

Communicative Competence Level of High School Teachers

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**Abstract** – *Of paramount importance to teachers' job performance is their ability to communicate well both in speaking and in writing. Other than carrying out their regular teaching job in the classroom, teachers perform a lot of other tasks including emceeing and business letter writing; hence, this study aimed to identify their perceived communicative competence level along these areas with the ultimate goal of proposing an intervention to increase their competence level in areas which they deem wanting. This descriptive study, conducted in Tanolong National High School (TNHS) from January to March 2017 determined the teachers' profile and their perception of their communicative competence level along emceeing and business letter writing. Sixteen (16) high school teachers were purposively chosen and surveyed using a validated questionnaire. For the objective interpretation and analysis of data, frequency counts, percentage, and average weighted mean (AWM) were used. The study revealed that majority or 81.25 percent of the teachers are female. Their length of teaching experience vary from 1-31 years and 25 percent of them indicated a 4 to 6 year-teaching experience. In terms of their highest educational attainment, more than half or 56.25 percent already earned masteral units. As to the number of trainings/seminars attended related to emceeing and business letter-writing, 87.5 percent indicated having had no training nor seminar. On another vein, results revealed a low communicative competence level in emceeing as evidenced by the average weighted mean (AWM) of 2.48. As to their perceived level of communicative competence in business letter writing, the AWM of 2.57 indicates a neutral perception level based on a five-point likert scale described as "very low", "low", "neutral", "moderately high", and "very high". Such results hint at the teachers' low communicative competence level in emceeing and business letter writing and suggest the need for trainings that would equip them with the skills necessary to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

**Keywords** – *communicative competence, perceived level*

**INTRODUCTION**

Crucial to teachers' effective performance of their tasks is their ability to communicate well both in speaking and in writing. Hence, they must constantly develop their communicative competence. Communicative competence is a system of knowledge, skills, and abilities, motivational disposition, attitudes, and properties in teaching communication and social interaction; it is also the essential competence of teachers [1].

Canale and Swain as cited by Xuefeng and Xinguang [2] identified the four components of communicative competence. First is the grammatical competence which is the knowledge of lexical items and rules of phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and sentence grammar, Second is the sociolinguistic competence which is the knowledge of socio-cultural rules of language and discourse. Third is the discourse competence which is the ability to connect sentences in stretches of discourse to form a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances. Fourth and the last is the strategic competence which is the verbal and the nonverbal communicative strategies that may be called into action to compensate for communication breakdowns due to performance variable or due to insufficient competence. Thus, teachers must be able to equip

themselves with all the four competencies in order to be communicatively competent.

Petkute [3] claimed that communicative competence is a necessary constituent of the teachers' general competence. This implies that for teachers to effectively teach and perform all their teaching-related duties, they must have a strong communicative competence. This seems to be a daunting task since teachers may begin to wonder where to start in honing such a competence. It is in this light that Bjekik, et al.[4] suggested that the development of teachers' communicative competence starts from the awareness process. Accordingly, the teachers' self-analysis help them realize their motives, goals, and needs. This implies that for teachers to be able to improve their communicative competence, they must start knowing what they believe they are capable of doing.

The need for teachers to develop their communicative competence is inarguably important because aside from facilitating learning that hinges on their communication skills, they are still expected to do many things. Among their manifold tasks are the performance of social responsibilities and the accomplishment of civic responsibilities which require public speaking and business writing. It is in this light that the researchers conducted this study which aimed to determine the teachers' perception of their

communicative competence in terms of their emceeding skills and their business writing skills.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to determine the perceived communicative competence level of the TNHS teachers in emceeding and in business writing.

Specifically, it sought to determine the profile of the TNHS teachers in terms of sex, years of teaching in TNHS, highest educational attainment, and trainings/seminars attended related to emceeding and business writing. It also looked into their communicative competence level in emceeding and in business writing along linguistic, socio-linguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Written below are the materials and methods used in this study.

**Materials**

The main instrument used was a validated researcher-made questionnaire composed of two parts. Part I sought to determine the profile of the respondents while Part II included a checklist of 20 statements that the respondents had to answer in order to determine their communicative competence along the following components: 1) linguistic competence; 2) socio-linguistic competence; 3) discourse; and 4) strategic competence.

**Methods**

This study necessitated the use of the descriptive method of research. Salmorin<sup>[5]</sup> stated that descriptive method is characterized as a normative approach to the study of conditions which are an essential guide to one’s thinking. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, practices that prevail, processes that are going on, effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing.

A total enumeration of the sixteen (16) TNHS teachers were purposively chosen as the respondents of this study conducted in January to March 2017 since it is one of the adopted schools of Pangasinan State University.

After seeking permission from the TNHS principal, the researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents. They also explained each item to them so that the respondents would be able to clarify their doubts.

For the objective interpretation and analysis of the data, appropriate statistical tools were used. Frequency counts and percentage were used to answer the first problem while the Average Weighted Mean (AWM) was used to answer the second and third problems.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

It was the objective of this study to determine the perceived communicative competence level in emceeding and in business writing of the TNHS teachers in 2017. Hence, this section presents the data gathered along with the corresponding interpretations and analysis. The manner of presentation is in consonance with the statement of the problem.

Table 1. Profile of the TNHS Teachers

ATTRIBUTES		FREQUENCY (f)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Sex	M	3	18.75
	F	13	81.25
Total		16	100
Years of Teaching Experience			
	1-3 years	1	6.25
	4-6 years	4	25
	7-9 years	1	6.25
	10-12 years	0	0
	13-15 years	2	12.5
	16-18 years	0	0
	19-21 years	1	6.25
	22-24 years	1	6.25
	25-27 years	2	12.5
	28-30 years	1	6.25
	31-33 years	3	18.75
	34-36 years	0	0
Highest Educational Attainment			
	Bachelor's Degree	2	12.5
	Master's Degree	9	56.25
	• With Units	4	25
	• Completed		
	Doctorate Degree	0	0
	• With Units	1	6.25
	• Completed		
Number of trainings/seminars attended related to emceeding and business correspondence?			
	0	14	87.5
	1	2	12.5
	2	0	0
	3	0	0
		0	0

Table 1 shows the profile of the TNHS teachers. In terms of sex, 18.75 percent of the respondents are male while 81.25 percent are female. This suggests that teaching as a profession is female-dominated.

In terms of teaching experience, 25 percent of the respondents have 4-6 years of teaching experience followed by the 18.75 percent with 31-33 years of teaching experience. The shortest teaching experience falls under 1-3 years. Results clearly show that TNHS teachers have varied length of teaching experience ranging from 1-33 years.

In terms of the highest educational attainment, majority of the TNHS teachers or 56.25 percent have earned master’s degree units followed by the 25 percent who already completed the master’s degree. Only two of the respondents or 12.5 percent were bachelor’s degree holder, while one (1) or 6.25 percent completed the doctorate degree. Results imply that TNHS teachers generally value continuing education as evidenced by their pursuit of post-baccalaureate degrees.

For the number of trainings/seminars attended related to emceeding and business correspondence, it is evident that most of the respondents or 87.5 percent did not have a

seminar or training related to emceeing and to business writing; hence, it may be deduced that these skills were not given a premium by seminar organizers or by the respondents themselves.

**Table 2. Perceived Communicative Competence Level in Emceeing**

Communicative Competence Components	Weighted Mean (WM)	Description
linguistic competence	2.65	Neutral
socio-linguistic competence	2.73	Neutral
Discourse	2.66	Neutral
strategic competence	1.88	Low
<b>Average Weighted Mean (AWM)</b>	<b>2.48</b>	<b>Low</b>

Legend:

Scale	Scale Limits	Description
5	4.50-5.00	High
4	3.50-4.49	Moderately High
3	2.50-3.49	Neutral
2	1.50-2.49	Low
1	1.00-1.49	Very Low

Table 2 clearly shows that the teachers' perception of their communicative competence level in emceeing is low as evidenced by the average weighted mean (AWM) of 2.48. This is despite the fact the respondents mostly rated the components of their communicative competence as neutral with an exception of their strategic competence which they rated low.

Their neutral responses imply that they are not really confident whether their utterances are grammatically correct or not, and whether their pronunciation and word choice are right or wrong. Although their socio-linguistic competence got the highest weighted mean of 2.73, this still falls under the neutral level which suggests that the respondents are uncertain of the language register to use. Moreover, results indicate that they do not seriously study the audience culture and norms that are supposed to guide their speaking style. As to their discourse competence, the neutral level hints that they are doubtful of the cohesion, organization, parallelism, and spontaneity of their speech.

Since their strategic competence was admittedly low, they acknowledge their inadequate knowledge and skills of the repair strategies in emceeing. They also disclose their failure to use appropriate gestures, and facial expressions and they are uncertain of what to do during untoward and problematic circumstances.

**Table 3. Perceived Communicative Competence Level in Business Letter Writing**

Legend:

Communicative Competence Components	Weighted Mean (WM)	Description
linguistic competence	2.43	Low
socio-linguistic competence	2.70	Neutral
discourse competence	2.60	Neutral
strategic competence	2.54	Neutral
<b>Average Weighted Mean (AWM)</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>Neutral</b>

Scale	Scale Limits	Description
5	4.50-5.00	High
4	3.50-4.49	Moderately High
3	2.50-3.49	Neutral
2	1.50-2.49	Low
1	1.00-1.49	Very Low

Results derived from Table 3 indicate the respondents' low level of linguistic competence in business writing and their neutral competence level along the socio-linguistic, discourse, and strategic components.

It is worth noting that as compared to their rating in emceeing along the linguistic competence, their perception of their competence level in terms of their knowledge in grammar, word choice, and spelling remarkably dipped from neutral to low. This could be explained by the fact that unlike spoken language in which errors could be repaired immediately, written communication does not afford the same flexibility.

As to their neutral rating in all the other competencies, it could be noted that the respondents view their business writing skills dispassionately. The results suggest that among the three competencies they rated neutral, the strategic competence got the lowest weighted mean of 2.54. This hints that the respondents have a lukewarm attitude to the importance of considering the readers' perspective and background in writing their letter, to the value of using the appropriate punctuation marks and other mechanics in writing in order to emphasize and clarify meaning, to the relevance of anticipating misinterpretations, and to the significance of editing and revising their letter before sending it.

In addition, their socio-linguistic competence which got a neutral level insinuate that like the case of their emceeing skills, the respondents are also uncertain of the language register to use in business writing. Results further indicate that they do not consider the culture of the readers and the norms accepted in the context of their business writing. In the same vein, their discourse competence, which is also on the neutral level, indicate that they are

doubtful of the cohesion, organization, parallelism, and spontaneity of their written message.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Results imply a number of things along the TNHS teachers' profile.

In terms of sex, the female specie is more bent to take up the teaching profession than the males. This could be explained by the more nurturing nature of the females.

As to the length of teaching experience, most of them are relatively new with only four to six years of being in the field.

Their highest educational attainment reveal that most of them put a premium on continuing education since more than fifty percent of them have masteral units.

On another vein, since almost ninety percent of them had not attended any seminar or training on emceeing and business writing, it could be inferred that this dearth may have contributed to the low rating they gave themselves along their perceived communicative competence in emceeing and their neutral rating in their perceived communicative competence in business writing.

Their low perception of their communicative competence in emceeing may also be rooted in the fact that much of what teachers know in emceeing comes from informal observations in actual programs or events. The tendency therefore is to repeat mistakes that well-meaning emcees unconsciously commit.

Regarding the overall neutral perception they have along their communicative competence in business writing, the respondents reveal their uncertainty regarding a number of things.

Their neutral rating as regards their perception of their ability to use appropriate language registers, polite strategies, and the conscious need to check the norms and culture of the receiver of the letter all fall within their socio-linguistic competence.

The same could be said about their neutral rating in discourse competence. This indicate their doubt in their ability to use cohesive devices, to use clear methods of paragraph organization, and to apply the rules regarding parallelism and subordination.

Their neutral perception about their strategic competence likewise hint at their incertitude regarding their ability to write business letters considering the reader's perspective; to use punctuation marks such as hyphen, semicolon, ellipses etc. and apply the rules on mechanics properly to clarify and emphasize meaning; to infer messages which

may not be directly spoken or written and to use such inference in letter-writing; to anticipate possible problems and misunderstandings that may arise in written communication and to prevent them.

Regarding their linguistic competence, their low rating suggests their strong reservation when issues of grammar, word choice, and spelling are concerned.

In the light of the given results and conclusions, the following recommendations are drawn:

First, that trainings/seminars/workshops should be designed in order to introduce and to develop all the components of communicative competence among teachers.

Second, that trainings/ seminars/workshops should be conducted to equip teachers with the essential knowledge and skills on emceeing and business writing.

Third, that further studies be conducted along the development of communicative competence among teachers and students.

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