

BENEFITS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AS PERCEIVED BY THE FOURTH YEAR TOURISM STUDENTS OF LPU–LAGUNA

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Abstract

This study is all about the perception of fourth year Tourism students of LPU–Laguna about the benefits of foreign language acquisition. The study aimed to determine the following objectives: (1) to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of gender and preferred working field in the future; (2) to find out the level of perceived benefits of foreign language acquisition by the respondents in the given aspects; and (3) to determine which aspect gives the highest level of benefit as perceived by the respondents. This study used the descriptive method. The respondents in this study were 71 regular fourth year Tourism students of LPU–Laguna. The researchers used survey questions to gather data needed from the respondents. In the results, majority of the respondents are female and most of them preferred working in the airline industry. The respondents strongly agreed with the cognitive, career, and social benefits of foreign language acquisition, they also agreed with its motivational benefits. The cognitive aspect got the highest level of benefit of foreign language acquisition. Foreign language in this study specifically pertains to French and Nihongo as those were the foreign language courses taken up by the respondents.

Keywords: *Benefits, Foreign Language, Acquisition, Cognitive, Motivational*

INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the ITTM program, students are required to take foreign languages. This includes French during the second semester of third year and Nihongo during the first semester of fourth year. Those have cognitive outcomes to understand and speak the language, evaluate its importance, and analyze its relationship with other languages. It can also be affective by considering the languages as an edge in belonging to the tourism industry and exhibiting curiosity and interest in learning. In terms of psychomotor outcomes, good participation in class activities are being signified.

In this study, the researchers aim to determine the perception of fourth year Tourism students of LPU–Laguna about the benefits of foreign language acquisition. They know that language is a form of communication, a soft skill, which is important in any workplace especially in the tourism industry. As the researchers will be soon encountering people of different nationalities after they graduate, the acquisition of any foreign language will be very helpful. Of course, they must first develop them inside a learning institution. When these students enter the real industry, they will appreciate what foreign language can bring to them. This is the reason why the researchers have decided to conduct this study to know if the students (respondents) understand the importance of foreign language in their chosen industry.

Review of Literature

Tourism is the world's largest industry. A degree in International Tourism Management is a great qualification if you want to play an effective role in an industry that makes such a valuable contribution to the global economy and workforce (Auckland University of Technology, 2015). There is

no doubt that programs related to tourism management created new opportunities to the industry.

Weingarten (2013) believes that a management course in tourism and hospitality covers the fundamentals of each industry including tourism economics, food service, and legal issues. This program can help students develop the management and entrepreneurship skills necessary to work in establishments related to the field. It will also give knowledge and ability to develop marketing strategies based on a practical business plan.

In some universities, more females are taking up tourism courses rather than males. In the statistics made by Kusluvan (2003), female students see their personality and identity as congruent with working in the tourism industry, but they know that their opportunities under tourism are more limited compared to males. However, female students can easily identify themselves with tourism jobs because it requires same kind of tasks and skills associated with the traditional roles of women.

Weingarten (2013) enumerated the working fields under the tourism industry. The first one is the airlines industry where students who graduate from Tourism Management programs should be able to land jobs in managerial positions overseeing the operations of various departments. One could work in reservations, maintenance, and more. Next is the cruise industry, a multibillion dollar industry that has plenty of career opportunities to Tourism and Hospitality graduates. Others include the following: hotel and restaurant industry, which includes accommodation and food; tourism organizations like tourism departments, embassies, or event organizations which manage upcoming events like concerts, conventions, and conferences; and travel agencies which provide travel arrangements, bookings, and reservations to a destination—tourism graduates can be travel

counselors or tour guides under that sector. Raising awareness of the importance of foreign language proficiency as well as fostering the development of intercultural competence in the area of tourism and hospitality industry is extremely important (Sindik and Bozinovic, 2013). The perception of Tourism students about the benefits of acquiring foreign language varies in related aspects like mental and social (Shook and Marian, 2012), motivational, and career aspects (Merritt, 2013).

The first one is the cognitive benefit. Dean (2013) posted a literary work about psychological effects of learning another language to a person. People used to think that learning two languages create confusion in the mind, but it was overshadowed by several studies. Some advantages include memory boost, better communication skills, cognitive flexibility, and brain growth.

In several articles made by Merritt (2013), she stated that foreign language sets as an instrumental motivation to learners. Learners who study a foreign language in order to achieve another goal are instrumentally motivated. In these cases, language competence is not the goal in itself, but rather the vehicle to achieving a separate professional or personal accomplishment. For many students, language learning is pursued only in school, as an academic requirement.

With regard the social benefits, learning a new language allows people to access many different cultures across the world (Smith, 2015). This proves the literary work of Shook and Marian (2012) which explains the valuable social benefits that come from being bilingual. It creates ability to explore a culture through its native tongue or talk to someone with whom you might otherwise never be able to communicate.

The third aspect is the motivational benefit. Merritt (2013) also explained in her article the motivational benefits of foreign language. For university students and professionals, language learning is often motivated by career. Many adults study foreign languages to fortify their curriculum vitae (CVs) and qualify for work.

Lastly, the career benefits of foreign language. In today's globalized business world, it is completely possible that a person working for a company would be required to travel the world to conduct business with people in different countries. Consequently, an employee with knowledge of a second language adds to his or her value in the workplace.

Conceptual Framework

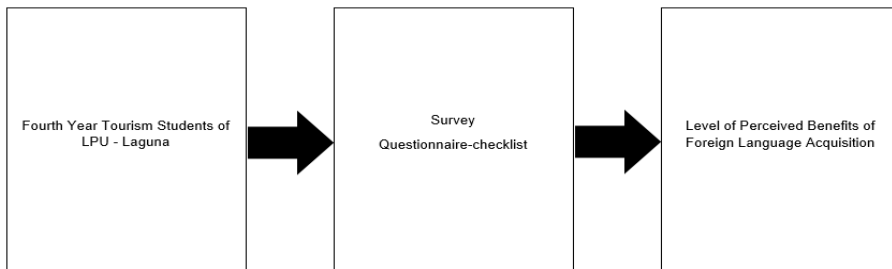


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The research was conducted to determine the benefits of foreign language acquisition as perceived by the fourth year Tourism students of Lyceum of the Philippines–Laguna. The study also aimed to find out the aspect which gives the highest level of benefit as perceived by the respondents.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following aims:

1. To determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - a. Gender; and
 - b. Preferred working field in future:
2. To find out the level of perceived benefits of foreign language acquisition by the respondents in the following aspects:
3. To determine which aspect gives the highest level of benefit as perceived by the respondents.

METHOD

This study used the descriptive method. It is an applicable method in this study because it provides data about the population being studied. The research location is at Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna. The respondents in this study were 71 regular fourth year Tourism students of LPU–Laguna. In their year level, since they have already taken up two foreign language courses which are French and Nihongo, it is a perfect opportunity to conduct this study. The researchers used survey questions to gather data needed from the respondents. The respondents were asked about their perception about the benefits of foreign language acquisition. The respondents answered the survey with four-point Likert scale. Frequency, percent, and weighted mean were used to present and analyze the

description of the subjects regarding the profile of the respondents and perception about the benefits of foreign language acquisition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents According to Gender

Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Male	11	15.49
Female	60	84.51
Total	71	100.00

As shown in Table 1, most of the fourth year Tourism students of LPU–Laguna are female.

Table 2. Distribution of the Respondents According to their Preferred Working Field

Preferred Working Field	<i>f</i>	%
Airline Industry	55	77.46
Travel Agency	5	7.04
Cruise Line	3	4.23
Accommodation	4	5.63
Tour Guiding	1	1.41
Tourism Organizations	3	4.23
Total	71	100.00

As shown in the Table 2, most of the respondents prefer working in the airline industry with 77 percent.

Table 3. Perceived Cognitive Benefits of Foreign Language Acquisition

Cognitive Benefits	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Learning foreign language can improve my creativity skills.	3.80	Strongly Agree
Foreign language can also improve my communication skills.	3.76	Strongly Agree
Foreign language helps my mind to be alert and focus.	3.61	Strongly Agree
Acquiring foreign language enhance my flexibility skills.	3.62	Strongly Agree
Acquiring foreign language makes me more conscious of my vocabulary, grammar, conjugation, etc.	3.72	Strongly Agree
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.70	Strongly Agree

Table 4. Perceived Motivational Benefits of Foreign Language Acquisition

Motivational Benefits	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Learning foreign language motivates me to perform well at school.	3.58	Strongly Agree
Foreign language allows me to be appreciative in doing things.	3.48	Agree
Foreign language inspires me to pursue my preferred job.	3.66	Strongly Agree
Learning foreign language encourages me to reside in other country.	3.65	Strongly Agree
Foreign language plays a big role in my decision making.	3.04	Agree
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.48	Agree

Table 5. Perceived Social Benefits of Foreign Language Acquisition

Social Benefits	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Acquiring foreign language helps me understand one's culture and tradition.	3.63	Strongly Agree
Foreign language gives me the advantage of seeing the world from different vantage points.	3.68	Strongly Agree
Learning foreign language makes me inclined with native in that specific language.	3.63	Strongly Agree
Foreign language helps me to communicate with foreign clients.	3.64	Strongly Agree
Learning foreign language helps me understand cultural differences between countries.	3.10	Agree
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.54	Strongly Agree

Table 6. Perceived Career Benefits of Foreign Language Acquisition

Career Benefits	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Having foreign language acquired written in my application gives me an advantage in getting my applied position.	3.63	Strongly Agree
Acquiring foreign language can help me a lot in working with any tourism-related companies.	3.76	Strongly Agree
Learning foreign language can also engage me to work far from my industry field. (e.g., teaching, marketing, human resource).	3.69	Strongly Agree
Acquiring foreign language makes me more valuable as an employee.	3.66	Strongly Agree
By having acquired foreign language, I can have a better compensation at work.	3.62	Strongly Agree
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.67	Strongly Agree

Table 7. Composite Mean of the Benefits of Foreign Language Acquisition

Benefits of Foreign Language Acquisition	Composite Mean
Cognitive Benefits	3.70
Motivational Benefits	3.48
Social Benefits	3.54
Career Benefits	3.67

Table 7 tells that the cognitive aspect got the highest level of benefits of foreign language acquisition by the respondents with a 3.70 composite mean. It is followed by career, social, and motivational aspects.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Majority of the respondents are female while minority are male. Most of them prefer the airline industry because other working fields under tourism are offered in separate programs in the institution.

The respondents strongly agreed with the cognitive benefits of acquiring foreign language. They believe that foreign language acquisition can improve their creativity and flexibility skills. In terms of motivational benefits, respondents strongly agreed that learning a foreign language has benefits like better performance in school, inspired to pursue preferred job, and encouraged to reside in other countries, while they agreed with factors like becoming appreciative and better decision making. Respondents strongly agreed with the social benefits in the form of understanding one's culture and tradition, building affinity with natives of a specific language, and communication with foreign clients. While respondents agreed with the factor of understanding cultural differences between countries. Under career benefits, the respondents believe that foreign language acquisition can make them more valuable in the workplace. These includes, getting higher compensation and job promotions.

Among all benefits, it is the cognitive aspect which got the highest level of benefits of foreign language acquisition because learning includes brain functions which develop the mental activities of a person.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions and data gathered and analyzed by the researchers, the researchers recommend the following:

Since results of the study showed that most of the respondents chose the airline industry as their preferred sector to work in, the researchers recommended that LPU–Laguna offer short courses on other foreign languages (aside from French and Nihongo) so the students will have high levels of efficiency in their working field. Offering short courses will not affect the curriculum of the students for it is only open to those students who want to develop more their foreign language acquisition.

To further enhance students' acquisition of foreign language, the researchers also recommend to CITHM to establish an *FL Club* (Foreign Language Club) which can help the students maintain their learnings and to improve their foreign language competency.

The college must also create a strategy to raise up the motivational factors of foreign language acquisition. They can give recognition or special awards to students who perform well in foreign language lectures and activities to help them become more motivated.

This study is non-commissioned and is solely based on the curiosity of the researchers to determine the perceived foreign language competency of the fourth year Tourism students of LPU–Laguna. The evaluations of foreign language competency aspects are limited to the perception of the respondents of this study. Questionnaire-checklist was developed by the researchers which served as the measurement tool.

Foreign language in this study specifically pertains to French and Nihongo as those are the foreign language courses taken up by the

respondents Perceived competency for another language does not reflect in this study. Any significant relationship difference between two variables discussed does not relate to this study as well. So, we recommend other researchers to conduct a new study regarding the said scope.

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