

# Communicative Competencies and Pre-Service Teaching Performance: Basis for Communication Skills Enhancement

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## ABSTRACT

With the current demand standard for teachers equipped with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill of communicative competence, teacher education institutions like the Dalubhasaan ng Lunsod ng San Pablo (DLSP) have continuously searched for ways and means to fortify the communication skills development of their students and to hone them into well-prepared and well-equipped future teachers. The pre-service teaching internship is an avenue to establish the readiness of the student-teacher in an educational environment. This paper assessed the extent of association between the level of communicative competencies and pre-service teaching performance of the DLSP student teachers for the academic year 2017-2018. More specifically, it showed the profile of the pre-service teachers: the majority are aged 21-25, females, taking BEED-General Curriculum. The pre-service teachers are found to have an above-average level of communicative competencies in reading, listening, and writing but only average level of communicative competencies in speaking. There is a significant difference among speaking, reading, and writing competencies when grouped

according to major or area of specialization. There is a weak correlation between communicative competencies of listening, reading and writing, and student teaching performance, while there is a moderate correlation between speaking competencies and student teaching performance. To get a more conclusive correlation between competencies and performance, it is recommended for the institution to include communicative competencies as one among the specific parameters in evaluating pre-service teaching performance. This study found a need to enhance the communicative competencies, especially in speaking and writing that an integrated listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) program for enhancement of the pre-service teachers(PST)communicative competencies is proposed.

**Keywords** — communicative competencies, LSRW, student teaching, pre-service teacher, student teaching performance

## INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is marked by a prominence of fast-evolving digital literacy and the emergence of a population of digital natives (born into the digital technology) and digital immigrants (born before the widespread use of digital technology), that the education sector is compelled to respond accordingly in putting up programs and strategies to equip both teachers and learners in coping with the inescapable demand of the present and the future. In this day and age, future teachers must incorporate the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill of good communication to be adequately prepared for the world of work, given the swiftness with which information technology has been influencing both the domestic landscape and the world of professions (Ozkan, 2015).

Pre-service teachers are desired to exhibit proficiency in the English language, meaning a good level of competency in the four modes of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW). LSRW permeates the curriculum; they are essential to learning and to the demonstration of learning in every content area. Content means the knowledge and skills a student needs to learn and acquire; but while the teacher is expected to have a mastery of such content, he or she needs to possess the necessary communication skill to impart that content to the student (Okoli, 2017).

In over two decades of the existence of the DalubhasaanngLunsodng San Pablo (DLSP), a local college run by the City Government of San Pablo, has

produced hundreds of professional teachers. Based on informal reports/feedback from and informal interviews of employers or school heads, the applicants newly graduated from DLSP are observed to display weakness in terms of communication skills, specifically in the oral and written forms. Though there is no organized documentation of such feedback or comments, DLSP has exerted effort to reverse the situation in revising English subject syllabuses to integrate and emphasize oral and written communication lessons.

These information prompted the researcher, a graduate school student specializing in English language studies, to determine the communicative competency levels of pre-service teachers because it may just prove to be a predictor of their effectiveness in the delivery of their function as student teachers and thus be better prepared to take on the teaching profession when they graduate and start teaching as professionals. It is hoped that in establishing relationships between the profile and the level of communicative competencies of the pre-service teachers and the correlation to performance in student teaching, it may be possible to discover variables affecting student teaching performance and offer some suggestions to school administration on ways to improve teaching and learning. The findings will be used as a basis to propose a program that will enhance the pre-service teachers' communication skills and thus establish their readiness and ability to teach when they do the professional or in-service practice.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Employing the descriptive-correlative nature of research, this study's main objective is to identify the correlates of the communication competencies of the pre-service teachers (PST) and their student teaching performance. Specifically, this study presents a profile of the pre-service teachers of DLSP for the academic year 2017-2018 in terms of age, sex, area of specialization and access to Internet; determines the level of communicative competencies of the said pre-service teachers; tests the significant relationship between pre-service teacher profile and communicative competencies; tests the significant difference among the competencies when grouped according to major or field of specialization; correlates the pre-service teachers' communicative competencies with performance in Student Teaching; and proposes a program to enhance the communicative skills of the pre-service teachers.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researcher used the descriptive design to assess the level of communicative competencies and the level of performance in the Student Teaching of pre-service teachers. The correlation method is used to analyze the extent and the nature of relationships between communicative competencies and student teaching performance.

### Research Site

The study was conducted in Dalubhasaan ng Lunsod ng San Pablo, which is located in Barangay San Jose, San Pablo City. Dalubhasaan ng Lunsod ng San Pablo (DLSP) is a local college run by the City Government of San Pablo that produced hundreds of professional teachers.

### Participants

The participants of the study were the pre-service teachers (PSTs) of the Dalubhasaan ng Lunsod ng San Pablo (DLSP) who took the Student Teaching subject in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018 and their respective cooperating teachers (CTs) in the cooperating schools where these PSTs were deployed to do practice teaching. A total of 102 out of the 137 fourth-year students enrolled in the programs of Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSED) and Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEED) who did their pre-service teaching during the second semester of AY 2017-2018 and their respective cooperating teachers participated in this study. A total of 119 CTs handled all those 137 pre-service teachers when they were deployed to do student teaching in different secondary and elementary schools of San Pablo City. To come up with a valid and reliable total number of respondents (sample size), Slovin's formula was used. Based on the said formula, the total number of respondents needed is 102, which is 74.45% of the total population.

### Instrumentation

This study used a questionnaire modified from and patterned after Self-Assessment Checklists for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing by Carol Orwig, SIL (Updated 2013), and its adaptation for use in Japan by Miriam Davis. The questionnaire was subjected to validation by three experts in the field – one in education, one in language, and one in research. The questionnaire

was next submitted to the University Statistician for reliability test, and results indicated that it was acceptable for the internal consistency of this paper. Also, this study made use of the Likert scale to assess the performance of the pre-service teachers based on the grades they obtained in the three components of performance evaluation in the six-unit subject of Student Teaching.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher sought permission from the College President of the DalubhasaanngLunsodng San Pablo in the distribution of the questionnaire to the pre-service teachers. Likewise, permission was sought from the Department of Education San Pablo City Division Schools Superintendent in the distribution of a questionnaire to the cooperating teachers. The data were gathered, tallied, tabulated, coded, and encoded. The encoded coded tabulation was sent to the university statistician for statistical analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The gathered and tabulated data were analyzed accordingly using the following statistical methods/tools. Frequency distribution was used to express the profile variable frequencies as a percentage of the total frequency equated to 100. Weighted mean and ranking were used to describe the level of communicative competencies of the pre-service teachers in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The following are the assigned values with verbal interpretation 2.50–3.49, which means Easily or Almost Always; 1.50– 2.49, which means With Some Effort; 1.00–1.49, which means Barely. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether the means of the four communicative competencies are different. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to show the relationship between the communicative competencies with the student teaching performance of the respondents in this study. All data gathered were treated using statistical software, PASW version 18, using an alpha level of 0.05.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Profile Summary of Respondents**

One hundred two (102) pre-service teachers were chosen to answer the questionnaire. Overall, there are more females, 77.45% of the respondents, than males, only 22.5%. There is a view that teaching is a vocation, an acknowledgment

of a call to serve others through the means of education and learning, be it at a primary, secondary, or post-secondary level. The focus of conceptualizing teaching as a vocation is more on students for whom teaching activities are carried out than it is on the teacher who performs these activities or on the institution that supports the teaching function (Buijs, 2005). Related to this, Sultana, Zahir, and Yaacob (2014) cited Drudy (2008), who maintained that women are more naturally disposed towards nurture than men, based on the traditional gender roles.

Most of the respondents are from the BEED–General Curriculum which is 24.51% of the total population of respondents, while the fewest respondents are from BSED–Filipino major, which contributed 7.84% of the total population. In terms of age, most of the respondents are within the age bracket of 21-25 years of age, which comprises 60.78 % of the total population. Meanwhile, the lowest age bracket was between 31-35 years old and 46-50 years old, which are both at 0.98%.

In terms of internet use: a number of hours spent to support or supplement learning, 28.43% of the total respondents spend between 5-10 hours per week while the longest time spent is 16-20 hours per week by only 9.8% of the total respondents. In today's educational landscape, computers are widespread, readily accessible, and practical; as computers have been an integral part of people's lives.

### **Cooperating Teachers' Profile**

A total of 102 cooperating teacher population was chosen to answer the questionnaire regarding their assessment of the communicative competencies of the pre-service teachers respectively assigned to them. Overall, there are more female cooperating teachers than males; 82.4% and 17.6%, respectively. Only a small percentage (9.8 %) of the cooperating teachers did not take a Bachelor in Elementary Education or Bachelor in Secondary Education. In addition, most of the cooperating teachers are between 26-45 years of age.

### **Communicative Competencies in Terms of Listening**

The PSTs' listening competencies are at a total composite mean of 2.56 with a verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (Above Average competency). Following the Zascersinska (2010) table of levels of communicative competencies, the PSTs are at Proficient User Level in terms of listening competency, meaning they can generally perform the listening tasks autonomously or they can regulate their listening processes with automaticity and without needing help from others.

Among the listening tasks cited, pre-service teachers (PST) can understand basic warnings and commands (rank 1.5); PST can understand greetings and other very commonly occurring social routines (rank 1.5), and PST can express personal apologies clearly and appropriately to someone he/she has offended (rank 3). The pre-service teachers (PST) can understand someone describing a complex object or procedure in detail (at rank 10) got the lowest weighted mean score of 2.35 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level of competency). As emphasized in the study of Zlatić, Bjekić, Marinković, and Bojović (2014), this lowest weighted mean score could mean that the PSTs are still in the formative period for structuring the system of their professional behavior. The PSTs, therefore, should be more flexible and ready to change their behavior at this stage in their teacher education training.

Listening tasks such as PST can persuade a student to do something he/she doesn't want to do or to stop doing something the PST doesn't like obtained a mean score of 2.36 (rank 9) and PST can understand enough to carry on short conversations on concrete topic in English, 2.51 (rank 8).

### **Communicative Competencies in Terms of Speaking**

In terms of speaking, the over-all composite mean is 2.47 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level of competency). From among the speaking tasks, both pre-service teachers (PST) can explain a simple process to students such as doing a project (rank 1.5) and PST can give students clear directions on how to go about an activity (rank 1.5) got the highest weighted mean of 2.68 and with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (Above Average level). For the speaking task, PST can express personal apologies clearly and appropriately to someone he/she has offended (rank 3) with a weighted mean score of 2.66 and verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always. However, the speaking task PST can present a talk at a professional meeting (rank 10) got the lowest weighted mean score of 2.22 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average competency level). Speaking task PST can handle formal discussions (rank 9) got a weighted mean of 2.28 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level). PST can articulate a complaint, giving the reasons why he/she is dissatisfied (rank 8) got a weighted mean of 2.32 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level).

### **Communicative Competencies in Terms of Reading**

Communicative competence in terms of reading has an over-all composite mean of 2.56 with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (Above

Average level). Pre-service teachers (PST) can read notes of instructions and follow them obtained a weighted mean score of 2.85 (rank 1). Likewise, with task items PST can read announcements and other items on bulletin boards (rank 2) obtaining a weighted mean score of 2.75 with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (above average level), and PST can read and identify signage in school premises (rank 3) getting the weighted mean of 2.74 and with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (above average level). On the other hand, the reading task item PST can read letters to the editor (rank 10) obtained the lowest weighted mean scores of 2.22 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level). Reading task items PST can read any kind of personal or business correspondence (rank 9) and PST can read expository prose on a wide range of subjects, including some unfamiliar to him/her (rank 8) also got the low weighted mean scores of 2.32 and 2.38 respectively with verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (average level). Meanwhile, a study made by Erdem (2015) on reading habits of university students revealed that students enjoy reading literary works, historic, romantic, entertaining-humorous, and psychological genres the most; business correspondence and expository prose are not among their reading preferences; and that students are too preoccupied with the intensity of lessons, busy social life, preparation for examinations and spending time on the computer/internet.

### **Communicative Competencies in Terms of Writing**

The pre-service teachers (PST) communicative competencies in terms of writing stand at a total composite mean of 2.52 with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (Above Average level). PST can fill out school forms is at rank one (1), having obtained a weighted mean score of 2.85 with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (above average). PST can write its own resume (rank 2), and PST can take notes during meetings, whether formal or informal (rank 3) got the next highest weighted means of 2.83 and 2.65 respectively with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (Above Average level). On the other hand, writing task item PST can write articles for professional journals (rank 10) got the lowest weighted mean score of 2.17 with the verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level). Writing task item PST can write memos (rank 9) got a weighted mean score of 2.33 with verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (average level) while PST can write poetry or lyrics to a song (rank 8) got the weighted mean score of 2.17 also with verbal interpretation of With Some Effort (Average level). Writing is an essential tool for

students to be successful in college and in the world of work across all disciplines because everything is based on writing in most academic and professional activities that require essays, reports, research, etc. and helping students improve their writing skills is a responsibility for all teachers (Watanabe, 2017).

### **Summary of Communicative Competencies**

It can be gleaned that in the four language competencies of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, PSTs show a composite mean of 2.52 and with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always, which means that they have Above Average level of communicative competencies. The result shows that the weighted means for listening (2.55/rank 2), reading (2.56/rank 1), and writing (2.52/rank 3) are homogenous. It shows only a little difference between the values or scores. It can be noted that the highest weighted mean is on reading competency, which is 2.56 with the verbal interpretation of Easily or Almost Always (Above Average level). Meanwhile, the lowest weighted mean is on speaking competency, which is 2.47 with, the verbal interpretation of with some effort (average level). Boonkit (2010) said that for effective communication using any language, whether the mother tongue or a second language like English, students must acquire a good level of speaking competence.

### **Over-all Student Teaching Performance**

It can be noted that 60.8% of the PSTs got a highly satisfactory grade (92-94) for the weekly evaluations. Meanwhile, 34.3 % of the PSTs got a satisfactory grade (88-91), and 4.9% got moderately satisfactory (85-87). In terms of final teaching demonstration evaluation, 67.6% of the respondents got a highly satisfactory grade (92-94). It can also be noted that only satisfactory grade (88-91) was given to 30.4% of the PSTs, while only 2% got an outstanding grade (95-97). In terms of portfolio evaluation, It can also be seen that the majority (73.5%) of the respondents got satisfactory grade only (highest attained grade for portfolio) while 26.5% got moderately satisfactory (85-87). Over-all, the PSTs got good grades in all three evaluation tools where the lowest grade attained was moderately satisfactory (85-87) while the highest is outstanding (92-94). As to the only 5 PSTs (4.9%) who exhibited moderately satisfactory performance in the weekly practicum, it can only be attributed to the individuals' deficiencies; while for the only 2 PSTs (2.0%) who were rated outstanding in the final teaching demonstration, it can be attributed to the individuals' above ordinary abilities and efforts.

### **Difference of Responses on Communicative Competencies of Students when Grouped According to Profile – Listening and Speaking**

As seen from the result, there were significant differences in speaking when grouped according to sex since the obtained p-value of 0.038 was less than 0.05 alpha level. This means that the responses of males differ from females. It was found out from the result (p-value 0.38), that females have higher competency than males when it comes to speaking. Based on the researcher's observation (who was also the PSTs teacher in their English subjects), the female student teachers seem to take extra care in speaking with correct grammar, pronunciation and intonation that they even self-correct or self-edit when they realize they commit a mistake, while the males on the other hand exhibit less care on this respect seeming to be content in being able just to express their message and be understood. Referring to Motallebzadeh (2011), his research regarding Gender Role in the Assessment of Oral Proficiency emphasized that sex or gender affects language performance. The study, focused on the relationship between gender and oral proficiency or performance, found that females did better in oral proficiency or performance than males. With regard to the competencies in listening and speaking, there was a significant difference observed on the program and major of specialization since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. It also shows that in terms of listening among the profile variables, only the program or course (.058 p-value) and internet usage (0.17 p -value) have significant differences.

### **Difference of Responses on Communicative Competencies when Grouped According to Profile – Reading and Writing**

The results revealed that there were significant difference observed from the competencies on reading p-value (0.009), writing p-value (0.002) when grouped according to sex; reading p-value (0.003), writing p-value (0.039) when grouped according to area of specialization and writing p-value (0.017) when grouped according to internet use and .008 in terms of reading. This means that the responses differ significantly. Based on the post hoc test groups with a higher level of competencies are females, as explained by the study of Xiong (2010) who wrote that females' internal motivation is stronger than that of males' in the foreign language because most females tend to aim to gain more language knowledge.

It was also found that PSTs who use the internet for 11-15 hours per week also got higher proficiency. This could mean that the internet aids the PSTs ability

to learn and enhance their communicative competencies. In today's educational landscape, computers are widespread, readily accessible and practical, and as computers have been an integral part of people's lives, it is inevitable that computers would attract the attention of pre-service teachers who turn to it for academic research and for general information (Basoz&Cubukcu, 2013).

It can also be noted that in terms of age, there are significant differences in writing competency. Age has a possible influence on the acquisition of proficiency in terms of writing. Differences in terms of development and rate of attainment can be attributed to age. The older the learners, the faster they are in the acquisition of knowledge and competencies in terms of writing (Torras& Celaya, 2011).

### **Relationship between Communicative Competencies and Student Teaching Performance**

The obtained r-values indicate a weak association, and the computed p-values are all greater than 0.05 alpha level. All r-values imply that there is only a weak association among the three communicative competencies (listening, reading, and writing) and student teaching performance. It can be noted that only speaking competency has a moderate positive correlation in the student teaching performance because of the positive r-value (.572) in the first indicator for student teaching performance, which is the weekly evaluation for PSTs. On the other hand, all the r-values for final teaching demonstration for PSTs have a positive relationship, while in terms of the portfolio evaluation, all communicative competencies have weak relationships.

### **Proposed Integrated Four-skills Program to Enhance the Communicative Competencies of Pre-service Teachers**

Any language skills development program would require the integration of all the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to ensure optimum success, hence this "Proposed Integrated Four-skills Program to Enhance the Communicative Competencies of Pre-service Teachers."

Key Result Area	Objectives	Strategies	Persons Responsible
Listening Competency	1. Achieve listening success in manifesting attentiveness, motivation, interest in and knowledge of topics of discussions and conversations	Note-taking activities using authentic data or materials that will use software and hardware resources	English area coordinator and instructors
	2. Demonstrate comprehension by listening to and carrying out instructions	Mock parent-teacher conferencing	Student Teaching coordinator and supervising teachers
		Interactive workgroup activities	Computer laboratory coordinator
		Simulated listening activities	
Speaking Competency	1. Achieve speaking success in approximating native English speaker mastery	Task-based speaking program Mock parent-teacher conferencing	English area coordinator and instructors Student Teaching coordinator and supervising teachers
	2. Demonstrate speaking competence in manifesting significant levels of fluency, accuracy and automaticity in the use of the English language	Interactive workgroup activities	
		Simulated speaking activities	

Reading Competency	1. Achieve reading success in obtaining either information or pleasure in reading endeavors	The 24-hour reading tasks plan	English area coordinator and instructors
		Interactive workgroup activities	College librarian and library staff Student Teaching coordinator and supervising teachers
		Reading and reflecting on the vision-mission statement of the school	Computer laboratory coordinator and staff
Writing Competency	1. Achieve writing success in being able to produce logical and functional written presentations that satisfy grammatical and organizational standards	Functional writing program	English area coordinator and instructors
		The teacher's journal writing	Student Teaching coordinator and supervising teachers
		Whole-class blog forum	Resource persons from the field
Writing Competency	2. Demonstrate writing competence in being able to produce either reflective or process writing outputs	The pre-service teacher newsletter production	Computer laboratory coordinator and staff

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, Dalubhasaan ng Lunsodng San Pablo's pre-service teachers for AY 2017-2018 have the following profile: the majority are aged 21-25, females outnumber the males, BEEd-General Curriculum area has the most number, and most of them access the internet 5-10 hours a week. Also, the pre-service teachers have above average level of communicative competencies in reading, listening, and writing, but the only average level of communicative competencies in speaking. In addition, there is a significant relationship between gender profile and communicative competencies in speaking, reading, and writing.

There is a significant relationship between the program or course and communicative competencies in listening and speaking. There is a significant relationship between major/area of specialization and communicative competencies in speaking, reading, and writing. There is a significant relationship in terms of age and writing competency. There is a significant relationship between internet use and communicative competencies in the four LSRW areas.

There is a significant difference among the speaking, reading, and writing competencies when grouped according to major or area of specialization. But there is no significant difference between listening competencies and the respondent's major or area of specialization. There is a weak correlation between communicative competencies of listening, reading and writing, and student teaching performance, while there is a moderate correlation between speaking competencies and student teaching performance. There is a need to enhance the communicative competencies, especially in speaking that an integrated four-skill program for enhancement of the PSTs' communicative competencies is proposed.

## **TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH**

Having found some areas that require refinement in the communicative competencies of the pre-service teachers, speaking and writing in particular, the findings of this study could be translated into any language skills development program. A program that will require the integration of all the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to ensure optimum success, which will aim to fortify the communication skills development of the student teachers to hone them into well-prepared and well-equipped future teachers. It may also be brought into various media of communication for information dissemination such as social media and mass media (TV, newspaper, and radio).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby proposed: The teacher education institution may include the pupil/student evaluation to reveal the impressions of the pupils/students taught by the pre-service teachers (PST). Teacher education institutions in general and the DalubhasaanngLunsodng San Pablo, in particular, should ensure that students are provided access to printed reading materials in different genres during their free time to enhance their reading experiences as an integral part of integrated four-skills communication development.

The cooperating teacher may serve as a model in oral communication skill demonstration and motivate the PSTs to overcome inhibition and shyness by being consistently friendly and positively correcting their errors. The Faculty of English may encourage writing competency enhancement activities for the PST, such as blog writing on teaching experiences. The teacher education institution may opt to revise their rating instrument in including communicative competencies as one among the criteria. The school may implement the proposed program for enhancement of the pre-service teacher's communication skills that may be evaluated thereafter. Future researchers may undertake further studies on the social and psychological issues affecting the communicative competencies of the pre-service teachers for an integrated or a correlational analysis.

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