

Basic English Language Communication Proficiency of AIMS Maritime Students

Article History:

Received: 12 June 2024

First Decision: 10 July 2024

Published: 31 August 2024

Judith J. Secusana

Master in Maritime Administration, Asian Institute of Maritime Studies, Pasay City, Philippines

Abstract

This study assessed the English language proficiency of first and second-year Bachelor of Science in Maritime Transportation (BSMT) and Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering (BSMarE) students at the Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (AIMS) during the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. Specifically, the study determined the proficiency levels of the students in Reading and Comprehension, Vocabulary, Grammar, Spelling, and Essay Writing. It also identified if there exist a significant difference between the two groups of students. The results provided recommendations to improve the English language proficiency of the students. Employing descriptive research design, a total of 317 students were sampled from a population of 2,996 first and second-year students across the two programs. The samples are broken down into the following clusters: 127 first-year BSMT students, 50 first-year BSMarE students, 90 second-year BSMT students, and 50 second-year BSMarE students. The study used standardized written-English language proficiency tests, patterned after TOEFL, which included twenty-five questions in each key proficiency area. Scores were categorized into seven levels, from "No Proficiency" to "Excellent." Results showed that spelling was the strongest skill for both first and second-year students, with high proficiency levels. Vocabulary was the weakest, with nearly all students failing on this section. Reading and comprehension, essay writing, and grammar were at an average level. There were no significant differences in proficiency levels between first and second-year students in most areas, except for vocabulary, where performance was uniformly low. Recommendations include the development of a special vocabulary learning program as well as the creation of additional lessons in writing and editing students' own work.

Keywords: Basic English, English Language Communication, Proficiency, Maritime Students, Asian Institute of Maritime Studies



Copyright © 2024. The Author/s. Published by VMC Analytikis Multidisciplinary Journal News Publishing Services. Basic English Language Communication Proficiency of AIMS Maritime Students © 2024 by Judith J. Secusana is licensed under **Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0)**.

 Judith J. Secusana is a graduate of Bachelor of Arts in English (Cum Laude) at Philippine State College of Aeronautics in Pasay City, Philippines. She was the former Head of the Center for Languages and Social Sciences and the former Publication Head of the Baywatch school paper at the Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (AIMS) in Pasay City. At present, she is a Faculty of the General Education (GENED) of AIMS handling English and Social Science classes. Address correspondence to Judith J. Secusana, General Education Department, Asian Institute of Maritime Studies, Roxas Boulevard corner Arnaiz Avenue, Pasay City, 1300 Philippines. Email: judithsecu@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is crucial for safe and efficient ship operations. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) encourages member states to provide English language skills to their seafarers. This requirement is outlined in Tables A-II/1 and A-III/1 (English Language), and Table A-IV/2 for GMDSS radio operators in the 1995 Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code, as amended in 2010. This provision was established due to serious maritime accidents

caused by faulty communication and human errors.

To address this, English language courses are included in the Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation (BSMT) and Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering (BSMarE) programs. These are the two most popular maritime programs offered by schools in the Philippines. Industry partners and employers expect that graduates of maritime schools will have both the technical knowledge and basic proficiency in English communication.

In Metro Manila, the Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (AIMS) is a leading maritime school offering BSMT and BSMarE programs. Located in Pasay City, AIMS has been operational for about 20 years and has produced thousands of graduates who have excelled in professional board examinations. The school aims to be the "Home of Maritime Knowledge Exchange" and is

dedicated to providing world-class maritime education.

AIMS has three academic departments: the College of Business, the Maritime College, and the Graduate School. It uses a bi-semester grading system, dividing the academic year into two terms: the "X" term and the "Y" term. Each term covers half of the subjects for a semester. Applicants for the BSMT and BSMarE programs must pass college admission tests, which include simple Mathematics problems, Psychological or Abstract Reasoning questions, IQ tests, and English language communication skills tests. Admission is based on test scores, personal interviews, high school grades, and health requirements.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines prescribes the curriculum for maritime education. CHED Memorandum Order No. 13, series of 2005 (CHED, 2005), specifies the minimum curricular components for BSMT and BSMarE programs. Section 12 requires students to complete 12 units of English language courses, which include Basic English Communication Skills, Marine Vocabulary and Maritime Terms, and Technical Writing and Oral Communication. AIMS includes English 1 and English 2 for first-year students, English 3 (Marine Vocabulary and Terms) in the second year, and English 4 (Technical Writing and Oral Communication) as the final English course. CHED believes that these 12 units will adequately prepare students for maritime communication.

Students at AIMS complete three years of academic courses before applying for a 12-month apprenticeship aboard ships. Most students prefer international shipboard training for the opportunity to earn in US dollars and potential employment offers. International shipping companies have strict requirements for apprentices, assessing qualifications based on personality, academic performance, attitude, technical competence, and communication skills.

Despite many students successfully meeting apprenticeship requirements, some face

rejections or delays. Feedback indicates that students often fail in interviews and personality assessments, despite passing technical and IQ tests. Shipping companies administer English language tests patterned after the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). These tests assess reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, sentence correction, synonyms, antonyms, idioms, phrases, and comprehension passages. Given the importance of English proficiency, AIMS needs to assess the communication skills of BSMT and BSMarE students. Currently, no in-depth assessment has been conducted, making it difficult for academic leaders and English faculty to evaluate student proficiency. The researcher, an English language faculty member at AIMS, aims to address this gap. This study seeks to evaluate the students' proficiency levels and identify their strengths and weaknesses, which will help the school improve its English language programs.

LITERATURES

Communication Skills and Their Importance.

Many studies emphasize the critical role of effective communication skills in educational and professional settings. Ornstein et al. (2011) discuss how family environments impact students' academic success, particularly their ability to communicate effectively in English. They argue that well-prepared family environments contribute to students' success, whereas inadequate preparation and insufficient school support lead to poorer outcomes. Tabares (2012) highlights the importance of communication skills for college entrance, noting that standardized tests and interviews increasingly assess these abilities. NDT Resource Center (2013) points out that effective listening and speaking skills enable students to understand and articulate concepts better, enhancing their overall learning experience. Macarandang and Vega (2009) focus on essay writing as a complex communication skill that requires students to generate well-developed responses to questions without a single correct answer.

Challenges in Language Proficiency. Several studies investigate the challenges students face in developing English language skills. Reigeluth and Chellman (2009) define knowledge and skill as crucial elements for effective communication. They emphasize that both written and oral skills are essential, but many students struggle more with oral communication due to internal uneasiness in face-to-face interactions. Rasonabe (2009) underscores that vocabulary development is fundamental to mastering English and accessing academic content. Similarly, Varghese (2013) notes a significant gap between receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) among ESL students, with students in India showing stronger receptive skills but weaker productive skills.

Evaluation and Improvement of English Proficiency. The evaluation of English proficiency and the implementation of improvement strategies are central to several studies. Yanping (2004) discusses the need for enhanced English communicative training in China, using multimedia and other innovative methods to address proficiency issues. Sarudin and Zubairy (2013) found that while Malaysian university graduates were proficient in basic English, they struggled with higher-order reading comprehension skills, impacting their workplace performance. Cerdeno (2004) measured the English communicative competence of maritime students, finding them to be average writers and marginal speakers, though they showed a positive attitude toward mastering English for career growth. Brillantes (2005) recommended assessing whether English proficiency improves with academic progression among maritime students. Rasonabe (2009) also identified below-median scores in basic English proficiency among freshmen maritime students, noting a strong desire among students to improve their language skills.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study utilized the descriptive comparative design. This design is

intended to describe the differences among groups in a population without manipulating the independent variable (Cantrell, 2011). In this research, the method was used largely to describe and elicit information about the proficiency level of the BSMT and BSMarE students in using English language communication across various modal functions.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques. The study adopted purposive sampling as respondents were chosen based on their program of studies as well as their year levels. The identified population of students was those enrolled as first and second years in the programs BSMT and BSMarE during the first semester of AY 2013-2014. The population of first-year students enrolled in the BSMT and BSMarE programs in that given period was 1,709 while the second-year students comprised of 1,297. The entire population of first and second-year students was 2,996. From this population, a total of 317 were used as sample respondents. They constituted more than 10% of the defined population.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of BSMT and BSMarE Sample Students Grouped by Year and Program of Study

Groups of Students	Population	Frequency	Percentage
First -Year BSMT	1,264	127	40.0 %
First -Year BSMarE	445	50	15.8 %
Second -Year BSMT	902	90	28.4 %
Second-Year BSMarE	385	50	15.8 %
Total	2,996	317	100%

Table 1 showed the frequency and percentage distribution of sample respondents. The highest percentage of 40% were the First Year BSMT cadets, 15.8% were the First Year BSME cadets, 28.4% Second Year BSMT cadets, and 15.8% Second Year BSME cadets. They were all enrolled in the AY 2013-2014. The respondents of the study were the First and Second-year students from the two Maritime programs offered by Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (AIMS); namely, Bachelor of Maritime Transportation (BSMT) and Bachelor of Marine Engineering (BSME) which all of them enrolled during the first semester of AY 2013-2014.

Instrumentation. The main instrument used in this study was a set of standardized written-English Language proficiency tests, developed by the researcher and patterned from the TOEFEL tests administered to college students by international schools. These types of tests were also commonly used by international and local employers in determining the English language communication proficiency of job applicants for entry-level positions. The tests were comprised of twenty-five itemized questions in each of the following key proficiency areas: Reading and Comprehension, Grammar, Spelling, Vocabulary and Written Essay.

Table 2
Scoring and Grading Scales and Verbal Interpretations

Test Score	Grading-Scale (in Percentage)	Interpretation
25	100%	Excellent
21-24	84-99%	Very Good
17-20	68-83%	Above Average
13-16	52-67%	Average
10-12	40-51%	Below Average
4-9	16-39%	No Proficiency
0-3	0-15%	No Comprehension

Table 2 showed the scoring and grading scales as well as verbal description used in this study. The scoring, grading and verbal descriptions of the test results followed the seven-point scale developed by Dr. Pamela Sharpe (2004) of Ohio University based on 6th Edition of Barron's Student's TOEFL.

Ethical Considerations and Data Gathering Procedure. Ethics has been strictly followed in the conduct of this study. All pieces of literature and excerpts from previous studies cited in this paper have been appropriately referenced. The list of references can be seen in the bibliography. The author-date method of in-text referencing was generally applied in this research.

On the other hand, appropriate permits were requested from the Head of the Maritime College Department of AIMS prior to the administration of the tests. The English language communication tests were first administered to the first-year BSMT students.

The second-year students got their examination on the second week of the same month. The third week of examination was administered to the first- year BSMarE students. The fourth week of October 2013 was the examination for the second-year BSMarE students. The entire process of test preparation, administration and retrieval took about three months.

Statistical Treatment of Data. To yield and analyze the data of the study, frequency distribution, percentage, ranking, mean and T-test for independent samples were used.

Frequency distribution was used to present in an orderly manner the various data representing the subject and observations. The response to each question by each student was counted and the total or frequency was recorded in an orderly manner.

Percentage was utilized to describe the frequency of scores obtained by the respondents while ranking was used to determine the position or distance of one score from the other. Mean was used in measuring the central tendency of the scores and grades of the students in getting the proficiency level of the respondent-students. Lastly, T-test of independent samples was used to measure the difference between the means of the two independent groups of students. In this case, one group was tested versus another group in the same category. For the first-year category, the proficiency level of the BSMT was tested versus the proficiency level of BSMarE. The same held true for second year category of students. The proficiency level of second year BSMT was tested vs. the proficiency level of second year BSMarE. Each group was treated as an independent from the other group.

RESULTS

For first-year students, the data as summarized in Table 3 bared that BSMT group had the highest mean score of 84.88 (Very Good) in Spelling proficiency. This score was followed by 72.59 (Above Average) mean score in Reading and Comprehension. Next to it was 61.95 (Average) in Essay, then 55.62 (Average) in

Grammar. Their lowest mean score was 32.66 (No Proficiency) in Vocabulary. The overall mean score was 61.54 (Average).

Table 3

Proficiency Levels of First-Year BSMT and BSMarE Students According to Five-Tested Functions of English Communications

Tested Functions	BSMT Students		BSMarE Students		Grand Mean		Overall Ranking
	Mean Score	Prof. Level	Mean Score	Prof. Level	Mean Score	Prof. Level	
Reading & Co.	72.59	AA	73.76	AA	73.17	AA	2
Vocabulary	32.66	NP	32.04	NP	32.35	NP	5
Grammar	55.62	A	52.56	A	54.09	A	4
Spelling	84.88	VG	87.44	VG	86.16	VG	1
Essay	61.95	A	63.52	A	62.73	A	3
Overall	61.54	A	61.86	A	61.70	A	

Legend: Above Average (AA); No Proficiency (NP); Average (A); Very Good (VG); Ranking 1 is highest and 5, the lowest.

On the part of BSMarE group, the data pattern appears to be similar as those of BSMT's data. The highest mean score of 87.44 (Very Good) was in Spelling. It was followed by 73.17 (Above Average) mean score in Reading and Comprehension. Next to it was, 63.52 (Average) in Essay, and distantly followed by 52.56 (Average) in Grammar. The lowest mean score was 32.56 (No Proficiency) score in Vocabulary. The overall mean score was 61.86 (Average).

The grand mean score of the BSMT and BSMarE first-year students subsequently displayed the highest mean score of 86.16 (Very Good) in Spelling. It was followed by 73.17 (Above Average) score in Reading and Comprehension. Next to it was 62.73 (Average) in Essay and 54.09 (Average) in Grammar. The lowest was 32.35 (No Proficiency) score in Vocabulary. The grand overall mean was 61.70 (Average) proficiency level.

Table 4

Proficiency Levels of Second-Year BSMT and BSMarE Students According to Five-Tested Functions of English Communications

Tested Functions	BSMT Students		BSMarE Students		Grand Mean		Overall Ranking
	Mean Score	Prof. Level	Mean Score	Prof. Level	Mean Score	Prof. Level	
Reading & Co.	78.88	AA	76.80	AA	77.84	AA	2
Vocabulary	36.28	NP	35.20	NP	36.24	NP	5
Grammar	59.33	A	60.80	A	60.06	A	4
Spelling	88.80	VG	87.40	VG	88.10	VG	1
Essay	64.26	A	62.88	A	63.57	A	3
Overall	65.51	A	64.62	A	65.06	A	

Legend: Above Average (AA); No Proficiency (NP); Average (A); Very Good (VG); Ranking 1 is highest and 5, the lowest.

For second year students, Table 4 uncovered that BSMT group got their highest mean score

of 88.80 (Very Good) in Spelling. It was followed by 78.88 (Above Average) score in Reading and Comprehension. Next to it was 64.26 (Average) in Essay, and 59.33 (Average) in Grammar. The lowest mean score of 36.28 (No Proficiency) went for Vocabulary. The overall mean score of this group was 65.51 (Average) proficiency level. With reference to BSMarE group, their highest mean score was 87.40 (Very Good) in Spelling; followed by 76.80 (Above Average) Reading and Comprehension, 62.88 (Average) score in Essay, and 60.80 (Average) in Grammar. The lowest score was 35.20 (No Proficiency) in Vocabulary. The overall mean score was 64.62 (Average). The grand mean scores revealed that the two groups achieved 88.10 (Very Good) in Spelling, 77.84 (Above Average) in Reading and Comprehension, 63.57 (Average) in Essay, and 60.06 (Average) in Grammar. The lowest score of 36.24 (No Proficiency) was in Vocabulary. The grand overall mean was 65.06 (Average) proficiency levels.

From the foregoing statistical results, it can be gleaned that, the two groups of first year students have the same or common areas of strengths and weaknesses in English Communication skills. Both groups' strongest skills are in Spelling and moderately strong skills in Reading/Comprehension. They have average skills in Essay and Grammar. Their common pitfall is in Vocabulary the parts of the two groups of second-year students, their weaknesses and strengths in English Communication are evidently in the same trend as those of the first-year students' data. The second-year students had their strongest skill in Spelling and moderately strong skills in Reading and Comprehension. They also have average skills in Essay and Grammar. Their lone weakness is in Vocabulary.

Table 5

Proficiency Levels of First and Second Year BSMT and BSMarE Students Across the Five Functional Areas of Proficiency

Student Groups	First Year		Second Year		Grand	
	Mean	Verbal Interpret.	Mean	Verbal Interpret.	Mean	Verbal Interpret.
BSMT	61.54	Average	65.51	Average	63.52	Average
BSMarE	61.86	Average	64.62	Average	63.24	Average
Grand	61.70	Average	65.06	Average	63.38	Average

Table 5 revealed that that the Grand Mean of BSMT first and second year student clustered towards 63.52 or Average, while the BSMarE obtained 63.24 or Average. The Grand Mean for all groups was 63.38 or Average. Students of AIMS appear to have a generally average proficiency in English Language communications

Table 6 displayed the results of tests of significant difference between the proficiency levels of first-year BSMT and BSMarE groups and second-year BSMT and BSMarE groups. Since all requirements for the application of parametric test were sufficiently met, the t-Test of Independent samples had been utilized in testing the significant difference between English Proficiency levels of two groups of students. Prior to the application of T-test, the F-test for two sample means was applied for the purpose of determining whether or not the T-Test would assume equal or unequal variances.

The two-tailed tests were applied, and the critical level or rejection and acceptance of null hypothesis was set at 0.05 probability. As such, the stated null hypothesis was rejected if p-value came greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. When p-value arrived at less than 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted. In another way, when the value of t-statistic came out higher than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected; and when t-statistic arrived at less than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 6
Tests of Significant Difference in English Proficiency Levels of First-Year Students

English Prof. Functions	Mean Variances		t-Stat	t-Critical Value	p-Value Crit. If ≤ 0.05	Decision Rule	Interpretation
	BSMT	BSME					
Reading & Comp.	229.35	262.63	0.4372	1.9882	0.6630	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Vocabulary	61.84	73.05	0.4452	1.9889	0.6573	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Grammar	244.17	306.29	1.0793	1.9876	0.1418	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Spelling	75.15	84.90	-1.6905	1.9882	0.0945	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Essay	143.96	123.19	-0.7986	1.9736	0.4255	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Overall	49.99	78.46	-0.2522	1.9736	0.8011	Accept Ho	Not Significant

For first-year students, Table 6 data divulged that in terms of "Reading and Comprehension" proficiency level, the obtained p-value was 0.6630 or higher than the 0.05 significant level.

The null hypothesis was retained or accepted because the mean variances between the first-year BSMT and first-year BSMarE students were not significantly different. There was no evidence to show that the proficiency level of BSMT students was higher or lower than proficiency level attained by BSMarE students.

Across other areas of English proficiency functions, such as, Grammar, Spelling and Essay, each p-value came out higher than the 0.05 set critical p-value. Therefore, in each functional area, there was no evidence that proved the presence of significant difference between the two groups' levels of English Language proficiency. Consequently, each null hypothesis was retained or accepted.

Similarly, the overall p-value was 0.8011 or higher than the critical p-value at 0.05, therefore, the overall null hypothesis was retained or accepted. Overall, there was simply no evidence established to show that the first-year students of BSMT program had higher or lower English Language proficiency level than those of the first-year BSMarE students

The overall results of the tests of significant difference for the first-year groups of students validated or confirmed the initial observation and analysis of this researcher that BSMT and BSMarE groups had similar degree or level of English Language communication proficiency. Both achieved above average proficiency in Reading and Comprehension; Very Good proficiency in Spelling, Average Proficiency in Grammar and Essay and No Proficiency at all in Vocabulary. Each groups have an "Average" overall proficiency level.

Based on these results, the current study contradicts Brillantes' (2005) theory that college level students have below the standard proficiency levels in English language communications across five modal areas. Clearly, based on the samples used in this study, the only area where students failed was in Vocabulary proficiency. Moreover, based on the overall test, the finding of this research also contradicts the study of Rasonabe (2009) that

maritime students have below the average levels of English language proficiency.

For second-year students, Table 7 showed the results of tests of significant difference on English Language communication proficiency between BSMT and BSMarE students of AIMS. In Reading and Comprehension, the p-value of the test was 0.3333 or higher than the 0.05 critical p-values. The null hypothesis was retained or accepted. There was no evidence to show that the two groups of students had significant difference in Reading and Comprehension proficiency level.

Table 7
Tests of Significant Difference in English Proficiency Levels of Second Year Students

English Proficiency Functions	Mean Variances		t-Stat	t-Critical Value	p-Value Critical if ≤ 0.05	Decision Rule	Interpretation
	BSMT	BSMarE					
Reading & Co.	124.77	161.30	0.9726	1.9863	0.3333	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Vocabulary	89.21	85.55	0.4584	1.9773	0.5111	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Grammar	296.35	199.18	- 9.5138	1.9773	0.6081	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Spelling	63.35	45.06	1.0225	1.9773	0.3083	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Essay	129.72	135.20	0.6810	1.9839	0.4974	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Overall	53.47	5381	0.6898	1.9837	0.4919	Accept Ho	Not Significant

Across other English proficiency areas, such as Vocabulary, Grammar, Spelling and Essay, each p-value was higher than the critical value of 0.05. Therefore, in each case, the null hypothesis was also retained or accepted. There was no evidence per case that warranted the presence of significance difference in the proficiency levels of the two groups of students. The overall p-value was 0.4919 or higher than the critical p-value of 0.05. Therefore, the overall null hypothesis was retained or accepted. There was no significant difference in the proficiency levels of the two groups of second year students. The tests results validated the initial observations and analyses of this researcher that second year BSMT and BSMarE groups of students had the same degree of proficiencies in all functional areas of English Language communications. The tests likewise established that insofar as Reading and Comprehension is concerned, the two groups had "Above Average" proficiency level. In Spelling, they both attained "Very Good" level; while in Grammar and Essay, both achieved "Average" proficiency level. Their overall proficiency was within the "Average" level.

The foregoing tests results for first year and second year groups of students refute the theoretical view of Brillantes (2005) that college level students have below the standard proficiency levels in English language communications across five modal areas. It also opposes the study of Rasonabe (2009) that maritime students have below the average levels of English language proficiency. It is emphasized, however, that this important theoretical finding is for the 317 sample student respondents only and may not generally represent other college level students in the country particularly those enrolled in other maritime schools. Nonetheless, the result of this study, is a piece of evidence that adds to the current body of knowledge insofar as English proficiency levels of maritime students is concerned.

Table 8
Tests of Significant Difference in English Language Proficiency Levels of First and Second-Year Students of AIMS

English Prof. Functions	Mean Variances		t-Stat	t-Critical Value	p-Value crit. If ≤ 0.05	Decision Rule	Interpretation
	First Yr	Second Yr.					
Reading & Co.	164.26	225.77	0.0005	1.9675	0.9995	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Vocabulary	64.69	87.55	3.4905	1.9675	0.0005	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
Grammar	186.64	388.32	8.4686	1.9675	0.0009	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
Spelling	83.50	79.54	2.9562	1.9675	0.0033	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
Essay	110.52	176.24	3.8037	1.9675	0.0001	Reject Ho	Significantly Different
Overall	37.08	53.31	5.4308	1.9675	0.0000	Reject Ho	Significantly Different

Two-tailed tests (positive and negative); Significant if p-value is ≤ 0.05 ; Accept Ho (or null hypothesis) if t-Stat is lesser than or equal to critical t-value; or Accept Ho; if p-value is higher than alpha

Two-tailed tests (positive and negative); Significant if p-value is ≤ 0.05 ; Accept Ho (or null hypothesis) if t-Stat is lesser than or equal to critical t-value; or Accept Ho; if p-value is higher than alpha.

In Reading and Comprehension, the computed p-value was 0.9995 or higher than the 0.05 critical p-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained or accepted. There was no sufficient evidence to show that the first-year students' Reading and Comprehension proficiency level was significantly different from the level obtained by the second-year students.

Referring to the Summary Tables of Proficiency Levels it can be seen that in Reading and Comprehension, the first-year students' grand mean clustered at 73.17 (Above Average proficiency), while those of the second- year

students gathered at 77.84 (Above Average). Though the second-year proficiency rating appears to be numerically higher than that obtained by the first-year group, the difference between the figures did not affect at all each one's attained proficiency category. Both were within "Above Average" proficiency level.

However, across the four other functional areas, the data showed that all of the p-values failed to surpass the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected, and sufficient evidence supported the theory that the first-year students' proficiency levels in Grammar, Spelling and Essay were significantly different from the proficiency levels attained by second year students.

When the overall proficiency levels of both groups were tested, the computed p-Value arrived at 0.0000 or less than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the overall null hypothesis was rejected. It means that there was sufficient evidence to support the grand theory that the overall proficiency level of first-year students of AIMS in English Language Communications was significantly different from the proficiency level attained by the second-year students.

DISCUSSION

The study assessed the English language proficiency of first and second year BSMT and BSMarE students at AIMS. The results revealed a generally average proficiency across various communication skills. For both first and second-year students, spelling was the strongest area, showing high proficiency levels, while vocabulary was the weakest, with nearly all students failing this component. Reading and comprehension, essay writing, and grammar skills were in the "average" range, highlighting some areas of strength but also room for improvement. The results suggest that while students excel in spelling, they struggle significantly with vocabulary, which impacts their overall proficiency in English.

When comparing first-year and second-year students, the data indicated no significant differences in proficiency levels across most

communication functional areas. Both groups demonstrated similar performance in reading, grammar, spelling, and essay writing. However, second-year students had slightly better scores in all areas compared to first-year students. This trend suggests that students improve their proficiency over time, although the improvements are modest. The findings indicate that while progression occurs, it is not yet sufficient to achieve significant changes in overall proficiency levels.

The study found no significant differences between the proficiency levels of first and second-year students in specific areas such as reading and comprehension, grammar, spelling, and essay writing. However, the overall proficiency of second-year students was higher, showing that they generally perform better after completing their first year. This finding underscores the importance of ongoing English language instruction, as incremental improvements are noted, but substantial gaps remain, particularly in vocabulary.

To address these issues, several recommendations were proposed. First, a special learning program for vocabulary enhancement is suggested. This could include "Audio Learning Lessons" that students can use at home. These lessons would focus on common errors and vocabulary usage, allowing students to learn at their own pace. This method aims to improve vocabulary proficiency, which is currently a major weakness. Second, targeted grammar instruction and writing practice are recommended. Students should receive more lessons in writing and editing, with a focus on grammar rules and sentence structure. Teachers can provide targeted feedback and mini lessons based on common errors observed in student work. This approach will help students address specific grammar issues and improve their overall writing skills (Author, Year). Additionally, developing new proficiency tests for larger student samples, including third-year students, could provide more comprehensive insights into English language skills across different levels. This could help further tailor educational interventions and track progress over time.

REFERENCES

- Brillantes, E.M. (2005). Basic English proficiency of UPHSD maritime students and its associated factors. Philippines: Master Thesis, University of Perpetual Help Systems College of Maritime Education.
- Cantrell, M.A. (2011). Demystifying the research process: Understanding a descriptive comparative research design. Gale Academic One File. <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=googlescholar&id=GALE%7CA265869622&v=2.1&it=r&asid=fdeab004>
- Cardeno, R.A. (2004). English Communicative Competence of Maritime Students of Central Visayas Polytechnic College. The International Maritime English Conference–IMEC 16.
- Commission on Higher Education. (2005). CHED CMO–No.01–s2005. <https://www.scribd.com/document/623343978/CHED-CMO-No-01-s2005>
- Macarandang, M.A. & Vega, V.A. (2009). Assessment of Learning 1. Mandaluyong City, Philippines. Books Atbp. Publishing Corp.
- NDT Resource Center (2013). Developing Communication Skills. <http://www.ndt-ed.org/02/18/13>
- Rasonabe, M. (2007). basic English proficiency of maritime students of UPHSL. Faculty research. University of Perpetual Help–Systems Laguna. Refereed Journal.
- Reigeluth, C.M. and Chellman, A.A. (2009). instructional-design theories and models volume iii: building a common knowledge base. USA: Taylor and Francis Publishing.
- Sarudin, I. & Zubairy, A.M. (2013). Assessment of Language Proficiency of University Students. <https://www.iiu.edu.my/02/16/14>
- Tabares, J. (2012). College students need for communication skills. <http://www.thehomeschoolmagazine.com/02/18/13>
- Varghese, R. (2013). An Integrated Teaching Model to Develop English Proficiency of ESL Management Students. India. Rjagiri Centre for Business Studies.
- Yanping, D. (2004). On developing communicative competence through communicative Activities in classes. The International Maritime English Conference–IMEC 16.