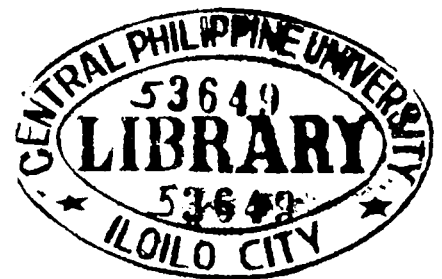


A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS'
KNOWLEDGE OF GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE AND
ABILITY IN READING COMPREHENSION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We live in an era of change and development and national leaders are looking for ways and means for solving problems confronting our country. One of the sectors of the government being given more attention by the Prime Minister is the Ministry of Education and Culture. Aware of the needs of the schools, students and pupils the Ministry of Education and Culture is conducting an evaluative or research study to improve the quality of education. Revision was done in the English program of the secondary department fitted for the Filipino students.

The English curriculum was revised to meet the Filipino adolescent's needs as he functions now and will continue to function as an adult in his new society. Composition and literature are now labelled Communication Arts (English). Communication Arts (English) I, II, III and IV cover skills and concepts deemed basic in the communication arts. Specific contents for the different levels are selected and organized in a spiralling progression scheme to develop the basic skills and concepts in increasing complexity.

Department Order No. 20, s. 1973¹ specifies the focus of English instruction at each curriculum level. In the first year, the students are to develop the mastery of the basic sentence and paragraph patterns, Philippine literature and the enjoyment of art forms. In the second year, the emphasis would be on expanded sentence forms and on Asian and African literature. The third year focuses on the different composition patterns and on English and American literature. In the fourth year, formal writing, world classics and discipline in the arts occupy central position.

Language enables an individual to live in society; the kind of society in which he lives will profoundly affect his language. Semantic structure and social structure are intimately connected and it is here that the most serious difficulties for the language learner are profoundly to be found.²

It is to be expected that Filipino students will find difficulty in learning English as a second language since the two languages differ from each other in structure.

¹Philippine (Republic) Department of Education and Culture. (Manila: February 21, 1973).

²Harold Allen. Teaching English as a Second Language (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), pp. 16-24.

Learning a language is not merely memorizing names for objects or finding the meaning of words; it is not simply memorizing names for objects or finding the meaning of words. It is not simply learning vocabulary--its lexical meaning, but it is understanding the system by which words work together to express an idea--its grammatical meaning. The relationships among words in a language are called its grammar.³ Grammar is important for it enables a person to speak and write the language and use it fluently. Every sentence that a person utters carries with it the grammar of the language. A native speaker of a language knows a great deal by the time he has learned to talk. When a toddler is able to reach for his bowl of cereal and say, "Tommy like," or when he takes delight in being read to because he understands that the big, bad wolf, not the third little pig, perished, he has absorbed a great deal of English grammar.⁴

³Helen C. Lodge and Gerald L. Trett. New Ways in English (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 123-4.

⁴Ibid., p. 123.

Statement of the Problem

A common problem is the failure of the students to understand the material read. This not only affects their performance in English classes but also in other content subjects. Bansuela⁵ expressed this problem in two questions stated thus: 1) Why do many pupils find it difficult to comprehend what they read?, 2) Why is it hard for them to understand sentences and paragraphs?" He gave four answers to the first question:

1. Pupils lack the ability to know the meaning of a word or words and the proper usage;
2. They lack the ability to comprehend thought units and the thought that is formulated is twisted, without sense;
3. They find it difficult to apply the knowledge of sentence construction to English sentences which emphasize the use of the subject before the predicate since in Filipino, most often the "predicate comes before the subject;"
4. They have noticed that some English words like two, to, too have similar sound but different meanings.

Since sentence construction in Filipino has an effect on English, especially when the students apply knowledge of Filipino sentence structure to English sentences, they meet with difficulties in comprehending what they read. The investigator deemed it necessary to

⁵Rafael H. Bansuela, "Understanding Sentences and Paragraphs Made Easy," The Philippine Journal of Education, LVI (February, 1978), pp. 464-5.

investigate the relationship, if any, existing between students' knowledge of English grammatical structure and ability in reading comprehension in English when intelligence and socio-economic status of parents of high school students are controlled.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is knowledge of grammatical structure related to reading ability when intelligence and socio-economic status of parents of high school students are controlled?
2. Is knowledge of grammatical structure related to reading ability when age is controlled?
3. How much of the relationship is explained by each of the intervening variables of mental ability and socio-economic status?

To answer the above questions, the following questions had also to be answered:

- a. Is mental ability related to reading ability?
- b. Is socio-economic status related to knowledge of grammatical structure?
- c. Is mental ability related to knowledge of grammatical structure?
- d. Is socio-economic status related to reading ability?

e. Is mental ability related to socio-economic status?

f. Is age related to knowledge of grammatical structure?

g. Is reading ability related to age?