticipating the adoption of self-regulated learning techniques, academic motivation, and overall academic achievement, encompassing specific domains like mathematics, reading, and writing (Kim et al., 2019). Additionally, students' self-perception regarding their grammatical and linguistic proficiency is aligned with the K to 12 Language Arts Curriculum objective, affirming the goal of acquiring the knowledge and skills to articulate grammatically correct and precise expressions (Tuan, 2017; Sioco and Vera, 2018). This high self-assessed competency level also shows that the students who graduated in the K to 12 Curriculum is showing a high degree of self- efficacy because the K to 12 English Curriculum Guide (2016), Senior High School focuses on the domains where language is integrated.

Table 3. English Language Competency Level of Students based on the Students' Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading, and Writing Test Scores

Vocabulary	Frequency N= 96	Percentage
Very High Competency	1	1.00
High Competency	48	50.00
Low Competency	45	46.90
Very Low Competency	2	2.10
Vocabulary Mean Score	**SD**	**Descriptive Interpretation**
20.27	2.57	Low Competency
Grammar	**Frequency N= 96**	**Percentage**
Very High Competency	1	1.00
High Competency	26	27.10
Low Competency	27	28.10
Very Low Competency	42	43.80
Grammar Mean Score	**SD**	**Descriptive Interpretation**
17.32	4.80	Low Competency
37.59	11.54	Very Low Competency

Table 3 shows the English language competency level of the students in terms of their vocabulary and grammar competency.

In terms of the English vocabulary competency level of students, the result shows that out of 96 students, 1 or 1% got a very high competency score, 48 or 50.00% got high competency scores, 45 or 46.90% got low competency scores, and 2 or 2.10% got very low competency scores. This shows that

most students received high competency scores, indicating a reasonable grasp of vocabulary, however, a significant portion scored low.

In terms of English vocabulary competency, the result also shows that the students got a low competency over- all mean score (M= 20.27, SD= 3.57) in the vocabulary competency test. The low mean score suggests an overall need for improvement in vocabulary competency. In the Philippine setting, Baeta, et. al. (2012, in Armea, et. al., 2022) stated that college first year are relatively proficient in grammar, but they are not highly proficient in vocabulary and the over- all college students' skill level is often considered moderate. Despite the positive outcomes that vocabulary imposes to the learners (Asyiah, 2017), it was found out that the main problem in learning the second language is the insufficient amount of vocabulary of the learners.

In terms of their grammar competency, the table shows that 1 or 1.00% got a very high competency score, 26 or 27.10% got high competency scores, 27 or 28.10% got low competency scores, and 42 or 43.80% got very low competency scores. This shows that a considerable number of students received very low competency scores in grammar, reflecting a notable weakness, while only one achieved a very high score.

In terms of English grammar competency, the result also shows that the students got a low competency mean score (M= 17.32, SD= 4.80) in the grammar competency test. The low mean score highlights a collective struggle with grammar rules and structures. The result shows that first- year students should expose themselves to factors that will help them improve their competency level in English and should strive to use the language in their daily conversations in their homes and even in the community (Leyaley, 2026). Moreover, students should also develop their basic English grammatical competence, specifically in a pronoun-antecedent relationship, pluralization of nouns, determining types of pronouns, subject-verb agreement (Sioco and De Vera, 2018), adjectives, and adverbs by answering worktext or activities for them to be familiarized with grammar rules (Galabasa, et. al., 2022).

The English competency assessment result indicates a critical need for comprehensive English language improvement. Addressing the identified weaknesses through targeted interventions and tailored programs can lead to a more balanced and enhanced English language competency among the students. Furthermore, despite their university training and language courses being the main avenues for improving the students' English language proficiency, it is crucial for educators to offer more meaningful and authentic activities (Temporal, 2018). These activities should focus on enhancing students' language skills necessary for effective communication in social interactions, academic pursuits, and professional environments (Othman and Suqair, 2013).

Table 4. Results of the Test of Significant Relationship between the Students' Self- Assessed English Competency and their English Language Competency Level of Students

Pearson- R Correlation Test Result	r- value	p- value
Self- Assessed English Vocabulary Competency and the Actu- al English Language Vocabulary Competency of Students	-.07	0.46 ns
Self- Assessed English Grammar Competency and the Actual English Language Grammar Competency of Students	.03	.70 ns

The findings indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between the self-assessed English vocabulary competency and the actual English language vocabulary competency of students (r =

-.07, p = .46). The results also shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between self-assessed English grammar competency and the actual English language grammar competency of students (r = .03, p = .70). Thus, this suggests that the students' perceptions of their vocabulary and grammar skills do not correspond closely with their actual vocabulary and grammar proficiency, and vice versa.

Based on the data gathered, it is also implied that although the students perceived themselves as having high competency in vocabulary and grammar, the students' perceived English proficiency does not influence and explain their actual English competency in these four domains. Temporal's (2018) study concludes that students' high perception of their English proficiency does not necessarily guarantee a high actual performance.

Although, research shows that it is important to consider that self-perception does not always align perfectly with objective proficiency (Galabasa, et. al., 2022). However, positive self-perception can act as a motivating factor, encouraging students to further develop and refine their language skills. Additionally, educators can leverage this confidence to create learning environments that build on students' perceived strengths while addressing areas that may require additional attention and improvement.

4. Conclusion

It was found out that although the students have a high self- assessed competency in English vocabulary and grammar, but their actual English competency is deemed as low. Thus, it is important to consider that self-perception does not always align perfectly with actual proficiency, but positive self-perception can act as a motivating factor, encouraging students to further develop and refine their language skills.

The result of the English language competency level of students based on the students' vocabulary competency revealed that the students got a low competency mean score (M= 20.27) in the vocabulary competency test. In terms of English grammar competency, the result shows that the students got a low competency mean score (M= 17.32) in the grammar competency test. The results have highlighted a consistent pattern of weakness across vocabulary and grammar, competencies. Thus, the prevalence of very low competency scores suggests a systemic issue that needs attention.

Based on the data gathered, it is also implied that although the students perceived themselves as having high competency in vocabulary, grammar, the students' perceived English proficiency does not influence and explain their actual English competency in these domains. Additionally, although university training and language courses are primary avenues for enhancing English language proficiency, it is essential for educators to provide more meaningful and authentic activities. These activities should specifically target the improvement of students' language skills essential for successful communication in social, academic, and professional contexts.

5. Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned conclusions, it was recommended that because there is an existing discrepancy between perceived and actual competency emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions to address specific language deficiencies, educators should go beyond traditional approaches and design activities that genuinely enhance students' language skills for effective communication in diverse contexts to bridge the gap between self-perception and actual competency.

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