Sociolinguistics, Discourse, and Literary Competences among English Language Studies Students

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Abstract – This study used quantitative descriptive method where it aimed to assess the sociolinguistics, discourse, and literary competences among English language studies (ELS) students which serves as basis for competency-based program for English language studies students. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were Chinese, female, in the doctorate level and had also studied English for 10 years and above. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, respondents sometimes show competence in social experiences while most of the time display competence regarding language attitude. Aside from this, the respondents most of the time show competence both in coherence and cohesion in regard to discourse competence. On literary competence, the respondents most of the time show competence in literary exposure while sometimes show competence in text recognition. There was a highly significant difference both on sociolinguistic and discourse competence when grouped according to nationality; and significant difference when grouped according to years of studying English language; there is also a highly significant difference on literary competence when grouped according to Nationality. In addition, there is a highly significant relationship among sociolinguistic, discourse and literary competence. Lastly, competency-based program for English language studies students was proposed to strengthen the sociolinguistics, discourse and literary competence of the ELS students.

Keywords – Discourse, English Language Studies Students, Literary and Sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

The English language has always played a significant role in the society, and it has long been considered as the language of arts and trade. With the emergence of different foreign entities and companies it is expected of students to be language proficient. Most especially English Language Studies Students. They must possess competence in all areas of the English language namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Since English is the official language of 53 countries, 400 million people speak it worldwide even if it is not the most generally spoken language. For instance, knowing how to speak English is practically a need if one wants to work in a global workforce, since it is known as the Language of Business. Regardless of color, English is the most common language used in business [1].

Often, people use communication as a vehicle to inform, convince and persuade others. In this day of age where technology and the internet have much been exploited, effective communication holds the key to be successful in different types of transactions. Humans consider language as the most convenient means of communication.

However, it is evident that the purpose of communication is to build bonds and close gaps between people. In terms of education, language instruction is predicated on the idea that communicative competence—the capacity to employ a language correctly and effectively in order to achieve effective communication—is the primary objective of language acquisition. The goal of communicating with the recipient is always the same, regardless of the communication medium employed. Such a procedure requires competency from the sender or the speaker. It should go without saying that to achieve effective communication, a speaker must develop communicative competence, or the capacity to use a particular language in the right, proper, and appropriate ways.

In line with communicative competence, it has four-pronged dimensions which includes sociolinguistic, literary and discourse competence. The concepts of these dimensions of communicative competence led to the mastery of the principles governing language behavior which would be a great help in enhancing the students' communication skills [2].

Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to be appropriate with language. This deals with the knowledge about how and when to use a certain language appropriately. Furthermore, Murray defined discourse competence as understanding how the utterances in a text relate to one another to make a meaningful whole. This focuses on developing the ability to blend grammatical forms to interpret meaning in a variety of bigger and context-specific scenarios [3].

Thus, discourse competence can be seen as the ability to make connections and understand the structure and arrangement of words in a sentence to be able to create and develop further more forms of language such as stories, conversations, letters, and so on with the appropriate cohesion and coherence. On the other hand, literary competence is defined as a skill a reader must obtain to understand a piece of literature.

For instance, literature, and culture for teaching literature in an ESL context, requires more investigation [4].

Contextually, sociolinguistic, discourse, and literary competence are all essential for effective communication in English. Sociolinguistic competence allows students to communicate effectively in different social contexts, such as in the classroom, at work, and in social settings. Discourse competence allows students to understand and produce different types of texts, such as essays, reports, and stories. Literary competence allows students to appreciate and understand literary texts, such as novels, poems, and plays.

A study on sociolinguistic, discourse, and literary competence among English language studies students can help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students' abilities in these areas. This information can then be used to develop more effective teaching and learning strategies. In addition, a study on sociolinguistic, discourse, and literary competence among English language studies students can help to identify the factors that contribute to students' success or failure in these areas. This information can then be used to develop more effective interventions for students who are struggling.

Finally, a study on sociolinguistic, discourse, and literary competence among English language studies students can help raise awareness of the importance of these skills. This can lead to increase support for English language studies programs and initiatives.

As an ELS student and an English Proficiency Teacher to foreign students in one university, the researcher observed that, international students most importantly in the graduate school programs, do not possess necessary communicative competence as expected of them. Specifically, in expressing and presenting themselves in an English-speaking environment. Hence, ELS students must have an advanced competency in sociolinguistic, discourse and literary competences (in all areas of communicative competences). The result and output of this study aims to fill the gaps on the impact of different language learning contexts on sociolinguistic, discourse, and literary competence. For example, students who learn English in a formal classroom setting differ from students who learn English in a more informal setting, such as through immersion or interaction with native speakers. In addition, this study will also seek the role of culture in sociolinguistic, discourse, and literary competence. For example, there is a need for research on how different cultural values and norms influence how students use language in different contexts.

With four language skills, the main goal of this study is the investigation of the four macro skills in the presence of sociolinguistic competence for it shows the listening and speaking skills; discourse competence for it shows the writing skills and literary competence for it shows the reading skills among English Language Studies Students in the Graduate School. Therefore, with the help of this study, ELS students will be more equipped before or after they obtain there post graduate studies as this study emphasizes their competence in sociolinguistics, discourse, and literary competences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to assess the Sociolinguistics, Discourse, and Literary Competences Among English Language Studies Students which will serve as basis for competency-based program for English language studies students.

Specifically, it sought to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age, nationality, sex, educational attainment, and years of studying English as a medium; to identify their sociolinguistic competence in terms of social experience and language attitudes; to identify the discourse competence in terms of coherence and cohesion; to determine the literary competence in terms of Literary exposure and Text recognition; to test the significant difference on sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and literary competence when grouped according to profile; to identify the relationship between sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and literary competence; and to suggest an action plan based on the results of the study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study used quantitative descriptive method. [5] to assess the English language studies students' sociolinguistics, discourse, and literary competences.

Participants

The respondents of the study were comprised by the total number of both local and international ELS students specifically, 162 students who are enrolled in the graduate school program of the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas. However, only 146 or 90% of the total population willingly participated in the survey.

Data Gathering Instrument

In gathering data for this study, the researcher utilized a survey questionnaire to achieve the study's objectives and goals. The researcher used an adapted questionnaire from several research which was checked and validated by experts and undergone reliability testing. The first part of the questionnaire is composed on the demographic profile of the respondents such as age, nationality, sex years of studying with English as the medium, and degree.

The second part of the questionnaire is about the sociolinguistic competence of the students in terms of social experiences and language attitude. This questionnaire was adapted from the study of Aguila, Barro and Magtibay (2017) entitled, *Sociolinguistic Competence of the College of Teacher Education Students* [6] which uses the following Likert scale: 4 – Always 3 – Most of the time, 2 –Sometimes, and 1 – Never. After reliability testing, each sub-variable obtained the following Cronbach's Alpha:

Table 1
Reliability Test Results

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
I speak English at/in...	0.869	Good
Social Experiences	0.755	Acceptable
Language Attitude	0.760	Acceptable

George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb:
"_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and _ < .5 – Unacceptable"

The third part of the questionnaire is for discourse competence in terms of coherence and cohesion. This part was adapted from the study of Briobo (2017)

entitled *Discourse Competence of the College of Teacher Education Students* [7]. It uses the following Likert scale: 4- To a very great extent; 3- To a great extent; To a moderate extent; and 1-To no extent at all. After reliability testing, each sub-variable obtained the following Cronbach's Alpha:

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Coherence	0.923	Excellent
Cohesion	0.885	Good

George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb:
"_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and _ < .5 – Unacceptable"

Lastly, the fourth part of the questionnaire is for literary competence in terms of literary exposure and text recognition. This part was adapted from the study of Shalan (2016) entitled *Investigating the Literary Competence Development of the Learners of English at the Tertiary Level* [8]. It uses the likert scale: 4 – Always 3 – Most of the time, 2 –Sometimes, and 1 –Never. After reliability testing, each sub-variable obtained the following Cronbach's Alpha:

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Literary Exposure	0.877	Good
Text Recognition	0.907	Excellent

George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb:
"_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and _ < .5 – Unacceptable"

Procedure

The topic was proposed by the researcher to a panel of experts which includes the dissertation writing professor, program dean, and subject experts. Once the topic was approved, a thorough literature review was conducted to further investigate the relevance of the study. A survey questionnaire was also looked up on several research journals and references. It was followed by reliability testing to determine the acceptability of each variable and indicators.

The finalized questionnaire was distributed to foreign students of LPU-Batangas Graduate School through Microsoft Forms. The researcher emphasized the relevance of the respondents' responses to the study. The researcher discussed some terminologies with the respondents so that they can answer the questionnaire knowing exactly what they are responsible for as the study's subject. The respondents asked to sign the data privacy consent and to answer truthfully on the survey questionnaire.

After data gathering, the data were tallied, interpreted, and reported to the panel.

Data Analysis

The results of the study were interpreted using different statistical tools. The demographic profile of the respondents was described using frequency distribution. The results were calculated using weighted mean and independent sample t-test which assessed the sociolinguistic, discourse and literary competence of both Filipino and International students. Moreover, to further test the significant difference between the three variables, analysis of variance and Pearson-product moment correlation were used.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed ethical considerations, such as informed consent. This principle addresses concerns related to research involving human beings, risk-benefit analysis, observation and monitoring, informed consent and additional safety measures, subject selection, privacy, and confidentiality. The values, rights, and interests of research participants shall also be secured by these ethical guidelines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2
Table on Sociolinguistic Competence

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Social	2.18	Sometimes	2
Language Attitude	2.62	Most of the Time	1
Composite Mean	**2.40**	**Sometimes**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Most of the Time; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

Table 2 shows the summary on Sociolinguistic Competence. Most of the time the respondents show competence in their language attitude with the weighted mean of 2.62. On the other hand, the respondents sometimes demonstrates competence in social experience obtaining a weighted mean of 2.18. Likewise, the results shows that most of the time the respondents display sociolinguistic competence regarding language attitude.

It can be inferred that the respondents are able to comprehend and respond to most social and cultural factors that influence language use which can be supported by result with the weighted of 2.62. This generally illustrates that they have an expertise in

sociolinguistics. In contrast, the respondents sometimes show competence in terms of social experience. It only shows that they can use language in as long as it is appropriate in the social context.

The respondents likely have greater linguistic attitude experience than social experience. This could be the case because social experience is more specialized while language attitude is a more generic term. It's possible that the items in the linguistic attitude scale were more recognizable to the respondents than those in the social experience scale. This might be as a result of the linguistic attitude scale's simpler and easier-to-use design. Furthermore, it's possible that respondents were more inclined to provide truthful answers to the linguistic attitude questions than the social experience questions. This might be as a result of the language attitude items having a greater bearing on their individual experiences. Tejada [9] mentioned that students need more experience and exposure in using the English language, and more opportunities for the application of their linguistic knowledge in various social situations. The cultural and social support should not only be for the positive well-being of international students, but also for helping them to cope with the host culture and society [10]. Similarly, sociolinguistic competence can be improved through explicit instruction [11].

Table 3
Table on Discourse Competence

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Coherence	2.76	Most of the Time	1
Cohesion	2.65	Most of the Time	2
Composite Mean	**2.70**	**Most of the Time**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Most of the Time; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

Coherence and cohesiveness both have mean ratings that are somewhat high, indicating that respondents are generally proficient in these areas of discourse competency. The respondents may be marginally better at organizing their ideas than they are at connecting them, as indicated by the fact that the mean score for cohesiveness is somewhat lower than the mean score for coherence. Discourse competence is associated with successful second language acquisition [12]. This is similar to the findings of Celce-Murcia [13] which states that discourse competence is a key component of communicative competence. Spoken texts were acceptable and sufficient in terms of cohesion, but

inadequate and undesirable in terms of coherence.

Table 4
Table on Literary Competence

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Literary Exposure	2.72	Most of the Time	1
Text Recognition	2.42	Sometimes	2
Composite Mean	**2.57**	**Most of the Time**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always; 2.50 – 3.49 = Most of the Time; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes; 1.00 - 1.49 = Never

This suggests that the participants are frequently engaged with literary materials, such as books, articles, poems, or other forms of written literature. A higher mean score implies a higher level of exposure and engagement with literary works.

However, their weighted mean of 2.42 indicates that individuals occasionally demonstrate proficiency in text recognition. This implies that although their ability to identify and comprehend texts may be somewhat proficient, it is not as strong or constant as their exposure to literature. The capacity to successfully understand and interpret written materials is known as text recognition.

Students who have a strong foundation in literary competence are more likely to be successful in their academic studies [14]. Creative and critical thinker students are product of their experience being involve to diverse type of literary pieces [15].

Overall, the result shows that the respondents have a higher level of literary competence. Whereas it is considered to be one of the most essential skills for students to obtain and develop.

Table 5
Difference of Responses on Sociolinguistic Competence When Grouped According to Profile

Age	λ^2_c / U	p-value	Interpretation
Social	0.05	0.975	Not Significant
Language Attitude	1.011	0.603	Not Significant
Nationality			
Social	31.493	<.001	Highly Significant
Language Attitude	34.206	<.001	Highly Significant
Sex			
Social	2065.5	0.103	Not Significant
Language Attitude	2082.5	0.119	Not Significant
Educational Attainment			
Social	2338.5	0.234	Not Significant
Language Attitude	2303	0.184	Not Significant
Years of studying language			
Social	368.5	0.043	Significant
Language Attitude	290.5	0.008	Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

The results suggest that people who are Filipino and have 10 years and above of experience studying English are more likely to be competent in sociolinguistic competence than people of other nationalities or with less experience studying English. This could be due to a number of factors, such as the fact that Filipino culture has a strong emphasis on the importance of communication, or that Filipino students are exposed to more English language media than students of other nationalities.

Consequently, AI-mediated interactive speaking exercises were more successful in enhancing the WTC and speaking abilities of EFL students. Additionally, the students' attitudes and views of the AI-mediated speaking teaching were favorable. [16].

On the other hand, students that has been exposed to different English language media demonstrates better sociolinguistic competence compared to students no with little to no exposure on any English language media [17].

Table 6
Difference of Responses on Discourse Competence When Grouped According to Profile

Age	λ^2_c / U	p-value	Interpretation
Coherence	0.607	0.738	Not Significant
Cohesion	4.343	0.114	Not Significant
Nationality			
Coherence	26.265	<.001	Highly Significant
Cohesion	46.795	<.001	Highly Significant
Sex			
Coherence	2005	0.059	Not Significant
Cohesion	2370	0.698	Not Significant
Educational Attainment			
Coherence	2638	0.994	Not Significant
Cohesion	2548	0.715	Not Significant
Years of studying English language			
Coherence	254.5	0.003	Significant
Cohesion	224.5	0.001	Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

The results suggest that people of Filipino heritage who have studied the language for 10 years or more are more likely than people of other nationalities or with less

English study experience to be fluent speakers of the language. This could be due to a number of factors, such as the Filipino culture's strong emphasis on communication or the fact that Filipino students are exposed to a greater number of English-language media than students from other nations.

Filipino students who had studied English for ten years or longer demonstrated much higher discourse competency than students who had studied the language for less time [14]. In a different study, it was discovered that Filipino students who were exposed to more English-language media had a noticeably higher level of discourse competency than students who were not [17].

These literatures show that there is an evident connection between nationality, years of studying English to discourse competence. In contrast, this evidence is correlational, meaning, they do not sole prove that these factors are the only causes of the gap in discourse competence. It could be inferred that there are other factors, educational system for instance or the cultural emphasis on communication.

Table 7
Difference of Responses on Literary Competence
When Grouped According to Profile

Age	χ^2_c / U	p-value	Interpretation
Literary Exposure	1.043	0.594	Not Significant
Text Recognition	2.932	0.231	Not Significant
Nationality			
Literary Exposure			Highly
	26.399	<.001	Significant
Text Recognition			Highly
	37.297	<.001	Significant
Sex			
Literary Exposure	2033	0.078	Not Significant
Text Recognition	2258.5	0.392	Not Significant
Educational Attainment			
Literary Exposure	2253	0.126	Not Significant
Text Recognition	2218.5	0.091	Not Significant
Years of studying English language			
Literary Exposure	394	0.069	Not Significant
Text Recognition	464	0.206	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Filipino English major students studying in Indonesia shows a higher score in terms of literary competence compared to students from other countries. This finding is supported by numerous research.[4]

In addition, students who had studied Filipino literature had significantly better understanding of literary texts than students who had not studied Filipino literature. These studies suggest that there is a link between nationality and literary competence. However,

it is important to note that these studies are correlational, which means that they cannot prove that nationality is the sole cause of the difference in literary competence. It is possible that there are other factors, such as the educational system or the cultural emphasis on literature, that could also be contributing to the difference [18].

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that most of the respondents who answered the survey were Chinese, female, and are in the doctorate level. They had also studied English for 10 years or more; the result shows that the respondents most of the time display sociolinguistic competence in terms of language attitude. However, the respondents sometimes show competence in terms of social experiences; the respondents most of the time show competence both in coherence and cohesion as to discourse competence; In terms of literary competence, the respondents most of the time the show competence in literary exposure while they sometimes show competence in text recognition; there was a highly significant difference both on sociolinguistic and discourse competence when grouped according to nationality; and significant difference when grouped according to years of studying English language; there is also a highly significant difference on literary competence when grouped according to Nationality; There is a highly significant relationship among sociolinguistic, discourse and literary competence, A competency-based program was proposed to strengthen the sociolinguistics, discourse and literary competence of the English language studies students.

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