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English Language Communicative Competence and Learning Engagement of Senior High School Learners: Basis For Language Instructional Pocket

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Abstract: The aim of the current study is to assess the English language communicative competence and learning engagement of senior high school learners in selected Private Senior High School in the Schools Division of City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Descriptive evaluation research was utilized to evaluate the influence, impact, or results of any practice, policy, or program. The respondents of the study were purposively selected which comprised fifty (50) students and five (5) teachers that are teaching English language in selected private schools in the City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. The researchers used the structured questionnaire which was a researcher-made instrument with 5-Likert scale survey. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that the level of English language communicative competence as assessed by teachers and learners was very satisfactory. On the other hand, the level of English language communicative competence of the learner in terms of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence have



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no significant difference. However, that strategic competence significantly differed when the teacher and learners assess it. In a way, the learners' engagement was highly engaged in the English language communication as described in the three indicators of learners' engagement. More than, that there is high positive correlation between English language communicative competence and learning engagement in the English language communication. Moreover, the learners' shows highly encountered challenge in English language communication. Based on the foregoing conclusion, it is recommended that the module created by the researchers be used in their English classes since the topics included in the module were relevant to the actual findings. It is important for the different school administrators to ensure that the teachers are able to carry out the suggested topics included in the module.

Keywords: English language communicative competence, learning engagement, language instructional pocket, senior high school learners

Introduction

The English language is no longer limited to a linguistic and cultural phenomenon but a socio-political reality. English is also known as the language of information and international affairs (Andrew, 2017). In education, factors such as globalization and internalization of education and the desire to compete internationally have given rise to the growth of the English language in higher education worldwide (Gill & Kirkpatrick, 2013).

The Philippines is recognized globally as one of the largest English-speaking nations with majority of its population having at least some degree of fluency in the language. English has always been one of the official languages of the Philippines and is spoken by more than 14 million Filipinos. It is the language of commerce and law, as well as the primary medium of instruction in education. English is considered the "prima lingua" of the world. Learning and mastering this language provides a myriad of employment opportunities for learners, as English is considered a stepping stone to a better life.

In addition, the key stakeholders from the government, academe, private, and non-government sectors acknowledged that even if the Philippines is doing fine in terms of English competency, concerns on how much of a competitive advantage it still is for the country were raised. The stakeholders agreed that the country needs to step up its efforts in improving the teaching and learning of English, developing it as a vital skill of the workforce (Cabigon, 2015).



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More so, every language classroom has traditionally aimed for communicative competence, with instructions focusing on organizational, pragmatic, systematic, and psychomotor components. Authentic language and real-world tasks enable learners to see the relevance of classroom activity to their long term communicative goals by introducing natural texts rather than artificial ones where students will more readily dive in to the activity and that these communicative goals are best attained if enough attention is given to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to realistic language and contexts and to how these students' apply the learning in real life situations.

Connectedly, that learners would benefit from this strategic investment in learning the target language. Thinking on the ways and means of improving the learner's ability in the language and is directly involved in their own learning process. However, it is important to understand that the strategies used in each situation will vary from learner to learner in solving the problems and tasks that he is tasked with.

It is in this situation that English classes aim to enhance student's ability to use English effectively and accurately during communication. Nevertheless, despite of the efforts of schools and teachers, there are still students who fail to become fluent and accurate in the use of English language despite the many years of study.

The decrease in the ability of students to use English language has become prevalent not only in tertiary level, more so in secondary level. In fact, results of national examinations done by Department of Education through the Bureau of Educational Assessment (BEA) had shown the learners' decadence in English. Relatively, in PISA 2018 results of reading literacy, 15-year-olds learners in Philippines score 340 points compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries. Relatively, in PISA 2018 results of reading literacy, 15-year-olds learners in Philippines perform better than with a difference of 27 points (OECD average: 30 points higher for girls). From this, the mean score in reading performance is one of the lowest among PISA-participating countries and economies.

Learners' engagement in class are said to be affected by their ability to express their ideas. Hence, learners' engagement to the learning process has something to do with his or her ability to take part in classroom activities and classroom discussions. To some extent, participation and engagement mirror their attention given to the classes, their feelings about school, and their understanding about their own learning.

The dilemma in distance learning that English teachers usually encounter is the inability of students to express their ideas using English language. Thus, it hampers their engagement to class discussion and might lead to their disengagement to the subject.

One of the noble functions of a teacher is to ensure that his or her learners have an interest to learn and that they engage in school activities. Their role is to create a



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conducive classroom environment and a school environment which will persuade learners to engage and be involved in the processes, experiences and activities of learning even in the remote learning. The learners' pleasant experiences in school is said to affect their engagement in school. Moreover, parents and families influence the participation of their children in schools. They inspire their child to become or remain involved and engaged in class and school activities, assisting and monitoring the homework and progress of their children.

However, the effect of English language communicative competence to high school students in the learner's engagement during the distance learning particularly English subjects is yet unexplored. There has a little, if none, study and discussion tackling the association of learners' English language communicative competence and their engagement in the remote learning. It is due to this premise that the researchers investigated on the relationship of English language communicative competence of Senior High School learners and their learning engagement in the remote learning. The results of the study will be basis in crafting a language instructional pocket for remote learners.

Action Research Questions

This study evaluates the senior high school learners' English language communicative competence in selected Private Senior High School in the Schools Division of City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan which serves as basis for crafting a language instructional pocket that can be used as learning resource material.

1. What is the respondents' level of English language communicative competence as assessed by teachers and learners themselves in terms of:
 - 1.1 Linguistic Competence
 - 1.2 Sociolinguistic Competence
 - 1.3 Discourse Competence
 - 1.4 Strategic Competence?
2. Is there significant difference in the assessment of the two groups of respondents on the level of English language communicative competence of the learners-respondents?
3. What is the respondent's level of learning engagement in the English language communication in terms of:
 - 3.1 Affective
 - 3.2 Behavioral
 - 3.3 Cognitive?



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4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of English language communicative competence and level of learning engagement of the learners-respondents?
5. What are the challenges encountered by the learner respondents in English language communication?
 - 5.1 Students' affective factors
 - 5.2 Linguistically-related factors
 - 5.3 Sociocultural factors
6. How may the findings of the study be utilized in crafting a language instructional pocket for learners?

Methods

This study employed the descriptive research design to evaluate the senior high school learners' English language communicative competence in selected private school in City of San Jose del Monte Bulacan which serves as basis for crafting a language instructional pocket that can be used as learning resource material. From this, descriptive evaluation research was utilized to evaluate the influence, impact, or results of any practice, policy, or program (Samosa, 2020). Data is collected using this research method in order to answer inquiries concerning the study subject's state. Its goal is to describe the nature of the situation as it existed at the time of the research, as well as to investigate the reasons for the phenomenon. Furthermore, in order to discover new truths, the descriptive study approach focuses on the current situation (what it is). Descriptive research is useful for three reasons: (1) it provides data on which to make scientific conclusions; (2) it transmits fundamental knowledge about the nature of objects and people; and (3) it allows for more detailed observations on three activities, behaviors, methods, and procedures.

The respondents of this study were fifty (50) students and five (5) teachers that are teaching English language in selected private schools in the City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. The respondents were purposively selected.

The questionnaire was the main tool used in this study in gathering data needed. This questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of series of items for the purpose of gathering information from the respondents. The researchers used the structured questionnaire which was a researcher made instrument with 5- Likert scale survey formulated based on literature and studies.

The indicators used in this study were carefully chosen and improved after several consultations, discussions and validations. Important points were chosen that could necessarily represent the essence, substance, and intention of the study. Upon consideration of suggestions and recommendations given on validation of the



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instrument, misleading questions were modified as well. The researcher then presented the final draft of the instrument to the thesis adviser and the three language experts for finalization and approval. After which, the researcher conducted a dry run or trial among thirty (30) learners for the validation using Cronbach alpha test of validity and reliability. All noted discrepancies or vague statement on the instrument were integrated and incorporated in the finalization of the instrument.

The instruments composed of three (3) parts:

Part I, are a series of statements about respondents' level of English language communicative competence specially under linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. More so, the computed Cronbach alpha test of validity and reliability was 0.87.

Part II, focused on the respondents' level of learning engagement in the English language communication in affective, behavioral and cognitive manner. Moreover, the computed Cronbach alpha test of validity and reliability was 0.85.

Part III, dealt with the challenges that the respondents encountered under affective, linguistic and sociocultural factors in English language communication. Likewise, the computed Cronbach alpha test of validity and reliability was 0.89.

In conducting the research study, the researchers employed the following steps: First, a letter asking for permission to conduct research was sent to the Dean of College of Education and Vice President for Academic Affair & Research. Second, the School Principal and Teachers were given a copy of the endorsement from the Dean of College of Education and Vice President for Academic Affair & Research and a cover letter on the subject of the study in order to solicit their support. Thirdly, a schedule was arranged with the Department Heads and teachers in order for the researcher to personally conduct and supervise the conduct of the study to assure reliability of responses. Fourth, the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Fifth, the researchers send the survey questionnaire via google forms to the selected SHS Learners and English Teachers in the City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Then, the survey questionnaires were immediately retrieved right after administering the research. Lastly, data were encoded and tabulated for statistical analysis.

Data gathered from this study were subjected to the following statistical treatments:

Weighted Mean. The weighted mean was used to assess the level of English language communicative competence (Research Question 1), level of learning engagement in the English language communication (Research Question 3) and challenges encountered by the learner respondents in English language



communication (Research question 5). More so, standard deviation was used to determine the extent of the variability of responses.

t- test. This was used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of the assessment of the two groups of respondents on the level of English language communicative competence of the learners-respondents (Research Question 2)

Pearson – Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This was used to indicate the significant relationship between the level of English language communicative competence and level of learning engagement in the English language communication (Research Question 4).

Results And Discussions

The data acquired in this investigation was rigorously evaluated and interpreted to ensure transparency and correctness.

TABLE 1: LEVEL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS ASSESSED BY TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE	TEACHERS			LEARNERS		
	WM	SD	Verbal Interpretation	WM	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Linguistic Competence	3.76	.23	Very Satisfactory	3.72	.25	Very Satisfactory
Sociolinguistic Competence	3.58	.27	Very Satisfactory	3.59	.20	Very Satisfactory
Discourse Competence	3.76	.26	Very Satisfactory	3.63	.25	Very Satisfactory
Strategic Competence	4.12	.19	Very Satisfactory	3.79	.21	Very Satisfactory
OVERALL	3.81	.24	Very Satisfactory	3.68	.23	Very Satisfactory

The tabulated data revealed the level of English language communicative competence as assessed by teachers and learners. Data showed that teachers' assessment on the learners' English language communicative competence was very satisfactory based on the overall computed weighted mean of 3.81 and $SD = .24$. More so, the teachers assess that strategic competence was $X = 4.12$, $SD = .19$; linguistic competence was $X = 3.76$, $SD = .23$; discourse competence was $X = 3.76$; $SD = .26$ and; sociolinguistic competence was $X = 3.58$, $SD = .27$ which denoted as very satisfactory all the English language communicative competence domains.



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On the other hand, when the learners assess their English language communicative competence showed that it was very satisfactory based on the overall computed weighted mean of 3.68 and $SD = .23$. Looking forward with the domains, revealed that strategic competence was $X = 3.79$, $SD = .21$; linguistic competence was $X = 3.72$, $SD = .25$; discourse competence was $X = 3.63$; $SD = .25$ and; sociolinguistic competence was $X = 3.59$, $SD = .20$ which denoted as very satisfactory all the English language communicative competence domains.

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. 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.

Meanwhile, 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.

As such, 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. It also supports 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.

In way, 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 2: SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE ON THE LEVEL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF THE LEARNERS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE	t-test computed value	t-test critical value	Probability level	Decision	Verbal Interpretation
Linguistic Competence	0.42	2.11	$P > 0.05$	Ho is accepted	Not significant
Sociolinguistic Competence	0.27	2.11	$P > 0.05$	Ho is accepted	Not significant
Discourse Competence	0.97	2.11	$P > 0.05$	Ho is accepted	Not significant
Strategic Competence	3.58	2.11	$P < 0.05$	Ho is rejected	Significant

To determine the significant difference in the assessment of on the level of English language communicative competence of the learner, the researchers employed t -test to determine the extent difference between the means of two or more groups on the variables under study.

The results of the t-test for significant differences on the extent difference of respondents' assessment on the level of English language communicative competence of the learner in terms of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence have no significant difference as can be gleaned on t- value 0.42, 0.27, and 0.97, respectively. Further discussion showed that the comparison of the t- value does not exceeds on the given t – critical value, giving the researcher reason to accept the null hypothesis. This may be implying that when the teacher and learner's assessment have not significantly differed on learners' level of English language communicative competence.

While the story on strategic competence comparison of t-test value and critical value shows that the t-test value exceeds the tabular value, giving the researcher reasons to reject the null hypothesis in favor of researcher hypothesis. This may be safely concluded that strategic competence significantly differed when the teacher and learners assess it, as gleaned on the t-value of 3.58.

Study outcomes along these lines confirm the essential role played by language acquisition and social skills in professional practice. Similarly, findings directly linked language competence to the type of activities carried out in the classroom, with other



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factors such as student motivation and the creation of favourable learning environments also being related.

Present findings coincide with those of other studies, such as that reported by Aspelin and Jonsson (2019) who developed a project with student teachers which focused on interpersonal teacher-student relations. In this way, these authors addressed relational competence in teacher training, focusing on three components: communication, differentiation and socio-emotional competence. In turn, they highlighted the benefits of developing this competence for students' subsequent professional practice. Similarly, conceptions of teaching communicative competence as a linguistic reference for students were evidenced in the present review.

A study carried out by Van der Veen, Van der Wilt, Van Kruistum, Van Oers, and Michaels (2017) promoted productive conversations between teachers and students. This was encouraged in order to improve students' oral communication skills, as an intermediary factor between the learning process and the student's thinking. Students' oral skills are also seen to go hand in hand with skills related with later reading comprehension, as well as with psychosocial factors such as motivation, social acceptance and self-regulation (Tao, Zheng, Lu, Liang, & Tsai, 2020).

TABLE 3: LEVEL OF LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION	WM	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Affective Engagement	4.52	.18	High
Behavioral Engagement	4.18	.30	High
Cognitive Engagement	4.09	.12	High
OVERALL	4.26	.20	High

Table 3 showed that all the three indicators of learners' engagement resulted to highly engaged ($X = 4.20$, $SD = .20$) in the English language communication as described mean scores in the affective engagement ($X = 4.52$, $SD = .18$), behavioral engagement ($X = 4.18$, $SD = .30$), and cognitive engagement ($X = 4.09$, $SD = .12$). This finding is parallel to the idea of Dawes and Larson (2011) who stated that students invest the highest level of engagement on activities that give them gratification which positively influence their identity development which integrates successes, routines, habits, novelties, thrills, and gratifications into a coherent and evolving interpretation of who they are.



TABLE 4: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN

VARIABLES	r_{xy}	r^2	Description	P- value	Decision	Verbal Interpretation
English Language Communicative Competence	.87	0.76	High relationship	< .00001	Ho is rejected	Highly Significant
Learning Engagement						

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

The data revealed the obtained Pearson r value .87 denotes high positive correlation. This means the higher the English language communicative competence of the learners, might be the higher is the level of learning engagement. Moreover, The coefficient of determination, $r^2 = 0.76$. This means that for the 50 SHS learners in the sample 76% of the variation in learning engagement of the learners could be attributed to the variation in English language communicative competence of the learners. The rest 24% is chance variation. Since the computed Sig. (2-tailed) test value of 0.00001 is greater than 0.05 Alpha Level of Significance, giving the researcher reasons to reject the null hypothesis. This may be safely concluded that there is significant relationship between English language communicative competence and learning engagement in the English language communication.

This study supported by the finding of Park (2019) that English language communicative competence and learning engagement in the English language communication was correlated.

TABLE 5: CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE LEARNER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION



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CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION	WM	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Affective factors	3.83	.18	Highly Encountered
Linguistic factors	3.60	.19	Highly Encountered
Sociocultural Factors and Environment	2.97	.33	Moderately Encountered
OVERALL	3.47	.23	Highly Encountered

The abovementioned tabulated data showed the challenges encountered by the learner in English language communication. Data revealed that learners' shows highly encountered challenge in English language communication based on the overall computed weighted mean of 3.47 and standard deviation of .23. communication as described on the following domain the mean scores in the affective factors ($X = 3.83$, $SD = .18$), linguistic factors ($X = 3.60$, $SD = .19$) was highly encountered while the sociocultural engagement and environment ($X = 2.97$, $SD = .33$) was moderately encountered.

This result is in agreement with Pangket (2019) who found that linguistic issues made up the most problematic and the most serious area of difficulty for EFL learners. This was mainly because of the learners' lack of sufficiently developed basic abilities of the FL.

In addition, learners in other ESL and EFL countries tend to face similar vocabulary problems. For example, Liu and Jackson (cited in Hanumantharao, 2011) claim that inadequate vocabulary was regarded as the main challenge for spoken communication by Chinese English speakers and Hong Kongese English speaker.

They also believed that this contributed directly to a lack of fluency in their speech. Arju (2001) and Kabir (2014) also found that Bangladeshi students have often been blamed for not having enough vocabulary. For example, a significant finding from the students' responses was that despite having the interest, they could not speak because of their limited vocabulary.

Conclusions

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusion were drawn:

1. The level of English language communicative competence as assessed by teachers and learners was very satisfactory.
2. The level of English language communicative competence of the learner in terms of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse



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competence have no significant difference. However, that strategic competence significantly differed when the teacher and learners assess it.

3. The learners' engagement was highly engaged in the English language communication as described in the three indicators of learners' engagement.
4. There is high positive correlation between English language communicative competence and learning engagement in the English language communication
5. The learners' shows highly encountered challenge in English language communication.
6. It is recommended that the module created by the researcher be used in their English classes since the topics included in the module were relevant to the actual findings.
7. It is important for the different school administrators to ensure that the teachers are able to carry out the suggested topics included in the module.

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