

Original Article

Level of English Proficiency of Freshman Criminology Students in the University of Eastern Philippines

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Abstract - This study was undertaken to determine the level of English Proficiency of the freshman criminology students in the University of Eastern Philippines. Specifically, the levels of the student's critical thinking skills were identified in terms of inferences, assumptions, and deductions, interpreting information and analyzing arguments.

One hundred sixty-three freshman criminology students of this university were randomly chosen as respondents. Two class observations of six (6) selected teachers of the freshman criminology students were conducted. This descriptive-correlational design study used frequency counts, weighted mean, percentages, multiple regression analysis, t-test for independent samples, and ranking in interpreting the data.

The student-respondents were highly exposed to the media, watching sports and Pinoy movies on television, then to reading novels/paperbacks. This exposure could be attributed to their poor English proficiency. In the critical thinking test, the majority of the student-respondents were good at assumptions and deductions, fair at interpreting information and analyzing arguments; and poor at inferences.

In learning styles and inferences, group learners were found to be significantly related to inferences. Nonetheless, visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and individual learners were not significantly related. Tactile and kinesthetic learning styles were significantly related to assumptions, while the visual, auditory, group, and individual styles were not. The visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, group, and individual learners were significantly related with deductions. Auditory and individual learning styles were found to be significantly related to interpreting information. On the other hand, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and group learning styles were not significantly related. It was further found out that kinesthetic and group learners were significantly related to analyzing arguments, but visual, auditory, tactile, and individual styles were not.

Good English proficiency was found to be significantly related only to assumptions and interpreting information. Fair English proficiency

was found to be significantly related only to assumptions. Poor English proficiency was found to be significantly related only to assumptions and interpreting information. Finally, a very poor English proficiency level was found not significantly related to any of the five (5) levels of critical thinking skills.

To sum up, the correlates of the critical thinking skills of the freshman criminology students of UEP were media exposure and English proficiency. Thus, the critical thinking skills of the freshman criminology students, particularly on the levels of inferences, assumptions, and interpreting information, were influenced by their level of exposure to media and their level of English proficiency.

Keywords - Critical thinking skills, Criminology students, Correlates, Teaching methodologies, Learning styles

1. INTRODUCTION

Language skills are important tools in expressing the students' opinions and getting their ideas across to communicate effectively with other people. Good communication skills make them confident and enrich their abilities to achieve more. English language is the medium of communication in school and is widely used in the country. However, freshman students in the University of Eastern Philippines have a poor ability in speaking and performing the second language. Criminology students are not exempted from this dilemma.

As an English teacher, the researcher has personally experienced the unwillingness to participate of her criminology students. They are hesitant to speak in English probably because they are afraid to make mistakes, and they grope for English words to express their ideas. Most of those enrolled in an English class cannot answer thought-provoking questions, and their grammar is a double handicap. They cannot write sensibly, and they spell poorly.

Criminology students are the future Law enforcers. Ensuring the safety of the citizens is their primary



goal. A variety of responsibilities are entailed to these brave souls, and one of the duties is to testify in court whereby one's expression of the English language is required. In other words, criminologists should possess good communication skills in order for them to express themselves clearly and effectively. What if they lack the facility of the English language? What will happen to the incident/accident report and many other reports that a police officer is required to accomplish?

The Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC), the educational training center for uniformed personnel such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), has lamented over the deteriorating quality of education of criminology students in the country, more particularly their English proficiency. PPSC President Ruben Platon said criminology schools in the country had shown a low quality of education, with some not offering any human rights subject in their curriculum, a situation he calls "dismal."

Nevertheless, the government is hard-pressed to train Criminology students and had implemented stringent measures to improve the quality of education to be competitive and effective in their field. In accordance with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act(RA)No. 7722, otherwise known as the "Higher of Education Act of 2004", the Criminal Justice of Education was established. The Commission on Higher Education issued Memo Order no.21, Series 2005, outlined the policies and standards for Criminology program from implementation in the academic year 2005-2006 CMO 21, provision engaging higher educational institutions to produce graduates with knowledge and skills to meet the challenge of globalization in the field of Criminology.

It has also been observed by some teachers that some freshman criminology students who are asked to share their thoughts and ideas on a certain topic would just say they do not have any idea. The worst is when they would just pretend to read their notes or lower their heads and say nothing.

The researcher believes that such a situation calls for urgent action. This substantiates the need to accomplish this study, the focus of which is to determine the correlates of critical thinking skills of the freshman criminology students in the University of Eastern Philippines. This will help the Department of Criminology a glimpse of the critical thinking skills of their students and look at the correlates that determine their critical thinking. Hence, this study.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study tried to look into the correlates of critical thinking skills of the freshman criminology students in the University of Eastern Philippines. Specifically, it aimed at meeting the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of English proficiency of the student-respondents.

2. To determine the level of critical thinking skills of the student-respondents:

- 2.1 inference;
- 2.2 assumptions;
- 2.3 deduction;
- 2.4 interpreting information; and
- 2.5 analyzing arguments

3.To determine the significant relationship between the instruction-related factors and the level of critical thinking skills of the student-respondents.

4. To determine the significant relationship between the student-related factors and the level of critical thinking skills of the student-respondents.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Bachelor of Science Criminology program was approved by the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP) Board of Regents on November 2006, Resolution No.21 s. 2001. It was Dr. Pedro B. Destura's brainchild. The first batch of qualified students was admitted to this professional course by the second semester, the school year 2005-2006.

The BS Criminology started under the Department of Social Science. On April 13, 2006, Special Order 39, s. 2009 created the Department of Criminology under Atty. Mar P. De Asis. Prof. Leopoldo C. Cui was designated as the Department Chair.

In its modest seven (7) years of sailing, it carved its own name in the university as number 1 in total enrollment, the first Technical Education and Skills Development Authority-Commission on Higher Education (TESDA-CHED) accredited center for NC1 and NC2 (Security Services) in Northern Samar, with accredited firing range facility, modern fingerprint and questioned document equipment.

This study made use of the descriptive-correlational method of research in order to determine the level of critical thinking skills of the freshman criminology students in the University of Eastern Philippines as affected by variables. This descriptive research is a correlation study since it establishes the relationship between the level of critical thinking skills and the level of instruction-related factors of the student-respondents. Likewise, it looks into the relationship between the level of critical thinking skills and the level of student-related factors of the student-

respondents. Similarly, this tried to analyze the relationship between the level of critical thinking skills and the level of English proficiency of the student-respondents.

Three sets of instruments were used in gathering the required and needed data.

This study included the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables were the instruction-related factors in terms of teaching methodology/strategy, instructional materials, classroom activities; student-related factors in terms of learning style preferences and media exposure; and English proficiency.

The dependent variable was critical thinking skills in inferences, assumptions, deductions, interpreting information, and analyzing arguments.

The overall population of freshman criminology students is two hundred seventy-six (276). If the population under study is too large to handle and will entail too much time, cost, and effort, taking samples is a good alternative. It should be noted that if a small part of the population is considered, sampling error should be expected.

A total of one hundred sixty-three (163) student-respondents were determined using simple random sampling. A simple random technique was used by which the researcher marked numbers 1 and 2 on the pieces of paper, and these were placed in a container. The students were randomly drawn from the container. The students who got the numbers were considered the respondents.

The respondents of this study were the five (5) sections of freshman criminology students of the University of Eastern Philippines enrolled in the second semester of the school year 2013-2014. The profile of freshman criminology students at the College of Arts and Communication in University of Eastern Philippines for the 2nd semester of the school year 2013-2014 showed they were aged 16-19, mostly males and came from public secondary schools with grade point average in high school from 75-89.

One hundred sixty-three student-respondents were determined using simple random sampling. The concerned students answered the survey questionnaire, English proficiency, and critical thinking tests in two (2) separate sessions.

This study employed three (3) sets of instruments: survey questionnaire, English proficiency test, and critical thinking test.

The survey questionnaire on teaching methodologies, instructional materials, classroom activities, and media exposure was constructed by the researcher and her adviser, while the students' learning style preferences section was adopted from Loverita's masteral thesis. The section on instruction was critiqued and polished by the panel of examiners before it was submitted for validation.

The English proficiency test was adopted from Mangada's dissertation. It consisted of a 100-item grammar test. The first part was composed of a 75-item multiple-choice test, and the second part consisted of a 25-item cloze test.

The 50-item critical thinking test comprises five (5) sections, namely; Inferences, Assumptions, Deductions, Interpreting Information and Analyzing arguments. Each section is composed of 10 points.

The critical thinking test was constructed by her adviser. Only the directions and examples were taken from the practice critical thinking test produced by Copyscape, which she requested to use thru e-mail.

Class observations were conducted to qualify and cross-check the responses of the student-respondents.

Three kinds of data were analyzed, the survey questionnaire, English proficiency test, and critical thinking test. The data were scored and interpreted as follows:

English Proficiency

The English proficiency test scores were transmuted and interpreted using range; that is, getting the difference of the highest and lowest scores and dividing it by five to have five-group distribution. The English proficiency test has a total score of 100 points. Thus, the transmutation was classified as follows:

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking test scores were transmuted and interpreted using range; that is, getting the difference of the highest and lowest scores and dividing it by five to have five-group distribution. The Critical thinking test has a 10-item point for each section.

Validation of Research Instruments

Since the English proficiency test used in this study was patterned after the validated research instruments of the other researchers, further validation was not anymore needed.

However, the researcher validated the critical thinking test and survey questionnaire at San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila in Catarman. This school was used in pre-testing because it was not included in the actual testing of the respondents. Thirteen (13) freshman

criminology students answered the test and the questionnaire.

By using the split-half method, the survey questionnaire was divided into 2 parts, x and y variables. The researcher made use of the regression analysis to establish the relationship between the first and second parts of the instrument. The result revealed that the F ratio of 1.580465 is greater than the Significant F of .234731. Thus, the research hypothesis was accepted. The further result revealed that the multiple R was .354441. It can be implied that the instrument is valid and reliable.

The same method and analysis were used in the CT test. The result revealed that the F ratio of 11.7850 is greater than the Significant F of 0.005594. Thus, the research hypothesis was accepted. The Multiple R was found to be .719186, which shows that the instrument was valid and reliable.

In the gathering of data for this research, the following procedures were done:

1. After the researcher's class observation, intact classes were used in administering the test to avoid changing the class schedule of the students. She used the fishbowl technique for each section of the freshman criminology students.
2. A simple random technique was used by which the researcher marked numbers 1 and 2 on the pieces of paper, and these were placed in a container. The students drew the piece of paper from the container. The thirty-three students for each section who got the number 1s were considered the respondents.
3. The schedule of classes of the respondents was arranged for (2) two sessions. Specific instructions were given to the respondents to avoid discrepancies in the data. Changing and guessing of answers were not encouraged by the researcher.
4. The first session was utilized in distributing the English Proficiency Test to the student-respondents, and they were given (40) forty minutes to answer it. Survey questionnaires were distributed after they answered the English proficiency test and were given (25) twenty-five minutes to complete it. The second session was utilized in answering the Critical thinking test; students were made to answer the Critical thinking test and were given (45) forty-five minutes.
5. After retrieving all the data, tallying and interpretation of the data gathered were made.

Frequency counts, percentages, and mean computations were used to analyze the data obtained.

To determine the classroom activities used by the teachers as perceived by the students, the ranking was used.

The item with the lowest mean of 3.4 and interpreted as "High" was "The teacher uses a variety of techniques such as lecture, group discussion, role-playing, and field trips." This confirms Pardo's study that teachers have to be more creative and industrious in using teaching methods applicable to the lesson.

Before the researcher administered the test, she observed six (6) teachers who were handling freshman criminology students. The purpose of the observation was to cross-check the students' answers in the survey questionnaire. For two sessions, she observed their classes and all the six (6) teachers used the memorization strategy. Among the teachers, four (4) utilized the lecture method, and the only one used group discussion. The item "The teacher uses a variety of techniques such as lecture, group discussion, role-playing, and field trips" got the lowest mean probably because the teachers did not use these methods/strategies as often as the other techniques.

Furthermore, all teachers had well-organized lectures and gave projects to their students. Two (2) of them required their students to write library research. Five (5) of them gave individual projects that did not depend on others for completion, and only one required group project.

In addition, almost all six (6) teachers asked questions that elicit critical thinking and thoughtful responses and motivated their students to participate in class discussions.

However, only one made use of role-play technique. The rest of them gave emphasis on independent learning.

IV. FINDINGS

English Proficiency

Table 3 presents the level of English proficiency of the student-respondents.

Out of 163 student-respondents, 80 or 49.08% obtained scores from 20-39 and interpreted as poor English proficiency, and two (2) students or 1.23% had scored from 60-79 and interpreted as good English proficiency. This indicates that only a few who were admitted to the criminology department have good English proficiency, and most of the students need to develop their English proficiency since they had poor English proficiency. With a grand mean of 32.6, this also indicates that a majority of the student-respondents had poor English proficiency. This indicates that these students need to develop their knowledge and skills in the second language to meet the challenge in the field of Criminology. It can be inferred that since the respondents were freshmen, which means that they

were fresh from high school, the English instruction at the high school level was inadequate. This further means that the students did not find ways to self-learning and were very dependent on the teacher, which means that self-help was not practiced among the student-respondents. This confirms Salazar's study that students need practice and opportunities to exercise their writing and speaking skills in English. This also confirms Mangada's study that students' language proficiency was below average.

Critical Thinking

Table 4 presents the level of critical thinking skills. Among the 163 student-respondents who took the critical thinking test, Eighty (80) students or 49.08% got scores 3-4 interpreted as "Poor at Inferences," and three (3) students or 1.84% got scores from 7-8 and interpreted as "Good at Inferences." With regard to assumptions, 75 or 46.01% achieved scores from 7-8 interpreted as "Good at Assumptions," and seven (7) or 4.29% got scores from 3-4 interpreted as "Poor at Assumptions." In the third section of the critical thinking test, 75 or 46% obtained scores from 7-8 interpreted as "Good at Deductions," and one (1)

student or .61% got the lowest score from 0-2 with interpretation as "Very Poor at Deductions."

In addition, three (3) students or 1.8% in the interpreting information section got the highest scores from 9-10 and interpreted as "Very Good at Interpreting Information," and 75 or 46% got score range from 5-6, which interpreted as "Fair at Interpreting Information." In Analyzing argument section, 81 students, or 49.7%, had scored from 5-6 interpreted as "Poor at Analyzing Arguments," and one (1) student or .61% attained the highest score from 9-10 interpreted as "Very Good at Analyzing Arguments." A majority of the freshman criminology students were good at assumptions and deductions, fair at interpreting information and analyzing arguments, and poor at inferences. This indicates that the critical thinking skills of the students were limited to cognition. This further indicates that since the respondents were freshmen, they still lack exposure to or involvement in classroom activities or learning experiences that enhance critical analysis, which is essential in enhancing the overall critical thinking skills of the learners.

Table 3. Level of English Proficiency of the Student-respondents

Raw Scores	Transmuted Rating	Interpretation	Frequency	Percent
80-100	1.5	Very Good English Proficiency	-	-
60-79	2.0	Good English Proficiency	2	1.23%
40-59	2.5	Fair English Proficiency	78	47.9%
20-39	3.0	Poor English Proficiency	80	49.08%
0-19	5.0	Very Poor English Proficiency	3	1.8%
Grand Mean			32.6	100%

Table 4. The Level of Critical Thinking Skills of the Student-respondents

Raw Scores	Interpretation	Critical Thinking Skills									
		Inferences		Assumptions		Deductions		Interpreting Information		Analyzing Arguments	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
9-10	Very Good	-	-	39	23.93%	20	12.26%	3	1.8%	1	.61%
7-8	Good	3	1.84%	75	46.01%	75	46%	38	23.3%	40	24.53%
5-6	Fair	43	26.38%	41	25.15%	57	35%	75	46%	81	49.7%
3-4	Poor	80	49.08%	7	4.29%	10	6.13%	42	26%	33	20.25%
0-2	Very Poor	37	22.70%	-	-	1	.61%	5	3%	8	4.9%
Total		163	100%	163	100%	163	100%	163	100%	163	100%

Test of Relationship

To test the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the level of critical thinking skills and the instruction-related factors of the student-respondents in teaching methodologies and instructional materials, the multiple regression analysis was used.

Relationship between the Instruction-related Factors and the Level of Critical Thinking Skills of the Student-respondents

Teaching Methodologies

The relationship between the teaching methodologies of the freshman criminology students' teachers and the respondents' level of critical thinking. The results indicate that the statements "lets his/her students memorize the lessons" and "motivates the students to participate in class discussions," although rated very high, were not significantly related to inferences since the computed F-ratio value of 0.890295 is lesser than the Significant F value of 0.116286 which means that the null hypothesis was rejected. Similarly, the mentioned teaching methodologies were also found not significantly related to assumptions, deductions,

interpreting information, and analyzing arguments since the computed F-ratios for the test of correlations were lower than the significant F value indicated above. On the other hand, the teaching methodologies which were rated high by the respondents, "assign group reports", "initiate creative and imaginative activities", "ask a variety of questions to elicit critical thinking", "require the students to write a term paper", "require individual projects", "on-hand- training", "assigns projects where students find solutions", "use a variety of teaching techniques like a lecture, panel discussion, field trip, etc.", "present well-organized lectures", and make use of "individualized instruction" were found to be significantly related to deductions with a computed F-ratio of 0.575588 which is higher than the Significant F value of 0.210098 but were found to be not significantly related to inferences, assumptions, interpreting information and analyzing arguments since the computed F-ratios of the tests of correlations for the mentioned critical thinking skills were lower than the Significant F values. This means that the mentioned teaching methodologies lead to the enhancement of the deductive thinking skills of the respondents but not to the four other critical thinking skills.

It can be gleaned from the data that the teaching methodologies of the freshman criminology students' teachers, namely assigning group reports, initiating creative and imaginative activities, asking a variety of questions to elicit critical thinking, requiring the students to write a term paper, requiring individual projects, on-hand- training, assigning projects where students find solutions, using a variety of teaching techniques like a lecture, panel discussion, field trip, etc., presenting well-organized lectures, and making use of individualized instructions led to deductive critical thinking skills of the respondents but not to inferences, assumptions, interpreting information and analyzing arguments which means that generally, there was no significant relationship between the teaching methodologies of the respondents' teachers and their critical thinking skills. The null hypothesis was then accepted. Thus, the researcher deduced that the teaching methodologies of the teacher do not essentially influence the critical thinking skills (except deductions) of the freshman criminology students of the University of Eastern Philippines.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings revealed the student-respondents were highly exposed to the media, watching sports and *Pinoy* movies on television, then to reading novels/paperbacks. This exposure could be attributed to their poor English proficiency.

In the critical thinking test, the majority of the student-respondents were good at assumptions and deductions, fair at interpreting information and analyzing arguments; and poor at inferences.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Since it was found out that the English proficiency of the respondents was poor, it is recommended that the English teaching in elementary and secondary be intensified so that those who enter college are already equipped with the basics of language competence. It is also recommended that the College of Arts and Communication intensify its Language Assistance Program to remedy the poor English proficiency of the learners.

2. It is also recommended that the students engage themselves in language learning activities outside the classroom like conversation using English, watching English language films, and close reading of English texts to aid themselves in attaining good English proficiency, considering that classroom as a language learning environment is limited.

3. Since the level of English proficiency is associated with critical thinking skills, particularly withdrawing assumptions and interpreting information, it is recommended that the teachers, especially those teaching freshman criminology students put primacy on critical thinking in their teaching and testing to help enhance the critical thinking skills of the respondents.

4. Finally, the teachers of non-English courses, except Filipino classes, should emphasize speaking and writing English in their classes to reinforce the enhancement of the student's critical thinking through language proficiency.

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