Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Competence of Senior High School Students

Ionell Jay R. Terogo, Crismae Amor C. Elimino, John Paulo M. Tallo,
Johanna A. Sacal, and Charles Martin Joseph E. Balahadia
University of San Jose - Recoletos
jay.terogo@usjr.edu.ph

Abstract

This study aims to identify whether the Senior High School students are Linguistically, Discursively, Sociolinguistically or Strategically Competent in English. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collate a survey that would sure mend the study. With comprehensive computation of the random datasets, almost every Senior High School student achieved a satisfactory rating in both the Perceptions and Abilities Categories. A Chi-Square Statistic was also used and yielded maximum values which consequently, resulted to low p-values, suggesting the negation of the study's null hypothesis. The result is further supported using the correlation statistic which corresponds to a high correlation between the students' Perceptions and Abilities in their speaking competence. The outcome of the summary of all competencies shows that the Linguistic Competence contributed the most to the overall language intents of the students with Sociolinguistic competence giving the least, which results in Linguistic Competence being the widely used language competency and sociolinguistic as not often practiced language skill amongst the students. With this, the Senior High School students are far more competent in phonetics, pronunciation, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics rather than on the socio-cultural aspect such as vocabulary, politeness and language style.

Keywords: speaking competence, K to 12 curricula, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence

1.0 Introduction

In the 21st century where English in the Philippines is becoming one of the most widely used languages as a means to communicate, it has become clear that every Filipino graduate should possess the necessary tools to meet global standards, especially in oral communication. As stated by Payne (2006), oral communication is one of the essential parts of everyday life because every conversation has an effect in building one's personal and professional future. With the advent of the Senior High School program in all schools in the Philippines, it is vibrant that from the claim of Payne (2006), speaking competence amongst students must be enriched well. With this, communicative competence must be achieved effectively and efficiently in any authentic setting to utilize the ability of the language as stated by Hymes (1972) and Lasala (2013). Wang (1986) even stressed

out that speaking competence is very significant. Thus it is both the primary and final goal of English language teaching. With the role of societal standards and cultural elements in identifying a person's capability, it is also important for individuals to incorporate the different 21st-century skills to be at par with the standards of today's society. The stated facts, therefore, led to the purposes of this study. The research aims to determine whether the Senior High School students are competent in all the areas of Hymes' communicative competence. Also, the researchers would want to know if the respondents in the 21st-century scale are good speakers and at the same time competent in the language because students in the present generation must possess these qualities to have an edge among other learners.

To explain further, Tongco, as cited by Lasala (2013) stated the fact that despite the teachers' different teaching pedagogies and various ways to relate the language in a real-life set up until today, the communicative competence of the students still poses a challenge. He also pointed out that the best way for the students to acquire and understand the language is through application and making the students feel the improvement of learning regarding communication rather than the mastery of the vocabulary through written exercises. It was even emphasized by Shu and Zhuang (2001) as cited by Jiayan and Jianbin (2010), that the current trends of today encourage intercultural communication with English as the most commonly used medium and so, individuals must have the mastery of the language. Shu and Zhuang (2001) claimed that cross-cultural communicative competence should also be given importance in English language teaching. As a basis of students' acceptable mark in speaking ability, Lasala (2013) used a teacher-made instrument structured from Pastrana (1980) for both written exercise and interview, based

from Pastrana (1980) and Prejoles (1997).

With this, the researchers' aim to know the ways on how the millennial students embrace the various tracks in the 21stcentury was visualized. The goal of identifying the capacity of the students and the extent of the K to 12 curricula toward the four competences of Hymes (1972) cited by Lasala (2013) possessed the challenge of the study. Moreover, as Lasala (2013) pointed out the disparity of the competence of the student's communication under the RBEC (Revised Basic Education Curriculum), strategies and the pedagogies used for the remediation of communicative competence deficiency will no longer apply to the millennial students in the present. To continue, unlike the RBEC (Revised Basic Education Curriculum), the K to 12 curricula introduces new sets of communicative skills training. Thus new sets of strategies are manifested. Since the 21st-century students are no longer under the previous curriculum, the result of the study is expected to be greater.

Also, the researchers considered the changes of the mindset of the students under the K to 12 curricula. Although the existence of the Oral Communication subject in the Senior High School curriculum continues to be helpful to the learners, still the researchers aim to (a) identify the Senior High School students' perception regarding their speaking competence, (b) current speaking competency in terms of Linguistic, Sociolinguistic, Discourse, and Strategic Competences, (c) the strength of the relationships between the students' perceptions of their speaking competence and their current speaking ability and (d) the dominant and weakest speaking competencies.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on Dell Hathaway Hymes' Theory of Communicative Competence cited by Lasala (2013) and got its support from the Components of

Language Competence of Lyle Bachman and the Model of Communicative Competence by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain. It explains that there are four communicative competences that a person must possess to be a competent speaker such as linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic (Hymes 1972, cited by Lasala, 2013). Linguistic competence focuses on phonetics which deals with the knowledge of sound and pronunciation as well as phonology which concerns on the interactions and patterns of sounds. It also involves the ability to form words, known as Morphology; the ability to structure sentences, known as Syntax; and ability to comprehend the meaning of the text, known as Semantics. On the other hand, sociolinguistic competence is the capacity to use and respond to language appropriately. It also includes mastery of socio-cultural code languages such as vocabulary, politeness, and style. Also, discourse competence is knowledge of producing and comprehending oral and written texts in speaking, writing, listening and reading. Furthermore, strategic competence is the ability in recognizing and repairing communication breakdowns such as background noise that hinders communication before, during, or after it overpowers the speaker.

It also explains that Lyle Bachman's Components of Language Competence played a role in Hyme's Theory. Herein, grammatical competence is about the recognition and production of the grammatical structures of a language and textual competence is the knowledge of conversations from the beginning to the end of communication. Also, pragmatic competence focuses on the relationship between what the speaker says in his or her communicative acts and what he or she performs through various utterances (Bachman, 1990). Also, the textual competence of a child and his/her grammatical competence refer to the conscious or unconscious understanding of language (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Indeed, when student's speaking capacity has reached the optimal use for communicative tasks, their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic aspects of language will surely be comprehensible. Also, the students' prior knowledge, contexts, experience, socio-cultural conditions and skills in all areas act together to form part of their language competence (Vallejo & Martinez, 2011; Nuñez Franco, 2011). With this, one must

> *know how to use the language in an actual performance of communication. Individuals must not only know the language but also use it in an actual setting because learning without application is still not learning* (Canale and Swain, cited in Ohno, 2011).

Communicative competency in the area of speaking is known as the goal of every classroom. To entice the students to participate in oral communication activities, one must let the students realize the importance and significance of the activity (Brown, 1994). Moreover, authentic tasks should be employed for the students to appreciate the relevance of the activities for their future use and to emphasize the various classroom settings and strategies that should be used to serve a variation of strategies depending on students' need (Lasala, 2013). About this, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991) made mention of an outlook towards strategic competence, wherein a person must realize the importance of repairing communication breakdowns. Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980, p.30) emphasized that "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are required to compensate communication breakdowns due to performance aspects or too incapable competency." Herein, a lack of strategic competence affects the situations of students who get stuck on the inability of repairing

communicative intent. Moreover, Mede and Dikilitas (2015) claimed that sociolinguistic competence played a great role in communicative competence, thus involves pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge as well as the ability to use the language linguistically and socially, regardless of the knowledge of code used in a country. These concepts are presented below:
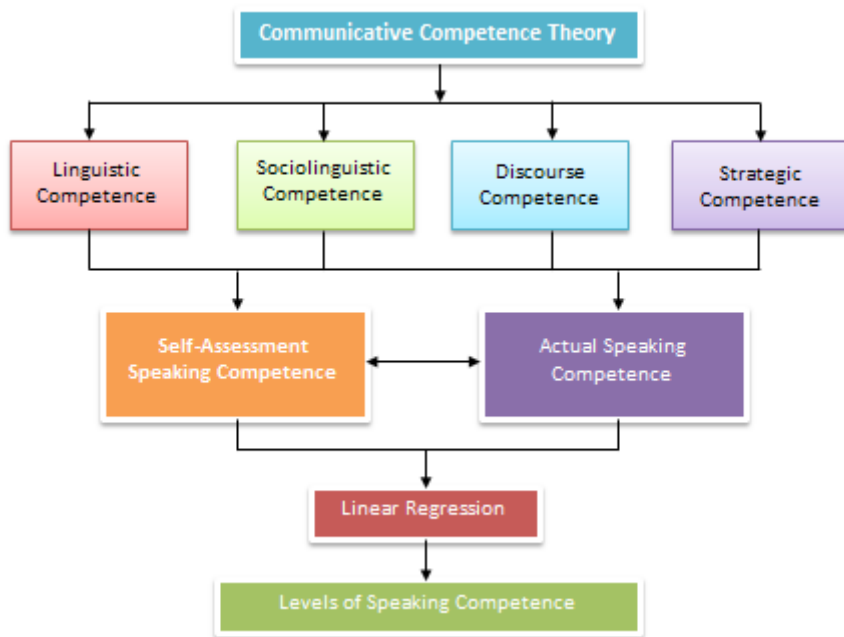

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework Diagram*

3.0 Research Design and Method

The study utilized both the quantitative and qualitative survey methods wherein, a survey questionnaire assessing the selected two hundred eighty-two students in Senior High School department was used. The survey questionnaire involved answering of self-assessment survey on the students' speaking competence based on their perception and the assessment of their actual speaking ability through an impromptu speaking activity, graded using a rubric validated by an expert. Using the formula of Cronbach alpha, the survey questionnaire was tested to be valid and reliable for actual data gathering.

The research involved Senior High School students under the strands of ABM (Accountancy, Business, and Management), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) and TVL (Technical Vocational Track).

Table 1. *Research Repondents*

SHS Strands	Population	Percentage
HUMSS	70	24.82%
STEM	117	41.49%
TVL	13	4.61%
ABM	82	29.08%
Total	**282**	**100%**

Table 1 above shows the random sampling of the respondents. Because they were the first absorbers of the K-12 program under the Senior High School Department, they were chosen as the respondents.

To determine the students' speaking competence based on their perception, the researchers utilized the weighted mean formula. To determine the students' actual speaking capability, the researchers used the chi- square method. To determine the strengths of the students' speaking capacity based on their perception and actual speaking skill, the researchers use linear regression. Pearson's correlation formula was also used in determining the correlation.

The researchers, hence, assumed that there is no significant correlation between students' speaking competence and their perceptions about their oral speaking competence. Another assumption is that there is no dominant or subservient speaking competence. This led the researchers to conduct the study objectively.

4.0 Results and Discussion

With the computation of random datasets, Table 2 to 5 show the Weighted Mean calculation and interpretation of the Senior High School students' perception of their speaking competence in each category.

Table 2. Weighted Mean on Linguistic Competence

Indicators	Weighted Mean (WM)	Interpretation
1. extensive vocabulary	2.81	Satisfactory
2. rules of grammar	2.96	Satisfactory
3. sentence construction	3.08	Satisfactory
4. pronunciation	3.10	Satisfactory
5. word meanings	2.91	Satisfactory
6. analyze word structure	2.81	Satisfactory
7. understand word meanings	3.07	Satisfactory
8. keen in detecting grammatical errors	2.98	Satisfactory
9. word choice	2.90	Satisfactory
10. actualize ideas	2.96	Satisfactory
General Weighted Mean	**2.96**	**Satisfactory**

Table 2 above shows the result of the Senior High School students' current speaking regarding Linguistic Competence as satisfactory. It displays that the lowest weighted mean is 2.81, under extensive vocabulary and word structure analysis, while the highest weighted mean is 3.10 under pronunciation. The result means that the Senior High School students have an extensive vocabulary and have the ability to analyze word structures. However, they are not so equipped in pronunciation. It implies that the Senior High School students are more exposed to oral/recitations rather than written exercises, making their word structure analysis to be not that

extensive. This outcome agreed to the Linguistic competence of Hymes (1972), cited by Lasala (2013), wherein extensive knowledge must have to be accomplished in sound, pronunciation and sentence structure.

Table 3. *Weighted Mean on Sociolinguistic Competence*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. decode colloquial language	2.67	Satisfactory
2. extensive informal language knowledge	2.64	Satisfactory
3. adapting to cultural barriers	2.91	Satisfactory
4. awareness of other culture's taboos	2.77	Satisfactory
5. proper usage of political terms	2.50	Fair
6. expression of attitude in conversation	3.06	Satisfactory
7. polite communicate to foreigners	3.17	Satisfactory
8. knowledge of sociocultural code	2.66	Satisfactory
9. knowledge of sociocultural language of other countries	2.46	Fair
10. adjustments on social language norms	2.77	Satisfactory
General Weighted Mean	**2.76**	**Satisfactory**

Table 3 above shows the current level of the Senior High School Students' Sociolinguistic Competence. It does infer that proper usage of political terms and knowledge on the sociocultural code of other countries achieve fair interpretation. The lowest weighted mean is knowledge on the sociocultural language of other realms with a weighted mean of 2.46. The highest weighted mean is 3.17 under the politeness to communicate with foreigners. The result shows that in the interaction with non-nationals is where the Senior High School Students perform best and the trait to be improved is to know the code of other countries regarding their society. It implies that because the Senior High School students do not have academic subjects on knowing the other country's languages, they are not that equipped with the background of other country's language code. It also implies that the politeness of Filipinos makes the Senior High School students attain satisfactory rate in communication to foreigners. This result is negated by a study of Mede and Dikilitas (2015) wherein learning pragmatic languages, not of too much-required knowledge on sociocultural code, must be used linguistically and socially appropriately.

Table 4. *Weighted Mean on Discourse Competence*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. produce impromptu	2.81	Satisfactory
2. explain and retell situations	2.96	Satisfactory
3. comprehend oral texts	3.08	Satisfactory

4. create and manage conversations	3.10	Satisfactory
5. distinct accent	2.91	Satisfactory
6. understand written texts	2.81	Satisfactory
7. pick out crucial details	3.07	Satisfactory
8. speak clearly and confidently	2.98	Satisfactory
9. free of filler expressions	2.90	Satisfactory
10. free of speech alterations	2.96	Satisfactory
General Weighted Mean	**2.96**	**Satisfactory**

Table 4 shows the current level of the Senior High School Students' Discourse Competence. The lowest weighted mean falls under impromptu speaking and reading comprehension with ratings of 2.81, while the highest falls under creating and managing conversations with a mark of 3.10. The result means that the students are more skilled and capable in the field of starting and managing the interaction with other individuals while producing of on-the-spot speeches are to be improved.

It implies that the Senior High School students are trained to manage how to start and end conversations during class collaborations, yet they are not that exposed in answering individually due to fear of committing mistakes. The results support Canale and Swain (1980) theory wherein one must know how to use their knowledge on an area through actual performance of communication using the language well and not mainly knowing about it. Speakers must be more attuned with understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the language because learning without application is still not learning.

Table 5. *Weighted Mean on Strategic Competence*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. cope with communication problems	2.74	Satisfactory
2. repair and restore interrupted communication	2.79	Satisfactory
3. keep communication channel	2.95	Satisfactory
4. communication breakdown awareness	3.15	Satisfactory
5. focus on conversation	2.96	Satisfactory
6. maintain train thoughts	2.79	Satisfactory
7. keep communication channel open	2.85	Satisfactory
8. respond to multiple listeners	2.68	Satisfactory
9. repairing communication	2.66	Satisfactory
10. stay away from places with communication breakdown	2.96	Satisfactory
General Weighted Mean	2.85	Satisfactory

Table 5 above shows the current level of the Senior High School Students' Strategic Competence. The lowest weighted mean falls under the skill of repairing communication with the rating of 2.66, while the highest falls under the knowledge of the different communication breakdowns with 3.15 rating. The result shows that the students are only limited to knowing what the communication breakdowns are (e.g. noise, distractions, etc.) without knowing how to deal with these hindrances. It implies that the students are exposed to conducive learning environments, thus only knew the communication breakdowns and not on repairing them because they were not exposed to a noisy classroom. The results agreed to Canale and Swain's strategic competence wherein without the presence of strategic ability, students with strong knowledge of grammar and wide range of vocabulary, get trapped and paralyzed with communicative intent.

Table 6. *Chi-Square Statistic*

Categories	Chi-Square Statistic	P-Value
Linguistic Competence	51.418	Less than 0.00001
Sociolinguistic Competence	116.33	Less than 0.00001
Discourse Competence	85.801	Less than 0.00001
Strategic Competence	73.887	Less than 0.00001

Table 6 above shows the chi-square statistic for every competence. Linguistic Competence category attained 51.418 chi-square statistic being the highest and Sociolinguistic Competence attained 116.33 being the lowest. The result leads to the rejection of the proposed Null Hypothesis which states that both the perceptions of students in their ability to communicate and own communicative competence are not interrelated.

Table 7. *Correlation between Perceptions and Abilities*

Variables	Df	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	R	Computed t-value	Critical Value	Decision	Interpretation
Perceptions	281	282	28.44	5.39	0.98	1.972	0.4265	Accept	There is a correlation between students' perceptions and abilities.
Abilities	281	282	11.53	2.59	0.98				

Table 7 above shows the average scores of all students in all four competencies with X representing the students' perceptions towards their communicative abilities and Y representing the students' innate communicative capacities. The data gathered yielded a correlation value of

0.978143 which when interpreted, gives out a high correlation between Perceptions and Abilities. The outcome implies that the Senior High School students were trained well to speak the language and were introduced to competent teachers. This reality led their perception on their speaking competence as highly correlated to their actual speaking competency. The result agreed on Lyle Bachman's Components of Language Competence; wherein there is relationship between what a speaker says towards his or her communicative acts and his or her performance through his utterances.

Table 8. *Summary of all Competencies using Regression Analysis*

The regression equation is
Speaking Abilities = 2.17 + 0.151 Linguistic Competence
+ 0.041 Sociolinguistic Competence - 0.056 Discourse Competence
+ 0.110 Strategic competence

Predictor	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	2.1652	0.2072	10.45	0.000
Linguist	0.15108	0.09650	1.57	0.119
Sociolin	0.0408	0.1039	0.39	0.695
Discours	-0.0557	0.1137	-0.49	0.625
Strategi	0.1102	0.1187	0.93	0.354

S = 0.5633   R-Sq = 14.3%   R-Sq(adj) = 12.9%

Table 8 above shows the summary of all the calculated average of the four competencies. It also presents that the students' perception of their speaking competency contributed 14.3% to their level of proficiency namely, linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic.

After synthesizing all results, it is imperative to discuss that the majority of the Senior High School Students both in the Perceptions and Abilities categories acquired a satisfactory rating in all four competencies with only a few with a fair rating. Also, the students' perceptions of their abilities contributed 14.3% to their actual innate skills in all four competencies. However, while the respondents lean most to their linguistic competence and least to their sociolinguistic competence, it makes little

difference to label their most refined skill or their least. The result is because of the fact that it yielded to a few difference amongst the four competencies with all four ranging around the 39-42 margins. The margin scale means that all respondents are more or less equally skilled in the four Communicative Competences of Dell Hathaway Hymes.

5.0 Conclusion

With the advent of the 21st century, English has become one of the core standards. With this truth, it has become clear that communicative proficiency in English is an essential skill to become a globally competitive individual. In the case of the Philippines, students have been shown to gain exceptional grades in the English subject,

but when asked to exhibit their actual abilities, they fall short of what was expected of them. The information is mostly seen in the students of the old curriculum namely the RBEC (Revised Basic Education Curriculum) and most probably even the ones before that. But with the K-12 curriculum that focuses on fixing that problem by allowing students to be more active in class through various constructivist, collaborative, and integrative activities, the students of today have shown to be more open and well-versed in the English language. From the results that were gathered, calculated, and interpreted, it was affirmed that there is a definite relationship between a student's perceptions of his communicative competence and his actual communicative competence.

Furthermore, results show that linguistic competence has the highest rating, making it the most widely used language ability amongst the respondents, with sociolinguistic competence coming in as not practiced often. Senior High School students have learned how to deal on English grammar and word meaning all throughout their school life. They can speak and pronounce words well and even deliver the lines with better understanding. However, they do not have much knowledge of other countries' language code, making it difficult to communicate to foreigners of various kinds. This outcome tells us that the school's English program is doing an exceptional job in enhancing the students' linguistically, but falls short in the sociolinguistic department. Therefore, it was suggested and imposed that improvement in the program concerning sociolinguistic competence must continue.

References

Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Regents.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, *1*(1), 1-47.

Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1991). Strategic competence and how to teach it. *ELT Journal, 45*(1), 16-23. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/45.1.16

Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In Pride, J. B., & Holmes, J. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected reading* (pp. 269-293). Baltimore, USA: Penguin Education, Penguin Books Ltd.

Jiayan G., & Jianbin H. (2010). On communicative competence in curriculum design: A comparison of the college english curriculum requirements and the english curriculum standards. *Polyglossia International Journal, 18*, 73-86.

Lasala, C.N. (2013). Communicative competence of secondary senior students: *Language instructional pocket. Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 134*, 226-237. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/document/355014624/Communicative-

Competence-of-Secondary-Senior-Students-Language-Instructional-Pocket-pdf

Mede, E., & Dikilitas, K. (2015). Teaching and learning sociolinguistic competence: Teachers' critical perceptions. *Participatory Educational Research, 2*(3), 14-31. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28324598 5_Teaching_and_Learning_Sociolinguistic_ Competence_Teachers'_Critical_Perceptions

Nuñez Franco, Y. (2011). *Constructing social interaction by enhancing the communicative competence through authentic tasks at IED La Belleza-Los Libertadores.* (Master's thesis, Universidad Distrital Francisco Jose de Caldas). Retrieved from http://repository. udistrital.edu.co/bitstream/11349/2318/1/ Nu%C3%B1ezFrancoYised2015%20.pdf

Ohno, A. (2011). *Communicative competence and communicative language teaching.* Retrieved last, December 2, 2011 from http://cicero.u-bunkyo.ac.jp/lib/kiyo/ fsell2002/25-32.pdf

Pastrana, C. (1980). *Determinants of linguistics and communicative competence of second language learners of english in the University of thePhilippines Integrated School* (Doctoral thesis, University of the Philippines). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.ne t/publication/263281846_Communicative_ Competence_of_Secondary_Senior_ Students_Language_Instructional_Pocket

Payne, T. (2006). *Exploring language structure: A student's guide.* Cambridge University Press: London.

Prejoles, Corazon A. (1997). *The oral discourse proficiency of the lower level 12 students in English* (Master's thesis, Cebu Normal University). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263281846_ Communicative_Competence_of_ Secondary_Senior_Students_Language_ Instructional_Pocket

Shu, D. F. & Zhuang, Z. X. (1996). *Modern language teaching theory, practice and methods.* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Vallejo, G. M. & Martínez M. J. (2011). Tarea y competenciacomunicativas:reflexionesdes deungrupo focal (Communicative task and competence: Reflections from a focal group). *Íkala, 16*(28), 161-197.

Wang, D. (1986). Optimal language learning based on the comprehension-production distinction. In Brumfit, C. (Ed.), *The practice of communicative teaching* (pp. 99-122). Oxford: The British Council &Pergamon Press.