

The Impact of Language Proficiency on the Academic Achievement of International Students

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International Students in the United States

The United States of America is still regarded as the melting pot. This has led to the influx of international students into American universities from the mid-1950s. According to the 2015 Open Doors Report from the Institute of International Education (IIE,2015), the number of international students studying at United States colleges and universities increased by ten percent from 877,433 in the 2013-2014 academic school year to 974,926 students in the 2014-2015 academic school year. As such, an additional 97,492 international students enrolled in the 2014-2015 academic school year; making this increase the highest rate of growth in 35years.

The official report of international student enrollment was first published in *Open Doors* [press release] in 1954/55. This report was supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Academic and Cultural Affairs in 1970. Therefore, the United States is home to more of the world's 4.5 million global mobile college and university students that attend colleges and universities around the world. The top countries with the most international students are: China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and Kuwait. As a result, international students constitute about five percent of the more than 20 million students enrolled in United States higher education; this was against four percent in 2013/2014 (Institute of International Education, 2015).

Several reasons have been given for this massive influx of international students into the United States' higher educational system. One reason according to Kim (2015), is that there are numerous reputable and renowned universities that offer a wide range of courses from which international students can make choices. American universities and colleges have a lot of educational options. These options contribute to the academic growth of international students. According to Kim (2015) American higher education gives international students the opportunity to participate in academic clubs and professional organizations, which may not necessarily be related to their majors. Participation in such organizations gives them an opportunity to learn skills that could be practical and useful in their careers. Many U.S. colleges offer students a lot of resources like books, academic journals, and films to help in their education; and some of these resources are hard to find elsewhere.

According to the Voice of America's Student Union report (2016), some international students who majored in Western History, alleged that it was hard to find "translated or English books" in their home country and this made it difficult for them to complete their program of study, but they can access such books and materials while in the United States. The successful completion of international students' careers has made them more marketable in the job market. The migration of international students to the United States, for some students, has given them the opportunity to learn English and to understand American culture. Learning about a new culture and having an international perspective can also facilitate job placement.

This global perspective gives the international students an indication of what life looks like for people outside their home country. This is because the international student learns about another culture by living in it. It is one thing to learn about other cultures online, or from the news, but it is a completely different thing experiencing this new culture firsthand by living in that culture. International education affords the students the opportunity to meet and make many friends. Such friendships could be for life. It also helps the international student to grow personally. Being on your own in a different country challenges you to solve problems and to adapt in a new way.

The United States of America (USA) has benefitted greatly from the enrollment of international students in American colleges and universities. The continuous increase in international students coming to the United States for higher education has positively impacted the American economy.

According to *Open Doors 2015*, international students contributed over \$30 billion to the U.S. economy in 2014, and with 132,888 students from India notably contributing \$3.6 billion. This was due largely to the fact that the majority of international students receive funding from their home country government or universities, or from family sources, or from their personal savings.

The Open Doors Report, states that international students contribute to America's scientific and technical research by bringing an international perspective into U.S. classrooms. According to (Stohl, 2007) this is a huge academic benefit. The institutions' intellectual environment is greatly enhanced as the international students offer different perspectives that really enrich all students both in and outside of the classroom (Fitzer, 2007). They enhance class discussions and can also share a different perspective with their American classmates. This has led to new innovations and to a better understanding of other cultures in the United States.

American students are better prepared for global careers resulting in long-lasting business relationships and economic benefits. According to Potts (1992), international alumni have been regarded as future business partners and great customers. In the international market, international students also help to generate demands for U.S. currency (U.S. dollars) since they have to exchange or transfer money from their home country's currency to pay for their expenses during their study in the United States.

International student education is also valuable to foreign policy and politics (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015) because it fosters mutual relationships among nations. The political impact of international students in their home country cannot be over emphasized. Many international students have attained great heights in the political scene of their countries. Below is a list of some ex-international students who attained great political heights in their countries.

Country	Name	Position	Alma Maters
Afghanistan	Hedayat Amin-Arsala	Vice President	Southern Illinois University, 2008.
Bangladesh	Iajuddin Ahmed	President	University of Wisconsin 1962.
China	Wang Guangya	Ambassador to the United Nations	John Hopkins, 1982.
Egypt	Mohamed Morsi	President	University of Southern California, 1982.
Republic of Georgia	Mikheil Saakashvilli	President	Columbia University, 1994. George Washington University, 1995.
Ghana	Kofi Annan	UN Secretary General (former)	Macalester College. MIT Minnesota, 1961.
Indonesia	Susilo Bambang	President	Webster University, 1991.
Japan	Masako Owada	Crown Princess	Harvard College, 1982.
Jordan	Abdullah II	King	Georgetown University, 1987.
Nigeria	Nnamdi Azikiwe	President	Lincoln University, 1930. University of Pennsylvania, 1934.
Norway	HaakonMagnus	Crown Prince	University of California/Berkeley, 1991.
Pakistan	Shafqat Ali Shan Jamot	Federal Minister for Food Agriculture & Livestock	University of Virginia, 1977.
Pakistan	Benazir Bhutto	Ist Female Prime Minister	Harvard University, 1969.
Saudi Arabia	Prince Saud Faisal	Deputy Prime Minister	Harvard University, 1964.
Thailand	Surin Pitsuwan	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Harvard University, 1972.

International students add cultural values to campuses and communities and they help diversify the campus by creating a multicultural learning and living environment for domestic students (Wu et al., 2015). Domestic students have the opportunity of having a first-hand interaction with fellow students from foreign countries. International students create a diversified learning environment on campus (Wu et al., 2015).

International Students Enrollment in Tennessee State University

Tennessee State University is not left out in the enrollment of international students. International Students’ Enrollment for spring 2016 from the university’s Office of Diversity & International Affairs is as shown below. A total of 844 international students were enrolled in Tennessee State University during the spring 2016 semester, to pursue various academic programs. The colleges and schools are:

- Agriculture, Human, and Natural Sciences
- Business
- Education
- Engineering
- Graduate Studies and Research
- Health Sciences
- Liberal Arts

International Students’ Enrollment in Tennessee State University (Spring 2016)

Bahamas 15	India 37	Nicaragua 1
Brazil 2	Iran 2	Nigeria 24
Bulgaria 2	Iraq 2	Philippines 2
Burkina Faso 1	Israel 1	Qatar 2
Canada 1	Jamaica 7	Saudi Arabia 681
China 16	Jordan 2	Sri Lanka 2
Colombia 3	Kenya 5	Syria 1
Congo 1	Kuwait 3	Tanzania 4
Ethiopia 1	Libya 4	Turkey 1
Georgia 1	Malawi 1	Uganda 2
Germany 1	Malaysia 1	UAE 1
Ghana 5	Nepal 16	UK 2
Hong Kong 1		

From the enrollment as shown above, Saudi Arabia had the highest number of students with a total number of 681 students. This was followed by India with 37 students and Nigeria with 27 students. There were 16 students from China, 16 from Nepal and 15 from Jamaica. These were the leading countries who had their students enrolled for different academic programs in Tennessee State University. However, international students whose native language is not English were required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language, (TOEFL) test score as a proof of their language proficiency in speaking and reading English.

Policies, Legislation and Legal Issues Affecting International Students in the United States

There are three ways through which a student from another country can temporarily come into the United States legally to study (Wasem 2008). They are admitted as nonimmigrants with different visa categories, but the three main visa categories typically used by international students are: 1) the F visa for academic study; 2) the M visa for vocational study, 3) and the J visa for cultural exchange. The most common visa given to international students is the F-1 visa, which is given to a student pursuing a full time academic education, unlike the M visa, which is issued to international students pursuing a non-academic course of study, for example, by someone pursuing a vocational course of study.

International students may also enter the United States under the cultural exchange of the J-1 visa and these include scholars, professors, teachers, foreign medical graduates, and au pairs. Holders of any of these visa categories: F-1, M, and the J-1 visas are admitted as nonimmigrants for the duration of their period of study or exchange program.

They have to present a proof of residence and a proof of sponsorship; and their spouses and children may accompany them as F-2, M-2 or J-2 nonimmigrants respectively (Wasem 2015).

International students with any of these visas are barred from off-campus employment except with a work authorization. However, every international student resident in the United States is subject to the laws of the United States, which may run contrary to the laws of their home countries. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse for breaking the law. Therefore, international students who wish to accomplish their academic pursuit successfully in the United States, are obliged to abide by the laws of their campus and the host country. Such laws include, but are not limited to traffic, alcohol, domestic violence, sexual assault, drugs and child abuse. In spite of the fact that, some international students are nonnative speakers of the English language, it is expected of them to demonstrate a certain level of academic language proficiency for their academic success.

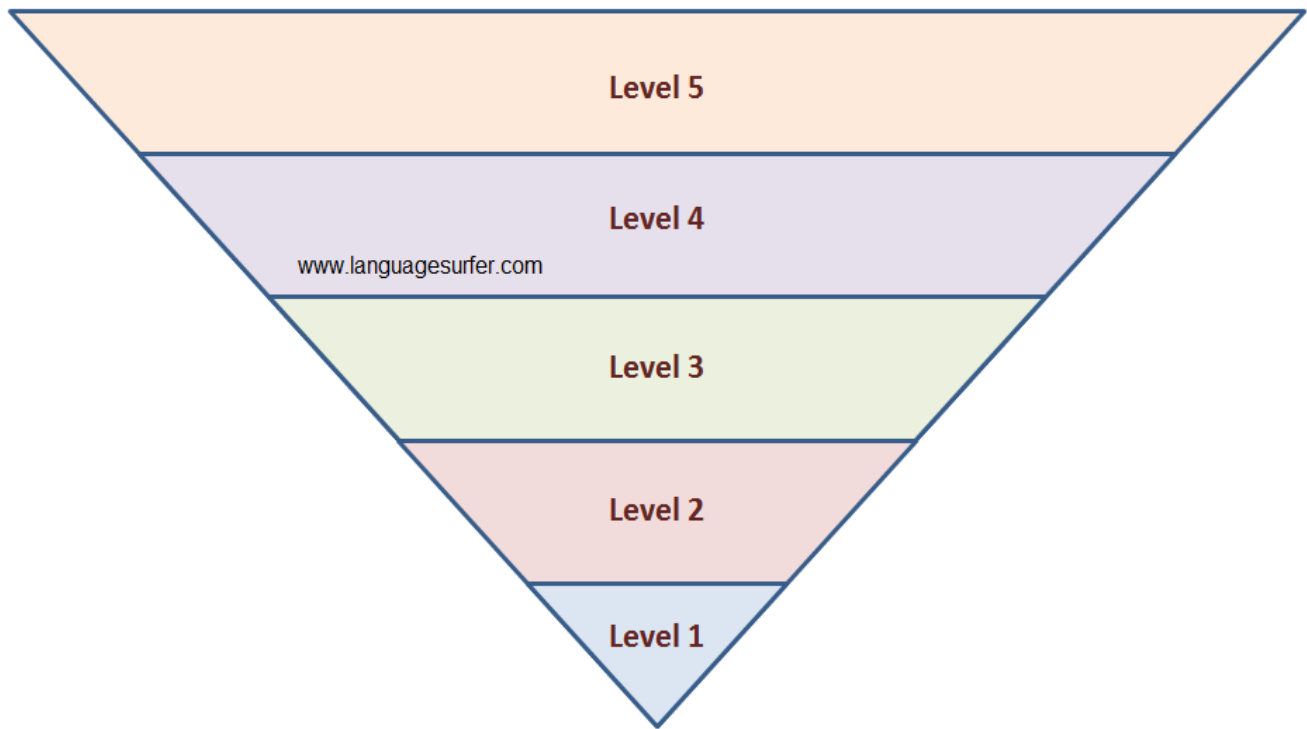
Language Proficiency

One of the challenges faced by international students is proficiency in the English language. Language proficiency is one's ability to use a language for a variety of purposes, which includes speaking, listening, reading and writing (State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2014). This therefore places a demand on the international student to demonstrate at least a minimum professional proficiency. For the student to effectively embark on his/her academic program, he/she should be able to speak the English language with sufficient structural accuracy and have a vocabulary adequate enough to participate in formal and informal discourse, but this has not always been the case. Most international students operate at different levels in their English language proficiency. According to Trice (2007) weak English language skills were perceived as one of the reasons why some international students were isolated from native speakers and faculty members.

The United States Department of State defined different levels of language proficiency in a hierarchical order. As represented below in the reversed pyramid, proficiency grows as one goes from one level to the other (Ron 2013). From the lowest is the Level One, which is also known as the Elementary Proficiency Level. A student operating at Level One is said to be able to speak and satisfy routine social travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements. He or she is able to read some personal names, place names, street signs, office and shop designations, numbers and isolated words and phrases.

Level Two is the Limited Working Proficiency Level. At this level, the student is able to speak the language and satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. He or she is able to read simple prose, in a form equivalent to typescript or printing, on familiar subjects.

Language Proficiency Levels



Level Three is also known as the Minimum Professional Proficiency Level. The speaker is able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary that could enable him or her to participate in formal and informal conversations on professional topics. He or she is able to read standard newspaper items, routine correspondence and technical materials.

Level Four is also known as Full Professional Proficiency Level where the student is able to use, read and speak the language fluently and accurately on all levels related to professional needs.

Level Five is known as the Native or Bilingual Proficiency Level. This is the level where the student has attained the speech and writing equivalent to an educated native speaker. This is the highest level of language proficiency that a learner can attain.

For a native speaker who is born into the language and lives in the environment where the native language is spoken, it is easy to attain such proficiency because language acquisition is innate. Therefore, a native speaker does not need a trigger to begin acquiring his or her native language (Chomsky, 2002). The transformational generative grammar of Chomsky maintained that there is an optimal learning age in which a child is able to learn a language in its entirety with fluency and this is between the ages of three to ten. After this age, it is difficult for the child to completely grasp the language.

Language consists of surface and deep structures (words and their meanings), as well as, the underlying relationships between words and the conceptualization of the syntactic structure of the sentence (Chomsky 2002). Hence the first language (L1) acquired by the international student interferes with English, the second language, (L2).

Cummins (2000) made a distinction between two kinds of language proficiencies- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The BICS are the surface skills of listening and speaking, which every student would normally acquire to function within the environment. It does not place great cognitive demand on the students and could be developed within six months to two years.

Nevertheless, the CALP is the academic language that places demand on the student. It includes the four basic language arts- listening, speaking, reading, and writing and takes between five to seven years for language proficiency to fully develop. This is the level of language proficiency that is required for international students to acquire in order to succeed in schools. Therefore, as proposed by Krashen and Brown (2007), academic proficiency consists of knowledge of the academic language as well as knowledge of the specialized subject matter.

Therefore, because international students are nonnative speakers of the English language of instruction and learn the English language as adults, invariably they are bound to operate at a lower level when compared with native speakers. Language difficulties therefore become a challenge. That is why different kinds of tests are used to assess international students' language proficiency before they can be granted admission into colleges and universities in the United States. The most widely used such test is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Language Assessment

The TOEFL test is a prescriptive examination that is used as a predictor of English language proficiency. It is the most common standardized test accepted for admission of international students (Stephenson, 2004). It was developed in the 1960's to assess the language proficiency of nonnative speakers who intend to study in institutions where English is the language of instruction (Educational Testing Service, 2009).

Presently, international students from the Commonwealth of Nations are exempted from taking the TOEFL - nations which are part of the Anglosphere (from Commonwealth realms to former British colonies e.g., Hong Kong, Special Administrative Regions of China, or former protectorates of the United States) where English is the official language automatically grants a TOEFL exemption. However, residents of Quebec are required to take the TOEFL exam while the rest of Canada is exempted. Also exempted are Anglophone African countries, but Francophone African countries where English is not an official language for example, Togo or Gabon are required to take the test. Also, included to take the test are countries like Mozambique and Namibia where English is co-official, but spoken by only 3% of the population.

TOEFL is a trademark of the Educational Testing Service (ETS), a private non-profit organization, which designs and administers the tests. ETS issues official score reports, to the test taker and independently to institutions, for two years following the test. It was developed under the umbrella of the National Council on Test of English as a Foreign Language. The Council as it is called in my research is made up of representatives from 30 public and private institutions. The testing program was initially financed by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Danforth Foundation. However, the test was first administered in 1964 by the Modern Language Association, but in 1965, the College Board and Educational Testing Service (ETS) assumed joint responsibility for the testing program. Since its inception in 1963 until today, about 25 million people from around the world have taken the test (ETS, 2015). It is offered in 165 countries with over 4500 test centers and it has evolved from paper-based to a computer-based test.

The TOEFL test is like a passport they can use because it is accepted by 7500 institutions worldwide. It is a four hour test that consists of four sections. Each section measures one of the basic English language skills namely: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Test takers are asked to perform tasks that combine more than one skill during the test. For example, they are required to

- Read, listen and then speak in response to a question
- Listen and then speak in response to a question
- Read, listen and then write in response to a question

Listening Section: This section tests the listening skills of the test taker. The test is structured in such a way that the test taker listens to a lecture, classroom discussion and conversation and then answer the questions that are meant to measure the ability to understand main ideas, important details, implications, relationships between ideas, organization of information, speaker's purpose and speaker's attitude.

Speaking Section: In this section, the test taker expresses an opinion on a topic. They speak in response to a reading and listening task. Test-takers are evaluated on their ability to appropriately synthesize and effectively convey information from the reading and listening material. They are also evaluated on their ability to speak spontaneously and convey their ideas clearly and coherently.

Reading Section: This section is made up of passages that the test takers is expected to read and answer the questions that follow them. Such questions are meant to test their comprehension of main ideas, inferences, vocabulary, inferences and more.

Writing Section: Test takers are required to write essay responses. It is meant to measure the test takers' ability to write in an academic setting. With such a well-structured test, TOEFL is considered an accepted worldwide test for nonnative English language speakers.

Academic Achievement

Due to an increase in the enrollment of international students in various colleges and universities in the United States, there are questions about the retention and graduation rate. It is therefore important to examine their academic outcome, such as the pass or fail rates and the grades or class of degree achieved. An instrument that is often use to assess students' educational outcome is their grade point average (GPA). However, as stated by Stoyhoff (1997), the determining factors of international students' academic achievement are very complex because a vast majority of international students, even those with low language proficiency, appear to succeed in the universities. As noted by Light, Xu, & Mossop, (1987) some important factors that affect the academic achievement of international students are not measured by the standardized test scores of TOEFL.

In addition, Abel (2002) pointed out that factors such as time management, classroom dynamics, social, and educational assistance were most likely to affect international students in their academic pursuit. However, Simpson (2001) identified language proficiency as one of the multiple factors that affect the academic achievement of international students and that GPA was a valid measure of academic achievement.

Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement

Researchers have presented conflicting results on the impact of English Language proficiency on the academic achievement of international students. Of greater concern is the question as to the appropriateness of TOEFL results to predict academic success. Both quantitative and qualitative research have been conducted to test and to investigate TOEFL's predictive validity. In the quantitative research, the common approach was to correlate the students TOEFL scores with their grade point average (GPA). While in the qualitative research, information was often obtained directly from the students through a survey or questionnaire in order to gain an insight into the relationship between English language ability and subsequent academic performance. However, both quantitative and qualitative research have painted an inconsistent picture of the correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement.

Consequently, Oliver & Dooley (2002) recommended that universities and colleges should look beyond language scores when assessing students' academic performance. Therefore, some researchers have predicted a positive correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement, while other researchers have negated this view.

Among the researchers who upheld the view that there was a positive correlation between language proficiency and academic performance was the research conducted by Martirosyan, Wang, & Wanjohi (2015). The results of their study on 54 undergraduate students ranked as sophomores, juniors, and seniors, showed a positive correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement. Although this study was an ex-post facto, non-experimental research that utilized a standardized self-reported questionnaire in place of a standardized test (TOEFL) to measure the level of students' language proficiency; the students' grade point average (GPA) was used as the dependent variable to measure students' academic achievement. Findings from this study revealed that there were significant differences in the academic performances of international students with different levels of English Language proficiency. This research further investigated the impact of multilingualism on students' achievement and both findings revealed positive correlations.

Green (2015) in a longitudinal study conducted on 297 students in a three year Pharmacy program from 2007 to 2009 concluded that low English proficiency had the prediction for weaker performance all through the years of the students' academic program. This was manifested in either failing papers or repeating the year. It was also revealed from this study that the impact of language proficiency on academic performance increased over time. Although other variables like gender, acculturation and ethnicity were taken into consideration, however language proficiency had a greater impact upon the students' academic achievement.

The research of Banjong (2015) conducted on 344 students reported a significant relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement. It was a qualitative research in which an online survey/questionnaire was administered to international students.

The results of the study did not only show a correlation between the student's language proficiency and student's academic achievement, but the study also revealed that the lack of English language proficiency was the major challenge of international students in their academic pursuits.

A study that supported a positive relationship between student's language proficiency and student's academic achievement was conducted by Bahar (2015). This study used convenience sampling of 1,223 students from Fatih University, Turkey Preparatory School. Data from the preparatory school were matched with student GPAs for four different semesters. Data from the following semesters were used: first year (2010) first and second semesters, second year (2011) second semester, and third year (2012) first semester were used. The results showed a positive correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement, especially in the faculty of Arts and Sciences. Morris & Maxey (2014) conducted another longitudinal study on international students who had completed their Masters of Accountancy program in one of two universities over the period from 1999-2012. It was required of the students to have completed at least 30 credits in two semesters in order to calculate their GPAs. The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) and TOEFL were used side by side as the independent variable to measure student's language proficiency. The results did not only indicate a correlation between student's language proficiency and student's academic achievement but that the TOEFL total score and component scores were more highly associated with academic achievement than the GMAT total and component scores.

Another study conducted by Eddey & Baumann (2011) on 2,253 students revealed a positive correlation between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement. It was also a longitudinal study from 2004-2007. Sahragard, Baharloo, & Soozandehfar (2011) reported a positive correlation between the language proficiency and the academic achievement among 151 students. The data for their study was collected in the fall semester of 2007-2008. They did not make use of their TOEFL scores but conducted a language proficiency test during their regular class hour without a time limit. The reliability of the student's language proficiency test was analyzed using Kurder-Richardson Formula 21. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between the students' language proficiency and their GPAs ($r=.53$, $p<0.05$). This meant that the more proficient they were, the better their academic success. It was therefore concluded that the students who scored higher on the language proficiency test (TOEFL) had better GPA scores.

Yen & Kuzma (2009) conducted a research study on a homogenous sample making use of only Chinese students in a Higher National Diploma class for the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 academic session. To measure their language proficiency, the researchers made use of the students' test scores on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The IELTS is employed by institutions in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand as a reliable means of assessing the English, language proficiency of nonnative speakers of English, just like the TOEFL is widely used in the United States.

To prove if there was a significant relationship between student's language proficiency and student's academic performance, the IELTS scores were correlated to their first and second semester GPAs for the two academic sessions. Results revealed a positive correlation between language proficiency and academic performance. However, the results further revealed that IELTS score better predicted the student academic achievement in the first semester more than the second semester. The IELTS sub scores for Listening, Read, Writing and Speaking were correlated to the GPAs and a positive correlation in the first semester was revealed for Listening, Writing and Reading but not Speaking. It was therefore concluded that low IELTS score led to poor grades especially if the students had poor listening results. This negated the reports of Sert (2006) on student's listening sub score.

Sert (2006) predicted a correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement using an English Language Program (ELP) test score. The ELP is a program designed to develop English language skills in students whose native language is not English Language. This is achieved through a curriculum that includes grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and academic preparation. Two different sets of language test scores which were used to determine language proficiency and the rules of grammar were correlated to the GPAs. Findings indicated that there was a correlation between the ELP tests and the student's GPAs. It was further revealed that the ELP was the major predictor of student academic achievement. Nevertheless, contrary to the report of Yen & Kuzma (2009), Sert (2006) whom both reported that the student's listening sub test score of ELP was the major predictor of the student's academic success.

This was in support of previous research conducted by Huong, (2001), and Woodrow (2006). Light et al. (1987) concluded that there was a significant positive correlation between the TOEFL scores and the student's grade point average (GPA) among 376 international graduate students.

Similar results were reported by Johnson (1988) when he conducted a study among 196 international undergraduate students. The students with TOEFL scores lower than 500 also had lower grades when compared with the students who had scored 500 and above. Similarly, Gebhard (2012) reported a significant correlation between the variables. According to Kuo (2011), who predicted a correlation between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement further ascertained that the accent of both the professors and international students contributed to their poor performance.

Also, Maleki & Zangani (2007) revealed a significant relationship between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement on a sample of 50 students using the TOEFL score and the student's GPAs. The correlation coefficient of the two sets of scores was 0.48. This meant that, as the student's English proficiency increased, so did the student's academic achievement. Also, mentioned in the results of the research were factors such as motivation, maturity, previous experience, poor study skills and inadequate background knowledge as hindrances to the student's academic achievement.

However, some researchers have reported that there is no correlation between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic performance. Daller & Phelan (2013) predicted that there was no significant relationship between the student's language proficiency among international students. Sadeghi, Kashanian, Maleki, & Haghdoost, (2013) predicted a non-significant relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement among Iranian medical students. This study was conducted on 156 students admitted in the academic year of 2008 and 2009.

Savicki (2011) also confirmed there was no correlation between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement. The participants for the study were 32 students on a study abroad program.

Wayne (2006) also revealed that there was no significant relationship between student's language proficiency and student's academic success. The TOEFL score and GPAs of 57 international students were used in this study. Fox (2004) reported that language tests such as TOEFL were not sufficient enough to measure language proficiency because it excluded factors such as financial security, time available to study, and other factors that may impact the academic achievement of international students.

Bayliss & Raymond (2004) also examined the relationship between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement in the context of two professional programs. First, Bayliss & Raymond examined the test scores for English as a Second Language (ESL) and the students' grade point average. The ESL scores were the scores in an advanced course on English as a Second Language. Both the ESL scores and GPAs were taken from two semesters. Second, Bayliss & Raymond examined the relationship of French Second Language scores on an advanced second language test. The results showed that there was not a relationship between the student's second language proficiency and the student's academic achievement.

Kertijens & Nery (2000) found no significant relationship between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic performance. Another research study that reported a negative correlation between student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement were the findings of Fass-Holmes & Vaughn (2015). They reported that the majority of international students who struggled with English language succeeded academically.

Mouton (2013) and Torregosa & Morin (2015) revealed that there was no significant relationship between the predictive variables such as language proficiency and academic achievement.

Garinger & Schoepp (2013) who indicated that there was no relationship between the student's language proficiency and the student's academic achievement also concluded that although students required some level of language competency to function in an academic setting, the reasons for their success or failure were more complex than mere language proficiency. The participants for this study were 181 international students who had studied for three years from 2009-2011 at Zayed University, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) sub scores in Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking were correlated to their corresponding GPAs. The findings reveal that International English Language Testing System (IELTS) sub scores were not predictors of future academic success.

The conflicting reports on the impact of the student's English language proficiency and the student's academic achievement has created a gap in the literature. Studies which predicted that there was no relationship between these variables maintained that TOEFL was not a good predictor of international students' academic success.

However, Fass-Holmes & Vaughn (2015) demonstrated that other variables such as, social and cultural events, mentoring programs, and student organizations could be responsible for the international students' success.

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