

# Demographic and Psycho – Academic Factors as Predictors of English Proficiency Test Performance

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**Abstract:** It is a fact among learners, not just the junior high school students that weaknesses in the English Language exist among them. They struggle in their English language academic performance most particularly in the areas of spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar usage and sentence construction. Since English language is important as a means of communication, it could be helpful to know the weak areas in the language to be able to provide academic intervention. The aim of this study was to determine the demographic and psycho – academic factors that may affect the English proficiency of the junior high School students in selected Augustinian Recollect Schools as manifested in their English Proficiency Tests (EPT) performance. Findings of the study provided data on the weaknesses of the students which were used as a basis of intervention measures in order to improve and further enhance their skills in the language. The descriptive-correlative method was used in this research. This is to discover the weaknesses in English of the junior high school students in selected Augustinian Recollect schools in Metro Manila, Quezon City and Cavite. The demographic characteristics: age, gender, school campus and the psycho – academic factors: goal – orientation and self – efficacy on their English language proficiency performance was also looked into if there was effect and influence. An English Proficiency Test Result that is administered in the school was used to determine their weaknesses in English in the language areas covered by the test. The respondents were grouped according to age, gender and school campus for demographic profile, and goal orientation and self – efficacy for psycho – academic factors to establish whether these variables have certain influence on the students' test ratings. The result of the study revealed that psycho – academic factors had significant effect in the English Proficiency test scores of the Augustinian Recollect Junior High School Students. The language area that they are weakest is vocabulary. A list of language areas activities, goal orientation and self – efficacy interventions was set to achieve English Language Proficiency.

**Keywords:** English language, proficiency, Augustinian recollect students, psycho–academic factors, weaknesses, goal orientation, self–efficacy.

## 1. Introduction

English Language is first spoken in early primitive England as a West Germanic language and now as an international language (Crystal, 2003). English has emerged as the leading language internationally and in professional context as United

States become a global superpower and through the presence of all printed and electronic media forms (Routes of English 2015). English, among the many languages after the usual Chinese and Spanish, is the third most adopted innate language in the world (Ethnologue, 2010). It is the most learned second language or official language of almost 60 states and countries around the world. There are more people who learned it as a second language than those native speakers of the language. English is the most usually and normally articulated language in Europe, North and South America, Canada and Australia. And it is also extensively spoken in some areas of the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia (Crystal, 2003).

As it grows and emerges as the most adapted language in any parts of the world and it becomes as well as the language of the global world, it poses a challenge to the learners in the school to where it is taught to be excellent and proficient in the English language. With that, it is an assurance that the weights in communication in the international world will be surpassed.

In learners, not just the junior high school students, weaknesses in the English Language exist. Although the Philippines is known for having very good speakers and writers of the English language, it is still a reality that many of Filipino learners are weak and poor in it. Problems and challenges are present just like in other countries where English is a second language. In a real classroom scenario, not all learners are fully motivated and interested to learn the language. Some enjoy it and are productive as they learn the language, but many have difficulty articulating their ideas, are poor in spelling, lack enough stock of vocabulary to use, have low confidence in speaking the language because of poor grammar usage and sentence construction background, and some are poor in spelling and punctuations.

It is this deterioration of the English proficiency among the students in this country that caused an overall decline in Philippine education, according to Carlos Conde of Davao City Philippines in his article Erosion of English Skills Threatens Growth in the Philippines. Supporting this claim is a recent government study that shows only seven (7) percent of high school graduates can properly read, speak or understand

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English, and poorly trained teachers are partly to blame. Education is a key to success. People should go with the flow of change and competence, using their best assets, their selves, in the world of competition. Being proficient in English language can give anybody the competitive edge in job or business prospects (Tocmo).

With all these laid as scenarios and reasons, the researcher became interested in determining the weaknesses in English of the junior high school students in selected Augustinian Recollect schools managed by Augustinian Recollect Sisters – of which the investigator is a member, and where she also teaches – and how the students’ English Proficiency Test (EPT) performances were influenced by selected demographic characteristics and psycho – academic factors.

The assessments done to the learners through and English Proficiency Test, Goal Orientation and Self – efficacy psychological test are means of identifying their performance in the English language. It also reveals the weaknesses in different areas of the English language.

These young people must be made aware of their weaknesses in the language and be provided with academic intervention to help them attain proficiency and mastery in English.

## 2. Methods

The study benefits from the descriptive correlational design. Actually, this design enabled the researcher to find the degree of correlation and influence between the English Proficiency Test Performance as the dependent variable and the selected demographic and psycho-academic factors as the independent ones at Augustinian Recollect schools in Metro Manila, Quezon City and Cavite. Findings of the study were used as basis to enhance and improve their skills in the English language.

## 3. Results and Discussions

This presents, analyzes and interprets the data gathered from the one hundred fifty (150) respondents who were all Augustinian Recollect junior high school students in Metro Manila, Quezon City and Cavite City in school year 2019 – 2020. This study was directed to know and identify the weaknesses of these students in English using an English Proficiency Test, and if certain demographic and psycho – academic factors have effect on their test performance.

### A. Characteristics of the Respondents

#### 1) Demographic

Table 1  
Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
12	33	22
13	17	11.33
14	24	16
15	15	10
16	62	40.67
TOTAL	150	100.0

It can be garnered from Table 1 that the mainstream majority of the respondents were 16 years old. There were 33 or 22 percent with age 12, 17 or 11.33 percent with age 13, 24 or 16 percent with age 14, 15 or 10 percent with age 15, and 62 or

40.67 percent with age 16 as the highest in frequency out of 150 respondents.

Table 2  
Gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
MALE	73	48.67
FEMALE	77	51.33
TOTAL	150	100.0

Table 2 shows that of 150 respondents, 73 or 48.67 percent were male and 77 or 51.33 percent were female. It shows that the big number of respondents were female.

Table 3  
Augustinian recollect schools of the respondents

AR Schools	Frequency	Percent
Saint Rita College Manila	50	33.3
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Quezon City	50	33.3
Saint Joseph College Cavite City	50	33.3
TOTAL	150	100.0

It can be gathered from Table 3 that there were 50 or 33.3 percent respondents from each of the three Augustinian Recollect Schools. Each school had the same number of respondents. This was intentionally done for purposive random samplings. The schools had only a one section per grade level in junior high school so using equal number of respondents for each school was favorable.

#### 2) Psycho-academic

Table 4  
Goal orientation of the respondents

Scores	Frequency	Percent	Verbal Description
4.31 – 5.00	70	46.67	High
3.51 – 4.30	58	38.67	Above Average
2.61 – 3.50	21	14	Average
1.81 – 2.60	0	0	Below Average
1.00 – 1.80	0	0	Low
N	150	100	
Mean	4.13		
Sd	0.57		

It can be gauged from Table 4 that 70 or 46.67 percent of the 150 respondents were classified as having a high-level goal orientation; 38.67 percent were on the above average and 14 percent on the normal or average level goal orientation. No respondents fell in the below average and low level’s goal orientation.

Table 5  
Self –efficacy of the respondents

Scores	Frequency	Percent	Verbal Description
75 – 100	74	49.33	High
50 – 74	73	48.67	Normal/Average
26 – 49	3	2	Below Normal
0 - 25	0	0	Low
N	150		
Mean	72.77		
Sd	10.98		

It can be garnered from Table 5 that 74 or 49.33 percent of the 150 respondents were classified as having a high-level self – efficacy constituting the most number of respondents. The

respondents with above average level self- efficacy were 73 or 48.67 percent with only one difference in frequency from those in the high-level goal orientation. There were only 3 or 2 percent with below normal level and none on the low-level self – efficacy among the 150 respondents.

3) *Language areas where the students were found weak*

It can be gleaned from Table 6 that the students’ performances in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and sentence construction were below the 75 mean score of the respondents. This also implies that students’ performance was very weak in vocabulary area compared to the other two areas. According to a study by Madhumathi Pasupathi and Arijit Ghosh, the students with higher level of reading proficiency frequently used reading strategies to comprehend academic texts. This was considered as a solution to weakness in reading comprehension.

On the other hand, the table shows that the students’ performances in spelling were high with 146 respondents in the 90 – 100 mean score out of 150 respondents.

To summarize, in Spelling, 146 out of 150 respondents scored outstanding; in grammar usage, 122 respondents were on the bracket of satisfactory to outstanding. The language areas where most respondents were below 75 mean score, which means they did not meet expectation and did not pass, were sentence construction with 93 respondents, reading comprehension with 99 respondents, and vocabulary with 145 respondents.

This is true, evident and well stated by Carlos Conde of Davao City, Philippines in his article *Erosion of English Skills Threatens Growth in the Philippines*. It is this deterioration of the English proficiency among the students in this country that caused an overall decline in Philippine education. Supporting this claim is a recent government study that shows only seven (7) percent of high school graduates can properly read, speak or understand English, and poorly trained teachers are partly to blame.

Kenneth Rapoza, a contributing writer of Forbes magazine cited in his article titled “Countries with the Best Business English,” a Mckinsey & Company study displaying that only 13 percent of those who finished college as graduates from developing countries are fit for work in international firms, and that the number one cause is deficiency of English skills (Hernandez, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2015).

4) *Comparison of the respondents’ overall English proficiency test scores when grouped according to age, gender, school, goal orientation and self – efficacy*

Table 7 revealed that there was no significant difference in the EPT of the respondents when they are grouped according to age. The obtained f – value of 1.332 and p – value 0.261 of the respondents led to accept the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the EPT and age. However, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) pointed out that younger language learners have advantage in fluency and pronunciation while older ones learn the grammar system faster and acquire greater knowledge on the language learning context (p. 68). It shows that respondents on the age 16 are having the higher mean so they can be English proficient as they are learning grammar system faster.

Table 8 Shows that obtained t – value of 1.164 and p – value of 0.140 that strengthen the conclusion of accepting the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the EPT when they are compared and grouped according to gender. The result in this study reveals that females with a mean of 76.06 are proficient in English than males. This is likely according to the study of (Browne, 2005; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Heugh et al., 2007; Lovas, 2011; Swann, 1992) that in language development there is gender difference, female had a clear advantage in verbal.

From Table 9, with the f – value of 1.992 and p – value of 0.099 as indicated, it was found out that there was no significant difference in the EPT of the respondents when compared accordingly to schools. Saint Joseph College got a higher mean

Table 6  
Students’ performance in the EPT according to language areas

Mean Score	Spelling		Vocabulary		Grammar Usage		Sentence Construction		Reading Comprehension		Description
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
90 – 100	146	97.33	2	1.33	46	30.67	13	8.67	17	11.33	Outstanding
85 – 89	0	0	0	0	65	43.33	0	0	0	0	Very Satisfactory
80 – 84	0	0	3	2	11	7.33	44	29.33	34	22.67	Satisfactory
75 – 79	1	.67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Fairly Satisfactory
Below 75	3	2	145	96.67	28	18.67	93	62	99	66	Did Not Meet Expectations
N	150	100	150	100	150	100	150	100	150	100	
Mean	97.30		39.33		87.45		67.60		54.80		
Sd	6.41		16.24		18.98		16.16		29.07		

Table 7  
Comparison of respondents’ English proficiency test scores according to age

	MEAN	S.D.	f/t - value	p - value	Significance
AGE	12	74.24	8.39	1.332	0.261 > 0.05
	13	74.24	9.61		
	14	75.25	8.29		
	15	75.87	7.75		
	16	77.92	7.33		

Table 8  
Comparison of the respondents’ English proficiency test scores according to gender

	Mean	S.D.	f/t – value	p - value	Significance
Gender Male	75.29	8.67	1.164	0.140 > 0.05	Not Significant
Female	76.06	8.10			

Table 9  
Comparison of the respondents' English proficiency test scores according to school

School	MEAN	S.D.	f/t - value	p - value	Significance
Saint Rita College Manila	76.96	7.62	1.992	0.099 > 0.05	Not Significant
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Quezon City	73.54	8.84			
Saint Joseph College Cavite City	77.68	7.30			

Table 10  
Comparison of the respondents' English proficiency test scores according to goal orientation

	Mean	S.D.	t - value	p - value	Significance
Goal – Orientation	4.13	0.57	104.383	0.00 < 0.05	Significant

Table 11  
Comparison of the respondents' English proficiency test scores according to self-efficacy

	Mean	S.D.	t - value	p - value	Significance
Self - efficacy	72.77	10.98	31.560	0.00 < 0.05	Significant

Table 12  
Regression analysis of factors that influence the respondents' English proficiency test performance

Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.217 <sup>a</sup>	.047	.021	4.49917	.047	1.799	4	145	.132

a. Predictors: (Constant), GOS, AGE, GENDER, SES

b. Dependent Variable: EPS

Table 13

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	
	(Constant)	31.143	4.625		6.733	.000	22.001	40.285			
1	AGE	.410	.234	.146	1.753	.082	-.052	.873	.158	.144	.142
	GENDER	1.044	.749	.115	1.393	.166	-.437	2.524	.095	.115	.113
	SES	.771	.680	.096	1.133	.259	-.574	2.115	.128	.094	.092
	GOS	.011	.035	.026	.303	.762	-.059	.080	.038	.025	.025

a. Dependent Variable: EPS

among the rest of the other schools. It is obvious that the respondents from that school are ahead in proficiency in English language.

From Table 10, the data show rejection of the null hypothesis that there is significant difference in EPT among respondents who grouped according to goal – orientation as the t – value is 104.383 and p – value of 0.00. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

This implies that the goal orientation of the respondents has effect on their EPT scores. According to Vandewalle's goal orientation, it is more of improving self to move for mastery and proficiency. It is more of being competent than being conscious of mistakes. It is doing with understanding and with achieving what was set as a goal.

From Table 11, that there was significant difference in the EPT of the respondents with self – efficacy for having a t – value of 31. 560 and p – value of 0.00. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the self-efficacy level of the respondents has an effect on their EPT scores. This is true and related to Bandura's theory which demonstrates that people with great self-efficacy, that is, those who have confidence that they can perform well, are more likely to view difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than something to be evaded. Another study by De Geest (2011) revealed that those who are having a high and great level of self-efficacy set more tough goals, employ more energy to attain those aims, and pursue to acquire from the processes of pursuing those goals.

5) Factors that influence the students' English proficiency test performance

The table 12 shows the multiple linear regression model summary and overall fit statistics. We find that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of our model is .021 with the R<sup>2</sup> = .047. This means that the linear regression explains 4.7% of the variance in the data. The F change = 1.799, which is between the two critical values of 1.5 < d < 2.5. Therefore, we can assume that there is no first order linear auto-correlation in our multiple linear regression data.

If we would have forced all variables (Method: Enter) into the linear regression model, we would have seen a lower R<sup>2</sup> and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (.047 and .021 respectively).

If we force all variables into the multiple linear regressions, we find that only age and gender are significant predictors. We can also see that age has a higher impact than gender by comparing the standardized coefficients (beta = .146 versus beta = .115).

The information in the table above also allows us to check for multi co linearity in our multiple linear regression model. Tolerance should be > 0.1 (or VIF < 10) for all variables, which they are.

Lastly, we can check for normality of residuals with a normal P-P plot. The plot shows that the points generally follow the normal (diagonal) line with no strong deviations. This indicates that the residuals are normally distributed.

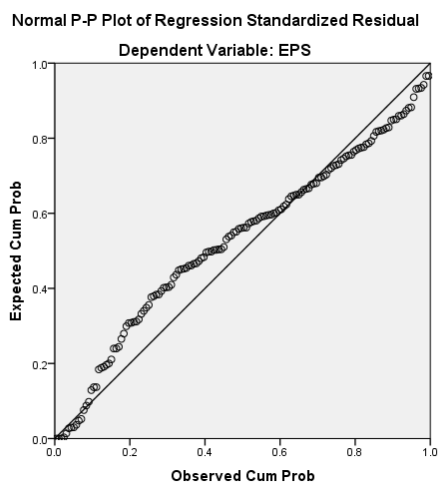


Fig. 1. Normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual

#### 6) Proposed interventions for low-performing Augustinian recollect junior high school students

According to the results of the study, the language areas where the students were found weak were Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, and Sentence Construction. The only area where the students excel was spelling. Based on these results, the researcher recommends the following language activities designed to improve the students' skills in the weak areas. A set of activities is also recommended to enhance their spelling skills.

### 4. Summary of Findings

The following findings are revealed as results of the data analyses:

#### A. Characteristics of the Respondents

##### 1) Demographic

Age. Majority of the respondents were 16 years old.

Gender. A big number of respondents were female.

Augustinian Recollect School. Each of the schools had the

##### 2) Psycho-Academic

Goal Orientation. Most of the respondents were classified as having a high-level goal orientation. There were 38.67 percent respondents with above average level goal orientation and 14 percent for average level goal orientation. No respondent got below average and low-level goal orientation.

Self-efficacy. There were 74 respondents classified as having a high level and 73 with normal or average level Self – efficacy. It is also good to note that a difference of 1 in the frequency of respondents on the high level and the normal or average level of self – efficacy. The respondents with below average level self – efficacy were only 2 and no low-level self – efficacy.

#### B. Language Areas Where Students Were Found Weak

Respondents' performance was very weak in the area of vocabulary with 145 on below 75 mean score or those who did not meet the expectation. Reading comprehension and sentence construction came next as those who did not meet expectation. It is quite interesting to take note that there were 146 who were outstanding in their performance in spelling and around 122

respondents ranged from satisfactory to outstanding in grammar usage.

#### C. Comparison of the Respondents' Overall English Proficiency Test Scores When Grouped according to Age, Gender, School, Goal Orientation and Self – efficacy

No significant difference was found in the respondents' English Proficiency Test scores when grouped according to age. This implies that age of the respondents has no effect or did not cause any difference on the test scores in English Proficiency.

There was no difference in the respondents' scores in the EPT according to gender and school. This implies that gender and school have no influence on the test scores in English Proficiency.

The goal orientation and self - efficacy of the respondents revealed a significant difference on the test scores in English Proficiency. The more they are goal oriented and self – efficacious, the more they are English proficient.

#### D. Factors that Influence the Students' English Proficiency Test Performance

Age, gender and schools have no significant influence on the students' EPT scores as shown in the findings.

The psycho – academic characteristics of goal orientation and self – efficacies have significant influence on the EPT scores of the students as revealed by the findings. This implies that the hypothesis that psycho-academic characteristics have significant influence on the EPT scores is accepted.

#### E. Proposed Intervention Based on the Findings of the Study

Numerous and varied activities are listed to improve the areas where the students were found weak in language, i.e. vocabulary, reading comprehension, and sentence construction, and the psycho-academic attributes of goal-orientation and self-efficacy which were shown to significantly affect the students' EPT performance.

### 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Students are generally weak in language, especially in vocabulary, reading comprehension and sentence construction.
2. Psycho-academic factors, specifically goal-orientation and self-efficacy affect students' language performance in the EPT.
3. Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and school setting do not affect the students' language performance in the EPT.

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