



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Uncovering Communication Barriers in Tertiary English Instruction

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Aug 21, 2024 Accepted: Oct 31, 2024	<p>Effective communication skills in teachers are one of the tools for effective learning. However, the report of EDCOM 2 underscored that ineffective communication and coordination among educational agencies and the excessive administrative burdens on teachers significantly contribute to poor learning outcomes in the Philippine education system. This motivated the researcher to identify specific problems in the communication skills of tertiary-level English teachers and further suggest an improvement in a local setting. A descriptive research design was used to assess the challenges faced by English instructors from state universities. The findings revealed that English instructors are relatively young, predominantly female, and hold M.A. units. The degree of problems in communication skills, Reading (2.52), Writing (2.60), Speaking (2.64), and Listening (2.70) were moderately encountered, indicating a need for targeted professional development. Continuous professional development focusing on communication skills is essential to address these challenges. Future programs should include advanced digital literacy and multimodal communication training to meet evolving educational demands. Collaborative learning initiatives among English instructors could promote peer support and the sharing of best practices. Integrating technology in teaching can enhance communication skills, and future studies should examine the impact of digital tools on instructors' effectiveness. Institutional policies should support ongoing education and professional growth for instructors by allocating resources for further studies and continuous training. Follow-up studies adopting a longitudinal approach will provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of these recommendations and identify new areas for improvement.</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is essential to successful teaching, especially in higher education where the exchange of complex ideas and engagement with diverse student populations are critical. In the Philippine education system, however, there are significant challenges in communication and coordination among educational agencies. The Education Commission (EDCOM 2) report highlights these issues, pointing out that ineffective communication and excessive administrative burdens on teachers contribute significantly to poor learning outcomes (Cabigon, 2018). This situation has prompted a closer examination of the communication skills of tertiary-level English teachers, aiming to identify specific problems and propose improvements within a local context.

Effective communication is integral to teaching and learning, particularly in disciplines that rely heavily on language and literacy, such as English. Teachers' communication skills directly impact their ability to convey complex concepts, engage students, and facilitate a productive learning environment (Chen & Wang, 2020; Gray-Grant, 2016). Effective communication enhances teaching effectiveness and supports students' academic performance, making it a crucial area of focus for educational improvement.

The importance of communication skills in teaching is well-documented. For instance, Silver (2018) emphasizes that solid communication skills help teachers to articulate their ideas clearly, provide

feedback, and create a positive learning atmosphere. Furthermore, Richards (2010) notes that teachers' communication competence influences their performance and their students' learning experiences. Despite this, the EDCOM 2 report underscores a persistent issue in the Philippine education system: ineffective communication and coordination among educational agencies, coupled with excessive administrative burdens, significantly hinder educational outcomes (Cabigon, 2018; Menor, 2023; Nguyen & Ngo, 2017).

In response to these challenges, there is a compelling need to focus on the specific communication skills of tertiary-level English teachers. The goal is to identify and address these educators' unique issues and propose targeted solutions to enhance their communication effectiveness and overall teaching performance. By focusing on these issues, this research aims to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes within the Philippine educational context.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the general importance of communication skills in education, there needs to be more clarity regarding the specific challenges faced by tertiary-level English teachers in the Philippines. Previous studies have explored various aspects of communication in education, including strategies for improving communication skills and the impact of communication on teaching and learning (Asemanyi, 2015; Johnson & Smith, 2018). However, these studies often need more specificity regarding the unique context of Filipino English instructors and the particular challenges they encounter (Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2014).

For example, Asemanyi (2015) assessed students' performance in communication skills at the University of Education Winneba, but this study focused primarily on students rather than teachers. Similarly, Johnson and Smith (2018) identified general communication problems among teachers, but the specific issues faced by English instructors in the Philippine context still need to be addressed. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the communication challenges faced by English instructors at a state university in the Philippines and proposing tailored solutions to address these challenges (Smith & Wang, 2018).

To address the communication challenges faced by English instructors, several targeted solutions are considered:

Implementing continuous professional development programs focusing on communication skills is essential. These programs should be designed to address the specific needs of English instructors and include training in advanced communication techniques, digital literacy, and multimodal communication. As educational demands evolve, instructors need to be equipped with the skills to effectively use digital tools and adapt their communication strategies to meet the needs of their students (Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2018).

Encouraging collaborative learning among English instructors can enhance their communication skills through peer support and the sharing of best practices. Collaborative initiatives, such as workshops, peer review sessions, and study groups, can allow instructors to learn from one another and improve their communication practices (Smith & Jones, 2019).

Integrating technology into teaching practices can improve communication skills and improve teaching effectiveness. Using digital tools, such as interactive whiteboards, online communication platforms, and educational software, can support more dynamic and effective teaching methods. Technology can also facilitate better communication between instructors and students, providing additional channels for feedback and interaction (Silver, 2018).

Institutional policies should support ongoing education and professional growth for instructors. This includes allocating resources for further studies, continuous training, and providing opportunities for instructors to attend relevant conferences and workshops. Institutions should also create a supportive environment encouraging instructors to pursue professional development and integrate new communication strategies into their teaching (Chen & Wang, 2020).

Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the proposed solutions and identify new areas for improvement. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into the impact of professional development programs on communication skills and teaching effectiveness over time, helping to refine and enhance these programs based on ongoing feedback and results (Li & Liu, 2019).

This study differentiates itself from existing literature by focusing specifically on the communication challenges tertiary-level English teachers face in the Philippine context. While previous research has explored communication issues in education more broadly (Asemanyi, 2015; Johnson & Smith, 2018), this study provides a detailed examination of the unique challenges encountered by local English instructors. Using a descriptive research design to assess these challenges and propose tailored solutions offers new insights that are not extensively covered in broader educational research.

Additionally, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating technology and collaborative learning initiatives, which are often overlooked in general discussions of educational communication challenges. By focusing on these aspects, the study provides practical recommendations for improving communication skills and teaching effectiveness that are specifically relevant to the Philippine educational context.

Readers of this study will gain valuable insights into the specific communication challenges faced by tertiary-level English teachers in the Philippines and practical recommendations for addressing these issues. The study highlights the need for targeted professional development and institutional support to enhance communication skills among educators. By providing actionable strategies, such as advanced training in digital literacy, collaborative learning initiatives, and the integration of technology, the study offers practical guidance for educators, administrators, and policymakers aiming to improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of ongoing research and evaluation to refine and enhance professional development programs. By adopting a longitudinal approach to assess the impact of these programs, future studies can provide deeper insights into their effectiveness and identify new areas for improvement. This approach ensures that the recommendations remain relevant and effective in addressing the evolving needs of educators and students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design to explore communication challenges faced by tertiary-level English instructors in San Carlos City, Pangasinan, Philippines. Descriptive research, as noted by Neuman (2014), is a quantitative approach that aims to observe and document characteristics of a sample or population without manipulation, focusing on specific variables and providing a clear view of existing conditions. Through this design, the study thoroughly examined the extent of communication issues among English instructors, alongside their demographic profiles, including age, gender, and educational attainment, to better understand how these factors may influence communication challenges.

Sampling and Participants

The respondents for this study included are 22 English teachers from Virgen Milagrosa University, San Carlos College, Binalatongan Community College, Palaris College, Philippine Institute for Maritime Studies and Technology and Pangasinan State University in San Carlos City, Pangasinan, Philippines. Purposive sampling and total enumeration methods were used to select the participants. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to target the most relevant groups to the study, while total enumeration ensured that all eligible respondents were included in the sample. This approach provided a comprehensive view of the communication challenges experienced by English instructors across different educational institutions.

Data Collection

The researcher personally administered questionnaires to the selected respondents. This direct approach ensured the questionnaires were properly distributed and completed, minimizing the risk of incomplete or inaccurate responses. To maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the data, the researcher ensured that all responses were collected and handled with high confidentiality.

Before distributing the questionnaires, the researcher obtained permission from the Heads of Colleges and Universities. This formal approval was essential to ensure the data collection process adhered to institutional policies and guidelines.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, it was organized and entered into Microsoft Excel for initial processing. Statistical analysis was then conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to address the first research problem, which focused on the profile of English instructors. These statistics helped to summarize and describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, and highest educational attainment.

The average weighted mean was employed to analyze the degree of communication challenges encountered by English instructors. This method provided a measure of central tendency for the responses, indicating the overall severity of the communication problems faced by the instructors. The average weighted mean allowed for an assessment of various aspects of communication skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. The researcher ensured that all data collection activities were conducted respecting participants' privacy and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose and rights as participants. Additionally, the data collected was stored securely and used solely for this study.

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

The profile of the respondents indicates that a notable portion, specifically 41.20%, are aged 25 years and below, highlighting that many English instructors are relatively young professionals in their field. This age distribution is consistent with the findings of Gogoi (2015), who pointed out that younger teachers often encounter unique challenges and opportunities in honing their communication skills, largely due to their limited experience compared to older, more seasoned educators.

In terms of gender representation, the results reveal that 70.60% of the English instructors are female. This gender disparity is in line with broader trends within the education sector, where women typically hold a more significant presence in teaching roles, especially in primary and secondary education (Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2018). The predominance of female instructors may have implications for classroom dynamics and communication styles, presenting an area ripe for further investigation.

When examining educational attainment, 41.20% of the instructors possess Bachelor's Degrees with Master's Degree units, while 23.50% hold only a Bachelor's Degree. This variation in qualifications suggests a diverse educational background among the respondents, with many either holding advanced degrees or actively pursuing further studies. This observation correlates with the research by Asemanyi (2015), which emphasized that higher educational attainment often leads to a better grasp of teaching methodologies and enhanced professional skills, thereby potentially improving teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

The study assessed various aspects of communication skills among English instructors, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The results showed that these challenges are moderately encountered, indicating a significant area for improvement.

Table 1. Identified Problems and Solutions

Identified Problem	Interpretation	Proposed Solution	Implications
Mispronunciation in Reading and Speaking	Instructors struggle with correct pronunciation, leading to communication barriers in the classroom.	Provide targeted pronunciation training through workshops and access to pronunciation dictionaries and online tools.	Improved pronunciation will enhance classroom communication and student comprehension.

Lack of Vocabulary in Writing and Reading	Limited vocabulary affects instructors' ability to convey complex ideas effectively and support student learning.	Implement vocabulary-building exercises and integrate vocabulary development into professional development programs.	Enhanced vocabulary will lead to clearer communication, better teaching, and improved student outcomes.
Grammatical Incompetence in Writing	Instructors face challenges with grammar, affecting the quality of written communication and instruction.	Offer grammar-focused professional development and encourage using grammar-checking tools in writing tasks.	Improved grammatical skills will result in higher-quality teaching materials and better student understanding.
Emotional Barriers in Speaking	Emotional issues such as anxiety or lack of confidence hinder effective verbal communication in the classroom.	Provide training on managing emotional barriers, including confidence-building exercises and stress management.	Reduced emotional barriers will lead to more confident and effective communication in the classroom.
Distractions and Noise in Listening	Environmental and internal distractions impede instructors' ability to listen attentively to students.	Enhance classroom management techniques and provide training on creating a conducive listening environment.	Better listening skills will improve classroom management and student engagement.

The study identifies several key challenges in communication skills that English instructors encounter, which are moderately prevalent across the four main areas of communication: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The average weighted means for these areas indicate that the instructors face moderate difficulties, which, if left unaddressed, could hinder their effectiveness as educators.

Reading Challenges

The most significant challenge in reading identified in the study is mispronunciation, which has an average weighted mean of 2.71, categorizing it as moderately encountered. Mispronunciation can significantly affect students' comprehension and learning, as it may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the material being taught. The importance of pronunciation in effective communication is well-documented in the literature. For example, the "Communication Skills for Teachers" (CST) course, part of the Language Enhancement and Academic Discourse Skills (LEADS) program, emphasizes the need for teachers to develop strong pronunciation skills to ensure clarity in communication (PGDE Handbook). The study's findings suggest that there is a need for targeted interventions to improve pronunciation among English instructors, such as workshops or access to online pronunciation tools.

Writing Challenges

In writing, the most pressing challenges are the lack of vocabulary and grammatical incompetence, both of which have an average weighted mean of 2.71. These issues are critical because they directly impact the clarity and effectiveness of written communication, which is essential for teaching and professional tasks such as preparing lesson plans and communicating with colleagues. Research by Brown and Jones (2017) highlights the detrimental effects of limited vocabulary on academic performance and professional communication, which supports the study's findings. Similarly, Garcia

and Martinez (2020) emphasize the correlation between grammatical incompetence and writing proficiency, noting that poor grammar can lead to confusion and reduce teaching effectiveness. The study's results underline the need for ongoing professional development focused on vocabulary and grammar to enhance instructors' writing skills.

Speaking Challenges

In the context of speaking, the primary challenges identified include mispronunciation, emotional barriers, and distractions, with average weighted means ranging from 2.65 to 2.71. These challenges are particularly significant, as effective verbal communication is crucial for delivering lessons, engaging students, and managing the classroom environment. Emotional barriers, such as anxiety and lack of confidence, can severely hinder an instructor's ability to communicate effectively. Research by Smith and Jones (2019) demonstrates that teachers who can manage emotional barriers and cultivate confidence in their speaking abilities are better positioned to engage students and create a positive learning atmosphere. The findings of this study suggest that implementing interventions such as confidence-building exercises and training focused on overcoming emotional barriers could enhance the speaking skills of instructors, ultimately benefiting the overall educational experience.

Listening Challenges

Listening challenges, such as distractions, noise, and interruptions, are also moderately encountered, with average weighted means of 2.70 and higher. Effective listening is essential for understanding students' needs, responding appropriately, and fostering a positive classroom atmosphere. The literature underscores the importance of listening in teaching, with Richards (2010) and Brown and Jones (2017) confirming that active listening can significantly enhance classroom management and student achievement. Furthermore, Goh and Kwang (2016) and Garcia and Martinez (2020) emphasize that attentive listening enables teachers to tailor their instruction to better meet students' needs. The findings of this study indicate that improving classroom management techniques and creating a conducive listening environment are critical steps in addressing these challenges.

Implications and Solutions

The study's findings have several important implications for the professional development of English instructors and the overall quality of education in San Carlos City, Pangasinan, Philippines. Addressing the communication challenges is crucial for improving teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. This aligns with the findings of Gray-Grant (2016), who discusses the evolution of writing skills over time, highlighting the importance of continuous development and adaptation in teaching practices to enhance educational outcomes.

Professional Development

The study highlights the need for targeted professional development programs focusing on the identified communication challenges. These programs should include workshops on pronunciation, vocabulary-building exercises, grammar-focused instruction, and strategies for managing emotional barriers and distractions. Providing instructors with ongoing access to online tools and resources, such as pronunciation dictionaries and grammar checkers, could also be beneficial. Additionally, incorporating collaborative learning initiatives, where instructors can share best practices and support each other in overcoming communication challenges, could further enhance the effectiveness of these programs.

Curriculum and Instruction

The findings suggest a need to integrate communication skills development more explicitly into the curriculum for English instructors. This could involve revising the curriculum to include more practical, hands-on activities that focus on improving pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and listening skills. Additionally, incorporating technology into teaching, such as using digital tools for language learning, could help address some of the challenges identified. Future studies should examine the impact of these tools on instructors' communication skills and overall teaching effectiveness.

Institutional Support

Institutional policies should support the ongoing professional development of instructors by allocating resources for further studies and continuous training. This could include providing funding for instructors to attend workshops and conferences and creating opportunities for them to pursue advanced degrees or certifications in language teaching. Additionally, institutions should consider implementing regular assessments of instructors' communication skills to identify areas for improvement and ensure that professional development efforts effectively address the challenges identified.

Future Research

The study's findings suggest several areas for future research. For example, future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach to assess the effectiveness of the recommended interventions over time. Additionally, research could explore the impact of gender on communication challenges and the influence of cultural and regional factors on pronunciation and other aspects of communication. Further studies could also investigate the relationship between instructors' communication skills and student outcomes, to better understand the impact of these skills on teaching effectiveness and learning.

Table 2. Action Plan to Implement the Solution

Identified Problem	Action Plan	Responsible Person	Timelines	Deliverables	Outcomes
Mispronunciation in Reading and Speaking	1. Conduct pronunciation workshops.	Department Head,	1-2 months	Workshop materials	Improved pronunciation skills,
	2. Provide access to online pronunciation tools.	Language Experts	Continuous access to tools	Access to pronunciation dictionaries and online tools	leading to clearer communication in the classroom.
Lack of Vocabulary in Writing and Reading	1. Develop and implement vocabulary-building exercises.	English Faculty Coordinator	2-3 months	Vocabulary exercises	Enhanced vocabulary,
	2. Integrate vocabulary development in PD programs.	Professional Development (PD) Team	Ongoing	Updated PD curriculum with vocabulary focus	leading to improved clarity in teaching and communication.
Grammatical Incompetence in Writing	1. Organize grammar-focused workshops.	English Faculty Coordinator	2-3 months	Workshop materials	Improved grammar in teaching materials,
	2. Promote the use of grammar-checking tools in writing tasks.	Professional Development Team		List of recommended grammar tools	leading to better student comprehension.

Emotional Barriers in Speaking	1. Provide training on managing emotional barriers.	Guidance Counselor	1-2 months	Training sessions	Reduced emotional barriers,
	2. Conduct confidence-building exercises.	Professional Development Team		Confidence-building exercises	lead to more effective verbal communication in the classroom.
Distractions and Noise in Listening	1. Enhance classroom management techniques.	Classroom Management Specialist	1-2 months	Training modules	Improved listening environment,
	2. Train instructors on creating a conducive listening environment.	Professional Development Team		Techniques for minimizing distractions	leading to better classroom management and student engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the communication challenges faced by English instructors at the tertiary level in San Carlos City, Pangasinan, Philippines. The findings highlight the need for targeted professional development programs that address specific reading, writing, speaking, and listening challenges. Institutions can improve teaching effectiveness and enhance student outcomes by providing instructors with the tools and support they need to overcome these challenges. The study also underscores the importance of ongoing research and assessment to ensure that professional development efforts are effectively addressing the needs of instructors and students alike. Through a comprehensive approach that includes professional development, curriculum enhancement, and institutional support, the communication skills of English instructors can be significantly improved, leading to better educational outcomes for all.

Several key recommendations are proposed to address the communication challenges English instructors face at the tertiary level in San Carlos City, Pangasinan, Philippines. These recommendations aim to enhance the overall teaching effectiveness of instructors, improve student outcomes, and foster a more supportive educational environment.

Implementation of Targeted Professional Development Programs

The study highlights the need for ongoing professional development specifically tailored to address the communication challenges identified. Institutions should organize workshops and training sessions to improve pronunciation, expand vocabulary, enhance grammar skills, and strengthen listening abilities. These programs should be designed to provide practical, hands-on experience, enabling instructors to apply what they learn directly in the classroom. Additionally, incorporating training on managing emotional barriers and building confidence in public speaking can help instructors overcome anxiety and other obstacles that hinder effective communication.

Incorporation of Technology in Language Instruction

Leveraging technology can play a significant role in overcoming communication challenges. Institutions should encourage using digital tools, such as pronunciation software, online grammar checkers, and vocabulary-building apps, to support instructors in their professional development. Additionally, integrating these tools into the curriculum can help instructors and students alike to develop stronger communication skills. Online platforms that facilitate peer collaboration and feedback can also be beneficial, allowing instructors to learn from each other and share best practices.

Curriculum Revision and Enhancement

To address the gaps in communication skills, it is recommended that institutions revise the curriculum so that English instructors place greater emphasis on practical communication exercises. This could include more opportunities for instructors to engage in role-playing, peer teaching, and other interactive activities focusing on real-world communication scenarios. The curriculum should also integrate lessons on the importance of audience awareness, context, and purpose in communication, helping instructors tailor their communication strategies to different classroom situations.

Strengthening Institutional Support for Professional Development

Institutions should demonstrate their commitment to enhancing instructors' communication skills by providing the necessary resources and support for professional development. This includes allocating funding for instructors to attend external workshops, conferences, and advanced studies related to language teaching and communication. Institutions should also consider establishing a mentorship program where experienced instructors can guide and support their less experienced colleagues in developing their communication skills.

Regular Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms

To ensure that the professional development initiatives are effective, institutions should regularly assess instructors' communication skills. This could involve self-assessments, peer evaluations, and student feedback, providing instructors with a comprehensive understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. Institutions should use the results of these assessments to tailor future professional development efforts and to identify emerging challenges that may require additional support.

Encouraging Collaborative Learning and Peer Support

Promoting a culture of collaboration among instructors can significantly enhance their communication skills. Institutions should facilitate opportunities for instructors to work together, share experiences, and provide feedback to one another. Collaborative learning groups, peer observation sessions, and discussion forums can help instructors to learn from each other's successes and challenges, leading to continuous improvement in their communication abilities.

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