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A PHENOMENOLOGY ON COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF BSED TERTIARY EDUCATION STUDENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS: STRATEGIC COMPETENCE IN FOCUS

Christine Joy M. Alferez, Belen D. Tado, PhD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to generate an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of BSED-Tertiary education students on their communicative strategic competence through the lens of language teachers in some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tagum City. Utilizing the purposive sampling, the fourteen research participants who are language teachers were identified and grouped for in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Data carefully analyzed using coding and thematic analysis. Results emerged from the experiences, struggles and difficulties of the language teachers which include having students with diverse backgrounds, handling students struggling to communicate due to anxiety, encountering passive students, and experiencing difficulties with students who have low self-confidence. Language educators adopt a range of strategies to deal with the challenges such as fostering a positive learning environment, providing different learning activities, assessing the students' performance using rubrics, and encouraging students to speak up. To mitigate these encounters, teachers need to know and assess students' background in communication, let students embrace mistakes and criticism in speaking, encourage and motivate students to communicate using English language, continue to learn strategies in communicative development through attending relevant seminars for communicative enhancement and tailor approaches to student needs. The results imply that significant changes and improvements should be considered and implemented in some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to tailor approaches in enhancing the communicative strategic competence of the students. More importantly, it highlights the importance of appropriate strategies and approaches promoting the continuous development of the students in their strategic competence.

KEYWORDS: *Qualitative- Phenomenological, BSED- Tertiary Education Students, Communicative Strategic Competence, Heis, Tagum City*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The communicative approach in teaching language begins from a conception of language as communication. One of the objectives of language teaching is to develop communicative competence of the language learners. The growing importance of teaching future teachers' communicative strategic competence specifically across the world in recent years can be partly explained by shifting the focus from grammatical and for compliance into meaning and function. However, language teachers have faced numerous concerns, worries and struggles in teaching and strengthening communicative competence, primarily the strategic competence of the students. There are students who are having difficulty in overcoming challenges when communication breakdown occurs and bridging the gap of their linguistic knowledge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenology study is to generate an in-depth understanding and experiences of BSED-Tertiary Education students on their communicative strategic competence through the lens of Language teachers in some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. The participants of this study are teachers teaching English subjects including strategic competence for 5-8 years, has attended seminar related to Language teaching and a Master's degree holder in any Language studies.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of the Language teachers in developing the communicative strategic competence of BSED-English college students?
2. How do the Language teachers cope with the challenges in developing the communicative strategic competence of BSED-English college students?
3. What are the insights and reflections of Language teachers in developing communicative strategic competence of BSED-English college students that can be shared to others?

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Theoretical Lens

This study is hinged from the concept of Canale and Swain Theory of Communicative Competence (1980) which describes a language learner's capacity to communicate effectively in terms of what, where, and how to say it from various cultural, traditional, and shared norms viewpoints. Further, the knowledge of a learner about grammatical rules is not only an indicator to be called communicatively competent but also when and where to use these in a specific context.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This phenomenology study has 14 participants from different college institutions within Tagum City, Davao del Norte. The participants are English instructors and teaching strategic competence to students, Master's degree holders and have attended seminars and training related to Language teaching. This study was conducted from September 2024 to November 2024 of School Year 2024-2025.

Importance of the Study

The adequacy and advantage of this study will be beneficial to the teachers to help them craft their course plan addressing the needs of the students and utilize pedagogical strategies in order to develop the communicative strategic competence of the students. Further, this will also provide to students a solution of their various challenges in developing their communicative strategic competence. Importantly, this study will be beneficial to school administrators to innovate and provide more related trainings to the teachers in order to cope with the challenges faced in developing the strategic competence of the students. Significantly, this will serve as a framework for future researchers and studies as they pursue related field of interest in their study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Strategic competence is an essential component of communication as it enables people to overcome obstacles to effective self-expression. However, due to several difficulties encountered by the learners and speakers in developing and applying strategic competence. A study conducted by Giray et al., (2022) stated English has been widely used as a medium of instruction in the tertiary level. However, due to the anxiousness of the students in utilizing the language across various contexts this has been a struggle among the students and also the teachers. Students have difficulty in communicating using the English language due to some factors. Bogodad et al., (2021) noted that teachers' low proficiency in language, incomprehensible input, lack of knowledge, fear of negative evaluation, unsupported learning environment and low self-confidence are the factors that can contribute to the level of anxiety of the students.

Additionally, nervousness in speaking, fear from negative evaluation, lack of background knowledge of the language and low self-belief are being demonstrated when a student is having language anxiety (Bordios et al., 2022). Further, Ananda and Hastini (2023) noted that having poor motivation and low self-belief learners are hesitant, shy to take risks resulting in avoidance to gaining an opportunity to develop. Consequently, educators, researchers, and teachers must focus on providing effective professional development to the teacher, researchers and other educational institutions (Ventista et al., 2023).

Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenology approach in order to have a deeper understanding on the communicative strategic competence of the BSED-Tertiary education students through the lens of the language teachers. Qualitative research method is a process of gaining a thorough understanding of social phenomena in their natural environment through conducting interviews, documentation and observations of the social phenomena (Busetto et al., 2020). Furthermore, the qualitative type of research focuses on the quality and topics of the responses or data rather than the quantifiable or numerical data (Creswell, 2013).

Research Participants

The research participants of this study are language college instructors handling English major subjects to BSED-Tertiary education students in some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. In this study, there were nine (9) participants for an In-Depth Interview (IDI), while there were be also five (5) participants who participated for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). These 14 participants are selected according to the inclusion criteria. Further, the researcher applied purposive sampling in this study. Purposive sampling is a technique used to get rich information from the participants whom the researcher selected based on their willingness to share their experiences with the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Data Collection Procedure

Initially, the researcher asked for approval to carry out the conduct of the study. Purposive sampling is being followed to ensure the inclusion criteria is met by the research participants. Ethical principles are observed to maintain integrity and academic standards in conducting the research. Further, informed consent was given to the research participants affixing their signature for approval. Safety measures were considered to ensure the well-being of the participants including the location and time of the interviews and the

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anonymity of the involved research participants. In-depth interviews and focus group discussion were being recorded, transcribed and translated to Standard English. Moreover, thematic analysis was used to ensure appropriateness in analyzing the participants' responses and come up with valid and reliable results.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

The research study involved 14 participants. Nine (9) for in depth interview and another five (5) for focus group discussion a total of 14 participants involved in this study. The research participants are Language teachers teaching strategic competence to BSED-English college students.

Experiences of Language Teachers in Developing the Strategic Competence of BSED-English Tertiary Students

Table 1 shows the major themes and core ideas in relation to the experiences of the English Language teachers in developing the strategic competence of the BSED-English tertiary students. There are four (4) relevant themes gathered from the responses of the research participants. The following themes include: (1) handling students struggling to communicate due to anxiety, (2) having students with diverse background, (3) encountering passive students and (4) experiencing difficulties with students who have low self-confidence.

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Language Teachers in Developing the Strategic Competence of BSED-English Tertiary Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Handling Students Struggling to Communicate due to Anxiety	• having language anxiety due to language barrier • showing nervousness in speaking • struggling in expressing themselves • being afraid to commit mistakes • demonstrating shaking, trembling and sweating while having simple conversations
Having Students with Diverse Background	• coming from different education background • rooting from different demographic background • varying of proficiency levels • possessing varied learning styles
Encountering Passive Students	• being passive to the strategies and techniques taught by the teachers • feeling reluctant to speak due to language barrier • struggling in acquiring skills due to lack of interest • having less engagement and participation
Experiencing Difficulties with Students Who Have Low Self-Confidence	• displaying poor motivation and willingness • lacking of self-confidence to speak • unwilling to cooperate • missing learning opportunities to develop communicative skills due to low self-confidence

Students do feel anxious when they talk in English so one of the biggest challenges is how to let them develop fluency and accuracy in speaking the English language. (IDI-03)

Participants determined several challenges in develop
ing the communicative strategic competence of the students. Language teachers divulged students struggle to communicate due to anxiety.

It made me feel like I am drained and challenged every day. It is really difficult to where you will start and dig deeper on the root cause of the problem. I think there is this bigger impact on how the curriculum is introduced to them way back in the foundational years. There are also lots of factors or a multi-factor. It is not just one factor but it is the conglomeration of other factors. (IDI-02)

During the interview, other participants mentioned that having different education backgrounds during the foundational years of the students affect the level of competence that the students have. In a classroom setting diverse students are prevalent. As a result, numerous teachers shared their various experiences in developing the strategic competence of the students with diverse background.

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I think that the biggest problem is the diligence to submit to themselves to learn, their motivation to enhance or to develop their competence. (IDI-07)

In the course of the interview additional theme was pointed out and that is encountering passive students during discussions. Thus, one common concept shared by the participants being passive to the strategies and techniques taught by the teachers.

Coping Mechanisms of the Language Teachers in Developing the Communicative Strategic Competence of BSED-English Tertiary Students

Table 2 outlined the major themes and core ideas that explained the coping mechanism of the language teachers in developing the communicative strategic competence of BSED-English college students. It also discusses the methods and approaches they use to help their students deal. There are four (4) themes that connect to the responses of the research participants. The following include: (1) fostering positive learning environment, (2) providing different learning activities, (3) assessing the student's performance using rubrics, and (4) encouraging verbal autonomy.

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on Coping Mechanisms of the Language Teachers in Developing the Communicative Strategic Competence of BSED-English Tertiary Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Fostering Positive Learning Environment	• understanding the context of the students • emphasizing to students that mistakes are natural • providing safe learning environment • encouraging active participation • setting clear goals and expectations from the students
Providing Different Learning Activities	• engaging in collaborative learning • giving an opportunity to talk and share own ideas • exposing them to speaking performance activities • incorporating language-related interactive games
Assessing the Student's Performance Using Rubrics	• using of rubrics to rate the performance of the students • utilizing feedback and corrections • tracing learners' progress through identifying improvements on their performances • promoting self-reflection to students
Encouraging Verbal Autonomy	• having oral recitation • having student-centered approach • exposing them to simulation on real-life accounts

As a teacher, you need to really understand them. The first thing that you should do is to understand them because as teachers, we are aware of the different theories of learning and of course we are also reminded that we could not actually generalize our students because they are coming from different cultural backgrounds or challenges. (IDI-02)

One of the significant themes discussed by the participants in developing the strategic competence of the students is setting the learning environment positively. Some teachers mentioned that creating this kind of space through understanding the context of the students helped them cope with their challenges in developing the strategic competence of the learners.

I have this game or activity in my class that students are grouped or paired. So, I provide them some pieces of information which contains a certain task. As a result, they need to understand the problem or the task and communicate with their classmates to solve. In that way, they will think critically and uses language to convey questions. (IDI-03)

Additionally, language teachers highlighted their coping mechanisms in developing strategic competence of the students through incorporating language games activities. IDI-03 shared her own method.

I always make sure that feedback and corrections must be thoroughly given to the students for room of improvement in the next communicative related activities. Also, this is for them not to make the same mistakes again. (IDI-09)

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Assessing student's performance can provide support to the teachers in giving constructive feedback. It fosters deep understanding of the strengths and weakness of the students and encourages continuous improvement through gaining of new insights.

I do oral recitations often especially surprise oral recitations. So, every discussion I will throw questions that they do not expect then I will call them to test their speaking skills. (IDI-01)

As the interview progresses, teachers spoke about meaningful coping mechanism to aid the students in developing their strategic competence. It has been mentioned that encouraging your students through having oral recitations develop one's self-confidence.

Insights and Reflections of Language Teachers in Developing Communicative Strategic Competence of BSED-English Tertiary Students

Table 3 outlines the major themes and core ideas that relate to the insights of Language teachers in developing the strategic competence of BSED-English tertiary students. There are five (5) significant themes gathered from the responses of the research participants. The following themes are: (1) knowing and assessing your students background in communication, (2) letting students embrace mistake and criticism in speaking, (3) encouraging and motivating students to communicate using English language, (4) acquiring new strategies in communicative development and (5) tailoring approaches to respond to student needs. The themes mentioned are explored in-depth focusing on their core ideas.

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights and Reflections of Language Teachers in Developing Communicative Strategic Competence of BSED-English Tertiary Students that Can be Shared to Others

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Knowing and Assessing your Students' Background in Communication	• knowing your learner's background • examining the learners • gauging the level of proficiency and fluency of the students • conducting of pre-assessment to students • allowing students' peer reviews
Letting Students Embrace Mistake and Criticism in Speaking	• becoming confident in teaching • embracing mistakes as part of learning • having no fear in committing mistakes • taking feedback positively for development • strengthening new insights will be acquired
Acquiring New Strategies in Communicative Development	• assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of the strategies • applying concepts appropriately in different contexts • innovating teaching strategies • building vocabulary expansion • attending seminars or workshops related to communicative enhancement
Encouraging and Motivating Students to Communicate Using English Language	• motivating the students to excel in their chosen field • reaching out to the students • developing patience within oneself • encouraging self-expression through crating their own written output
Tailoring Approaches to Respond to Student Needs	• revisiting fundamental aspects in the curriculum • designing appropriate strategies for the needs of the students • being adaptive to the changes in the education • integrating technological advancement tools in the classroom

For the new set of instructors, they study first their learner. Of course, they are modern type of students so we should also modernize and upgrade our strategies. (IDI-01)

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Subsequent to the discussion of the challenges and coping mechanisms of the teachers in developing the strategic competence of the students, one major theme was emphasized that is knowing your learners' background.

They become confident. Confident in the real world of teaching that they can now handle everything. They can communicate well with their students and to their future students. (IDI-01)

Students can communicate effectively if mistakes and criticisms are naturally embraced in the learning environment. Through adopting a growth mindset, it will boost the competence of oneself and empowers the students to reach their full potential.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The results of the study were able to illustrate and ponder the invaluable experiences of the Language teachers in developing the communicative strategic competence of the BSED-English tertiary students. Further, the findings of this study serve as a significant contribution in crafting the implications which can be used to solidify and incorporate appropriate strategies in developing the strategic competence of the BSED-English college students in different Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Recommendations for Further Research

This research study was successful in achieving its main purpose which is to generate an in-depth understanding and explore the experiences of the BSED-English tertiary students on their communicative strategic competence through the lens of the Language teachers. The themes being gathered from this research depicted its adequacy of providing significant information on the same phenomenon. Furthermore, pedagogical approaches and teachers' training should be delved. This involves how educators can better incorporate the development of communicative strategic competence into language teaching curricula would be significant.

Concluding Remarks

In the sense that I was able to conduct this study, I am immensely grateful for all the experiences I have acquired and learned from the participants. This entire academic journey provided me a lot of realizations and learnings to become more effective teacher in the version of myself. Additionally, this has made me think that there is no such a perfect educator nor a perfect strategy inside the classroom but there is such an effective one. Further, I hope that the results of the study will be an avenue to offer more workshops and seminars to the teachers related to development of the strategic competence of the students. It is also essential that educators are equipped with the adaptive methods in instruction to prepare the future teachers holistically.

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