

PERCEIVED ENGLISH LANGUAGE'S POWER AND ATTITUDE TOWARD IT: BASIS FOR THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

This mixed-method investigation analyzed the perceptions of randomly selected grades 7 to 10 students (400) and teachers (54) of a national comprehensive high school on the importance of the spoken English language and their attitude toward it. The study results are intended to revalidate the usefulness of spoken English as a learning tool and derive inputs for strengthening English instruction in the junior high school level. To supplement survey data, 14 Grade 7 students, classified as non-readers, were interviewed on their perceptions of the English language's importance.

Results showed that the respondent-teachers and students have high regard for the importance of the English language, with both groups posing a high level of attitudes toward good English speakers. However, teachers have a higher perception of the English language's importance than the students, as evident in the registered average weighted means of 3.53 and 3.39. Meanwhile, statistics show that male and female teachers do not differ in their perceptions of the same variables, and so do male and female students. On the other hand, a significant difference in how the respondent-students across grade levels perceived the importance of English and how they view people speaking it was further revealed.

English has been proven to be important, relevant, and powerful for both teachers and students. With the realities presented in the study, particularly the arguing perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students towards the importance of English and its speakers, curriculum development and innovation could bolster the way how the curriculum is being carried out to the clientele, particularly in making it more relevant and truly addressing the needs of the people it served.

Keywords: Attitude towards English, Perception towards English, English, Language

INTRODUCTION

Language acts as the soul of any culture, which unites the people by establishing connections through their spoken words (Bridges, 2016). It influences the daily lives of members of any race, creed, and region of the world. If language influences how a person behaves and how he perceives things, it means that culture is also inherent in the language itself (Alptekin, 2002).

Language is essentially a means of communication among the members of society. Through language, feelings, desires, and queries may be expressed. Words, gestures, and tone are utilized in the union to portray a comprehensive field of emotion. Human beings can use the unique and diverse methods to communicate through written and spoken language is a large part of what allows us to harness our innate ability to form lasting bonds with one another, separating humankind from the rest of the animal kingdom. Hence, language contributes to the totality of one's development (Lal Banga and Suri, 2015).

The most common system of communication is language. It consists of arbitrary and vocal symbols developed by a social group to use as a medium of expression of their thoughts and feelings. As long as humans exist, so does language, and it remains alive while people continuously use it (Magallona-Flores et al., 2006).

Such denotes the complexity of language and the role it plays in establishing communication with people. One of the most important factors in communication is language. Without using the language, the world is boring, full of tension and discomfort (Ornos et al., 2004).

There are four skills when a person learns language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Out of the four, speaking is different from the other three. The other three can be done alone, on one's own, without anyone else. On the other hand, it is very important to find somebody to speak with because one cannot practice speaking when he or she is alone. Speech sounds in English are crucial because they serve as the basis for the different meanings of a word or group of words. These refer to the sounds people produce in English spoken language, classified into vowels, consonants, diphthongs, schwa, stress, pitch, juncture, etc. (Garma-Guiyab, 2006).

Moreover, Fernando, Habana, and Cinco (2005) reiterated that the role of communication as a central force in people's lives is reaffirmed in every area of human activity. Communication is used for the transfer of ideas, education, and entertainment (Bokhari, 2012). It brings about social interactions, pleasure, and a more comprehensive knowledge of life and its complexities. It is impossible to establish communication without language usage and meaning, which results in effective learning. Communication is the carrier of social processes and makes interactions that influence another and is influenced in return.

Also, Thakur (2014) said that communication helps an individual learn better by asking questions and seeking answers. With a wider array of communication methods available, people around the world are linked together more closely. Additionally, transformation on the way people communicate was made possible by technology, and through this, it created an impact on how they deal with each other and other business interactions (Ramey, 2013). Given the vast technological advances that have occurred over the past century, it seems that improved communication competence will play a pivotal role in determining the positive direction of future decisions.

The quality of life and the relationship of people with fellow human beings are determined by communication. These serve as a bridge in time and across distances that can penetrate barriers of human individuality. These are also the sparks that can ignite understanding and relations among human beings even across cultures (Padilla, 2003).

In order to communicate effectively, one needs to speak a particular language fluently. Hence, Fernando, Habana, and Cinco (2005) pointed out that learning to speak well is an asset. Since most people talk much more than they write, they are judged more for their speech than writing. Students are asked to answer school questions, contribute to discussions, participate in debates, and give oral reports. In terms of relationships with family and friends, social conversation plays an important role. In the workplace, many admire people who know what they are talking about and who communicate clearly.

Interestingly, English has become a by-word among the world's languages and hits more patronage; thus, it is necessary for utilitarian reasons (Cabrera and de Asis, 2008). The English language is considered as the closest thing to a *lingua franca* around the globe. English serves as a link-language across countries (Chopra, 2015). The dominance of the English language across different fields is very evident. English is used in education, sciences, workplace, cultural products, and it serves as a supranational language in European institutions (Truchot 2002). Mydans (2007) added that, at telephone call centers worldwide, the emblem of a globalized workplace, the language is spoken, is, naturally, English.

Filipinos acquired the English language in the Philippine context when the Philippines became one of the States of the United States of America from 1898 to 1940 (Mar 2013). From then on, English also became one of the mediums of instructions in the country (Tom McArthur, 2002).

Such a scenario is not unique in the Philippines. The English language is becoming more and more popular worldwide and in all spheres of life; in particular, anyone who wants to succeed in the business world has to learn English. Knowledge of vocabulary has a serious influence on general language competence. The more words students know, the more secure they feel, and the more willing they are to communicate (Stepanova, 2013).

Though English is seemingly becoming an easy language to learn for others, many non-English speakers encounter difficulties learning and using it as part of their daily regiment. Learning a foreign language is challenging, and teaching a foreign language can be just as daunting (Samuels, 2013). Though teachers may experience only minimal changes in the curricula from year to year, they are constantly looking for new and creative ways to motivate them to learn. If students felt better about themselves, they will learn more and result in greater achievements. In addition to this, the more inclined students are in sharing their feelings, interests, values, hopes, and dreams, the stringer and more self-confident they will be. That may appeal to foreign language teachers because it also meant that the students would have the confidence to speak more in the target language and move closer to full linguistic competence. Effective instruction acknowledges students' gender differences and reaffirms their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heritages (Saravia-Shore, 2008).

An integral part of learning a foreign language is acquiring some familiarity with the culture associated with it. Simply having an acquaintance with the grammar, syntax, phonetics, and some of the social conventions associated with English will not give learners real insights into the nuances of the people's daily lives speaking the language. Thus, language teachers recognize the need to incorporate sociocultural factors into their classrooms (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007).

In this sense, teachers play an integral role in making English a second or foreign language more friendly, easy to deal with, and easy to establish a connection for more similarities. Kaboodvand (2013) explained that teachers' responsibilities are even more highlighted in language classes, with language teachers sometimes being viewed as the driving force behind coordination, harmony, peace, and global understanding. Since teaching is premised as a social act, the language class must provide an environment where communication is encouraged through formal instruction and informal interaction. The contextualization of socially responsible topics is often included in their lesson plans.

It is also crucial how teachers help learners grasp the information they can use to communicate effectively in English. Rao (2013) believed that students in an English classroom acquire, retain, and retrieve information in various ways in general. Some of them learn by reflecting and acting, while others may prefer to learn by memorizing and visualizing. Teachers, likewise, usually do their preferred styles in teaching, which may sometimes be inconsistent with their students' learning styles.

According to Al Samadani and Ibnian (2015), a positive attitude facilitates foreign language learning, while a negative attitude acts as a psychological barrier against learning. However, not all students have a positive attitude towards the English Language. English Central (2015) stated that high school students in Japan have a strong aversion towards learning English. Additionally, Libyan secondary school students showed overall negative attitudes towards learning English (Abidin, Mohammadi, & Alzwari, 2012). However, these negative attitudes may be a product of the language taught specifically in English or caused

by other factors. Attitude to language is a construct that explains linguistic behavior in particular. It may be positive or negative, as well as instrumental or integrative. It varies from favorably to unfavorably or vice-versa in language learning and acquisition, choice, and language use in different domains. Hence, it is important to question the survival and development of a particular language and its chances in language policy implementation (al Mamun, Rahman & Rahman, 2012). Having such linguistic behavior is paramount in learning a language as a discourse. Though language acquisition may vary from individual to individual, this may reveal the veracity as to which students and teachers see the importance of using a particular language.

Moreover, attitudes permit more development and investigation of language. Such favorable attitudes help the students learn a language and vice versa. Though English is not the language with the most number of users, it is uncontested to be the universal language as people use it in education, businesses, and other walks of life. Hence, many people are trying to grasp and become acquainted with it for learning and future endeavors.

Many factors can hinder one's engagement in learning a particular language. Adding to that fact is the reality that English is not the native language for many people worldwide. Some schools are not prioritizing English as a language and express the curriculum in the local language. Some students nowadays do not see the importance of this shift to the local language as they do not have plans to leave their respective countries. As pointed out in Senobio (2015), students have so little time to speak and write English. In school, they spend an hour in English class where they are supposed to learn how to be conversant in the language. Nevertheless, that is not often the case because English teachers have to make time for other language macro-skills. Many students spend hours playing computer games and logging on to Facebook and other social networking sites at home.

Indeed, learners' attitudes and feelings to use a particular language may vary from culture to culture, and from the extent, they expose themselves to such usage. To some, technology often serves as a driver in easy usage and acquisition of English language skills. Chinnery (2014) accorded that on the internet, students of English have an authentic context in which to share their lives through expressive narrative and eye-catching imagery on social media organizers. For instance, students can compare and contrast global perspectives on current events or public figures using web analytics tools, survey friends with a polling application in social networking sites, and report their findings on multimedia presentation sites. Engaging practices of this sort are entirely feasible— as long as students— and their teachers— have some degree of access to the internet. "Learners' perceptions towards technologies and their presence in their English classes as teaching tools may have a great effect on the success or failure of the teaching and learning processes" (Javad & Leila, 2015).

More so, students' knowledge and application of technology are producing literacy skills for a 21st-century digital age. At a variety of educational institutions, digital media productions function as a mechanism for learning, expression, and building community

(Brenner, 2014). Still, there are many considerations to help students develop high regard in using English as their second or third language, like proper speaking, pronunciation, learning vocabulary, and other language usage concepts like reading and grammar.

The first and most obvious impact of poor pronunciation is on speaking. Saying a word or a name, only to be met by the blank stare of the listener's incomprehension, is immensely frustrating for learners. In general, when learners find a word difficult to pronounce, they avoid using it. Teachers frequently interpret this as limited vocabulary rather than poor pronunciation. The second obvious problem of poor pronunciation is its impact on listening. The most immediately tangible issue here is that learners either fail to identify the sounds, words, or phrases of English or confuse them with others. The result of poor pronunciation on speaking and listening feels familiar to most English teachers, the idea that pronunciation can negatively impact writing. However, one of the major headaches for English learners is the absence of any clear, simple relationship between how words are spelled in English and how they sound in speech (Walker, 2014).

Meanwhile, learning vocabulary is one of the most demanding challenges facing a foreign-language student. Moreover, for many, it can seem like a tedious battle against a never-decreasing enemy: no matter how many words are acquired, there are always more waiting to be tackled (Barclay, 2013). The building of vocabulary is essential in the development of reading abilities for effective communication. Accordingly, reading is an important channel for students to receive the second language (L2) input, but unmindful or distracted reading offers little to L2 acquisition, explaining why learners often complain about minimal progress after taking extensive reading courses. It is generally believed that L2 acquisition is impossible without focused attention on target language forms since people learn about the things they pay attention to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend (Schmidt, 2010 Zhang & Gao, 2014).

On the other hand, some degree of grammar instruction is necessary if a teacher wants the learners to pose effective communicative skills— and essential if accuracy is the learners' aim, which often is. Students value the generative capacity of rules, which enables them to create and understand a new language. Maybe knowing grammar rules gives students a feeling of security, even though the number of exceptions to rules might mean a false sense of security (Payne, 2013).

Grammar is essential to convey meaning. Teachers can help young learners become more competent in English by designing activities which move from noticing grammar patterns (and the meanings they convey) to those which practice the structure in controlled conditions and, finally, to activities which require the correct use of the target structures to participate in real-life communication (Barra, 2013).

The above-listed areas of language usage serve as prerequisites in speaking and using English effectively. Such processes demand a relatively exhausting development of

habits and practices that would secure a better language acquisition. Such engagement and development of desired attitudes and feelings toward the English language may delineate the line of success or failure in its usage. As people move forward to globalization and as many Filipinos are finding their fortune working abroad, expressing oneself and communicating with the rest of the world using the English language seemed to be a necessity nowadays. Hence, many studies add to the richness of the English language's importance to the world, particularly on varying attitudes toward it. In the study of al Mamun, Rahman, and Rahman (2012), they found that the respondents were positive towards the English language, and this could be attributed to the fact that respondents were instrumentally motivated towards English.

Language activities prepared by the teachers appear to have a promising effect on the students' attitudes towards learning the English language. More than half of the participants commended that the classroom topics and activities motivate learners, eventually leading to their success in learning the language (Ahmed, Yassatarn, Yossiri and Yossiri, 2012).

Filipinos are also fanatic users of the English language since the American colonial era. The study of Barlogan (2009) posited that English indeed continues to penetrate the Filipino society, as evidenced by its dominance in various domains and activities and even more intimate contexts such as the home, prayers, and expressions of intimate emotions.

Moreover, Lefever's (2013) study revealed further that Filipino students' language environment is typically complex, usually characterized by various languages and dialects being used in the home, which may impact foreign language learning. Some Filipino students are also concerned about belonging issues and have what may be called a fragmented identity.

Many Filipinos also have practiced the code-switching of Filipino and English, making the two languages part and parcel of their daily lives. The study of Durano (2009) revealed that participants are generally positive toward English and Fil-English code-switching. However, more private school students have a neutral attitude towards code-switching than public high school students.

With the dilemmas faced by Filipino learners as non-native speakers of English and the compelling use of English in the Philippine educational system, not to mention the usability of English in their everyday life, students may perceive different appreciation and attitude toward the language. With only ample exposure to speaking the language within the school's premises and little reinforcement at home, teachers and students have significantly developed different views and orientations with the importance of English.

There are still many factors that can be considered in studying the importance of English as a language; thus, this study presented a discourse on the teachers' and students' perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward spoken English. Such discourse provided clear

ideas of what the study would like to imply, particularly in highlighting English's relevance in today's 21st-century learners and the concurrent Philippine K-12 educational system.

Though hailed as one of the largest English-speaking nations globally, the Philippines, particularly Filipino students, are not excused in experiencing difficulties in speaking the English language. Being a multi-linguistic society, Filipino learners are expected to learn at least three languages: mother tongue (regional language), Filipino, and English. Added to such a dilemma is the students' very limited exposure to the English language in their respective homes and communities.

Due to students' varying interests in technology and socialization, more and more are becoming less interested in learning and studying English as a language. Some are just confined in and content with the knowledge of getting acquainted with simple tenses and sentences and how to speak the basics of English. In worse cases, students do not even know and understand what these basics are.

With the tenets of 21st-century education, where one of the needed 21st-century skills of the learner is the communication skills (one of which is the ability to communicate with the rest of the world using a common language), it is hard to imagine students who cannot communicate and express themselves to the rest of the world. The 21st-century education demands students and teachers collaborate to make themselves competitive and attuned with the rest of the world's community. Perhaps one way of addressing this is to shift from their skepticism about the English language to capitalize on it and make the language a globally competitive tool.

It is for these reasons why this study is initiated. People cannot escape English if they want to become globally connected and competitive. As citizens of the world, students and teachers need to be equipped with the right mindset and attitude on using the English language and how they can be progressive users.

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL-International), an organization that "studies, develops and documents languages, especially those that are lesser-known, in order to expand linguistics knowledge, promote literacy and aid minority language development" (par. 1), has recorded a great amount of research on language attitude. It states that people have attitudes/feelings/beliefs about language in general, language, and other people's language. They may believe that they can only know one language at a time. They may feel that the national language is the best language for expressing patriotism, the best way to get a job, the best chance at improving their children's future.

Attitudes cannot be observed directly but are demonstrated through actual behavior—for example, how people treat speakers of other languages (avoidance, approach), or in their desire (or not) to learn another language. The convergence of one's speech to conform to

another's speech suggests a "positive attitude" toward the other's speech. Divergence suggests an intention for the opposite outcome.

Attitudinal studies help identify how people of one language group view speakers' character and social status and form associations about other languages. Therefore, the assessment of language attitudes aids in grouping communities based on their intergroup affinities and, in combination with other methods, in estimating potential extensibility of materials. Since attitudes cannot be studied directly, language attitudes require asking such questions about other aspects of life.

Given the preceding premises, this study intends to explore the respondents' perceptions of the importance of English; their attitudes about people who can speak English well; and the significant differences in their perceptions and attitudes toward English and its speakers. Further, it also identifies their outlook on how the English language may affect one's perceptions and views on their future career and proficiency in speaking the language.

Hence, the present study takes its ground on the participants' perceptions of the importance of the English language, perceptions of people who speak English well, and attitudes toward people who speak English well, using the descriptive analysis of data gathered from the questionnaire key-point coding from the interview. The present study focused on the respondents' perceptions and views and students to the power of English as a language and their attitudes toward it. Careful handling of the data analysis was made to assure the conciseness, preciseness, accuracy, brevity, and relevance of the data exposed in the present study.

Furthermore, the study's thrust is geared toward the English language's power and people's attitudes toward it. Specifically, it sought answers to how the respondents perceived the importance of English, how they think about people who can speak English well, and how they feel about people who can speak English well. Clearly, with the mismatch of perceptions and attitudes toward the importance and use of the English language that have developed between teachers and students, revisits and reorientation on the relevance of the English curriculum and its practicalities are noteworthy for investigation.

This study examined their attitudes toward the English language, particularly in Pampanga, where Kapampangan is the lingua franca, and English serves only as a second or tertiary language. Though English is not a foreign language to some students who are enrolled in the private school or have been exposed to using the English language, most of the students, particularly those in the public sectors, were highly marginalized in using it day-to-day. This argument is based on the researcher's experiential observations as a language educator. This study's results may strengthen their attitudes and engagement in learning the English language and their future endeavors or whenever the necessity sees fit. It may likewise serve as a useful instrument for teachers in making their learners competitive users

of the English language, whether or not the learners do have plans working abroad in the future or decide to flourish in their careers in the domains of their own country.

This study may also reorient teachers in understanding their attitudes and their students toward the English language. The data presented in this research can serve as their baselines in conducting intervention and remediation programs to help learners develop deeper engagement and outlook in learning the English language. Special attention may also be accorded to non-reader students to strengthen the English skills and competencies through a reading program that could make them readers after being included in the training sessions. As such, teachers and students' rapport and collaborative efforts in the teaching-learning process may be strengthened. In the same line, teachers may become adaptive and responsive in catering to learners' varying needs in adopting a second or third language and making them flexible in using such language to their full advantage.

The outcome of the study may also serve as assistance to educational or school leaders. This could function as their guideline in spearheading, piloting, or initiating programs, seminars, activities, training, and other related endeavors to help learners and their teachers develop a positive outlook and attitude toward English. Designing modules on intensifying reading programs in school through determining the strengths and weaknesses of the non-readers and by benchmarking good practices of English teachers in making their non-readers excel in the English language may follow suit. Hence, the mandate of the school in providing superb instruction to the clientele was safeguarded and maintained. It is also hoped that schools' curricula become more adaptive, flexible, and relevant to the clientele' needs. Administrators' enforcement of programs supporting non-readers to have active participation in school affairs and having significant exposures leading to self-confidence in using the English language were also prioritized.

Moreover, the study results can pave the way for further research from this study's gathered data and expound on other factors relative to teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes toward the English language. Variables included herein may serve only as springboards, and other studies may explore other areas and their underpinnings on the said topic. Likewise, other research methodologies served as their starting point in conducting more relevant studies relative to the concurrent research.

Finally, it is desired that this work may serve as a humble contribution to language education and the existing body of knowledge. The data gathered in this study would add to the enrichment of English learning and explore various aspects of the English language that needed to be highlighted further.

The study was delimited to the factors typifying the experiences and exposures to English language use through the revealed data on surveys and interviews. The respondents were also limited only to the students, non-readers, and teachers of certain secondary schools

who served as the respondents and participants of the researcher who provided the study's data.

To be able to have a better understanding of this study, the following terms were defined as conceptually and operationally:

Attitude. It is a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Operationally, this is the feeling or way of thinking the teachers and students have that affects their behavior toward the English language itself, its importance, ability to speak it, and people who are good speakers of English.

Feeling. It is the mental representation of the physiological changes that characterize emotions (Damasio, 2001). The study involves the teachers' and students' outlook on those who are using the English language.

Perception. The process of perceiving something with the senses; the process or state of being aware of something in the light of experiences (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 2011). This is the teachers' and students' apprehensions or positive awareness of the importance of speaking and communicating using the English language.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method type of research. As explained in Navarro and Santos (2011), researchers creatively integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches in ways that will be most advantageous to the study. Through the quantitative approach, data may be obtained from sampling students, specifically their attitudes, and through in-depth interviews using the qualitative approach, the problem may be discovered, which seriously affects their performance. Moreover, Neto (2001) added that the mixed-method approach is a research strategy integrating different methods. It is a way to come up with creative alternatives to traditional research methods.

The mixed-method of research fits the study as it provided quantitative and qualitative data as bases for interpreting the gathered information from the survey and the interview. This was done to have a detailed, bird's eye view, comprehensive and cohesive description, presentation, and explanation of the studied problem. This approach provided the study an in-depth and cross-sectional analysis of the problem, detailing every aspect in a wider and vivid perspective. Hence, towards applying this method with the aid of the data gathered from the survey-questionnaire and interview, the teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes toward the English language's power were showcased and highlighted.

The quantitative data gathered and analyzed were taken from the survey-questionnaire administered to the respondents to identify and measure spoken English

attitudes. Since this study used a descriptive survey design that describes inclinations and general trends to spoken English, descriptive analysis in the gathered data was utilized. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were obtained from an unstructured interview which involved the non-reader students. This was done in order to support the result of the survey. Using this qualitative design, a thematic analysis of the data gathered was applied.

Four hundred (400) students, fourteen (14) non-readers, and fifty-four (54) teachers of a large secondary public school were selected as respondents for the study. The non-reader respondents are categorized into 4, based on the mechanism used by the DepEd, namely: Category A can read, but without comprehension; Category B can read simple words, but find difficulty in reading phrase or statement; Category C can read very simple words, and Category D can read only letters. They were selected to have a detailed and comprehensive representation of their perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward the English language. The non-reader respondents underwent in-depth interviews. Interview transcripts served as the sources of data for the study. The investigation of their perceptions, feelings, and attitudes was centered on their significant experiences and exposures to the use of the English language.

The instruments used to gather the data for this study are survey and interview questionnaires. According to Zulueta and Perez (2010), a questionnaire comprises questions filled out by the surveyed person. It is much easier to get a bigger sampling with questionnaires because they are easy to distribute and can be filled in by many people at the same time. Moreover, Ary et al. (2010) described it as an instrument in which respondents provide written responses to questions or mark items that indicate their responses. The survey questionnaire and interview were composed of two parts: the profile of the respondents and their perceptions on the importance of the English language, perceptions on people who speak English well, and attitudes toward people who speak English well.

The study focused on various literature and studies in crafting the survey-questionnaire to develop items that could picture the respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward the English language. To further attest to the questionnaire's content, the instrument underwent validation to measure its applicability to the public educational setting through the reliability index provided by Cronbach's alpha. All the items found reliable in the said measure are incorporated in the survey-questionnaire, and all the items that garnered lower than 0.70 reliability index were rejected. Moreover, the research sought three experts in the English language to validate the survey questionnaire's content. Their suggestions and criticisms were noted to come up with the final draft of the questionnaire. The final draft underwent a piloting test for a certain group of respondents in a large secondary public school. The result was tallied and subjected to statistics such as Cronbach's alpha to determine its content validity and reliability. Significantly, the results of the Cronbach's alpha using IBM SPSS 20 revealed that the 10 items stipulated in the survey-questionnaire (see Appendices page 44) measuring the perceptions of the respondents toward English garnered a reliability index of 0.9326, which suggests that the measure is reliable to be used for the study's construct. Likewise, the 10

items stipulated in the survey-questionnaire, measuring the respondents' attitudes toward English, garnered a reliability index of 0.9780, which suggests that the measure is also reliable to use.

When the said processes had been accomplished, the following steps were undertaken to gather the data needed. A formal letter was sent to the schools' division superintendent and the selected secondary school principal to permit the students' floating of questionnaires and interview conduct. After acceding to the request, the floating of the questionnaires and conducting of interviews were personally administered. In the conduct of the interview, only students who voluntarily permitted the researcher were interviewed. Moreover, before the interview, parental consent was sought.

The non-reader participants underwent in-depth interviews. In the interview, Jha (2011) pointed out that the interviewer works directly with the respondent and takes the opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions. The interviewer is considered a part of the measurement instrument, and interviewers have to be well trained on how to respond to any contingency. Furthermore, in an unstructured interview, the participants' attitudes, aspirations, beliefs, and characteristics are used to collect the information. It is uncontrolled and flexible whereby pre-decided or pre-organized orders of questions are not emphasized. Here the interview can be in the form of free response. Thus, the unstructured interview is un-manipulated and flexible.

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants who are non-readers on their significant perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward English as a language. A semi-structured interview guide was used for this purpose. This type of personal interview is largely aided by a list of questions or issues to be explored. The participants were also persuaded to agree in a recorded interview to serve as a basis for key-point coding. During the data gathering, the categories' saturation occurred after the data analysis of the participants' interviews. Thus, this served as the determination of the final respondents for the study. Interview transcripts were then coded to serve as the sources of data for the study. Concepts were then identified, and after which, the diagrammatical emergent of concepts was revealed.

Descriptive data analysis started in treating the gathered data from the survey using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, and weighted mean, while inferential statistics included Independent Samples *t*-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), whichever is applicable.

Frequency counts and percentages were used to detail teacher and student-respondents' profile in terms of sex and grade level (for students only). Weighted mean with corresponding descriptive equivalents was used to describe the respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and feelings toward those who can speak English well.

The scale below with descriptive equivalents was used in determining the perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of the respondents toward people who can speak the English language well:

Scale	Range	Descriptive Equivalent
4	3.26– 4.00	Very Important
3	2.51– 3.25	Important
2	1.76– 2.50	Fairly Important
1	1.00– 1.75	Less Important

The following scales with descriptive equivalents were used in interpreting the average weighted means of the perceptions of respondents on the importance of English and attitudes of respondents about people who can speak English well:

Scale	Range	Descriptive Equivalent
4	3.26– 4.00	Very Favorable
3	2.51– 3.25	Favorable
2	1.76– 2.50	Fairly Favorable
1	1.00– 1.75	Less Favorable

Meanwhile, inferential statistics such as t-test for independent samples and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were utilized to determine a significant difference in the respondents' perceptions, as revealed in the gathered data from the survey. Meanwhile, the Scheffe test was used to determine where the significant differences in the groups lie. In determining a significant difference, the probability value (p-value) is compared to 0.05 to determine whether a hypothesis is rejected or not. If the p-value is equal or less than 0.05, the statistical test is significant, and therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Meanwhile, if the p-value is higher than 0.05, the statistical test is not significant, and therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

On the other hand, thematic data analysis in this study started with identifying key points in the data that have significance to the field under study. The highlighted points were analyzed through coding. After the grouping of the codes, concepts were grouped according to their commonalities. Similar concepts were clustered together and further analyzed. Common concepts produced categories. The categories underwent further scrutiny through a constant comparative method. Linking the other categories with the others led to the emergence of the categories relative to the study being investigated.

Key-point coding was also used in this study. For coding purposes, the respondents were identified as participants in the key-point coding. The points regarded as important to the investigation were identified in the transcripts and given an identifier attributed in sequence for each interview to give P1, P2, and so on where 'P' indicates 'key point.' To differentiate key

points from each interview transcript, these identifiers were distinguished with a suffix A, B, or C to mean participants A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. For example, key point 1 made by participant A appears as P1A.

In the development of themes and categories, after assigning codes to each key point, which came in the form of words or phrases, the codes were analyzed for their commonalities and were grouped in a table. These similar codes are called concepts. From the concepts arose yet other common themes, which are called categories. It links these concepts and categories and the constant comparison of which led to the emergence of the study categories.

In writing the narrative report, by linking the categories and investigating the connections between concepts, the students' overall perceptions and attitudes had emerged. Moreover, the categories' headings were labeled as much as possible, using the participants' actual words or phrases. In this case, the categories and the emergent perceptions, feelings, and attitudes were authentically derived from the live data. The writing of the narrative report seeks to fully analyze the categories and the connections between categories and concepts, which led to the accumulated perceptions, feelings, and attitudes, supported by the participants' original statements, freely expressing themselves in the language of their choice. In this manner, the authenticity of the results was maintained, and any misinterpretation of the participants' points of view was avoided. Student participants were provided a code typified as follows: SA– Student 1, SB– Student 2, and so on.

FINDINGS

This section presents the data gathered, organized based on the stated objectives' sequence in the introduction.

Respondents' Perceptions of the Importance of English

Table 1 shows the teacher and student respondents' perceptions of the importance of the English language.

The data indicate that both groups of respondents perceive the English language as "Very Important" for having registered an average weighted mean of 3.46, particularly on the statement that "Speaking English makes a person globally competitive," which registered a mean of 3.56. This discloses further that in today's 21st-century education, where learning is getting global, and the arena for information is seemingly becoming borderless, teachers and students are convinced that English, considered a global language, can make a person globally competitive. This is true to Filipinos, who are now seeking employment abroad as an alternative mode of working. In such a scenario, speaking the English language well is a must for every Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW).

Table 1.
Survey Results of the Perception of Respondents
on the Importance of English

Item Statement	Teachers n=54		Students n=400		Average	
	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating
1. Speaking English makes a person empowered to communicate with others, especially to foreigners.	3.69/ 0.61	Strongly Agree	3.31/ 0.64	Strongly Agree	3.50/ 0.63	Very Important
2. Speaking English makes a person globally competitive.	3.70/ 0.63	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.60	Strongly Agree	3.56/ 0.62	Very Important
3. When a person can speak English very well, he/she has better employment opportunities.	3.43/ 0.84	Strongly Agree	3.40/ 0.75	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.79	Very Important
4. Speaking English makes a person become successful in his or her future career endeavors.	3.44/ 0.82	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.72	Strongly Agree	3.43/ 0.77	Very Important
5. Having the ability to speak English is an edge toward various opportunities in life.	3.67/ 0.61	Strongly Agree	3.38/ 0.70	Strongly Agree	3.52/ 0.66	Very Important
6. Proficiency in speaking English spells excellent performance in school.	3.56/ 0.50	Strongly Agree	3.39/ 0.56	Strongly Agree	3.47/ 0.53	Very Important
7. Having the ability to speak English makes a person eligible for scholarship.	3.48/ 0.50	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.65	Strongly Agree	3.44/ 0.58	Very Important
8. English is vital for socio-economic development of a country.	3.43/ 0.50	Strongly Agree	3.42/ 0.62	Strongly Agree	3.42/ 0.56	Very Important
9. English is vital in this era of globalization, migration, and technological advancement.	3.46/ 0.77	Strongly Agree	3.38/ 0.68	Strongly Agree	3.42/ 0.73	Very Important
10. English is important for developing oneself as a global speaker and global citizen.	3.44/ 0.74	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.64	Strongly Agree	3.43/ 0.69	Very Important
Average	3.53/ 0.65	Very Important	3.39/ 0.66	Very Important	3.46/ 0.66	Very Important

Trimming down the results, teachers have a higher perception of the English language's importance than the students, as evident in the registered average weighted means of 3.53 and 3.39. This view is acceptable since teachers see more of the benefits or importance of English in job opportunities, while students are not typically fascinated by the idea or need to speak English at this early point in time since their focus is on their studies. Adding to this fact is that these students have their first two languages using everyday living–

their mother tongue and Filipino. Having two languages to master as one grows is typically posing difficulties to many Filipino children and adding to this dilemma is the challenge of having able to master their language, which is English, once they enter school.

Meanwhile, the average standard deviation of 0.66 implies that their responses on the item statements are quite harmonized.

As attested further with their transcripts, the non-reader students pointed out that they may find work abroad and be globally competitive in speaking English well. This was clearly expressed by two of the interviewees:

Kaya ko pong makapagtrabaho sa abroad kapag marunong po akong mag-Ingles. [I can work abroad if I am able to speak English] – Pa1

Matutunan ko pong makipagsabayan sa iba. [I can compete with others in speaking English] – Pd2

Respondents' Attitudes about People Who Can Speak English Well

Table 2 shows the survey results of the teacher and student respondents' attitudes about people who can speak English well.

Table 2
Survey Results of the Respondents' Attitudes
about People Who Can Speak English Well

Item Statement	Teachers n=54		Students n=400		Average	
	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating
I have a high regard for people who can speak English well.	3.37/ 0.85	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.87	Strongly Agree	3.39/ 0.86	Strongly Agree
I think people who speak English well are eloquent and exude confidence personally and professionally.	3.31/ 0.80	Strongly Agree	3.38/ 0.89	Strongly Agree	3.35/ 0.84	Strongly Agree
I respect people who are better speakers of English than me.	3.63/ 0.76	Strongly Agree	3.36/ 0.81	Strongly Agree	3.49/ 0.78	Strongly Agree
I look up to people who are making efforts to speak the English language well.	3.50/ 0.77	Strongly Agree	3.51/ 0.66	Strongly Agree	3.51/ 0.72	Strongly Agree

Item Statement	Teachers n=54		Students n=400		Average	
	WM/SD	Descriptive Rating	WM/ SD	Descriptive Rating	WM /SD	Descriptive Rating
I do not think someone is boasting or bragging when he or she is speaking English.	3.52/ 0.69	Strongly Agreej	3.49/ 0.83	Strongly Agree	3.50/ 0.76	Strongly Agree
I envy people who can speak English well.	3.44/ 0.72	Strongly Agree	3.38/ 0.86	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.79	Strongly Agree
I am inspired by people who speak English well to improve my ability to speak the language.	3.24/ 0.91	Agree	3.37/ 0.83	Strongly Agree	3.31/ 0.87	Strongly Agree
I feel comfortable being with people who speak English well.	3.39/ 0.88	Strongly Agree	3.43/ 0.81	Strongly Agree	3.41/ 0.84	Strongly Agree
I admire people talking to foreigners and expressing themselves in English.	3.48/ 0.77	Strongly Agree	3.42/ 0.80	Strongly Agree	3.45/ 0.78	Strongly Agree
I love to see people speaking English in school, public places, and other platforms or avenues for speaking opportunities.	3.56/ 0.77	Strongly Agree	3.47/ 0.84	Strongly Agree	3.51/ 0.80	Strongly Agree
Average	3.44/ 0.07	Very Favorable	3.42/ 0.82	Very Favorable	3.43/ 0.81	Very Favorable

As evidently reflected in the table, both groups of respondents have a "Very Favorable" attitude about people who are good speakers of English as revealed by the obtained average weighted mean of 3.43, specifically, on their thinking that they "look up to people who are making efforts to speak the English language well" and "love to see people speaking English in school, public places, and other platforms or avenues for speaking opportunities" which both obtained a mean of 3.51. These expose further that respondents have a high regard for the importance of the English language in one's life. This exhibits how English has influenced how people respect one's authority, power, and ability.

Meanwhile, analyzing the results, teachers have a slightly higher "Very Favorable" attitude toward people who can speak English well than the students, as evident in the obtained average weighted means of 3.44 and 3.42, correspondingly.

The average standard deviation of 0.81 suggests that their responses on the item statements are quite homogeneous. As can be gleaned from these transcripts, the participants reiterated that:

Bisa qung matutu... Gusto ko pong maging kagaya ng iba na nagsisikap matuto ng Ingles. [I want to learn... I want to be like those people making efforts to learn English] – Pf4

Hindi naman po sila mayabang. Magaling lang po talaga sila sa pag-i-Ingles. [They are not boastful. They are just good in speaking English] – Pj5

Affirming the overall data on the participants' perception and attitudes toward English, the interviews exposed how non-readers deemed the importance of English in general and how it can make a person powerful and attain success by using it as a medium communicating. This is reflected in the following quotes:

Magiging successful po ako kapag magaling akong mag-Ingles. [I can become successful if I am good in speaking English] – Pa4

Kaya ko pong magtagumpay kung matututo akong gamitin ang Ingles.

[I can succeed if I could learn to use English effectively] – Pc6

Comparison of the Respondents' Perception and Attitudes toward English and Its Speakers

Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 show the comparison of respondent-teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes toward the importance of the English language and toward the people who can speak English well, when they are grouped accordingly.

Table 3 presents the comparison of the respondent-teachers' and students' perceptions of the importance of the English language. The table reveals that the computed t-value of 3.524, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.999, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, suggests that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means a significant difference between the teachers' and students' perceptions of the importance of the English language. This underpins the previous finding that teachers have a higher perception of the importance of the English language than students, as evident in the registered average weighted means of 3.53 and 3.39, respectively. This implies that teachers are the ones who are seeing more the benefits of using the English language.

Table 3
T-test Results of the Respondents' Perceptions of the Importance of English

Group	N	Mean	SD.	df	t-Critical	t-Computed	p-value	Decision
Teachers	54	3.53	0.28	62	1.999	3.524	0.000	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Students	400	3.39	0.21					

Table 4 presents the comparison of the respondent-teachers' and students' attitudes toward people who can speak the English language well. The table reveals that the computed t-value of 0.429, which is less than the critical t-value of 1.997, and a p-value of 0.669, which is greater than the significance of 0.05, suggests that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the teachers' and students' attitudes toward people who have a good command of the English language. This is further supported by the previous finding, which revealed the difference in the average weighted means between the teachers' attitude and the students' attitude towards people who speak English well to be very minimal, i.e., 0.02. This implies that both groups of respondents maintain the same very favorable attitude toward good speakers in English.

Table 4
T-test Results of the Respondents' Attitude about People Who Can Speak English Well

Group	N	Mean	SD.	df	t-Critical	t-Computed	p-value	Decision
Teachers	54	3.44	0.38	65	1.997	0.429	0.669	Accept Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Students	400	3.42	0.33					

Table 5 exhibits the results of the comparison of the perceptions of the male and female teachers on the importance of the English language. The table reveals that the computed t-value of 3.658, which is greater than the critical t-value of 2.201, and a p-value of 0.004, which is less than the level of significance of 0.05, suggesting that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means a significant difference between male teachers' and female teachers' perceptions of the English language's importance. This highlights how female teachers have garnered higher mean perceptions on the importance of the English language than the male teachers, i.e., 3.60 and 3.22, in that order. This infers that female teachers are the ones who are seeing more the benefits of using the English language.

Table 5
T-test Results of the Teachers' Perceptions
on the Importance of English According to Their Sex

Group	N	Mean	SD.	df	t-Critical	t-Computed	p-value	Decision
Male Teachers	10	3.22	0.31	11	2.201	3.658	0.004	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Female Teachers	44	3.60	0.22					

Table 6 exhibits the comparison of the male and female teachers' attitude towards people who can speak the English language well. The table reveals that the computed t-value of 2.425, which is greater than the critical t-value of 2.160 and a p-value of 0.031 less than the significance level of 0.05, suggests that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means a significant difference between male teachers' and female teachers' attitudes towards those who have a good command of the English language. The difference of 0.31 in the computed mean of the two groups of respondents supports this claim in favor of the female teachers. This infers that female teachers are the ones who maintain a more "very favorable" attitude toward the good speakers of English.

Table 6
T-test Results of the Teachers' Attitude about People
Who Can Speak English Well According to Their Sex

Group	N	Mean	SD.	df	t-Critical	t-Computed	p-value	Decision
Male Teachers	10	3.19	0.37	13	2.160	2.425	0.031	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Female Teachers	44	3.50	0.36					

Meanwhile, Table 7 exhibits the results of the comparison of the perceptions of the male and female students on the importance of the English language. The table exposes that the computed t-value of 3.981, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.966, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, suggests that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means a significant difference between male students' and female students' perceptions of the English language's importance.

Table 7
T-test results of the Students' Perceptions on the Importance of English According to Their Sex

Group	N	Mean	SD.	Df	t-Critical	t-Computed	p-value	Decision
Male Students	200	3.43	0.18	369	1.966	3.981	0.000	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Female Students	200	3.35	0.24					

Table 8 displays the comparison of the male and female students' attitudes towards people who can speak the English language well. It can be seen that the computed t-value of 8.837 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.966 and a p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance of 0.05 suggest that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means a significant difference between the male students' and female students' attitudes towards those who have a good command of the English language. The difference of 0.27 in the computed mean of the two groups of respondents supports this claim in favor of the male students. This surmises that male students are the ones who maintain a more "very favorable" attitude towards the good speakers of English.

Table 8
T-test Results of the Students' Attitude about People Who Can Speak English Well According to Their Sex

Group	N	Mean	SD.	Df	t-Critical	t-Computed	p-value	Decision
Male Students	200	3.56	0.26	366	1.966	8.837	0.000	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Female Students	200	3.29	0.35					

Table 9 manifests the comparison among the perceptions on the importance of the English language described by the respondent-students per grade level. Results indicate a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, which suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference in how the respondent-students in various grade levels perceived English's importance.

Table 9
ANOVA Results of the Students' Perceptions on the Importance of English According to Their Grade Levels

Group	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Interpretation
Between Groups	2.503	3	0.834	21.049	0.000	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Within Groups	15.699	396	0.040			

Table 10 illustrates the multiple comparisons of the importance of students' English language in their grade levels. The results indicate no significant differences in the importance of the English language between Grades 7 and 8, 7 and 9, and 8 and 9. On the other hand, significant differences are found in the perceptions on the importance of the English language between Grades 7 and 10, 8 and 10, and 9 and 10.

Considering the gathered data, it can be deduced that students have varying perceptions of the English language's power. Though their mean scores are clustered on a high appreciation of the English language's power, their differences in grade levels, particularly in their ages, revealed differing levels of appreciation.

Table 10
Scheffe Test Results on the Perceptions of Students on the Importance of the English Language According to Their Grade Levels

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	P-value	95% Confidence Interval		Interpretation
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Grade 7	Grade 8	-0.005	0.028	0.999	-0.084	0.074	Not Significant
	Grade 9	-0.014	0.028	0.970	-0.093	0.065	Not Significant
	Grade 10	0.176	0.028	0.000	0.097	0.255	Significant
Grade 8	Grade 7	0.005	0.028	0.999	-0.0741	0.084	Not Significant
	Grade 9	-0.009	0.028	0.992	-0.088	0.070	Not Significant
	Grade 10	0.181	0.028	0.000	0.102	0.260	Significant
Grade 9	Grade 7	0.014	0.028	0.970	-0.065	0.093	Not Significant
	Grade 8	0.009	0.028	0.992	-0.070	0.088	Not Significant

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	P-value	95% Confidence Interval		Interpretation
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
	Grade 10	0.190	0.028	0.000	0.111	0.269	Significant
Grade 10	Grade 7	-0.176	0.028	0.000	-0.255	-0.097	Significant
	Grade 8	-0.181	0.028	0.000	-0.260	-0.102	Significant
	Grade 9	-0.190	0.028	0.000	-0.269	-0.111	Significant

Table 11 depicts the results of the Statistical (ANOVA) comparison of the respondents' attitudes toward people who can speak English well as described per grade level. Results indicate a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, suggesting the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference in the students' attitudes towards people who have a good facility using English with due consideration to their grade levels.

Table 11
ANOVA Results of the Students' Attitude about People Who Can Speak English Well According to Their Grade Levels

Group	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Interpretation
Between Groups	10.112	3	3.371	39.448	0.000	Reject Ho at 0.05 level of significance.
Within Groups	33.837	396	0.085			

Lastly, Table 12 shows the multiple comparisons (Scheffe Test) of students' attitudes toward people who can speak English well in terms of their grade levels.

The results indicate that the attitude of Grades 8 and 9 toward people who are good at speaking English are not significantly different while the attitude of Grades 7 and 8, Grades 7 and 9, Grades 7 and 10, Grades 8 and 10, and Grades 9 and 10 toward people who are good at speaking English are significantly different at a level of significance of 0.05.

Considering the Statistical results, it can be deduced that students have a varying attitude toward good speakers in English across grade levels. Though their mean scores are

clustered on high favor on people who can speak English well, the differences across grade levels imply differing degrees of favorability across ages.

Table 12
Scheffe Test on the Attitude of Students towards
People Who Can Speak English Well
According to Their Grade Levels

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	P- value	95% Confidence Interval		Interpretation
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Grade 7	Grade 8	0.125	0.0413	0.029	0.009	0.241	Significant
	Grade 9	0.228	0.0413	0.000	0.112	0.344	Significant
	Grade 10	0.434	0.0413	0.000	0.318	0.550	Significant
Grade 8	Grade 7	-0.125	0.0413	0.029	-0.241	-0.009	Significant
	Grade 9	0.103	0.0413	0.104	-0.013	0.219	Not Significant
	Grade 10	0.309	0.0413	0.000	0.193	0.425	Significant
Grade 9	Grade 7	-0.228	0.0413	0.000	-0.344	-0.112	Significant
	Grade 8	-0.103	0.0413	0.104	-0.219	0.013	Not Significant
	Grade 10	0.206	0.0413	0.000	0.090	0.322	Significant
Grade 10	Grade 7	-0.434	0.0413	0.000	-0.550	-0.318	Significant
	Grade 8	-0.309	0.0413	0.000	-0.425	-0.193	Significant
	Grade 9	-0.206	0.0413	0.000	-0.322	-0.090	Significant

DISCUSSION

Since the American colonial rule, more Filipinos have viewed the ability to speak English as a superior competency [though this may not be the general case], hence a bizarre outlook of Filipinos to good English speakers. This also reveals how Filipinos give importance to English to attain success and be respected in general society. Moreover, following what the adages say, "experience is the best teacher" and "practice makes perfect," exposure to speaking English opportunities is a good means of developing and improving one's skills in using the language. Having such an opportunity is a good avenue for coaching and mentoring sessions where people can learn from other people who develop their English speaking skills.

The United States of America has colonized the Philippines for more than 40 years and using the English language originates from the Americans (Karnow, 1989). Such denotes how Filipinos have developed a sense of inclination toward using the language in every aspect of life, not only in ordinary conversations, more so, in different workplaces (Kassim & Ali, 2010). Also, with the Philippines being considered the third largest English speaking nation globally (Bolton et al., 2004), Filipino teachers and students are now facing the challenge of maintaining that premium attribute of being known to be communicatively competent in expressing themselves using the English language.

The birth of the K-12 curriculum is among the government's smart moves in equipping young Filipinos with the competencies they need to become "upright, useful and productive" citizens (BP Bldg.232):

To ensure the maximum participation of all the people in the attainment and enjoyment of the benefits of such growth (Section3.2)

It is also the government's contention that sufficiently educated individuals become empowered and confident to take their place in the global society.

In response to the national vision, schools worldwide, as implementers of the curriculum, ensure that the students are developed holistically and acquire the key competencies– critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity– necessary to meet global standards. Among the four competencies identified, communication plays a critical role in the students' overall formation (Rubin et al., 1990).

Trends on communication skills development present that there are now five macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing (Barrot, 2014). Of these five skills, students have more speaking difficulties, particularly in using the English language, which is the international language (Jenkins, 2000).

At this point, the present study seeks to highlight the importance of developing the learners' English speaking ability. Its overarching objective is to derive inputs that may be

offered for intensifying Oral English instruction. As a springboard, the study looked into the respondents' perceptions of the importance of English; their attitudes about people who can speak English well; and the significant differences in their perceptions and attitudes toward English and its speakers.

Language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols developed by a social group to cooperate. It makes it possible for men and women to express their thoughts and feelings (Magallona-Flores et al. 2006). It is indeed one of the most important communications (Ornos et al., 2004). Hence, teachers' responsibilities are even more highlighted in language classes, with language teachers sometimes being viewed as the driving force behind coordination, harmony, peace, and global understanding (Kaboodvand, 2013). With such principles in mind, gauging how teachers and students perceive the importance of the English language and how they think toward people speaking, it is a timely endeavor in today's global educational setting. Teachers and students may have differing views on the value of English as a language, particularly in the Philippine setting where multilingualism exists, and the culture permits various languages. However, nature stipulated in the Constitution that strengthens English alongside Filipino gives a certain sort of power in the former's use.

On the respondents' perceptions of the importance of English, both groups, i.e., the teachers and students, have given high regard on the importance of the English language, particularly in making the speakers globally competitive. The non-readers, on the other hand, believed in the importance of the English language and how it can make a person powerful and attain success by just using it as a medium in communicating. This leads to what Lee et al. (2013) have coined that people are "earning power" using the new languages. English is a prestigious and working language for the formal institutions of government, law, education, and international business. The acquisition of skills in using the English language allows people to achieve a higher status. This shows that Filipinos value English as a tool for globalization as more Filipinos are considering English speaking ability to find their luck in working abroad (Stepanova, 2013).

Meanwhile, respondents' attitudes on people speaking well revealed that teachers and students have high regard toward these individuals. They typically look up to people who are making efforts to speak the English language well. The data present how Filipinos give high regard and respect to people who speak the English language, recognizing the importance of having such ability. Borlogan (2009) pointed out that English indeed continues to penetrate the Filipino society as evidenced by its dominance in various domains and activities and even more intimate context such as the home, prayers, and expressions of intimate emotions. Furthermore, the participants' feelings toward people speaking the English language show that teachers and students value those people as they love to see people speaking English in school, public places, and other platforms or avenues for speaking opportunities. Cabrera and de Asis (2008) affirmed that English is necessary for utilitarian reasons. It is the language of space, technology and electronics, medicine, international business and advertising, governance and politics, radio, television, film, and many other

endeavors. This reveals the dominance of the English language and how it affects people's attitudes toward others and how they view things in life.

Overall, teachers and students have high perceptions and attitudes toward the English language and on the speakers. This signifies how they see the English language's power as a mechanism that could empower one's life. Filipino society can see and encounter English words in almost all life facets, as proven in the Philippine context.

Looking closely at the significant differences in the respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward the importance of the English language and the people speaking it well, the data revealed astonishing and varying results. As deduced from the data, there is a significant difference in how the respondent-teachers and students perceive English's importance and how they view people speaking it well. Meanwhile, on the test of significant difference in how the male and female teachers' respondents perceive the importance of English and how they view people speaking it, a significant difference was disclosed. The male teachers valued the English language at a much higher level. On the other hand, comparing male and female students' perceptions and attitudes toward people speaking English well presented no significant difference. These details show how students perceive the importance of English in their life and future career path. Likewise, on the comparison between the perceptions and attitudes toward people speaking English well as described by respondent-students per grade level, a significant difference was obtained. This posits how students have appreciated or valued the importance of English in their schooling. The higher-grade level students tend to have established; their appreciation of the English language is also intensified.

As revealed in the transcripts of the non-reader students, they pointed out that in speaking English:

Kaya ko pong makapagtrabaho sa abroad kapag marunong po akong mag-Ingles. [I can work abroad if I am able to speak English] – Pa1

Matutunan ko pong makipagsabayan sa iba. [I can compete with others in speaking English] – Pd2

The cited statements are further attested by Stepanova (2013) because the English language is becoming more and more popular worldwide and in all spheres of life; in particular, anyone who wants to succeed in the business world must speak English. Moreover, Pascasio (2005) pointed out that English's role may be diminishing on the national (Philippines) level, but it is certainly the language of wider communication at the international level for globalization and information technology.

Language is power (Mayr, 2008), and indeed, English has made its way to be recognized worldwide as an influential language. Such influence transcends the lives of the people using it and those who aspire to use it as a tool for success. With the localization and

contextualization of the Oral Communication curriculum in the Senior High School program, the students are deemed to be equipped with competencies integral to making them eloquent speakers and expressing themselves through the English language, thus contributing greatly in making them more functionally literate and lifelong learners. Making students speak more the English language does not mean forcing them to speak inside the classroom. This demands good preparation of instructional materials, and implementation must be progressive and systematic. Since the study shows that respondent-students give high regard to those who speak English well, teachers need to reduce their TTT (Teacher Talking Time). Being a teacher in English is different from being a lecturer. Therefore, teachers may consider increasing STT (Student Talking Time). This may encourage students' participation.

To emphasize, communication is an essential 21st-century skill that the students must hone thoroughly to prepare them for the world of work, continuing education, and business opportunities.

Hence, through this study's results, the research seeks to recommend the formulation or design of programs, strategies, and interventions that would intensify the teaching of Oral Communication to students across levels. Furthermore, curriculum developers may consider this study's findings as a basis for future efforts in enriching the curriculum to make it more relevant and useful.

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