

# DEFINITION SYSTEM AND VERBALISM AS STIMULI TO SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACUMEN

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The learners' breadth of knowledge on the English language is greatly attributed to their strategies of finding meaning to new words and their verbal dynamism to address immediate needs as a member of an academic and cultural community. Employing descriptive design using adopted and expert validated questionnaires and checklists, this study aimed at ascertaining the English language learning scheme and its correlation with sociolinguistic intelligence among 50 randomly selected respondents representing 90.91% of the English major teacher education students of a state university in Cagayan Valley, Philippines in SY 2014-2015 using means, percentages, and correlational procedures at 0.05 level of significance. This educational venture unveiled that the respondents employed paralinguistic definition (4.21, always) over pragmatic (4.11, often), structural (3.72, often), and referential (3.69, often) definition strategies while a majority of them displayed normal verbal activity (39 or 78.00%). Positive significant correlations transpired as the respondents' English language learning scheme was tested with sociolinguistic intelligence along with metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligence. Hence, the respondents' definition system and verbalism could improve their sociolinguistic intelligence thereby indicating a favorable degree of their maturity, awareness, or capability to grasp more directly what happens around them, thus think and act more appropriately.*

**Keywords:** definition system, sociolinguistic acumen, verbalism

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nueva Vizcaya State University is a microcosm of cultural groups from the southern part of the province. The university through its various educational programs lures students who are culturally affiliated with the Igorots, Ifugaos, and Isinais among others. Because of multiculturalism, English language education has become a challenging factor as manifested by the low performance of teacher education students in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (Velasco, 2016). This could be attributed moreover to their apprehension in using the English language in performing speaking activities in the classroom (Salas et al., 2015).

One performs a schematic definition that takes an enormous part of his learning. English language learning marks the continual quest for substance in any learning experience one endeavors. It sprouts from creating complex patterns of expanding knowledge which is

converted into a set of verbal and nonverbal symbols expressed in perceptions, preferences, and personal traits. Further, it is demarcated by various configurations interwoven by unique experiences to create meanings that one attaches to every object he encounters.

In this perspective, English words, objects, and situations take their meaning in varied forms (Richard & Renandya, 2003). The referential, denotative, or lexical meaning of words is based on its technical purpose. Knowledge about an object is strengthened by considering its dictionary, encyclopedia, online meaning, or any other references that offer the technical meaning of words. Moreover, the structural meaning of an object is based on the analysis of dissected parts of a word, e.g. prefix, base word, and suffix. Further, objects may take their pragmatic, connotative or contextual meaning based on exposures and experiences of an individual. This is tantamount to the functional meaning of the object. On another side, the paralinguistic

meaning of an object is based on nonverbal factors that surround the communicative situation like tone, volume, pitch, actions, and emotions among others.

Words, objects, and situations are used by man in verbal activities which are inevitable. The degree to which one extends to his immediate society hinges on the strength of his language learning. Sociolinguistic intelligence is the awareness or the capability to "see" and grasp more directly what is going on in the world through the use of language in intercultural activities. Once we "see" we can think and act more appropriately (Lane, 2008).

It is in this light that this study specifically aimed to seek answers on how the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) major in English students of Nueva Vizcaya State University-Bambang Campus describe their English language learning scheme through their extent of use of definition strategies along with the referential definition, structural definition, pragmatic definition, and paralinguistic definition and the extent of their verbal activity; how do they evaluate the level of their sociolinguistic intelligence along with metacognitive intelligence, cognitive intelligence, motivational intelligence, and behavioral intelligence; if significant relationships exist in the extent of the respondents' use of definition strategies and their extent of verbal activity; and if English language learning scheme of the respondents through their extent of use of definition strategies and their extent of verbal activity influences their level of sociolinguistic intelligence.

## METHODS

The descriptive approach was used in this study which mainly determined how English language learning scheme through definition strategies and verbal activity influences the sociolinguistic intelligence of the randomly selected respondents composed of 50 BSED-English students of the Nueva Vizcaya State University, the school year 2014-2015, which sample population takes 90.91% of the target population. Questionnaires were used to gather the needed data.

In the survey questionnaire on definition strategies, the respondents were asked to rate the extent of their use of the mechanisms in the acquaintance of communicative symbols. The Verbal Activity Scale (VAS), which was adopted from the questionnaire developed by Rozilyn Miller in July 2002 as contained in the *Task force on high school curriculum*:

*Communication apprehension curriculum resource guide*, was used to gauge the respondents' verbal dynamism. In the sociolinguistic intelligence survey, which was based on the questionnaire developed by Soon Ang and Christopher P. Early contained in the book "*Cultural Intelligence*" published in 2003, the respondents were asked to assess the extent of their ability to use language and language behaviors in social interactions.

Means and percentages were used to describe respondents' definition strategies, verbal activity, and sociolinguistic acumen while Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was employed in unveiling the degree of relationships of the extent of use of definition strategies and verbal activity; and of the English language learning scheme and the sociolinguistic intelligence of the respondents, at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language learning could be achieved by being acquainted with various English words. The strategies used by the respondents of this study in putting meaning to words and eventually understanding and utilizing them in communicative processes are discussed in the succeeding section.

### *The English language learning scheme and degree of verbal activity of the BSED-English students of Nueva Vizcaya State University-Bambang Campus*

Table 1 reveals that among the strategies considered in this study, the paralinguistic definition garnered the highest mark at 4.21 with a qualitative description of always. This signifies that the English major students of the university become oriented to English words best when various parameters of paralinguistic such as intonation, volume, gestures, and facial expression which are attached to the words being expressed by the speaker.

This finding is backed by the concept of interpersonal communication which does not only involve the explicit meaning of words, the information or message conveyed but also refers to implicit messages, whether intentional or not, which are expressed through non-verbal behaviors. (<http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/nonverbal-communication.html>)

**Table 1.** Extent of use of definition strategies by the respondents

Strategy	Means	Description
Referential Definition	3.72	Often
Structural Definition	3.69	Often
Pragmatic Definition	4.11	Often
Paralinguistic Definition	4.21	Always

Least among the definition strategies used by the selected respondents is a structural definition at 3.69, with the qualitative category of often. This strategy is attached to the vocabulary and word recognition skills of the learner which are among the most difficult language skills to develop. Both skills require the frequency of reading which is a language-based activity that does not develop naturally, and for many learners, specific decoding, word recognition, and reading comprehension skills must be taught directly and systematically. (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/why-some-children-have-difficulties-learning-read>)

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents as to the extent of their verbal activity which defines how much an individual communicates with the people around him using the spoken language.

**Table 2.** Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents as to the extent of their verbal activity

Extent	Range	Frequency	Percentage
High	Above 38	7	14.00
Normal	22-38	39	78.00
Low	Below 22	4	8.00
Total		50	100.00

Majority of the respondents or 39 (78.00%) have a normal level of verbal activity. On the other hand, only 7 respondents or 14.00% have a high level of verbal activity while 4 respondents or 8.00% of the sample population have a low level of verbal activity.

English major students are expected to have the facility of the English language. Being expressive can be achieved through an expanded knowledge or understanding of the language which requires a verbal function to either generate or interpret meaningful spoken or written words or symbols. The level of verbal activity of the respondents is attributed to their inclination to paralinguistic definition as revealed in this study.

### The respondents' sociolinguistic intelligence

The sociolinguistic intelligence questionnaire using the Likert Scale was administered to the respondents and the summary of their level of sociolinguistic intelligence is disclosed in table 3.

It could be noticed in the table that the highest among the areas in which the respondents were described is motivational intelligence with a mean of 3.84 or high and next to it is metacognitive intelligence with a mean of 3.81 or high. Moreover, behavioral intelligence comes next with a mean of 3.75 or high, and the least is cognitive intelligence with a mean of 3.64 or still high.

**Metacognitive Intelligence.** The sociolinguistic intelligence of an individual ascertains the level of his maturity in terms of the strategies he uses in conveying his thoughts to the people around him through the use of language (Ang, 2003). The extent of the respondents' sociolinguistic intelligence as to their metacognitive intelligence refers to the strategies that the respondents use in translating his ideas, opinions, and attitudes to the people around him through language.

**Table 3.** Level of respondents' sociolinguistic intelligence

Sociolinguistic intelligence along:	Mean	Qualitative Description
Metacognitive	3.81	High
Cognitive	3.64	High
Motivational	3.84	High
Behavioral	3.75	High

The level of the respondents' metacognitive intelligence is described by the overall mean of 3.81 or high. This is attributed foremost by their being conscious of the cultural knowledge they have when interacting with other people and they are being mindful of what others may feel through their words and actions. Moreover, the respondents' metacognitive intelligence is characterized highly by their being able to adjust their knowledge as they interact with other people from unfamiliar cultures and to reflect on their speech and actions when dealing with other people.

Among the indicators of metacognitive intelligence, the least that describes the respondents is that they know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures. Nueva Vizcaya State University- Bambang Campus is an intersection of diverse cultures demarcated by various ethnic groups within the province like the Igorots, Isinais, Ifugaos, and Ilocanos among others. The majority of the students come from Bambang, Dupax del Sur, and Norte, Aritao, Kayapa, and Kasibu or

municipalities from Northern Nueva Vizcaya.

Knowing the different cultures of people in a social unit is a challenging task. Over time, the mixture of cultures in the university has naturally developed the sociolinguistic skills of the students, thereby developing their versatility in mingling with people that comprise their social life.

**Cognitive Intelligence.** The extent of the respondents' sociolinguistic intelligence as to their cognitive intelligence refers to their level of knowledge of various cultures around them. The level of their metacognitive intelligence is described by the overall mean of 3.64 or high. This is ascribed by the respondents' ability to understand that each person is unique and so is their cultural background. The respondents likewise display high perceptual intelligence under this domain by reflecting on the appropriateness of language in social communication dealings, as well as by recognizing the importance of living the concept of cultural relativism.

On the other hand, the respondents find it tough to know the arts and crafts of other cultures, to familiarize with the marriage systems of other cultures, and to know the legal and economic systems of other cultures. This finding takes relevance in the meaning of cultural diversity which encompasses differences in race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background; which do not only involve how people perceive themselves, but how they perceive others which affect perceptions and their interactions with others (Greenberg, 2014).

**Motivational Intelligence.** The motivational constructs which characterize the respondents as to their confidence, certainties, and willingness to carry out communicative activities reveal their overall level of motivational intelligence at 3.84 or high.

The most noteworthy among the indicators which is qualitatively described as very high with a mark of 4.28 is that the respondents are open to new experiences that disclose their curiosity, broad-mindedness, and imagination. This finding that defines the high level of the drive of the respondents is reflexive of the need of the respondents to explore the benefits of diversity as further cited by Greenberg (2014) that an individual or organization's success and competitiveness depends upon their ability to embrace diversity and realize the benefits like increased adaptability which can supply a greater variety of solutions to problems and variety of viewpoints which provide a larger pool of ideas and experiences.

**Behavioral Intelligence.** This study also determined the extent to which the respondents

put into action their desire to engage in sociolinguistic activities to be able to increase their knowledge of the English language. This speaks of the extent of the respondents' sociolinguistic perceptual intelligence as to their behavioral intelligence with an overall mean of 3.75 or high.

All indicators under this domain are qualitatively described as high, most notable of which is the respondents' varying of the rate of their speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it, changing their nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural interaction requires it, and their use of pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.

These parameters of social communication are parallel with the most dominant strategy that the respondents use. The respondents deem it easier to indulge in conversations with other people if they use appropriate speed in speaking, accompany speaking with proper gestures, and be silent at times to listen to the person they speak with.

#### ***Relationship in the extent of the respondents' use of definition strategies and their extent of verbal activity***

Language learning through exposure hands in confidence to the second language learner to engage actively in communicative processes whether verbal or nonverbal. Table 4 discloses the relationship of the extent of the respondents' use of definition strategies in expanding knowledge in the English language and their extent of verbal activity.

Three strategies yielded significant relationship as indicated by the computed r values for referential, structural, and pragmatic definition strategies whose converted t-values are all greater than the critical t-value of 2.0096 at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is a significant relationship between the above-stated strategies with the respondents' verbal activity. This is ascribed to the use of the majority of the respondents of referential, structural, and pragmatic definition strategies to an extent described qualitatively as often and the extent of verbal activity of the majority of the respondents described qualitatively as normal. It may be inferred as well that less use of these strategies of definition means less involvement in verbal communications.

**Table 4.** Relationship of the extent of the respondents' use of definition strategies in expanding knowledge in English language and their extent of verbal activity

Verbal Activity Vs.	Computed r	t-value	Interpretation
Technical Definition	0.3109	2.2663	Significant
Structural Definition	0.4682	3.6710	Significant
Pragmatic Definition	0.3890	2.9255	Significant Not Significant
Paralinguistic Definition	0.2649	1.9033	Not Significant

Critical  $t = 2.0096$  at 0.05 Level of Significance

Conversely, the paralinguistic definition strategy does not correlate significantly with the verbal activity of the respondents. This finding implies that the extent to which the respondents use the descriptors of paralinguistic language does not relate significantly with the extent to which they engage in conversations. Eventually, it is because the paralinguistic definition strategy does not make use typically of verbal language but more of nonverbal language which the respondents use most of the time as revealed in this study.

#### **Relationship of respondents' use of definition strategies and their extent of verbal activity with their level of sociolinguistic intelligence**

The extent of the respondents' use of definition strategies in expanding knowledge in the English language and their extent of verbal activity are likewise tested for a significant relationship with the respondents' level of sociolinguistic intelligence. Tables 5 and 6 unveil statistics that lent answers to this research question.

**Table 5.** Relationship of the respondents' extent of use of schematic definition strategies in expanding knowledge in the English language with their level of sociolinguistic perceptual intelligence

Sociolinguistic Intelligence	Statistics	Referential Definition	Structural Definition	Pragmatic Definition	Paralinguistic Definition
Metacognitive Intelligence	Computed r	0.2440	0.4410	0.2430	0.3700
	p-value	0.0880	0.0010	0.0900	0.0080
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Significant	Not Significant	Significant
Cognitive Intelligence	Computed r	0.1910	0.5310	0.3260	0.5200
	p-value	0.1830	0.0000	0.0210	0.0000
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant
Motivational Intelligence	Computed r	0.1560	0.4070	0.4120	0.4010
	p-value	0.2780	0.0030	0.0030	0.0040
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant
Behavioral Intelligence	Computed r	0.3330	0.4790	0.3980	0.4860
	p-value	0.0180	0.0000	0.0040	0.0000
	Interpretation	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant

Structural definition strategy yielded significant relationships with all indicators of sociolinguistic intelligence. This means that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' level of use of the structural definition strategy and their sociolinguistic intelligence. The structural definition is the least among the strategies used by the respondents. This strategy allows the respondents to analyze words based on its isolated parts. Through this finding, it could be inferred that the respondents' level of maturity in relating with other people through the use of language

is not greatly influenced by their mastery of prefixes, suffixes and base words as well as of etymology.

Moreover, pragmatic definition strategy yielded significant relationships with the respondents' cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligences. This means that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' level of use of the pragmatic definition strategy and their sociolinguistic intelligence as to the three domains above cited. This suggests that the maturity of the respondents in engaging with communicative processes through their knowledge, drive, and conversational actions is inclined with their scheme of learning words based on how they are used in practical situations. This finding shares some light with Crawford (2014) who asserted that physical stages of human growth will always be accompanied by linguistic, emotional, and social developments. The respondents being college students have acquired holistic human growth which defines their sociolinguistic perceptual intelligence.

Lastly, paralinguistic definition strategies yielded significant relationships for all indicators of sociolinguistic intelligence. This means that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' level of use of the paralinguistic definition strategy and their sociolinguistic intelligence. Paralinguistic definition is the most used strategy by the respondents who consider expressing thoughts accompanied by emotions, gestures, volume, pitch, and speed among others. This strategy greatly affects the respondents' maturity in engaging themselves in social activities that involve communication.

**Table 6.** Relationship of the respondents' extent of verbal activity with their level of sociolinguistic perceptual intelligence

Socio-Linguistic Intelligence	Statistics	Verbal Activity
	Computed r	0.1310
Metacognitive Intelligence	p-value	0.3640
	Interpretation	Not Significant
	Computed r	0.2900
Cognitive Intelligence	p-value	0.0410
	Interpretation	Significant
	Computed r	0.6050
Motivational Intelligence	p-value	0.0000
	Interpretation	Significant
	Computed r	0.2810
Behavioral Intelligence	p-value	0.0480
	Interpretation	Significant
	Computed r	0.2810

Table 6 displays the relationship between the respondents' extent of verbal activity with their level of sociolinguistic intelligence. Among the indicators of sociolinguistic intelligence, it is only with the metacognitive intelligence that the respondents' verbal activity is not significantly correlated. With computed p-values, less than 0.05, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligences have significant relationships with the respondents' verbal activity.

Significantly correlated strategies define the level of cognitive development or expansion of an individual. Sociolinguistic intelligence, on the other hand, defines the social maturity that relates to cognitive development, according to Robert Kegan's "Awesome Theory of Social Maturity," at 2007 MentalHealth.net article penned by Dr. Mark Dombeck as cited by Rush (2014). Further, Barr (2014) posited that verbal communication activities can teach effective communication skills and assist learners to achieve meaningful personal interaction goals.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

After careful investigation and handling of data, the conclusions in subsequence were derived.

The BSED English major students of NVSU use most constantly the paralinguistic definition scheme as a strategy in expanding their knowledge in the English language. As to the extent of verbal activity of the respondents, the majority of them have a normal level of verbal activity.

The respondents' sociolinguistic intelligence as to metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligences is high.

There is a significant relationship between the extent of verbal activity of the respondents and their extent of use of referential, structural, and pragmatic definition strategies. On the other hand, the paralinguistic definition strategy does not correlate significantly with the verbal activity of the respondents.

Referential definition strategies yielded significant relationship with behavioral intelligence. On the other hand, structural and paralinguistic definition strategies yielded a significant relationship with all indicators of sociolinguistic intelligence, while pragmatic definition strategy yielded significant relationships with the respondents' cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligences. Furthermore, among the indicators of sociolinguistic intelligence, it is with cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligences that the respondents' verbal activity is significantly correlated.

With the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. The BSED English students of the university may hone their skills in the English language by developing a holistic interest of the four schemes of definition thoroughly discussed in this study. Aside from this, the students may have the willingness to engage in task-based lessons in the English subject that they may learn to speak out their thoughts appropriately considering the classroom as their speech laboratory.

2. After having unveiled in this study the extent of verbal activity of the BSED- English students as well as their extent of use of schematic definition strategies, the teachers may attune their strategies in language teaching to the needs of their students. To meet what is expected of the English major students, the teacher may develop their verbal activity by letting them engage in communication tasks that may address their patterns of defining English words.

3. The sociolinguistic intelligence of the BSED English language students is high for all indicators like metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligences. This speaks of the maturity of the respondents in using language in social interactions which may involve various cultures. To remedy the issues of culturalism, learners may embrace heterogeneity and diversity as a norm. Understanding different cultures in a diverse social unit like the school may help the students survive the challenges of social life.

4. Since all licensure examinations require relatively satisfactory English language skills which ease up the understanding of the test items, the students may be equipped with critical and creative thinking skills through the facility of the language. This may materialize by adapting the students to the language requisites of the Licensure Examination for Teachers through a more intensive preparation in language skills, vocabulary, and reading comprehension as components of the review program of the College of Teacher Education.

5. Future researchers may consider studies related to this study with a focus on correlating sociolinguistic intelligence with some other variables like ethnicity, economic status of the family, academic performance, participation in extra-curricular activities, apprehension in social interactions, and stress coping mechanisms of students. Future researches may likewise correlate the same variables with language learning schemes through verbal activity and definition strategies.

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