

Relationship Between Filipino Language Proficiency, Literacy Skills, and Academic Performance Among Grade 11 Learners in Basilan Province

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Abstract—This study investigates the relationship between Filipino language proficiency, literacy skills, and academic performance among Grade 11 learners in Basilan Province, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 320 Grade 11 students across six public senior high schools in Basilan. Findings revealed high proficiency levels in cultural and educational aspects of the Filipino language ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.68$) but moderate proficiency in basic language skills ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.75$). Literacy skills demonstrated strong overall performance ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$), though vocabulary development and reading comprehension showed areas requiring improvement. Statistical analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between literacy skills and academic performance ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$), particularly in reading comprehension ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). However, Filipino language proficiency did not show a significant relationship with academic outcomes ($r = 0.18$, $p > 0.05$). The study recommends implementing targeted literacy intervention programs, enhancing teacher professional development, and strengthening parental involvement in literacy activities. These findings contribute to educational policy development specific to conflict-affected regions like Basilan.

Keywords—Filipino language proficiency, literacy skills, academic performance, Basilan, Grade 11 learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), particularly Basilan Province, presents unique educational challenges due to its geographical isolation, historical conflict situations, and multicultural linguistic landscape [1]. With multiple languages spoken including Yakan, Tausug, Chavacano, and Filipino, understanding the relationship between language proficiency, literacy skills, and academic achievement becomes crucial for educational planning and policy formulation [2].

Previous research has established connections between language proficiency and academic success in various contexts [3], [4]. However, studies specifically examining these relationships in conflict-affected provinces like Basilan remain limited. The current educational landscape in Basilan faces challenges including limited educational resources, teacher deployment issues, and varying levels of student preparedness [5]. Other study also focus on language but more on reading and comprehension in English context [15], and Language Barriers for Pre-Service Teachers [16].

This study addresses this gap by investigating the specific relationship between Filipino language proficiency, literacy

skills, and academic performance among Grade 11 learners in Basilan Province. The research builds upon existing literature while providing context-specific insights that can inform localized educational interventions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement

Language proficiency has been consistently linked to academic achievement across various educational contexts. Cummins [6] proposed the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), suggesting that while BICS may develop within 2-3 years, CALP requires 5-7 years to reach proficiency levels necessary for academic success.

In the Philippine context, Filipino serves as both a national language and a medium of instruction in certain subjects. Studies have shown that students' proficiency in the language of instruction significantly impacts their academic performance [7], [8]. However, the multilingual nature of many Philippine provinces, particularly in Mindanao, complicates this relationship.

B. Literacy Skills Development

Literacy encompasses more than just reading and writing; it includes vocabulary development, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and information processing skills [9]. Research indicates that strong literacy foundations correlate strongly with academic success across all subject areas [10]. In multilingual contexts like Basilan, literacy development faces additional challenges. Students may develop literacy skills in their mother tongue, Filipino, and English simultaneously, requiring careful instructional planning and resource allocation [11].

C. Contextual Factors in Basilan

Basilan Province presents unique contextual factors that influence educational outcomes. Historical conflict, geographical isolation, and limited infrastructure have impacted educational delivery and student learning opportunities [12]. Additionally, the province's multicultural composition, with significant Yakan, Tausug, and Chavacano populations, creates a complex linguistic environment where students navigate multiple language systems [13].

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships between Filipino language proficiency, literacy skills, and academic performance among Grade 11 learners in Basilan Province.

B. Participants

The study involved 320 Grade 11 students from six public senior high schools across Basilan Province. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different municipalities and school types. The sample included 168 male and 152 female students, with ages ranging from 16 to 19 years (M = 17.3, SD = 0.8).

C. Instruments

Three main instruments were used in this study:

1. Filipino Language Proficiency Test: Adapted from the National Achievement Test framework, assessing basic language skills, cultural understanding, and educational applications of Filipino.
2. Standardized Literacy Assessment: Measuring vocabulary development, reading comprehension, writing skills, and critical literacy abilities.
3. Academic Performance Records: Official grade reports covering the first semester of the academic year, converted to numerical equivalents for statistical analysis.

D. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficients) using SPSS version 25. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

IV. RESULTS

A. Filipino Language Proficiency Levels

Table I presents the mean scores and standard deviations for Filipino language proficiency across different dimensions.

TABLE I. Filipino Language Proficiency Levels Among Grade 11 Learners In Basilan

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Basic Language Skills	3.42	0.75	Moderate
Cultural Understanding	4.21	0.68	High
Educational Applications	4.15	0.72	High
Overall Proficiency	3.93	0.65	High

Note: Scale: 1.00-2.00 = Low; 2.01-3.00 = Fair; 3.01-4.00 = Moderate; 4.01-5.00 = High

The results indicate that Grade 11 learners in Basilan demonstrate high overall proficiency in Filipino, particularly in cultural understanding and educational applications. However, basic language skills such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary usage show moderate levels, suggesting a need for foundational skill reinforcement.

B. Literacy Skills Performance

Table II shows the literacy skills performance of participants across different domains.

TABLE II. Literacy Skills Performance Among Grade 11 Learners In Basilan

Literacy Domain	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Vocabulary Development	3.38	0.82	Moderate
Reading Comprehension	3.45	0.79	Moderate
Writing Skills	3.92	0.74	High
Critical Literacy	3.81	0.77	High
Overall Literacy	3.89	0.71	High

Note: Same scale interpretation as Table I

While overall literacy skills are rated as high, specific areas such as vocabulary development and reading comprehension show moderate performance levels. This suggests that students possess strong foundational literacy skills but require additional support in advanced comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

C. Correlation Analysis

Table III presents the correlation coefficients between the studied variables and academic performance.

TABLE III. Correlation Between Language Proficiency, Literacy Skills, And Academic Performance

Variable	r	p	Interpretation
Filipino Language Proficiency	0.18	0.089	Not Significant
Literacy Skills (Overall)	0.67	<0.001	Significant
Reading Comprehension	0.72	<0.001	Significant
Vocabulary Development	0.58	<0.001	Significant

The analysis reveals a significant positive correlation between literacy skills and academic performance ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$), with reading comprehension showing the strongest relationship ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, Filipino language proficiency does not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with academic outcomes ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.089$), suggesting that general language proficiency may not directly translate to academic success in this context.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Key Findings

The study's findings reveal several important insights about the educational landscape in Basilan Province. First, while students demonstrate high proficiency in cultural and educational aspects of Filipino, their basic language skills remain at moderate levels. This pattern suggests that students may have developed contextual understanding of Filipino through cultural exposure but require systematic instruction in fundamental language mechanics.

Second, the strong correlation between literacy skills and academic performance aligns with international research emphasizing literacy as a foundational skill for academic success [14]. The particularly strong relationship between reading comprehension and academic outcomes underscores the importance of comprehension strategies across all subject areas.

Third, the lack of significant correlation between Filipino language proficiency and academic performance may reflect the multilingual reality of Basilan, where students navigate

multiple language systems. Academic success may depend more on general literacy competencies than specific proficiency in any single language.

B. Implications for Practice

These findings have several practical implications for educators and policymakers in Basilan:

1. Targeted Literacy Interventions: Schools should implement focused programs to strengthen vocabulary development and reading comprehension skills.
2. Teacher Professional Development: Educators need training in evidence-based literacy instruction strategies that address the specific needs of multilingual learners.
3. Parental Involvement: Programs should engage parents in supporting literacy development at home, regardless of their own language proficiency levels.
4. Curriculum Adaptation: Educational materials should be designed to leverage students' cultural knowledge while systematically building foundational literacy skills.

C. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences about the relationships observed. Second, the sample was limited to public schools, potentially missing insights from private educational institutions. Third, the study focused primarily on quantitative measures and may have overlooked qualitative aspects of language learning.

Future research should explore longitudinal designs to track language and literacy development over time, include mixed-methods approaches to capture students' lived experiences, and investigate the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies in the Basilan context.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between Filipino language proficiency, literacy skills, and academic performance among Grade 11 learners in Basilan Province. The findings highlight the critical importance of literacy skills, particularly reading comprehension, for academic success, while suggesting that general Filipino language proficiency may not be the primary determinant of academic outcomes in this multilingual context.

The results underscore the need for targeted educational interventions that address specific literacy gaps while building upon students' cultural and linguistic strengths. By

implementing evidence-based literacy programs and supporting teacher professional development, educational stakeholders in Basilan can work toward improving student outcomes and addressing educational inequities in this unique provincial context.

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