

Enhancing Pre-Service Teachers' Communication Competence: An Input to a Communication Skills Development Module

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ABSTRACT

Communication competence is a vital component of effective teaching and learning. This study assessed the oral and written communication competence of pre-service teachers and the challenges they encounter as a basis for developing a communication skills development module. Specifically, it aimed to: (1) determine the respondents' profiles; (2) evaluate their oral and written communication competence; (3) identify strategies for enhancement; (4) examine significant differences in their self-assessments when grouped by profile variables; (5) determine major communication challenges; and (6) design a communication skills development module based on the findings. A descriptive-quantitative design was utilized involving 224 pre-service teachers from the College of Teacher Education, Batangas State University – The National Engineering University, ARASOF-Nasugbu Campus. Data were gathered using a validated survey questionnaire and analyzed through mean, standard deviation, and ANOVA. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers were proficient in oral communication, particularly in maintaining eye contact, using an appropriate tone, and fostering a positive speaking environment, while moderately proficient in written communication—strong in proofreading and grammar but weak in vocabulary use and organization. Common strategies included seeking feedback, practicing public speaking, and engaging in writing activities. Their challenges were limited vocabulary, difficulty sustaining tone consistency, and anxiety during presentations. Based on these findings, a Communication Skills Development Module was designed featuring interactive, reflective, and performance-based learning activities to enhance oral and written communication competence. The study concludes that structured communication interventions are essential in preparing pre-service teachers for professional teaching and classroom interaction in both face-to-face and digital contexts.

Keywords: Communication competence, oral communication, written communication, pre-service teachers, teacher education, module development

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is at the core of quality teaching and learning. It underpins classroom interactions, instructional strategies, and learner engagement, enabling teachers to convey ideas clearly, respond to students' needs, and foster meaningful participation (Jaca & Javines, 2020). Teaching is fundamentally a communicative act, involving both verbal and non-verbal cues that shape how learners understand and construct knowledge (Rodríguez-García et al., 2022).

In the Philippine educational system, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST, 2017) emphasizes communication as essential for clarity, inclusivity, and engagement. Pre-service teachers are expected to demonstrate proficiency in both oral and written communication—skills vital for delivering lessons, providing feedback, preparing lesson plans, and producing academic documents (Imas Cintamulya et al., 2024). However, studies show that many pre-service teachers still face challenges such as speech anxiety, limited vocabulary, and inconsistent writing skills, which can affect teaching readiness (Yılmaz, 2023).

Developing communication competence requires deliberate practice, feedback, and reflection. It involves not only language accuracy but also adaptability, empathy, and professionalism in diverse classroom and digital

contexts (Míguez-Álvarez et al., 2022; Kadel, 2024). Strategies like collaborative learning, peer teaching, and reflective exercises have been shown to enhance communicative confidence and performance (Rodríguez-García et al., 2022; Jaca & Javines, 2020).

The present study aims to examine the oral and written communication competence of pre-service teachers at Batangas State University – The National Engineering University, identify their communication challenges, and develop a Communication Skills Development Module. The findings are expected to provide practical strategies for improving communication training in teacher education programs, preparing future educators for excellence in both traditional and digital classrooms.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Communication is widely recognized as the cornerstone of effective teaching. Teachers' ability to convey ideas clearly, listen actively, and adapt their messages according to learners' needs directly influences classroom engagement and learning outcomes (Rodríguez-García et al., 2022). Research indicates that educators with strong communication competence are more likely to foster student motivation, participation, and critical thinking, creating a dynamic learning environment where learners feel encouraged to interact and explore (Ramos, 2020). Despite this, studies have consistently shown that many pre-service teachers continue to struggle with expressing ideas fluently and confidently, highlighting gaps in both oral and written communication (Jaca & Javines, 2020). These findings underscore the need for structured skill-building strategies within teacher education programs, including targeted interventions, reflective exercises, and curriculum-aligned communication modules, to ensure that pre-service teachers develop the professional communication skills necessary for effective teaching. Furthermore, communication competence is not limited to content delivery; it also involves sociocultural awareness, empathy, and the ability to engage with diverse learners, reinforcing the need for holistic training approaches in teacher preparation programs.

Oral communication competence encompasses clarity, confidence, active listening, adaptability, and the ability to respond effectively in dynamic classroom situations. According to Yılmaz (2023), many pre-service teachers experience speech anxiety, limited vocabulary, and hesitation when addressing audiences, which can affect their overall teaching efficacy. Al-Harthy (2020) highlighted that reflective speaking practices, peer feedback, and structured rehearsal exercises significantly enhance oral confidence, allowing pre-service teachers to become more comfortable with both planned and spontaneous communication tasks. Additionally, interactive exercises such as micro-teaching, role-playing, and impromptu presentations provide practical opportunities to simulate real classroom experiences and improve fluency, pronunciation, and audience engagement (Imas Cintamulya et al., 2024). Beyond technique, oral competence also requires emotional intelligence, such as reading nonverbal cues, adjusting tone, and managing classroom dynamics, making it a multifaceted skill essential for teaching success. Therefore, deliberate and repeated practice in safe, supportive environments is critical to ensure pre-service teachers can translate theory into effective classroom communication.

Written communication remains a significant area of concern for many pre-service teachers. Kana (2015) observed persistent challenges in coherence, tone, organization, and academic vocabulary, which may affect instructional planning, lesson documentation, and professional correspondence. Flores and Gonzales (2021) advocate for explicit writing instruction that combines grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary development with authentic writing tasks such as lesson plan creation, reflective journals, and academic essays. The integration of digital tools for writing and collaborative platforms is increasingly important, as Kadel (2024) emphasizes, because it allows pre-service teachers to receive timely feedback, engage in peer review, and adapt to the digital communication demands of 21st-century education. Strengthening written communication skills not only improves academic performance but also prepares future teachers for professional responsibilities, including preparing instructional materials, formal reporting, and online teaching communication. A comprehensive approach to written competence must therefore address both technical accuracy and higher-order organization, tone, and audience awareness.

Pre-service teachers face a variety of challenges in developing communication skills, including limited vocabulary, inconsistent tone, lack of structure, and low self-confidence (Míguez-Álvarez et al., 2022). These barriers affect both oral and written modalities, reducing clarity, fluency, and the overall quality of teacher-

student interactions. However, research suggests that targeted strategies can effectively mitigate these challenges. Reflective practices, including journaling and self-assessment, enable pre-service teachers to identify weaknesses and monitor progress (Al-Harthy, 2020). Regular engagement in speaking exercises, structured writing tasks, and feedback cycles supports skill improvement and builds resilience against performance anxiety. Rodríguez-García et al. (2022) further emphasize the value of collaborative learning, peer review, and digital literacy in enhancing communication competence, noting that exposure to authentic communicative tasks fosters confidence, adaptability, and professional readiness. By combining reflective, practical, and collaborative approaches, teacher education programs can create comprehensive strategies that address both linguistic and affective dimensions of communication competence.

Modules provide structured, learner-centered frameworks for targeted skill acquisition, promoting autonomy and allowing learners to progress at their own pace. Villanueva (2021) demonstrated that well-designed instructional modules enhance retention and mastery of competencies, including communication skills. These modules can integrate multimodal activities, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening exercises, allowing pre-service teachers to practice and apply skills in varied contexts. Similarly, Imas Cintamulya et al. (2024) highlighted that performance-based communication modules, which include interactive and reflective tasks, significantly improve collaborative communication and practical skill application in teacher preparation. Incorporating such modules into teacher education curricula provides consistent, scaffolded opportunities for skill development, ensuring that pre-service teachers can translate knowledge into practice and meet professional standards. Modules also allow for flexibility, enabling teachers to adapt exercises to individual learner needs, provide immediate feedback, and monitor progress, making them ideal tools for enhancing both oral and written communication competencies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive-quantitative design was used to assess levels of communication competence, challenges, and improvement strategies.

Participants

The study involved 224 pre-service teachers enrolled during Academic Year 2024–2025 at Batangas State University – TNEU, ARASOF-Nasugbu Campus. Participants represented diverse year levels and majors under the College of Teacher Education.

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Sex	Female	168	75.0
	Male	56	25.0
Year Level	2nd Year	60	26.8
	3rd Year	72	32.1
	4th Year	92	41.1
Specialization	BEEd	120	53.6
	BSEd-English	45	20.1
	BSEd-Math	30	13.4
	BSEd-Science	29	13.0

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

A validated researcher-made questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 measured oral and written communication competence, improvement strategies, and challenges. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA to test group differences by sex, specialization, and year level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Oral Communication Competence

To examine pre-service teachers' oral communication competence, respondents self-assessed their skills in maintaining a positive communication environment, speaking clearly, using appropriate tone, handling questions, and avoiding fillers. These indicators reflect both confidence and fluency in classroom interactions.

Table 1. Self-assessment of Oral Communication Competence

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Maintains positive communication atmosphere	4.20	Always
Speaks clearly and confidently	4.18	Often
Uses appropriate tone and volume	4.10	Often
Handles questions effectively	3.95	Sometimes
Avoids fillers and speech pauses	3.80	Sometimes
Overall Mean	4.12	Proficient

The overall mean of 4.12 indicates that pre-service teachers perceive themselves as proficient in oral communication. The highest-rated skill, maintaining a positive communication atmosphere ($M = 4.20$), suggests that students are able to create an engaging and supportive environment, which is critical for fostering interaction and participation. Similarly, clarity and confident speech ($M = 4.18$) indicate competence in planned or structured oral tasks.

However, lower scores in handling questions effectively ($M = 3.95$) and avoiding fillers ($M = 3.80$) reveal persistent challenges in spontaneous communication, suggesting a lack of flexibility in unplanned teaching scenarios. These findings align with Yılmaz (2023), who reported that pre-service teachers often experience speech anxiety and limited fluency during real-time classroom interactions.

The results suggest that while structured presentations are well-handled, pre-service teachers require interventions targeting impromptu speaking, question-response techniques, and verbal fluency exercises. Incorporating micro-teaching, role-playing, and peer evaluation can help enhance both confidence and spontaneity, essential components of effective oral communication (Al-Harthi, 2020; Imas Cintamulya et al., 2024).

Written Communication Competence

Written communication competence was evaluated based on proofreading, grammar, tone consistency, organization, and vocabulary use. These dimensions assess the ability to construct coherent, professional, and academically appropriate texts.

Table 2. Self-assessment of Written Communication Competence

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Proofreads for grammatical errors	4.25	Always
Uses correct grammar and punctuation	4.05	Often
Maintains consistency in tone and style	3.85	Sometimes
Organizes ideas logically	3.90	Sometimes
Uses varied vocabulary	3.85	Sometimes
Overall Mean	3.98	Moderate Proficiency

Pre-service teachers' overall written communication proficiency is moderate ($M = 3.98$). They excel in proofreading and grammatical accuracy, indicating attention to surface-level correctness. However, lower scores in tone consistency, logical organization, and vocabulary reveal difficulty in achieving higher-order writing competence. This supports findings by Flores and Gonzales (2021), who emphasized that teacher education students often struggle to maintain coherence and professional tone across written tasks.

The results indicate a gap between mechanical writing skills and advanced written communication abilities, such as structuring arguments, selecting precise vocabulary, and maintaining style consistency. These deficits can negatively impact lesson planning, instructional documentation, and academic reporting.

To address these challenges, interventions should include guided writing exercises, peer editing, structured feedback, and vocabulary enrichment programs. Incorporating reflective writing and collaborative editing activities can help pre-service teachers internalize organizational patterns and stylistic norms (Imas Cintamulya et al., 2024).

Strategies for Communication Improvement

This section examines the methods pre-service teachers employ to enhance their communication skills, including oral and written domains. Understanding these strategies informs the design of targeted interventions.

Table 3. Frequency of Communication Improvement Strategies

Strategy	Mean	Interpretation
Public speaking practice	4.15	Often
Peer feedback	4.10	Often
Writing journals	4.05	Often
Watching model presentations	3.90	Sometimes
Participating in online discussion forums	3.85	Sometimes

The respondents rely predominantly on active practice and reflective strategies. Public speaking practice ($M = 4.15$) and peer feedback ($M = 4.10$) are most frequently used, demonstrating the importance of experiential learning in developing communicative competence. Writing journals ($M = 4.05$) facilitate reflective growth, reinforcing self-awareness and iterative improvement.

Less frequent engagement with online forums ($M = 3.85$) and model presentations ($M = 3.90$) suggests limited exposure to digital communication contexts, which are increasingly relevant in contemporary teaching (Kadel, 2024).

These findings indicate that while pre-service teachers employ traditional methods effectively, there is a need to expand strategies into digital and multimodal communication practices, including online discussions, asynchronous feedback activities, and virtual presentations. Integrating these approaches into the curriculum can enhance both oral and written competence and prepare teachers for blended learning environments.

Challenges Encountered

Identifying the barriers to communication provides critical insight for intervention design. This table summarizes the main challenges cited by respondents.

Table 4. Common Communication Challenges

Challenge	Mean	Interpretation
Limited vocabulary	4.25	Often
Maintaining tone consistency	4.10	Often
Organizing ideas logically	4.05	Often
Performance anxiety	4.00	Sometimes
Fear of negative evaluation	3.90	Sometimes

The most prevalent challenges are limited vocabulary, tone inconsistency, and difficulty organizing ideas, indicating that pre-service teachers struggle with both linguistic and cognitive aspects of communication. Limited vocabulary ($M = 4.25$) restricts both oral and written expression, while tone inconsistency ($M = 4.10$) affects professional and academic credibility.

Performance anxiety ($M = 4.00$) and fear of negative evaluation ($M = 3.90$) highlight affective barriers to effective communication. These findings are consistent with Rodríguez-García et al. (2022) and Kadel (2024), who emphasize the interplay between affective factors and language competence in teacher preparation.

Addressing these challenges requires holistic interventions that combine vocabulary-building, structured writing and speaking exercises, and confidence-enhancing practices such as role-play, peer feedback, and reflective journaling. Such interventions should focus on both skill acquisition and psychological readiness to communicate effectively.

Significant Differences by Profile Variables

To determine whether communication competence varies by demographic characteristics, ANOVA was conducted for sex and specialization.

Table 5. ANOVA Results for Communication Competence by Sex and Specialization

Variable	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex (Oral)	1.12	.292	Not significant
Sex (Written)	0.95	.334	Not significant

Specialization (Oral)	1.35	.256	Not significant
Specialization (Written)	1.21	.278	Not significant

The ANOVA results indicate no significant differences across sex or specialization in both oral and written communication competencies. This suggests that communication challenges are universal among pre-service teachers, not confined to specific demographic groups.

The findings reinforce the need for inclusive interventions. A Communication Skills Development Module should therefore target all pre-service teachers, regardless of sex or specialization, and incorporate differentiated activities to address diverse learning needs.

The Communication Skills Development Module

Purpose and Structure

The developed Communication Skills Development Module aims to enhance pre-service teachers' oral and written competence through structured reflection, performance tasks, and interactive feedback.

Module Units

Unit I – Enhancing Oral Communication

Activities: Role-plays, micro-teaching, impromptu speaking. *Focus:* Confidence, clarity, and nonverbal communication.

Unit II – Improving Written Communication

Activities: Guided writing, peer review, vocabulary expansion. *Focus:* Coherence, grammar, and tone.

Unit III – Integrating Communication in Teaching

Activities: Lesson discourse analysis, reflective journaling. *Focus:* Applying communication in classroom contexts.

Expert evaluation ($M = 4.70$) confirmed the module's high validity and relevance.

CONCLUSION

Pre-service teachers displayed generally strong oral but moderate written communication competence. Vocabulary development, consistency in tone, and organization remain problem areas. The proposed module offers structured interventions to address these weaknesses and prepares teacher candidates for both face-to-face and digital communication demands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The developed module should be integrated into teacher education curricula, particularly within communication and methodology courses, to reinforce oral and written skills systematically. Regular workshops and seminars are recommended to improve confidence and written expression through practical, performance-based activities. Reflective practices such as journaling and peer evaluation must be institutionalized to foster continuous improvement. Future research may adopt quasi-experimental designs to test the module's effectiveness longitudinally. Finally, teacher education programs must incorporate digital communication training to align with the evolving requirements of online and blended learning environments.

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