

Proficiency Level in English Teachers of the Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in the Northern Mexican Union Conference

Anabel Gastelum Soto
English/Faculty of Education
University of Montemorelos

English is recognized as a globalized language all over the world. Also, as the need to speak English increases, teaching English as a foreign language and testing of English become more vital in Mexico as well as worldwide. English empowers people who have learned it, giving them more academic and professional opportunities, providing them with various skills needed for the labor market. Therefore, students need to learn English for a brighter future with more chances to have better jobs and possibilities. English teachers have an essential task in the students' learning, carrying out the activities, and they are an immediate source to learn the language; the students acquire their second language input through exposure or their zone of proximal development. Teachers with a high-level target language proficiency could handle several aspects of language teaching, exposing learners to a broader spectrum of language structures and vocabulary. Because of the importance of English in daily life, this study aimed to provide a real diagnosis of secondary school teacher's proficiency level. This current study is mainly a descriptive quantitative explorative and transversal type. The instrument was applied via an online questionnaire or survey, testing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The sample consisted of 24 Secondary English teachers from 9 states. The data obtained from the LimeSurvey showed that the 24 English teachers have strength in the Listening and Speaking skills, but a deficiency in the Reading skill. Overall, most of the teachers got the right level in English proficiency (B1-C1), which respond to the Government's Teacher Profile requirements.

Keywords: English, proficiency, level, teachers, adventist, secondary

Introduction

English is recognized as a globalized language all over the world. When people travel abroad, no matter which country they visit, English is always in signs and advertisements. Also, as the need to speak English increases, teaching English as a foreign language and testing of English become more vital in Mexico as well as worldwide. English is a global language; it is heard on television and spoken by politicians around the world. When people travel abroad, no matter which country they visit, English is always in signs and advertisements. That is not surprising at all because, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2007), English is the most expanded

language of communication with more than one billion speakers.

English has come to be considered the lingua franca or a "common language" that everyone must learn to have a better chance of professional success. Because of the growing needs, many countries such as Colombia, Argentina, Peru, and Chile have joined the effort of introducing English in their Education system. Of course, Mexico is not the exception; According to la Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP (the Ministry of Public Education) 2010, Mexico has formally introduced English language classes at the secondary school level since 1926. In 2009, SEP implemented the "Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica", PNIEB, (National English Program in Basic Education). The aim of this program is for students who completed their third year of

secondary education, to have completed a B1 level of English (intermediate), according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

As a country, Mexico aims to become a bilingual country within 10 to 20 years with the fulfillment of the national programs' support (Federal Government of Mexico, 2016). That is why Mexico has now introduced the English language into the educational system on every level. However, Mexico has experienced a challenge in terms of teacher training. The PNIEB coordinators in the SEP have determined a minimum acceptable profile for teachers. According to the SEP (2010), the teacher at the secondary level requires at least a B2 or higher level in English proficiency; this profile was defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).

Students need to learn English for a brighter future with more chances to have better jobs and possibilities. English teachers have an essential task in the students' learning, carrying out the activities, and they are an immediate source to learn the language; the students acquire their second language input through exposure or their zone of proximal development. Teachers with a high-level target language proficiency could handle several aspects of language teaching, exposing learners to a broader spectrum of language structures and vocabulary (Ellis, 2005). Because of the importance of English in daily life, this study aimed to provide a real diagnosis of secondary school teacher's proficiency level. The research question of this study is: What is the proficiency level in English teachers of the Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in the Northern Mexican Union Conference?

Review of Related Literature

2.1 English Proficiency

Language proficiency is not necessarily associated with nativeness, and indeed, not all native speakers are equally skilled users of English. Also, people can continue to develop their second language proficiency throughout their lives (Pasternak and Bailey, 2004). Ellis (2005) states that it is essential that for a teacher to teach a foreign language, he/she must have the right level

of English proficiency, because students acquire second language input through exposure or their zone of proximal development; in this case, the teachers. Therefore, it is crucial for an English teacher to have a high level of target language proficiency and full command of the language. Richards et al. (2013) analyzed teachers' classroom practices who were with limited subject knowledge and their target language proficiency, with those with more extensive subject knowledge; these teachers were teaching French, Spanish, German, Chinese, and Japanese as a foreign language in New Zealand. The findings revealed that teachers' target language proficiency was the determining factor explaining the variance in the effectiveness of teachers' classroom practices. according to Richards (2015), it has been demonstrated by multiple research projects that language proficiency influences in some way how well a teacher can teach a second language.

2.2 How Proficiency Level is Measured

In order to recognize the English proficiency level of the teachers, different tests score the four necessary skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. The Common European Framework for Languages or 'CEFR' has been operationalized as a set of English-language standards around the world. It gives a detailed description of learner level using the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in a language-neutral format. It is a valuable reference document for school directors, syllabus designers, teachers, teacher trainers, and proficient learners.

Objective

Because of the importance of English in daily life, this study aimed to provide a real diagnosis of secondary school teacher's proficiency level. The findings of this study may provide information about the English proficiency level in teachers of the Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in the Northern Mexican Union Conference, applying the Michigan Test as the instrument. Consequently, the findings of this study may help the Adventist Education system know their teachers' English proficiency.

Methodology

This current study is mainly a descriptive quantitative explorative and transversal type. The most feasible way to obtain descriptive quantitative explorative and transversal information from a specific number of participants in the northern part of the country was to develop an online questionnaire. We began the design of the instrument by generating a long list of possible questions, taken from the Michigan Practice Tests from the sections of grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening, and from TOEFL and Ted Talk videos for the speaking section. The instrument consisted of 113 items in total: the grammar section had 40 items that were multiple choice (participants had 60 seconds to answer); vocabulary section with 40 items that were multiple choice (60 seconds); reading section with 10 items that were multiple choice (180 seconds were given for each text and 90 seconds to answer each question); speaking section with three items that the participants answered with voice recordings (45 seconds); and the listening section with 20 items that were multiple choice (80 seconds).

The survey was administered via Lime Survey as widely as possible, to know the teachers' proficiency level, as well as to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument (Dörnyei, 2003). 24 Secondary teachers from 9 states responded to the survey. 14 (58,3%) were women, and 10 (41,7%) were men. Out of 24 participants, just six teachers (25%) have a degree in the English area, but almost all (91,6%) of them received certification for teaching English. Another interesting fact is that there is a slightly higher percentage concerning graduates of non-Adventist Universities (54.2%) compared to graduates who studied at Adventist Universities (45.8%).

Results

The responses of participants to questionnaire items were coded and analyzed. The quantitative data obtained from the Lime survey was transferred to Microsoft Excel; then, data were transferred to Jamovi. All answers in the Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, and Listening section were evaluated, and a series of schemes were developed.

Through the analysis of the data in the Grammar section the arithmetic average of 48 was obtained of the English teachers in the Adventist schools of the Northern Mexican Union Conference. The highest value presented in the test was of 76, and the lowest value was of 22. To make sure that the participants were consents when answering the test, the reliability analysis of the answers was checked in each section using a Jamovi software. In the Grammar section the scale of reliability was of .849 according to the Cronbach's α .

In the Vocabulary section the arithmetic average of 56 was obtained of the English teachers in the Adventist schools of the Northern Mexican Union Conference. The highest value presented in the test was of 74, and the lowest was of 38. The scale of the reliability was of .756 according to the Cronbach's α , which is lower than in the Vocabulary section.

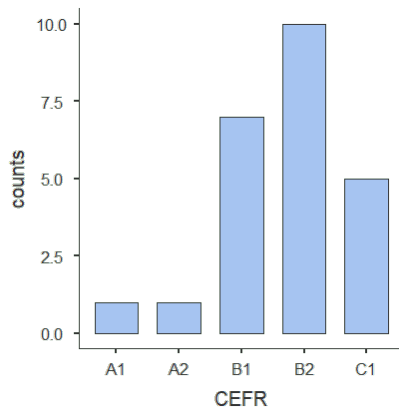
In the Reading section the arithmetic average was of 56 of the English teachers in the Adventist schools of the Northern Mexican Union Conference. The highest value presented was of 72, and the lowest was of 8. In this section the scale of the reliability showed the lowest result of all sections, which was of .464 according to the Cronbach's α . That indicates that the participants were not very consistent in answering the test. The participants might not have good reading comprehension or a large vocabulary.

In the Speaking section, the arithmetic average was 59.3 of the English teachers in the Adventist schools of the Northern Mexican Union Conference. The highest value presented was of 76.4 and the lowest of 34.1. In this section the scale of the reliability showed the highest result, which was of .876 according to the Cronbach's α .

In the Listening section the arithmetic average was of 58 of the English teachers in the Adventist schools of the Northern Mexican Union Conference. The highest value presented was of 76, and the lowest of 16. The scale of the reliability showed the result of .826 according to the Cronbach's α .

The results of English proficiency levels showed that most of the teachers have a level that is required by the English Teacher Profile which is higher than B1 level (see below). 20.8% of the teachers have C1 level, other 41.7% have B2 level, 29.2 % have B1 level, 4.2% have level A2 and

4.2% have A1, these last two do not meet the minimum requirements of the teacher profile.



Conclusions

This study set out to investigate the proficiency level in English teachers of the Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in the Northern Mexican Union Conference. The data obtained from the LimeSurvey showed that the 24 English teachers have strength in the Listening and Speaking skills, but a deficiency in the Reading skill. The data showed a drop in the Reading section, which might be caused by two factors: 1) the length of the test: the participants might have got tired, and they answered at random. 2) the participants do not have good reading comprehension skills.

Overall, most of the teachers got the right level in English proficiency (B1-C1), which respond to the Government's Teacher Profile requirements. The motivation for this study was to contribute and give the Seventh-day Adventist education system of the North Mexican Union Conference analysis of their Teachers' proficiency level. We recommend that the Seventh-day Adventist education system of the North Mexican Union Conference should have an English Teacher Profile because we notice that most of the teachers do not have a degree in English Teaching. For that, we suggested online courses or summer courses to help teachers improve their language skills.

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