

Competency of English as Second Language (ESL) Program in a State University in the Philippines

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Abstract: Since globalization has been visibly taking its shape in Southeast Asian countries over the years, the Philippines have been attracting foreign students to enroll in their English as Second Language (ESL) programs. By using the Input-Process-Output model, the researcher used Karatas and Fer's questionnaire to evaluate the English curriculum of Bulacan State University. The Area IV and Area XIII of Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines' (AACCCUP) survey instrument were also used to determine the adequacy of the physical plants and the University's support for the students. The assessment and analysis of gathered data were done through tabulating the frequency, percentage, and mean using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results showed that the ESL curriculum was very satisfactory in harnessing the English communication skills of the foreign students. It also revealed that BulSU has provided adequate administrative support and facilities relating to their needs.

Keywords: Globalization, English as Second Language, education, Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is considered to be the "Holy Grail" in field of education, and mastery of the language is perceived to be a global advantage. Crystal (2003) reported that many countries choose English as the means of communication in their schools because of its educational value, especially in the field of science and technology. In fact, Large in 1983 (as cited in Crystal, 2003) reported a study in which 85 percent of scientific papers in biology and physics were written in English. Evidently, English is strongly prevalent in the field of education, which strengthens its reputation as the global language, as many educational institutions use it as the medium of instruction.

Moreover, English is the leading language in the field of communications as perceived by professionals. Crystal (2003) mentioned the British Council project called *English 2000*, wherein 96 percent of English language teaching (ELT) practitioners from 90 countries believed that English will be the main language in international communications. Hence, it remains to be the most influential and dominant, as seen on how it is used in various countries.

As globalization is clearly and evidently forming a strong bond with Southeast Asian nations, non-native English speakers feel the need to learn the language, and many of them choose to study English in the Philippines. The country has ranked first in the 2013 Business English Index with a rating of 7.95, while Norway and Netherlands landed second and third place, respectively (Pearson English Business Solutions, 2013). In 2010, Philippines ranked 35th out of 163 countries, who took TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) as reported by Educational Testing Service (Chavez, 2014). South Korea, China and Japan were in 80th, 105th, and 135th places, respectively, where most foreign students enrolled in ESL programs in the country come from.

Bulacan State University (BulSU) is one of the Philippine universities offering international programs, and has existing international linkages with neighboring Asian universities and colleges. Since 2008, BulSU has been providing English as

second language (ESL) program to foreign students from various countries such as South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan and Indonesia. It aims to develop and hone the speaking, writing and grammar skills of foreign students in the English language.

Students are typically assessed through a written examination to determine their proficiency level in the language before administering the appropriate level of ESL program from one to two months. BulSU accommodates walk-in applicants but most ESL students come from universities and colleges that have an existing international linkages with BulSU.

With the growing population of foreign students in BulSU, or even in the Philippines, the researcher observed the need to evaluate the level of competency of the University in terms of its English curriculum, administrative support to the students and the adequacy of its physical plants.

ENGLISH CURRICULUM

While it is true that appropriate and innovative teaching strategies are some of the keys to provide quality education, however, the level of competence of a university's ESL curriculum must also be perused, which is one of the focal points of the current research. According to English (2010) curriculum is the overall content of education including its various forms. His study explained that the Latin word *curriculum* is associated with the notion of "designed experience," meaning it has been well-thought out and carefully planned before running it on a full course. Hence, English noted that curriculum is the "designed life" of students throughout their schooling.

Transformative Learning Theory explains the process of transformation after a period of studying (Whalley, 1995). It relates how foreign student undergo multicultural training that enables the students to learn a new meaning scheme, which is instrumental and communicative. For the entire ESL program to be transformative, the English curriculum must be effective in developing the students' English proficiency. This will prove the efficacy of the curriculum in the learning process of the students.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) states how behavior, environment, and personal/cognitive theory influence self-efficacy, which is achieved through overcoming obstacles through perseverance and sustained efforts. Foreign students develop self-efficacy as they create their own solutions whenever they face problems in adapting to the new culture. Providing adequate administrative support for international students will help them in coping up to the way of living of the country they are currently staying in.

Administrative support must go beyond helping the students on processing their visa-related documents. Zhai (2004) reported that foreign students in U.S. universities described the Office of International Education (OIE) staff to be helpful in processing their visas and assisting them for their travels and financial problems. However, they still prefer to turn to their family and friends for their personal problems, as the staff seemed to be very busy and "had no time to discuss the personal concerns." This shows the importance of providing adequate student support to help the foreign students feel that they can rely to University officials regarding their problems, either academic or personal concerns.

Every university must be able to provide warmth and care, if not familial connection, to the students, for them to trust the university officials regarding their welfare in order for them to enjoy and maximize their stay.

PHYSICAL PLANTS AND FACILITIES

Department of Education's Educational Facilities Manual (2010) defined educational buildings as "facilitating agents" of all academic activities inside the school. These structures are crucial in providing a conducive environment for learning. Thus, these must adapt to the evolution of teaching methods and school organizations.

Asiabak (2008) revealed that facilities play a significant part in the teaching and learning processes inside the school. She cited that successful implementation of an institution's goals lie on the proper facility provision and management of the administration. Hence, infrastructures inside educational institutions must aid in the learning experience of the students and help the teachers in improving their facilitation of lessons.

With the continuous growth of BulSU's international students, this research aims to evaluate the University's ESL program. It will be assessed through identifying the level of competency of its ESL curriculum, and the adequacy of the administrative support and facilities in relation to the needs of the foreign students. Through identifying the level of competency and adequacy of these factors, the study can assess if the University's ESL program.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Method

The research used quantitative method, which analyzes numerical data through mathematical processes (Mujis, 2010). This method deals with collection and manipulation of "hard data" in order to produce the results needed by the study (Neuman, 2014).

Respondents

The researcher chose 50 ESL teachers and 50 Korean students from the Language Center of Bulacan State University as the respondents. The students were already staying in the University for one month, and are enrolled in the ESL program of the University. The teachers were chosen based on their capability to effectively communicate in English and their tenure in the institution, which must be at least five years.

Bulacan State University Language Center provides intensive and interactive classes that focus on grammar rules and specialize in honing the speaking, listening, reading, writing abilities of the students. The University's Language Center has international linkages with various Asian universities and colleges, such as Chosun University, Ulsan College, and Chungbuk University among others.

Research Instrument

The study used three sets of questionnaire to gather the needed information to evaluate the competency of BulSU's ESL program in terms of its curriculum, administrative support to the students and the adequacy of its facilities.

The first questionnaire is developed by Karatas and Fer (2009) that aims to evaluate the competency of BulSU's ESL curriculum. It is composed of 38 items to assess the efficacy and competency of the ESL curriculum. The items for the first questionnaire were measured using the Likert Scale of 5 – Outstanding, 4 – Very Satisfactory, 3 – Satisfactory, 2 – Fair, and 1 – Needs Improvement.

The second set of questionnaire is adopted from the Area IV of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines' (AACCUP) survey instrument that intended to determine the level of administrative support to the students. AACCUP is responsible for accrediting the curricular programs of various colleges and universities in the Philippines.

The administrative support to the foreign students was measured based on the services provided by the Student Affairs department and overall support by the administrative officials, personnel, and faculty members. This part showed how the University help the foreign students regarding their needs.

The third set of questionnaire came from Area VIII of AACCUP survey instrument, which consisted of 14 items. It focused on the level of adequacy of the physical plant and facilities of the University. The adequacy was measured based on the location, infrastructures, buildings, and equipment of the University that were vital in ensuring the effectiveness of the ESL program.

The items for the last two sets of questionnaire were measured by using the Likert scale of 3 – Very Adequate, 2 – Adequate, and 1 – Not Adequate.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Using the Input-Process-Output model, the needed data was gathered through using three sets of questionnaires, which are internationally and locally adopted for the study.

After tabulating the frequency of the gathered data, the information were statistically treated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The mean was determined for each statement per questionnaire, which is also the basis for the verbal interpretation for each statement.

The interpreted results were the bases for further recommendations on BulSU's ESL program in terms of any possible improvements.

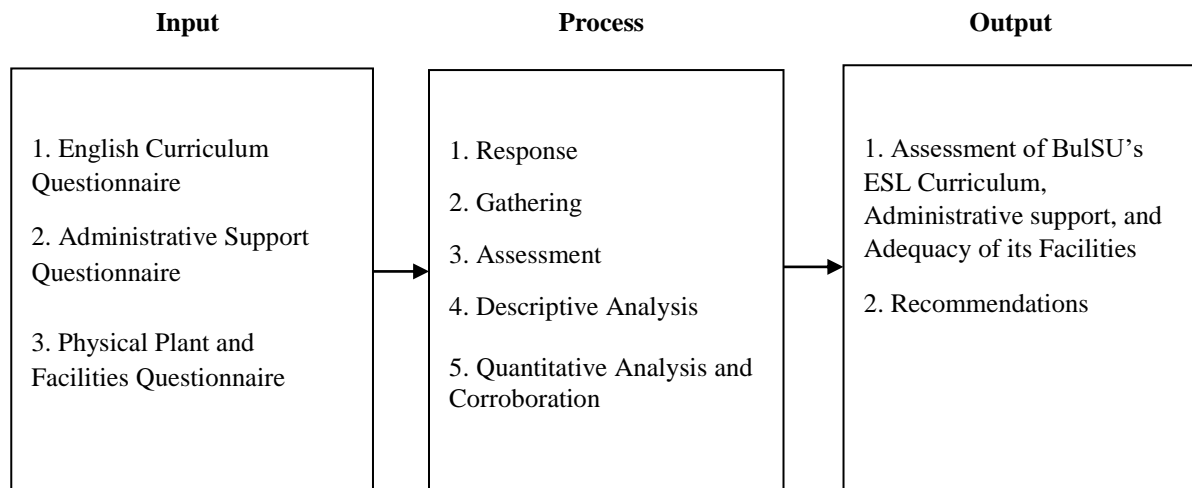


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

III. RESULTS

The following tables show the varied outcomes of the study showing the competency of BulSU's ESL program in terms of its curriculum, administrative support to the students, and physical facilities. Table 1 presents the evaluation of the English curriculum as viewed by the 50 faculty members of BulSU Language Center. The questionnaire is composed of 38 items scrutinizing the level of competence of English curriculum. Table 2 reports the assessment made by the Korean students regarding the administrative support they are receiving in relation to their needs. Lastly, Table 3 indicates the perception of the Korean students on the sufficiency of BulSU's physical plants and facilities.

Table 1

Perceived Evaluation of the Faculty on the English as Secondary Language Curriculum of Bulacan State University

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Int.
1. The curriculum is appropriate for the improvement of the students' language skills.	18	19	12	0	0	4.12	VS
2. The curriculum meets the students' individual needs.	17	17	14	1	0	4.02	VS
3. The reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are balanced well in the curriculum.	17	21	10	1	0	4.08	VS
4. The curriculum meets the students' individual interests.	14	17	16	1	1	3.48	S
5. The curriculum meets the students' characteristics needs.	10	21	16	1	1	3.78	VS
6. The curriculum meets the students' existing needs related with English.	19	17	13	0	0	4.12	VS
7. The curriculum forms a basis for the students' future needs related with English.	16	19	14	0	0	4.04	VS
8. The curriculum contributes to the students' work related with their fields.	11	20	16	2	0	3.82	VS
9. The objectives of the curriculum meet the needs of the students regarding English.	15	20	16	1	0	4	VS
10. The curriculum has measurable objectives.	11	14	23	1	0	3.71	VS
11. The objectives of the curriculum are appropriate for the students' preliminary	17	14	17	1	0	3.6	VS

knowledge of English.

12. The level of the difficulty of the topics in the curriculum complies with their duration.	15	12	21	1	0	3.84	VS
13. The total duration of the curriculum is adequate.	14	11	24	0	0	3.8	VS
14. The coursebook of the curriculum is appropriate for the students' level.	13	19	16	1	0	3.9	VS
15. The coursebook attracts the students' attention.	12	13	21	3	0	3.69	VS
16. The content of the coursebook is comprehensible.	13	20	15	1	0	3.92	VS
17. The audio visual materials of the curriculum help the students learn easily.	14	13	19	2	1	3.76	VS
18. The audio visual materials of the curriculum attract the students' attention.	15	13	19	1	1	3.82	VS
19. The audio visual materials of the curriculum have positive effects on the students' language skills.	14	16	17	1	1	3.84	VS
20. The classwork of the curriculum helps the students learn easily.	15	18	15	0	1	3.94	VS
21. The classwork of the curriculum attracts the students' attention.	11	17	20	0	1	3.76	VS
22. The classwork of the curriculum has positive effects on the students' language skills.	15	19	12	1	1	3.88	VS
23. The curriculum motivates the students to learn.	18	12	16	2	0	3.88	VS
24. The projects assigned are according to the curriculum and affect the students' language skills positively.	14	22	11	1	0	3.94	VS
25. The curriculum increases the students' vocabulary knowledge in English.	14	21	10	2	1	3.86	VS
26. The curriculum helps the students to acquire the habit of studying English.	12	20	15	1	0	3.82	VS
27. The curriculum helps the students to acquire the habit of studying in groups.	12	20	15	1	0	3.80	VS
28. The curriculum gives the students the opportunity to use their knowledge.	14	22	11	1	0	3.94	VS
29. The students' improvement of English reading skills is satisfactory.	14	20	12	1	1	3.86	VS
30. The students' improvement of English writing skills is satisfactory.	16	18	14	0	0	3.96	VS
31. The students' improvement of English listening skills is satisfactory.	14	16	16	2	0	3.80	VS
32. The students' improvement of English speaking skills is satisfactory.	16	21	10	2	0	4.04	VS
33. The students' improvement of English grammar is satisfactory.	14	18	14	2	0	3.84	VS
34. The knowledge of English the students acquire at the end of the curriculum is satisfactory.	12	23	13	1	0	3.84	VS
35. The English skills the students acquire at the end	14	18	14	2	0	3.84	VS
36. The curriculum complies with the students' courses in their field of study.	14	17	16	2	0	3.88	VS
37. The curriculum helps the students to acquire the knowledge of English they need for their fields of study.	13	17	17	2	0	3.84	VS
38. The curriculum helps the students to acquire the knowledge of English they need for various business areas.	16	19	13	0	1	4.0	VS

As shown in Table 1, the teachers evaluated the English curriculum of Bulacan State University's ESL program to be very satisfactory in honing the communication skills of the Korean students. All 37 statements describing the English curriculum garnered means ranging from 3.6 – 4.12, which have a corresponding verbal interpretation of "Very Satisfactory." The teachers agreed that the curriculum is effective in meeting the students' existing needs relating to their English proficiency and it is suitable for the language improvement of the students. Both statements received a mean of 4.12.

The faculty members affirmed that the curriculum greatly helps in improving the students' skills in the following areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking and in grammar. The statements for each area received a verbal interpretation of "Very Satisfactory." In addition, the teachers also assessed that the curriculum significantly helped the students acquire the English proficiency they need for their respective courses or fields of study with a mean of 3.84.

On the other hand, the teachers assessed that the curriculum meets the students' individual interests satisfactorily with a mean of 3.48.

Table 2*Perceived Evaluation of the Foreign Students on the Adequacy of Administrative Support of the University*

Statements	3	2	1	Mean	Int.
1. The functions of the Student Affairs Services are focused on students' welfare, growth and development	32	15	3	2.58	VA
2. The office of Student Affairs Services provides services for students	21	26	3	2.36	A
3. The organization is headed by a qualified and competent personnel	21	28	1	2.40	A
4. The administration supports the needs of the student	15	34	1	2.28	A
5. The administration, faculty and staff, are supportive of the student services and activities in the university	13	35	2	2.22	A

Table 2 shows the assessment made by the foreign students regarding the adequacy of administrative support of the University. The Korean students perceived BulSU to be an adequate provider of the services they need during their stay. In that regard, four out of five statements received a mean ranging from 2.22 – 2.40 with a rating of "Adequate."

On the other hand, the students affirmed that the programs of the Student Affairs Services are centered on their welfare and development. They rated it with a mean of score of 2.58, which is equivalent to "Very Adequate."

Table 3*Perceived Evaluation of the Foreign Students on the Adequacy of the Physical Plant and Facilities of the University*

Statements	3	2	1	Mean	Int.
1. The Institution is located in an environment for educational activities.	14	34	2	2.24	A
2. The site can accommodate its present school population, and can handle expected future expansion.	13	29	8	2.10	A
3. The school is accessible by public transportation and has satisfactory roads and pathways.	20	24	6	2.28	A
4. There is a site plan displayed prominently in the campus indicating the location of the different buildings with their proper identification, driveways, parking areas,	7	35	8	1.98	A
5. The campus is well-planned, attractive, landscaped, and kept clean.	5	41	4	2.02	A
6. Where needed, covered walks are provided to protect the students from inclement weather	5	35	10	1.90	A
7. There is an area for extensive outdoor educational activities, e.g. social, physical, athletic, cultural, and military.	4	40	6	1.96	A
8. Emergency exits are provided and properly marked.	6	38	6	2.00	A
9. Classroom size meets standard specifications for specific activities	4	42	4	2.0	A
10. Classrooms are sufficient	5	34	11	1.88	A
11. The classrooms are well-lighted and ventilated, and with good acoustic.	6	36	8	1.96	A
12. Classrooms are maintained and kept clean	5	40	5	2.0	A
13. All offices are accessible and conveniently located with respect to their functions	5	40	5	2.0	A
14. Offices and staff rooms are clean, well-lighted and ventilated	7	38	5	2.04	A

Table 3 presents the evaluation of the foreign students with regards to the level of adequacy of the University's physical plants and facilities. All 14 statements were well-received after each obtained a mean ranging from 1.88 – 2.24, wherein each was interpreted to be "Adequate."

Based on the perception of the students, it shows that the University is well-equipped with facilities, such as classrooms and outdoor area for physical activities. This affirms the statement that BulSU is strategically located in an environment that is conducive for educational activities, with a mean of 2.24. Furthermore, the students regard BulSU to be accessible to public transportation and has enough roads, which even received the highest mean of 2.28. This shows that the University is reachable by almost all means of transportation, such as buses, public utility jeepneys (PUJs), and utility vehicles.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcomes of the study showed that the English curriculum of Bulacan State University's ESL program is perceived to be competent enough to effectively hone the English proficiency of the Korean students. Most of the statements received "Very Satisfactory" ratings from the faculty members, who have witnessed how the students effectively learn through the given curriculum. A curriculum is an important tool in harnessing the skills and values of students. Hence, it is an integral part of the ESL program to help ensure that foreign students' academic potentials will be fully maximized.

According to the students, the University provides adequate administrative support in relation to their needs. This shows how BulSU guarantees that their needs are well-attended. Acknowledging and providing the needed administrative support of the foreign students will help them adapt to the Filipino culture and prevent them from feeling isolated. It is important to let the students feel that they can depend on the staff even with their personal problems.

In addition, the Korean students perceived that the University provides adequate physical plants and facilities, which is vital for their complete learning experience. Educational facilities help in the maximum learning experience of the students (Asiabak, 2008). Therefore, adequate physical plants and facilities will help improve the students' learning process and provide a conducive environment both for the students and teachers.

The study recommends that the English curriculum be modified to suit the individual interests of Korean students, as this particular statement received the lowest mean tantamount to "Satisfactory." If the curriculum is altered in accordance to their interests, it may help increase their motivation to study in their classes.

Although the Korean students deem the University's facilities to be adequate, the provision of covered path walks against inclement statements were given the lowest rating. Hence, it is recommended that BulSU should create more covered path walks to protect the students against harsh weather conditions. Making the foreign students feel secure and safe while inside the school's premises will help them be more comfortable throughout their academic program.

This study has focused only on the perception of Korean students about Bulacan State University's ESL program and other factors affecting their stay in the institution – the administrative support and physical facilities. Future researchers may look into other aspects of learning that greatly influence their stay. They may also consider conducting studies about other nationalities studying English in BulSU or in the Philippines.

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