Freshman Students' Attitudes and Behavior towards Advanced Grammar and Composition Teaching

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Abstract -Teaching English advanced grammar and composition to college students is important as it provides them with high level of understanding and competence in the language. It guides them in putting words together into sentences and makes them orally produce sounds clearly and effectively. This paper aims to determine the attitudes and behavior towards advanced grammar and composition teaching among freshman college students of Batangas State University. Descriptive method of research has been used to analyze and interpret data. The following instruments such as self-made questionnaire, focus group discussion, data analysis, interview guide, have been utilized to gather data. To analyze and interpret data, mean scores have been used. Pearson's (r) Product Moment Correlation Method has been utilized to treat the null hypothesis with regard to the attitudes and behavior of the students towards advanced grammar and composition teaching. Based on the findings of the study, the students sometimes understand and feel the subject matters, i.e., morphology, phonology, grammar and usage, and mechanics and composition writing. They are also sometimes ready in particular lesson and activity which are given to them in class. The study also reveals that there is no significant relationship between the students' attitudes and behavior towards AGCT. In this regard, college students taking advanced grammar and composition course must be well-motivated to understand, and must have the readiness to perform the activities entail in the subject areas of morphology, phonology, grammar and usage, and mechanics and composition writing through teacher's varied approaches, strategies, researches, and integration.

Keywords -AGCT, Attitudes, Behavior, Composition Writing, English Grammar, & Module

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English advanced grammar and composition to college students is important as it provides them, according to Debata [1], with greater depth of understanding and proficiency in the language. It guides them in putting words together into sentences and makes them orally produce sounds clearly and effectively. Students' knowledge about grammar in turn such as how sentences are built, the choice of word use, or the types of words that comprise a sentence enables them to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. It also serves as passport of communication that channels one's ideas, concepts, understanding, and social awareness, as well as a way of knowing that all languages follow certain grammatical patterns.

Based on my preliminary survey on students' performance in advanced grammar and composition, attitudes and behavior appear to be important factors affecting students' English performances; however, if everyone is given the appropriate encouragement, enrichment, and instruction, varied language skills can be developed to a reasonably high level of performance, but this is not reflected in most English language classrooms. According to Alagozlu [2], college students demonstrate poor performance in grammar as manifested in their inability to construct sentences in English with correct grammar and utilize verbal ideas effectively as reflected to their difficulties encountered in expressing their decisions or stand, as well as their judgement and disposition in writing essays. This problem can also be attributed to the very limited linguistic training of English teachers;

lack of exposure to various strategies in grammar teaching; "very limited period of time to plan and organize lessons and mark assessments" as revealed in the submitted paper of the student to the Universiti Utara Malaysia; and [3] inability of English teachers to determine the real reason why there are several students who hardly communicate in class or even outside the school.

One way to help improve the students' performance in grammar is not only through teaching approaches and strategies of the teacher but also the ultimate realization of the students' attitudes and behavior towards advanced grammar and composition. According to Feldman [4], attitudes are commonly referred to as "personal attributes or states that evaluate any particular behavior, belief, or concept of a person. In addition, attitudes highly depend on a number of factors such as message characteristics of the message, characteristics of the target language". Moreover. attitudes in the language learning involve one's "beliefs, emotional reactions, and behavioral tendencies related to the object of attitude" Farani et

McGroarty [6] there are important components of attitude, namely: cognitive, affective, and conative, which have evaluative aspects as disposition and tendency to react positively or negatively to something as subject matter in class. Apparently, Arenas [7] defined behavior as an "objectively observed activity as a result of mental processes and affective domain"(p.5). Similarly, behavior includes internal processes such as thinking, feeling, and other reactions that can be directly observed but can be inferred by other external behavior. In this view, Mohd et al. [8] language teacher should have to improve the students' language learning through involving 'the students to' participate 'in classroom activities' enthusiastically, and making the students accomplish the given tasks with satisfaction and willingness.

Determining the relationship between the students' attitudes and behavior towards advanced grammar and composition teaching is very significant in the learning process as this can provide new concepts and measures to whether the students hardly understand and perform the learning concepts and tasks, or how the English grammar teachers can interpret and analyze the problems, and even adjust or

modify some approaches and strategies employed in the classroom.

Bandura's [9] *social cognitive theory* is viewed as the "understanding and managing of environment, motivation, behavior, development, and capabilities" (p. 8). SCT is anchored on the present study which focused on the attitudes, behavior, and relationship of the two different aforementioned variables towards AGCT as basis for the development of module. This theory of learning exemplifies that most external influences affect behavior through cognitive processes like emotional impact, and motivating power.

In addition, individual people process and transform, i.e., passing experiences, by means of verbal, imaginal, and other symbols into cognitive models of reality that serve as guides for judgment and action. Through symbols, people give meaning form, and continuity to the experiences. Consequently, through experiences, there are "rules and strategies that can provide the cognitive operations for manipulating knowledge for different purposes—these knowledge and thinking skills provide the substance and tools for cognitive problem solving" (p. 9).

In the study of Chaiklin [10], "attitude and behavior relationship may be a two-way street, but there is no clear way to get from one side to the other". This statement explains that no studies in the past clearly stressed out the positive relationship of the attitudes and behavior. However, it is very evident that there have been recommendations for further investigation on the existing issue or concerns as to whether individual students have their own evaluative aspect, a disposition and tendency to react positively or negatively to something. This possibility can be considered in the modification and development of the curriculum for an effective and efficient English grammar instruction.

On the other hand, attitude is psychologically defined as a verbal expression as a *behavior*, while sociologically defined as a verbal expression as an *intention*. These two different definitions clearly provide ideas that attitude is differently understood into two distinct, yet related fields, i.e., psychology and sociology. This study is sociological in nature as it is supported by Bandura's SCT. Attitude, as a verbal expression, refers to the intention, mental position with regard to a fact or state, or a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state.

Presumably, students' learning can also be improved by providing various activities that will

make everyone interacts, collaborates, and cooperates to ensure participation in the acquisition of the target language. These learning activities that can be provided to students by language teacher must be carefully chosen to stimulate their interests and enjoyment, and to meet varied learning styles. Consequently, for the students to behave in a particular task given in the class, there is a need for a motivation like game/play (extrinsic) or good remarks/compliments (intrinsic).

Moreover, the underlying principles shed light in the formulation and investigation of a new concept regarding the students' attitudes and behavior towards learning through concrete understanding, analysis, interpretation, and realization.

Hence, the construct of formulating and conducting this present study is very significant, specifically in English grammar class, as it can provide the teachers and students, and other researchers essential information and ideas regarding the influence or impact of attitudes and behavior to the success of the classroom instruction, i.e., for students' satisfaction and lifelong learning, and for the teacher's commitment and good performance as manifested in the ultimate and holistic employability and integration of varied approaches, strategies, and intelligences in the context.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to determine the freshman students' attitudes and behavior towards advanced grammar and composition teaching.

Specifically, the study sought (a) to determine attitudes and behavior of the students towards Advanced Grammar and Composition teaching; (b) to determine the significant relationship between attitudes and behavior towards teaching the course; and (3) to propose a module to further improve students' language learning in the course.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a descriptive method of research which was designed to determine the attitudes and behavior of the students towards Advanced Grammar and Composition teaching.

Participants

The study made use of the sample two hundred seventy (270) freshman students using the Slovin's

Formula with five percent margin of error, but because of some constraints in retrieving the questionnaires, six percent became the margin of error with only 270 questionnaires retrieved from the different campuses of Batangas State University during the school year 2011-2012. Stratified random sampling was used as a technique to proportionate the sample per campus.

Specifically, Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents from Batangas State University by campus. As shown, out of 9185 freshman student population university-wide, the distribution of student respondents in population and sample is presented as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of students

	Students	
Campus	Population	Sample
Main I	3048	127
Main II (Alangilan)	1696	71
Nasugbu	236	10
Lemery	329	14
San Juan	125	5
Rosario	438	18
Lipa	679	28
Balayan	991	41
Malvar	1595	67
Lobo	48	2
Total	9185	383

Instrument

The study made use of the following instruments self-constructed survey questionnaire, documentary analysis, i.e. list of students enrolled and filed in the university registrar as per accepted and approved by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), focus group discussion agenda, and interview guide to gather data. The option 1-5 was used in the set of questionnaire for students, as guide in tabulating and scoring of their responses. Documentary analysis was employed to gather information about the content of the syllabus in Advanced Grammar and Composition subject. Focus group discussion (FGD) was also included for five to eight students as subjects of this study, as well as the interview which provided relevant facts and information.

In the development of questionnaire, the first draft was prepared and presented to the university experts for their comments and suggestions. The draft was checked according to its contents and its connection to

the statement of the problem. The self—constructed questionnaire was then validated by three language experts together with the university statistician to determine the validity of the instrument. After the validation, dry-run was employed to test the strengths and weaknesses of the instrument which was participated by selected students from three colleges, namely: Tanauan Institute, First Asia of Humanities and Technology, and Laguna College of Business and Arts.

Procedure

After several ways to improve the data gathering instruments, production has been made followed by the request letter which was sent to the university president for an approval of the distribution and administration of questionnaires with a focus group discussion session and interview to the target students-respondents in the 10 campuses. The survey, interview, and FGD, including the retrieval were conducted for a week.

After the retrieval of all instruments and other matters, tabulation, analysis, and interpretation of data were also made.

In terms of module development for advanced grammar and composition course, stages such as planning, development of lessons, content validation, and revision of lessons were considered to improve or enhance the language learning and performance of the students. In addition, the lessons included in the module were carefully selected based on the results of the study.

Thus, contents of the lessons were carefully and comprehensively validated by English language experts based on the general and specific objectives, and performance evaluation through simplified activities, language focus, intelligence integration, approaches and strategies, and learning devices.

Data Analysis

The study made use of the statistical tools such as Mean (Weighted Average), and Pearson's (r) Product Moment Correlation Method. Mean was used to find and give weight the average responses for opinions or perceptions of the students on their attitudes and behavior towards advanced grammar and composition teaching. So, Pearson's (r) Product Moment Correlation Method was used to test the null hypothesis on the relationship of the students' attitudes and behavior towards the teaching of the

course. Likert scale 1-4 was used as described as 1-Not True to Me, 2-Sometimes True To Me, 3-Often True to Me, and 4-Most Often True to Me.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' attitudes and behavior towards advanced grammar and composition as a course

Table 2 shows the perception of the students as to cognitive, affective, and conative attitudes. The cognitive attitude of the students in the area of morphology with a composite mean of 2.78; in phonology of 2.93; in grammar and usage of 2.88; and mechanics and composition writing of 3.12 are interpreted as sometimes true to students.

Table 2. Perceptions of the students as to attitudes (n=270)

Attitudes	Cognitive	Affective	Conative
Morphology	2.78	2.85	2.81
Phonology	2.93	2.99	2.81
Grammar & Usage	2.88	2.97	2.85
Mechanics &Composition Writing	3.12	3.00	2.97

Legend: All composite means are described as sometimes true to the students

Based on the results of the study, the students sometimes perform the tasks expected to them to do under morphology, phonology, grammar and usage, and mechanics and composition writing. This might be the course that comprises many lessons, tasks along this areas which are done at one time; lack the skills in producing correctly the vowels and consonant sounds in English as the activities or exercises relative to improving production skills are not done consistently; not frequently engaged in sentence construction activity; and low performance in the target language and poor vocabulary words.

In terms of affective attitude of the students, the composite means of 2.85 for morphology; 2.99 for phonology; 2.97 for grammar and usage; and 3.00 for mechanics and composition writing are interpreted as *sometimes true to them*. This implies that students perceived that they are sometimes motivated and interested to perform activities in language where they made use of varied inflectional morphemes in writing sentences as well as informing new words; that even they enjoyed and experienced lessons on phonology, they still encountered difficulty especially in the

identification of symbols used for sounds as Gilakjani [11] noted that pronunciation directly affects learner's communicative competence as well as performance as students with limited pronunciation skills amy have low self-confidence, social interaction, restrictions, and negative credibility and ability". The study also reveals that students consider certain items difficult on their part to perform like diagramming of sentences as this involves constructing framework and structural analysis in sentences; and that they do not feel comfortable or at ease on some items like following stages of writing composition in which there are still other important concerns that need to be attended and be given priority.

As to conative attitude of the students, the composite means of 2.81 for morphology; 2.81 for phonology; 2.85 for grammar and usage; and 2.97 for mechanics and composition writing are interpreted as sometimes true to them. This implies that although students understand the lessons on morphemes there are also instances that they find difficulty as manifested to their lack of interest or motivation to perform the task; that even they can perform the task pertaining to sounds as they learn the lessons relative to this, but they enumerate problems on intonations as this might not be given focus in the discussion; that though they have the know-how and skill in constructing correct sentences, they also admitted that they find they are not that good in some other items; and that they are sometimes prepared to perform the tasks relative to the use of capitalizations and punctuations in writing, as well as making use of the stages of writing composition. Consequently, some activities are not geared towards writing.

Table 3. Perceptions of the students as to behaviour (n=270)

Content Areas	Behavior		
	CM	VI	
Morphology	2.47	Sometimes True to Me	
Phonology	2.93	Sometimes True to Me	
GU	2.89	Sometimes True to Me	
MCW	2.32	Sometimes True to Me	

Table 3 presents the perception of the students as to behavior. As presented in the table below, the composite means of 2.47 for morphology; 2.93 for phonology; 2.89 for grammar and composition; and 2.32 for mechanics and composition writing are interpreted as *sometimes true to them*.

The findings reveal that students are sometimes effective, patient, and careful in doing the tasks because of their varied learning styles and multiple intelligences; that they find difficulties to understand and master the lessons in a short period of time. There are some items of the lessons that the students perform consistently because of their stored knowledge. They are occasionally able to understand what has been asked of them to do, while experience of being not at ease in accomplishing other tasks. Apparently, students seem to be not corrected or informed in class when they committed errors, which in turn can provide them constructive feedback and clarification to perform well in the future classroom activity or tasks. On the other hand, students found to possess their knowledge in different types of paragraphs through participation in different classroom writing exercises and varied strategies, though they commit errors in spelling and mechanics.

In the identification of the students' attitude and behavior, results reveal that in cognitive, the highest falls on mechanics and composition writing with a composite mean of 3.12; for affective, still on mechanics and composition writing with a composite mean of 3.00; and as to conative with a composite mean of 2.97, all were interpreted as sometimes true to them which reveal that the students understand, acknowledge, and respond to the topics as well as learn and experience the tasks expected in them in the course. On the other hand, the lowest rated items on attitudes are the following: for cognitive, it is on morphology with a composite mean of 2.78; for affective, it is on grammar and usage with a composite mean 2.85, and for conative in the areas of morphology and phonology with sometimes true to them as verbal interpretation of all the areas. Results show that the students experience difficulty along the items of these areas in Advanced Grammar and Composition course. According to Choy [12], the students' negative attitude in the second language acquisition can be changed when it is spurred by knowledge and this can be reduced through effective teaching strategies, good classroom, and social environment. Merisou-Storm Further, emphasized that the following "factors influence language acquisition and attitude, i.e. individual differences, age, gender, language background, type of school attended, as well as peer influences". As for students' behavior towards the course, it is on the area of phonology where they rated the highest with a

composite mean of 2.93 which means that they understand the lessons along English sounds and rated lowest on mechanics and composition writing as reflected in the composite mean of 2.32 which means that the students find difficulty as regard to the lesson pertaining to writing. Li [14] stressed that "strategies used in English as a foreign language is more effective approach to English language, as well as an innovation and a great factor for strengthening and improving language proficiency of students".

Table 4. Relationship of the students' attitudes and behavior in relation to the course

Pearson's (r)	Critical value a= .05	Decision	Interpretation
-0.089	.139	Accepted	Not significant

Table 4 shows the relationship of the students' attitudes and behavior in relation to the course. As shown in the table below, the computed (r) value of -0.089 is lesser than the critical value of .139 in five percent degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and concluded that there is no significant 'relationship between' the 'students' attitudes and behavior towards' AGCT, similar to the findings revealed by Gross and Niman [15] that "...changing attitude does not ... affect behavior".

Results show that attitudes and behavior of the students appear independent as these two variables never affect each other. The cognitive, affective, and conative attitudes of the students are more likely affected by their lack of initiatives, low self-esteem and level of confidence, inactive participation, and no self-regulation through varied verbal and non-verbal tasks in class.

On the other hand, the students' behavior towards advanced grammar and composition teaching can be observed objectively and logically through their active participation, involvement, cooperation, and collaboration in various tasks or activities in class. Likewise, behavior can be observed as reflected in the students' way of thinking, feeling, and other reactions towards stimuli or accounts that may appear in class. However, behavior can be not be objectively observed if it is affected by some external behavior like noise, atmosphere, environment, physical, social, and peers.

Proposed advanced grammar and composition module to further improve the students learning in the course

Acquiring quality education does not depend only in the physical plant of the school, but also in the idea of preparing the lessons with selected and effective teaching materials. The *development of advanced grammar and composition module* is *based on the least rated contents and learning areas where students are weak and have difficulties in the course*. Through this module, the students are expected to enhance their English language skills and competencies; will nurture their strengths and will alleviate their weaknesses in the course through varied, but simplified activities and exercises about words like morphology and phonology, grammar and usage(GU), and mechanics and composition writing (MCW).

The main objective of the developed proposed advanced grammar and composition module is to enhance students' language skills and competencies. Specifically, the module aims to: provide students with knowledge and understanding, practical, and intellectual skills through the different morphological concepts or words structure; enhance students' comprehension, ease of production, familiarization of English sounds; help students express ones' ideas through correct arrangement of words; enhance students' writing skills based on qualities or criteria, process or stages, and observing correct spelling, capitalizations, punctuations, and miscellaneous rules; and recognize students' multiple skills and strenghts, Armstrong [16] through integration of eight intelligences, namely: "linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, visual or spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic" that can enhance their English language According to Pociask and Settles[17], "incorporating multiple intelligences into daily lesson can improve students' self-esteem, increase retention rates, enhance motivation for learning, and decrease incidences of off-task behavior". Bañez [18] emphasized that "module can hone or enhance other intelligences as well as provide students with a clear understanding of its pedagogical implications and that development of multimodal module of the course can minimize students' difficulties".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The negative correlation between the attitudes and behavior of the students towards AGCT appears to be significant in a broader sense or aspect of investigation.

sometimes understood and felt the subject matters, i.e., morphology, phonology, grammar and usage, and mechanics and composition writing. They were also sometimes ready in particular lesson and activity given to them in class. Zint [19] stressed thatthe "attitudinal component is commonly referred to as an attitude towards the behavior, i.e., an act; while the normative component is termed as subjective norm, i.e., perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform...". For Kortemeyer [20]"students' behavior is not a pure reflection of students' epistemological beliefs; other factors, i.e., notably expectations and expediency also feed into their ... behavior" (p. 9). In this regard, college students taking AGC course must be well-motivated to understand through game and/or play and music (extrinsic), or good remarks and/or compliments (intrinsic), and must have the readiness to perform the activities entail in the learning areas of morphology, phonology, grammar and usage, and mechanics and composition writing. Readiness of the students can be achieved by setting conducive learning-teaching environment. Specifically, the teacher must: (a) set the goals and standards which are clearly defined, stated, and presented in class; (b)empower the students in the target language by making them feel the trust and mutual respect to one another through getting along with each other, or involving them in varied classroom activities in English grammar; (c) recognize individual differences with regard to the students' learning styles strategies, intelligences, and level understanding: Moskowitz (d)consider [21] humanism, i.e., affective-humanistic that can promote respect for individual's feeling, and meanigful communication as well, towards self-realization experience, peer support, and reaction for a successful learning; and(e) tap other experts to have related and essential ideas for future course plans, designs, and

Based on the findings of the study, the students

As this paper mainly focused on the students' attitudes and behavior towards AGCT, it calls for further study and investigation of the same topic, and may consider other variables like personal, i.e., self, age, profile; situational; methodological; needs; defences; intention and purpose; maturity, volitional and perceived behavioral controls; and other culturally inherited factors of the future respondents as a subject.

classroom theories and practices.

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