

Freshmen College Students' Metalinguistic Knowledge: Matching Perception and Actual Performance

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Abstract

Amid the little treatment of grammar, heavily literature-based in the 2010 Secondary Curriculum in the Philippines, this mixed-mode research aimed to investigate the relationship between the students' actual nature and extent of metalinguistic knowledge (MK) and their perception on the merits of metalanguage in grammar teaching and learning. One hundred forty-eight (n=148) freshmen college students from five different academic programs in a university in Manila took the metalanguage and perception tests. Using the SPSS, Pearson-moment correlation and ANOVA were utilized to see the relationships under study. An interview was also conducted to triangulate their responses. Results show that the actual students' MK was considered low with significant difference; thus, an academic program is a factor in metalinguistic knowledge. As regards the relationship, no significant relationship between the actual MK and perception on MK exists as a whole, hence a very weak positive correlation. However, the positive perception on metalanguage may be used by the policy makers to revisit the treatment of grammar in the existing English curriculum.

Keywords: metalanguage, metalinguistic knowledge, grammar perception, college students

1. Introduction

"You're in college but you don't know what a 'noun' is? There has been considerable concern among language teachers about the deterioration of students' English proficiency not only in the high school but also in the tertiary level. In fact, it is not uncommon to learn that many professors whine about the poor performances of college students in a grammar class. They lament that nouns, adjectives, and even basic grammatical terminologies are hardly recognized. Metalanguage is defined as a shared language between a teacher and students in describing and talking about language (Correa, 2011; Hammond & Derewianka, 2011; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 2008; and Victoria & Rodman, 1974) or a jargon of the linguists whose nature is self-referential and self-reflective (Zongxin, 2006). Metalinguistic knowledge (MK) is defined by Carter & Nunan (2011) as an "explicit, formal knowledge about language that can be verbalized, usually including metalinguistic terminologies (p. 224). This awareness involves understanding the nature of language; learning the meaning and function of letters, words, vocabulary, syntax and sentence, including the ability to play with the language using a lot of metalanguage" (Arnó-Macià, 2009; Arndt, Harvey & Nuttall, 2000; Savage, 1998). The definition or operationalization of MK has varied somewhat across studies (Roehr, 2007). Some researchers operationalize the concept through the learners' ability to correct, describe, explain L2 errors, and explain grammatical rules (e.g. Tswana, 2012, Tsang, 2011; Mirzaei, Domakani, & Shakerian, 2011; Roehr, 2007, White & Ranta, 2002; Andrews, 1999). Others focus on the learner's ability to label parts of speech (Tokunaga, 2010), and identify morphological knowledge, idioms, sentence structures, sentence parsing, and verb conjugations (Munalim & Raymundo, 2014; White & Ranta, 2001; Ellis, 2006; Gelderen, 2006). All these metalinguistic tasks require one's "ability to look at language as an object" (White & Ranta, 2002, p. 261).

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The merits of metalanguage have been supported by many researchers to date (Jin, 2011; Hu, 2010; Haussamen, 2003; Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2005). For instance, Burkhalter (1997) asserts that students have to learn the terminologies if analyzing the language is the goal of every teacher. This knowledge of metalanguage allows learners to reflect on why certain language forms are used, to understand grammar books and to have good translation skills (Arnó-Macià, 2009). As an avenue to talking about a language, these terminologies provide teachers the ability to access linguistic references to discuss difficulties with clarity and comprehensibility, thereby helping the students to understand concepts, textbook contents and classroom explanations (Hu, 2010; Quirke, n.d.). However, criticisms are hurled against metalanguage, a language that teachers and students share and use in talking about the language as it has become one of the hotly debated topics (Hammond & Derewianka, 2011). These debates would question into the merits of grammatical terminologies. As Correa (2011) opines, those teachers who focus on accuracy have been accused of failing fluency in communication; those who focus on meaning have been accused of not stressing accuracy. Berry (2008) also argues that terminologies may not be appropriate for less advanced, younger or less mature students. Further, the use of terminologies has received little practical importance, perhaps because it is incompatible (Berry, 2008) with communicative language teaching (CLT) that continues to influence and lead to the development of L2 communicative competence (Johnson, 2000). Hu (2010) posited that metalanguage has been downplayed or even rejected as a legitimate component of pedagogical practices because it may be the “bane of second and foreign language teaching” (Choudhury, 2010, p.188). Thus, proponents of this new approach demand that grammatical competence be not the goal of language teaching (Richards, 2006).

Despite these arguments, explicit instruction has not disappeared in the age of CLT (Burns, 2009). Communicative Approach produces students who can communicate well but experience consequent loss in accuracy in the pursuit of fluency (Noonan, 2004; Harmer, 1983). This exclusion of focus on form in CLT impedes one in “building a mental grammar of the target language” (Slabakova, 2014, p. 22). Whether the approach is audio-lingual, situational or communicative, grammar explanation in a grammar-focused instruction still holds true in methodology, materials and teacher training programs (Roehr, 2004; Noss, 1996). Since the conception of Teachers’ Metalinguistic Awareness (TMA) by Andrews (1999), many studies have concentrated both students’ and teachers’ MK although the later has dominated the former. Alderson & Horak (2010) investigating the possible decline or increase of Knowledge about Language (KAL) in longitudinal study found out that the undergraduate students had difficulty in the verb forms and tenses. Tokunaga (2010) who developed a simple metalanguage test to 195 Japanese university students with TOEIC Bridge scores between 64 and 170 also revealed that only 32% of the students identified what adverbs are. Moreover, in the study of Roehr (2007) with the undergraduate students of Advanced German, she found out that the description/explanation section proved to be challenging, for it requires not only the labeling of a linguistic unit, but also linking this unit with students’ stored pedagogical grammar rules. Myhill’s (2000) study with 26 twelve-year-old students revealed that learning metalanguage can be problematic due to three possible misconceptions such as misconceptions acquired from teachers and textbooks; characteristics of English grammar; and cognitive pressure involved.

Lastly, focusing on the functions of metalanguage in practice, Haly-James & Stewig (1993, as cited in Scott, 1995), manipulated children’s awareness of syntax by asking the pupils to distinguish between sentences and non-sentences; segment sentences into subjects and predicates; form compound sentences from simple sentences; correct run-on sentences; find nouns in sentences; form noun plurals and possessives; and to form compound phrases from simple sentences. All these are common to the constructs of metalinguistic knowledge. With regard to Teachers’ Metalinguistic Awareness (TMA) coined by Andrews (1999), increasing evidence shows that even teachers are anxious about their gaps in explicit knowledge about language (Macken-Horarik, 2009). For example, Munalim & Raymundo (2014) found out that years of teaching may not fully influence teachers’ declarative metalinguistic knowledge. Similarly, 90 pre-service English teachers’ metalinguistic knowledge was considered dissatisfactory as expressed by Dikici (2012) when conjugations of verbs was only achieved at 8.9% accuracy. Worse still, primary teachers were better at the lower level of metalanguage (Tsang, 2011). Other teachers were either marked below the passing mark (Shuib, 2009) or just right at the marginal average level (Tswana, 2012). Expectedly, the problems were attributed to the literature-based curriculums (Munalim & Raymundo, 2014; Tswana, 2012), insufficient exposure to grammar during teacher training, and lack of interest to improve grammar knowledge (Tswana, 2012; Shuib, 2009).

The qualitative study of Borg (2001) pointed out the importance of teacher cognition in the growing body in ELT research. He stressed that the important goal of teacher education and development programs should be the development of sustainable realistic awareness of knowledge about language (KAL) especially that many educational institutions in the world today teach English, not as a medium of communication but as a mere subject (Vijay, 2010). Theoretically, Tomlinson (1994, as cited in Tswana, 2012) posited that language awareness is dynamic and intuitive which is internally developed by the learners. This study is akin in its pedagogical implications to KAL or knowledge about language (Alderson & Horak, 2010; Borg, 2001), explicit/conscious grammar, focus-on-form, and Krashen's (1981) monitor hypothesis as an error-detecting mechanism that scans, edits, or confirms utterances. In his first conception, Andrews (1999) used the term Teacher Metalinguistic Awareness (TMA) as an assertion that second language teachers need a sound knowledge about language. This is also applicable to ESL/EFL learners, thus this study. Beliefs and perceptions which deal with human behavior while learning are central to every discipline. Consequently, researchers have spent efforts on the cognitive aspects of grammar learning (Altan, 2006) to elucidate the various beliefs held by students and teachers (Moini, 2009). To illustrate, grammar aspects with drills can improve English (Zhiwen, 2013; Pazaver & Wang, 2009; Farrell & Lim, 2005). Students prefer that explicit grammar should be valued by English teachers especially in teaching writing (Farahian, 2011; Male, 2011) as it enables the students to manipulate the English structure (Farrell & Lim, 2005). Students averred that their goal was to be proficient with the language, thus, advocating a limited grammar instruction (Pazaver & Wang, 2009) because the unfortunate use of explicit grammar fails to be applied automatically in speaking (Male, 2011).

In the Philippines, the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum "addresses the communicative needs of students by adopting a communicative, interactive, collaborative approach..." (DepEd, 2002, p.19), while the 2010 English curriculum for high school focuses on developing functionally literate Filipinos who can effectively function in various communication situations. Grammar is treated with a little attention in the language standards section, heavily literature-based. Given all the information, it can be surmised that no study, to the knowledge of the author, has deliberately explored the metalinguistic knowledge of Filipino learners and their perception towards metalanguage use. This study may be considered timely as these respondents are considered products of literature-based curriculums. The results may be utilized by the policy makers to revisit the treatment of grammar in the 2010 English Curriculum and in the K to 12 curriculum. Thus, the focal aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between freshmen university students' actual nature and extent of metalinguistic knowledge and their perception on the merits of metalanguage.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

Using a quantitative-qualitative method designs, one hundred forty-eight (n=148) freshmen college students from five different academic programs in a university in Manila participated in the study. The sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula and proportional stratified sampling. Originally, the study targeted 16 academic programs; however, only five programs confirmed the intact number of freshmen students in their departments, hinting the author they were uninterested. The respondents' average age is 18.17, and composed of 21.21% male and 78.70% female who were all bilinguals—both Filipino and English speakers. Also, 61.63% came from private schools, 36.37% from the public schools.

2.2. Instrument and Data Collection

Metalanguage tests by Munalim & Raymundo (2014) validated by four international authors expert in MK were used. Tests included *metalanguage recognition*, *metalanguage production*, *sentence production*, and *error correction & explanation* each with 12 items, a total of 48 items. For the perception part, ten statements comprising of the merits and demerits of metalanguage were equally distributed in a five Likert-scale scheme: 5= *Strongly Agree*; 4= *Moderately Agree*; 3= *Agree*; 2= *Disagree*; and 1= *Strongly Disagree*. The instrument was piloted and yielded good interpretation for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. Different professors administered the tests and informed the participants that the test was part of their major examination. Questionnaires were retrieved and returned to the researcher after two hours.

2.3. Data Analysis

Using SPSS, results of all metalanguage tests were subject to a descriptive analysis using frequency, standard deviation and mean. The items were ranked based on the percentage to find out the well and least mastered terminologies in all tasks. The overall level for each academic program and the overall students' MK was interpreted accordingly: 10-12: *Very High*; 7-9: *High*; 4-6= *Low* and 1-3= *Very Low*. Furthermore, t-test on two paired sample was utilized to see the significant difference of scores between grammatical forms and functions; and simple and perfect tenses. ANOVA was used as the study has only one independent variable, i.e., the five academic programs; and the dependent variables, i.e., scores in MK tests, including the overall MK score. Weighted mean was used to know the level of perception using this scheme: 4.21 to 5.00= *Strongly Agree*; 3.41 to 4.20= *Moderately Agree*; 2.61 to 3.40= *Agree*; 1.81 to 2.60= *Disagree*; and 1.00 to 1.80= *Strongly Disagree*. The results were then based upon: 4.21 to 5.00= *Very Highly Positive*; 3.41 to 4.20= *Highly Positive*; 2.61 to 3.40= *Positive*; 1.81 to 2.60= *Negative*; and 1.00 to 1.80= *Highly Negative*. Lastly, Pearson-moment correlation was utilized to compute a correlation coefficient between the actual metalinguistic knowledge and MK perception.

2.4. Triangulation of the Results

For the qualitative analysis, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the representative respondents from each program in order to triangulate students' perception, including the possible causes of difficulty. The data was analyzed by describing and developing recurring themes based on the questions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Actual MK Performance

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Metalanguage by Programs

Academic Programs	N	Recognition			Production			Sentence Production			Error Correction & Explanation			Overall Performance			
		X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	R
Arts & Sciences	35	7.49	2.09	H	5.80	2.23	L	5.66	3.06	L	3.20	2.59	V L	5.54	2.93	L	1
Business Administration	24	4.54	2.25	L	3.75	3.05	V L	5.50	3.82	L	2.33	2.53	V L	4.03	3.15	L	2
Fine Arts & Design	10	4.12	2.44	L	3.75	2.34	V L	5.43	4.04	L	2.38	1.71	V L	3.34	2.51	V L	3
Education	69	3.90	2.56	V L	4.20	2.30	L	2.30	2.54	V L	2.30	2.98	V L	3.18	2.66	V L	4
Nutrition & Dietetics	10	3.00	2.11	V L	4.10	3.07	L	1.30	1.42	V L	2.00	1.83	V L	2.60	2.36	V L	5
<i>Grand</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>4.89</i>	<i>2.73</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>4.29</i>	<i>2.60</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>5.01</i>	<i>3.76</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>2.53</i>	<i>2.19</i>	<i>V L</i>	<i>4.23</i>	<i>3.02</i>	<i>L</i>	

Comparatively speaking, the standard deviations of the scores in *metalanguage recognition* are small, ranging from 2.09 to 2.56, suggesting that the subjects' performance in this skill category is nearly homogenous. Put another way, their scores do not seem to vary considerably from one another and that they cluster around the general mean (GM=2.73). Also, the standard deviation (SD= 2.09) from *Arts & Sciences* is the lowest which suggests that aside from having the high scores, their group of scores do not also scatter considerably. By inspection, *Arts & Sciences* got the lowest standard deviation (SD= 2.23), indicating that the raw scores are not too far from the mean although the level is still considered *Low*. Also, the mean of this group ranges from 2.23 to 3.07, suggesting that the subjects' performance is heterogeneous. Simply, their scores seem to vary considerably from one another, and they do not cluster around the mean. Looking at their mean scores, *Arts & Sciences* still shows consistency as it tops the ranking (M= 5.66). *Fine Arts & Design* garnered the highest standard deviation (SD= 4.04), suggesting that their scores considerably vary from one another and scores do not cluster around the mean score. Also, its standard deviation (SD= 3.76) as a whole is the greatest, suggesting that this task contained highest score and lowest scores at the same time. The raw scores from 148 students considerably vary from one another and do not cluster around the mean scores. In *error correction & explanation*, the variability of scores from *Education* was the biggest (SD= 2.98), hinting that their scores considerably vary from one another, thus heterogeneous. Comparatively speaking, the standard deviation ranging from 2.00 to 3.20 was quite big, thus suggesting that there was a variety of raw scores from different groups of academic programs, thus heterogeneous. Although the standard deviation (SD= 2.19) of *error correction & explanation* is the lowest, the mean score is also the lowest, hinting that the scores were very low at the same clustering to one another.

Table 2: Students' Performance of Metalinguage Constructs

Metalinguistic Competencies	X	SD	VI
1. Sentence production	5.01	3.76	Low
2. Metalinguage recognition	4.89	2.73	Low
3. Metalinguage production	4.29	2.60	Low
4. Error correction & explanation	2.53	2.19	Very Low
Grand	4.23	3.02	Low

Sentence production produced better performance. It can be inferred that verb conjugations are easier than any of the other metalinguage tasks, which does not accord with Dikici's (2012) study. However, its low level is not good enough for college-level students. Slabakova (2014) in her Bottleneck Hypothesis maintains that functional morphology carries syntactic and semantic features. This is reflected in the respondents' sentences where sentences are grammatical correct but do not reflect the required semantics. Also, the difference of the mean percentages of correct answers between *simple tense* and *perfect aspect* is significant which is similar to the study of Munalim & Raymundo (2014). *Perfect tense/aspect* is a challenge because it is an optional alternative to the simple past tense (Çaki, n.d.). This has pedagogical impact regarding the traffic on the map of the 12 traditional tense-aspect combinations that gives little attention to the perfect tenses (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 2008). As a whole, the performance in *sentence production* can be considered *Low* (GXm= 5.01). On the other hand, *metalinguage recognition* performed better than *metalinguage production*. The findings also corroborate international studies (Tswana, 2012; Tsang, 2011; Shuib, 2009) but Munalim & Raymundo's (2014) study shows otherwise. Admittedly, the recognition task requires the participants to identify examples within the given sentences, thus considered cognitively less demanding in nature (Andrews, 1999). Likewise, the results suggest that the students are better at recognizing grammatical functions than grammatical forms which does not corroborate the findings of Munalim & Raymundo (2014), Tsang (2011), and Shuib (2009). In the actual test, there are only four terminologies which passed the lenient passing of 50% mastery, for example, *subordinating conjunction* at 71.62% mastery. The rest of the eight metalinguage only achieved mastery from 5.41% to 45.95%, thus a low level.

In terms of *metalinguage production*, incomplete description of the language features is also observed. Instead of writing "proper noun", they opted to write "noun." Respondents' lack of familiarity of explicit terminologies and specialized vocabularies perhaps is the reason of this discrepancy. As a whole, *metalinguage production* only achieved 35.76% mastery which can be considered *low*. As a whole, the poor performance of *metalinguage production* and *metalinguage recognition* may be tolerable. Classification of English words has been testified as a problematic case; grammatical patterns seem to have gone beyond perfect description (Harmer, 1983). Words may have complex and dual categories, behaving and falling under more than one part of speech (Endley, 2010; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 2008; Vitto, 2006). They have to be parsed for morphological, syntactic and semantic cues to identify how they behave in the given sentences (Zyzik, 2009; Crystal, 1987). With previous studies (Munalim & Raymundo, 2014; Tswana, 2012; Tsang, 2011; Shuib, 2009; Andrews, 1999), *error correction & explanation* is the undisputed hardest task because it undergoes cognitive processes—a kind of problem-solving (Cots & Arnó, 2005 as cited by Arnó-Macià, 2009). Respondents have to describe and explain pedagogical rules syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically, then have to make explicit rules which have been broken by employing appropriate metalinguage (Roehr & G'anem Guti'erez, 2008; Andrews, 1999). In summation, grammar is primarily a mental phenomenon where speakers can produce infinite grammatical sentences with or without explanation (Endley, 2010) as language is known to be tacit.

Table 3: Significant Difference of Metalinguage across Academic Programs

Metalinguage	F Computed	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
1. Recognition	15.143	0.000	Reject Null	Significant
2. Production	4.3140	0.003	Reject Null	Significant
3. Sentence production	4.7420	0.001	Reject Null	Significant
4. Error correction & explanation	1.1300	0.345	Accept Null	Not Significant

As gleaned from Table 3, the difference of metalinguistic, as a whole, is significant. This means that the academic program is a factor in *metalinguage recognition*, *metalinguage production*, *sentence production* but not in the *error correction & explanation*.

Pooling together, the results have reminded us of the challenging nature of metalanguage—a language to describe a language (Myhill, 2000); it is acknowledged and understood to be a cognitive problem-solving task that involves analytical reasoning and high control of rule-based processing (White & Ranta, 2002; Roehr, 2000). Hence, perfecting all metalanguage tasks is impossible even to the experienced English teachers (Munalim & Raymundo, 2014).

Table 4: Overall Performance of Academic Programs

Academic Programs	N	Recognition			Production			Sentence Production			Error Correction & Explanation			Overall Performance			
		X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI	R
Arts & Sciences	35	7.49	2.09	H	5.80	2.23	L	5.66	3.06	L	3.20	2.59	V L	5.54	2.93	L	1
Business Administration	24	4.54	2.25	L	3.75	3.05	V L	5.50	3.82	L	2.33	2.53	V L	4.03	3.15	L	2
Fine Arts & Design	10	4.12	2.44	L	3.75	2.34	V L	5.43	4.04	L	2.38	1.71	V L	3.34	2.51	VL	3
Education	69	3.90	2.56	V L	4.20	2.30	L	2.30	2.54	V L	2.30	2.98	VL	3.18	2.66	VL	4
Nutrition & Dietetics	10	3.00	2.11	V L	4.10	3.07	L	1.30	1.42	V L	2.00	1.83	V L	2.60	2.36	V L	5
<i>Grand</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>4.89</i>	<i>2.73</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>4.29</i>	<i>2.60</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>5.01</i>	<i>3.76</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>2.53</i>	<i>2.19</i>	<i>V L</i>	<i>4.23</i>	<i>3.02</i>	<i>L</i>	

More or less, the performance has been consistent throughout the tests. As a whole, the difference of standard deviation between 2.36 to 2.93 can be considered a little bigger. *Arts & Sciences* maintained its standing with a grand mean of 5.54, although still considered as *low*. They are composed of communication arts and psychology students who must be preoccupied of the importance of accuracy in their future profession. Surprisingly, *Education* missed to fare well which is lagged behind *Business Administration* and *Fine Arts & Design*. Although they confirmed that English is not their favorite subject, that should not be used to justify their meager knowledge on metalanguage. From the onset, they must have cultivated the habit of appreciating the English system. As Johnson (2000) puts it, possessing some specialized knowledge about the language seems to be imperative if someone professes to be a language teacher. Expectedly, the consistent low performance of *Nutrition & Dietetics* can be forgivable. They belong to a science-related course who must be toyed with the idea that accuracy has little to do with their future profession. However, *Nutrition & Dietetics* at one task performed better than *Business Administration*. It may be attributed to the fact the metalanguage requires rigor and memory. Their mental prowess must have contributed to the better production of grammatical terminologies. This may increase when metalanguage is regularly incorporated.

3.2. The Perception on Metalanguage in Grammar Teaching and Learning

With regard to the perception, the respondents believed that terminologies can raise their understanding of the language system ($M=4.11$, *Moderately Agree*), and suggested that teachers should explain rules using terminologies ($M=4.09$, *Moderately Agree*). Admittedly, these terminologies help them self-correct and monitor their own grammar mistakes ($M= 4.04$, *Moderately Agree*). In contrast, they favored fluency over accuracy ($M= 3.45$, *Moderately Agree*). Pooling together, the overall perception ($M=3.38$, *Agree*) can be considered positive perception in favor of the merits of metalanguage. Considerably, the results in the perception may be a good indication that the students are willing to learn more about the English system. Their low MK may improve any time their teachers incorporate rich metalanguage in grammar teaching. Put another way, the results depict the discrepancies between what and how much they know about metalanguage, and their positive perception on the merits of metalanguage. In fact, they were expected to have performed an advanced level of metalanguage because they demonstrated positive perception ($M=3.38$, *Agree*, $2.61-3.40=Positive$). All their positive perception was confirmed during the interview as a form of triangulation. They reiterated that their high school teachers utilized very limited terminologies that have greatly affected their actual performance.

Table 5: Ranking of Perception across Academic Programs

Academic Programs	Mean	Verbal Interpretations
1. Education	3.79	Moderately Agree
2. Arts & Sciences	3.52	Moderately Agree
3. Fine Arts & Design	3.34	Agree
4. Business Administration	3.22	Agree
5. Nutrition & Dietetics	3.13	Agree

The cohort of *Education* students who performed weak across all metalanguage tests topped the ranking. For sure, these future teachers still cling to the fact that mastering terminologies cannot be taken for granted [Andrada, personal communication, September 13, 2012]. It must be inferred that while taking the tests with difficulty, they were also reflecting what they can do to improve their meager knowledge. Although the ranking suggests that how students consider the importance of metalanguage is based on their professions in the future, the significant difference turned out to be insignificant. That is, whether from a teacher-education-related program, from a science-related course, or from an aesthetics-related course, all are toyed with the idea that terminologies are an indispensable aspect when a teacher teaches, and when a student studies grammar.

3.3. Significant Relationship Between Actual Metalinguistic Knowledge and Perception on Metalanguage

Table 6: Pearson-r and the P-Value in each Metalanguage Task

Metalinguistic							Pearson r	p – value	Decision	Conclusion
Areas	Actual Competence			Perception						
	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI				
Sentence production	5.01	3.76	L	3.38	1.15	Agree	0.06	0.480	Accept Null	Not Significant
Recognition	4.89	2.73	L	3.38	1.15	Agree	0.20	0.017	Reject Null	Significant
Production	4.29	2.60	L	3.38	1.15	Agree	0.06	0.480	Accept Null	Not Significant
Error correction & explanation	2.53	2.19	VL	3.38	1.50	Agree	-0.02	0.814	Accept Null	Not Significant

As regards the relationship, it turned out that the relationship between actual MK and perception on MK is insignificant in *sentence production*, *metalanguage production* and *error correction & explanation* but significant in *metalanguage recognition*, hence, a very weak positive correlation. That is, the overall metalinguistic knowledge is not driven or affected by their perception.

4. Conclusion

Obviously, the students have demonstrated dearth of metalinguistic knowledge. These disconcerting results may be used to validate that the curriculums with strong emphasis on literature these students had been exposed to in high school have dire repercussions on grammatical accuracy. As regards the relationship, no significant relationship between students' actual metalinguistic knowledge and perception on metalanguage exists; thus, the overall metalinguistic knowledge is not driven or affected by their perception. However, the challenge faced now is that the match should be desired; these respondents conceded to the importance of metalanguage with positive perception but performed poorly in their actual metalinguistic knowledge. Understandably, teachers should be aware of their students' perception since they are in the better position to motivate the students, especially the *Education* students who need continuing and preparatory trainings. On the top of the concern, policy makers should revisit the treatment of grammar in the existing English curriculum in order to improve and perpetuate grammatical accuracy among the college students.

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