

DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH COMPETENCY PROGRAM FOR FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the development, implementation, and evaluation of an English Proficiency Program that is tailored for first year university students. During the implementation phase, a positive shift in competency test scores is observed (pre-test mean of 92.00 to post-test mean of 102.40), indicating overall improvement. The significant difference between pre- and post-test scores (p -value= 0.00) underscores the program's positive impact on general competency. The perceived effectiveness, with a grand mean of 4.64, attests to the program's efficacy in enhancing various language proficiency aspects. Participants express consensus that the program is well-executed, meeting its objectives, and significantly contributing to improved English language proficiency. It is therefore recommended that educators should address language deficiencies through targeted interventions particularly in grammar and writing competencies of students, incorporate technology, implement long-term impact assessments, extend program duration, and integrate successful elements into broader educational activities. These recommendations collectively form a comprehensive and effective approach for enhancing English language proficiency among students.

Keywords: Communicative English Competency Program, English Competency, University Students

INTRODUCTION

The age of globalization and advancement of technology had allowed people from different parts of the world to communicate with each other and therefore people need to use an international language, the English language to communicate (Rao, 2019; Mehrajuddin & Wani, 2022; Patron, 2016). In Asia, countries like Singapore and the Philippines have long adopted English as a second language. In the Philippines, English remains a key subject in the school curriculum and is used in religious, media, and business contexts (Gonzales, 1998 in Esteron, 2020). English proficiency is crucial for academic success and career advancement, with a high proficiency level positively impacting students' academic performance (Gomez & Gomez, 2021; Shahzad et al., 2023).

On the other hand, though Filipinos are known as prominent English language speakers compared to other Asian countries, it is very alarming that just recently Filipinos have failed to keep the name while other studies revealed the dramatic decrease in the English language oral skills competency (Jimenez, 2018). The implementation of the K to 12 Program aimed to

align with international standards, with English playing a central role. However, the integration of mother tongue-based instruction in the early years of schooling has posed challenges, leading to a decline in English literacy levels (Namanya, 2017; K to 12 English Curriculum Guide, 2016). In addition, ineffective English teaching at elementary and high school levels has resulted in poor performance in global assessments (Gullas in Luci- Atienza, 2021).

As universities are more available to high school graduates, the demand for students' basic academic abilities has been lowered in admission. In the case of the Isabela State University, majority of freshmen students have very low to low English language competency based on their College Admission Test (Guidance and Counselling Office Data, 2019 and 2023; Manalastas, et. al., 2021). However, after entering universities, some of the students encounter great difficulties in comprehending their lectures as they lack the required academic knowledge to manage college-level work (Casta and Cachuela, 2017). It is based on the recognition that some students come to

university with skills not suited for competent participation in the programs on offer. Many of the students expressed that although they would like to enhance their proficiency level, they could not find an effective way to do so. Furthermore, as state universities have been offering English courses that cater to different levels of students, but the limited class time and the large number of students in class make it difficult to serve individual needs. Further, the textbooks designed for college students are far beyond the low achieving students' level, and some of the students are unable to comprehend the materials in class and even end up giving up the learning opportunities. Therefore, to ensure that these are students not left behind, additional support such as a cohesive and comprehensive English Proficiency Program is necessary and effective (Hidajati and Jannah, 2019), additionally, an English Proficiency Program should be implemented to help these students compensate for the insufficient learning in previous academic settings so that they can gain the skills necessary to complete college-level courses and academic programs successfully.

With these premises, this study was conducted in order to develop, implement and evaluate an English Proficiency Program that is focused on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enable students to gain the skills needed to complete their course successfully, to enhance the functional and communicative use of the English language, to provide low-achieving students with more chances to reinforce the basic knowledge in the English subject, and to develop their Communicative English proficiency that could lead to a greater recognition of the importance of stressing English competency among students, teachers, curriculum planners and school administrators.

Objectives of the Study

This research aimed to develop, implement, and evaluate an English Proficiency Program centered around the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), specifically to:

1. Determine the significant difference between the communicative English competency pre- test and post- test mean scores of the students.
2. Determine the effectiveness of the Communicative English Competency Program in terms of Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading

Comprehension, and Writing Competency based on students' perception.

METHOD

Research Design

The study was completed by using the One-group Pre-test/ Post-test Experimental Design, and Descriptive Research Design through a survey questionnaire to determine the perceived effectiveness of the Communicative English Competency Program.

Sample and Data Collection

The participants for the implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program were the 15 randomly selected students who were enrolled for the First Semester, School Year 2023- 2024 from the College of Education's Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd). These students were chosen based on the previously conducted needs assessment part of the study whose scores from the English language competency level test are below average.

For assessing students' communicative competence, a pre-test was administered before the program implementation, covering vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing competency. The four- part tests were validated by English language and Professional Education specialists to ensure their structure and content's technical soundness.

The researcher had also prepared engaging and interactive learning activities that support the learning objectives, and necessary materials, resources, and tools to support the instructional plan that include presentations, handouts, videos, online resources that will enhance the learning experience of the students. The activities included were based on the least learned concepts, as indicated in the needs assessment. The completed instructional materials were first subjected to expert validation. The integrated activities are aligned with the learning objectives and the needs of the students. Instructional approaches such as lectures, discussions, group activities, and hands-on exercises were also integrated in the lesson proper of the program.

A teacher-made post-test was conducted after the program. The four- part tests were validated by English language and Professional Education specialists to ensure their structure and content's technical soundness.

Following the program, a 20-item researcher-made survey questionnaire gauging their perception of the Communicative English Competency Program's effectiveness. The data gathered was treated with utmost confidentiality to ensure the privacy of the student participants.

Analyzing of Data

Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) was used to determine the students'

English Proficiency pre-test and post-test scores before and after the conduct of the program, and the student's perception on the effectiveness of the Communicative English Competency Program. The Communicative English Competency Program students' pre- test and post- test scores were described using the following scale:

Vocabulary	Grammar	Reading	Writing	Total	Descriptive Interpretation
50	50	30	30	160	
46-50	46-50	26-30	26-30	141- 160	Very High Competency
36- 45	36- 45	21-25	21-25	111- 140	High Competency
26- 35	26- 35	16-20	16-20	81- 110	Low Competency
25- below	25- below	15- below	15- below	80- below	Very Low Competency

The student's perception on the effectiveness of the Communicative English Competency

Program was described using the following arbitrary scale:

Scale	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1	1.00- 1.50	Strongly Disagree/ Very Ineffective
2	1.51- 2.50	Disagree/ Ineffective
3	2.51- 3.50	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Effective
4	3.51- 4.50	Agree/ Effective
5	4.51- 5.00	Strongly Agree/ Very Effective

Paired Samples T- Test was used to evaluate the significant difference in the pre- test and post- test scores of students before and after

the Communicative English Competency Program using a 0.05 level of significance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Test of the Significant Difference between the Communicative English Language Competency Level of Students based on the Students' Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading, and Writing Pre- Test and Post- Test Mean Scores

Communicative English Language Competency Level: Pre-Test vs. Post-Test Scores						
Vocabulary Competency	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation	t- value	p- value	
Pre- Test Score	30.33	5.30	Low Competency	-1.89	0.08 ns	
Post- Test Score	33.27	4.20	Low Competency			
Grammar Competency	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation	t- value	p- value	
Pre- Test Score	27.87	5.29	Low Competency	-0.80	0.44 ns	
Post- Test Score	28.93	4.18	Low Competency			
Reading Competency	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation	t- value	p- value	
Pre- Test Score	20.47	3.91	Low Competency	-2.80	0.01 s	
Post- Test Score	21.93	3.83	High Competency			
Writing Competency	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation	t- value	p- value	
Pre- Test Score	13.33	4.50	Very Low Competency	-4.85	0.00 s	

Over- all Competency Score	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation	t- value	p- value
Pre- Test Score	92.00	11.92	Low Competency	-4.66	0.00 s
Post- Test Score	102.40	10.45	Low Competency		

Table 1 shows the significant difference between the English Competency mean score of the students before and after the program in terms of vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing.

The vocabulary pre-test score indicates a mean of 30.33 (SD= 5.30), suggesting a low competency level. Following the intervention, the vocabulary post-test score shows a mean of 33.27 (SD= 4.20) with a descriptive interpretation of low competency, however, it is important to note that the improvement from the pre-test suggests positive progress. The test of significant difference also shows that there is no significant difference between the pre- test and post- test vocabulary scores of the students (p-value= 0.08).

The grammar pre-test score indicates a mean of 27.87 (SD= 5.29), categorizing the competency level as low, while the grammar post-test score shows that there is a slight increase with a mean of 28.93 (SD= 4.18). Despite the descriptive interpretation still categorizing it as "Low Competency," the marginal improvement suggests a positive trend in grammar competency. However, like the vocabulary pre-test and post- test scores of the students, there is no significant difference between the grammar pre- test and post- test scores of the students (p-value= 0.44).

The reading comprehension pre- test score shows a mean of 20.47, (SD= 3.91), categorizing the competency level as "Low Competency." However, after the implementation of the program, the post-test scores demonstrated a noteworthy improvement with a high competency mean post-test score of 21.93, (SD= 3.83). Statistical analysis further supports the observed improvement, with a significant difference between the reading comprehension pre- test and post- test score (p-value= of 0.01). This statistical significance suggests that enhancement in reading competency is attributed to the intervention. The educational implications of this improvement are substantial, indicating that the implemented program has effectively elevated students' reading skills.

The writing pre- test score shows a mean of 13.33, (M= 4.50), characterizing the competency level as "Very Low Competency." Following the implementation of the program, the writing post-test scores indicated a substantial improvement as evident by a mean post-test score of 18.27, (SD= 2.52). The analysis strongly supports the improvement observed, with a highly significant difference between the writing pre- test and post-test scores of the students (p-value= 0.00). This shows that the intervention played a crucial role in enhancing writing competency.

The over- all English competency scores, as revealed by both pre-test and post-test results, present a notable improvement in the general competency of the students. The mean score increased from 92.00 in the pre-test to 102.40 in the post-test, indicating a positive shift in the overall competency level. The English Competency Program has shown promising results in enhancing both reading and writing skills based on the provided pre-test and post-test scores, suggesting the effectiveness of the program in improving the students' English language competencies. The statistically significant difference between the English competency pre- test and post- test scores (p-value= 0.00) emphasizes that the program has positively impacted students' general competency.

In some cases of remedial teaching program in the college setting, students have shown significant progress in their abilities to use English as their first or second language and the effectiveness of the courses is influenced by innovation and utilization of some strategies towards imparting long lasting language skills in students (Khan, 2017). Ho (2016) also affirmed that the English remedial course for low proficiency college students reported an improvement in their basic skills in English and had highly positive attitudes toward English learning and that their motivation was also enhanced (Chao and Tseng, 2017). Furthermore, Bansal's (2017), study have affirmed that guided reading and sentence making practice had improved the comprehension skills and reinforced grammar knowledge and fluency of

students. In certain college remedial English proficiency programs, students have shown notable improvement in using English, whether it is their first or second language and the success of these courses depends on implementing strategic plans to impart lasting language skills (Alghamdi and Siddiqui, 2016; 2017). Moreover, properly conducted CLT English programs that can provide more than just academic support, especially with regards to raising motivation, self-esteem and more confidence in one's ability for both language acquisition and learning, according to research, can significantly enhance students' language proficiency (Alwazir and Shukri, 2017).

However, despite this improvement, the descriptive interpretation categorizes both sets of scores as "Low Competency," underscoring the complexity of addressing and elevating overall proficiency levels. The persistent categorization as "Low Competency" highlights the need for ongoing efforts and potentially more targeted interventions to bring about further advancements in students' overall proficiency. In previous studies, many students who undergo a remedial course or training program in English

studies finish their course work without improvement in their performance because they are not exposed to practical use of the language outside their classes (Eno, 2019; Selvarajan, 2022). The main reason for this is that most of the students start using their native language as soon as they step out of the classrooms. The evidence suggests that over-all, the program may have been insufficient in length for these low achieving students to achieve the required progress (Pan, et. al., 2018). This means that the only time they use English exclusively is when they are in the program or their limited exposure in their classrooms and failure to expose the students to the use of English in prolonged periods leads to the erosion of the new ideas that they learn in class (Wang, et. el., 2013). It was also noted that learning a new language is effective when a student has a prolonged exposure to its use (Pan, 2016), thus, an extension of the program may provide more help to these low- achieving students, thus it was also suggested that an additional time for the lecture should be conducted. (Jez and Wassmer, 2015, cited in Pan, 2016).

Table 2. Perceived Effectiveness of the Communicative English Competency Program to the Students in terms of Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading Comprehension, and Writing Competency

Student's Responses on the Effectiveness of the English Competency Program	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
Vocabulary Competency			
1. The program improved my ability to use vocabulary in communicating in English.	4.80	0.41	Strongly Agree
2. I have incorporated the new vocabulary skills that I have learned into my writing and speaking.	4.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
3. The program equipped me with strategies for expanding my vocabulary skills.	4.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
4. The program effectively improved my vocabulary skills.	4.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
5. I feel more confident in using new words and expressions in English.	4.47	0.52	Agree
Total Mean	4.80	0.41	Very Effective
Grammar Competency			
6. The program provided a comprehensive review of the grammar I had previously learned in school.	4.87	0.35	Strongly Agree
7. Following the completion of the program, I could produce meaningful and grammatically correct sentences.	4.47	0.52	Agree
8. The program effectively improved my understanding of English grammar.	4.80	0.41	Strongly Agree
9. I am more confident in my ability to use correct grammar in spoken and written English.	4.40	0.51	Agree
10. After finishing the program, I could communicate using grammatically correct sentences.	4.40	0.51	Agree
Total Mean	4.59	0.37	Very Effective

Reading Comprehension Competency			
11. After completing the program, I became proficient in critically reading and extracting ideas from texts.	4.67	0.49	Strongly Agree
12. The program aided me in understanding and grasping texts relevant to my academic field.	4.53	0.52	Strongly Agree
13. Upon completing the program, I gained the capacity to understand and interpret written materials.	4.67	0.49	Strongly Agree
14. The program enhanced my ability to comprehend diverse types of texts.	4.73	0.46	Strongly Agree
15. I find it easier to understand and interpret English texts after participating in this program.	4.47	0.64	Agree
Total Mean	4.61	0.42	Very Effective
Writing Competency			
16. The program honed my skills in composing written texts for various purposes.	4.47	0.52	Agree
17. The program afforded me the opportunity to review writing mechanics and punctuation.	4.67	0.49	Strongly Agree
18. The program enabled me to write reports pertinent to my academic field.	4.33	0.72	Agree
19. The program has helped me become a more effective writer in English.	4.67	0.49	Strongly Agree
20. I am more confident in expressing my thoughts and ideas in written English.	4.47	0.64	Agree
Total Mean	4.52	.47	Very Effective
Grand Mean	4.64	.30	Very Effective

Table 2 shows the perceived effectiveness of the communicative English competency program to the students in terms of vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing competency.

In terms of vocabulary enhancement, the students expressed a strong agreement with the notion that the program significantly enhanced their ability to utilize vocabulary in English communication (M= 4.80, SD = 0.41), they incorporated the newly acquired vocabulary skills from the program into both their written and spoken expressions (M= 4.87, SD = 0.35), the program provided them with effective strategies for expanding their vocabulary skills (M= 4.87, SD = 0.35), the program had effectively contributed to the improvement of their vocabulary skills (M= 4.87, SD = 0.35). The students had also agreed that they are feeling more confident when employing new words and expressions in English (M= 4.47, SD = 0.52). The students had also indicated that the vocabulary enhancement part of the program is very effective (M= 4.80, SD= 0.41).

In terms of grammar skills enhancement, the students strongly agreed that the program offered a comprehensive review of grammar learned in previous school experiences, indicating a thorough coverage of grammatical concepts (M= 4.87, SD = 0.35), that they gained the ability to produce meaningful and grammatically correct

sentences following the completion of the program, demonstrating a positive impact on practical language use (M= 4.47, SD = 0.52), that the program significantly enhanced their understanding of English grammar, reflecting a high level of effectiveness in imparting grammatical knowledge (M= 4.80, SD = 0.41). The students have also agreed that their sense of confidence in using correct grammar in both spoken and written English had increased (M= 4.40, SD = 0.51) indicating a positive impact on their linguistic self-assurance, and that the students could effectively communicate using grammatically correct sentences, underscoring the practical application of grammar skills gained from the program (M= 4.40, SD = 0.51). The students had also indicated that the grammar skills enhancement part of the program is very effective (M= 4.59, SD= 0.37).

In terms of reading comprehension enhancement, the students have strongly agreed that they have acquired a high level of proficiency in critically reading and extracting ideas from texts after completing the program (M= 4.67, SD = 0.49), suggesting a significant improvement in their analytical reading skills, that the program helped the students to understand and grasp texts relevant to their academic field (M= 4.53, SD = 0.52) indicating a beneficial impact on academic reading comprehension, the students gained the capacity

to understand and interpret written materials, as indicated by a strong agreement ($M= 4.67$, $SD = 0.49$), highlighting an enhanced ability to engage with and make sense of written content, the program improved the students ability to comprehend diverse types of texts, as reflected in a high rating ($M= 4.73$, $SD = 0.46$), emphasizing the broad impact on their text comprehension skills. The students have also agreed that it easier to understand and interpret English texts after participating in the program ($M= 4.47$, $SD = 0.64$) and suggesting a positive influence on their overall ease of comprehension when dealing with English-language materials. The students have also indicated that the reading comprehension enhancement part of the program is very effective ($M= 4.61$, $SD= 0.42$).

In terms of the writing enhancement part of the program, the students agreed that the program played a crucial role in refining their skills in composing written texts for various purposes, with a positive rating ($M= 4.47$, $SD = 0.52$) indicating a notable improvement in their ability to create written content effectively, that the program enabled them to write reports relevant to their academic field, though with a slightly lower rating ($M= 4.33$, $SD = 0.72$), suggesting a positive but somewhat less pronounced impact on academic writing skills, the students had increased confidence in expressing thoughts and ideas in written English following the program ($M= 4.47$, $SD = 0.64$) indicating a positive impact on their confidence in written expression.

The students had also strongly agreed that the program was also seen as providing valuable opportunities for reviewing writing mechanics and punctuation ($M= 4.67$, $SD = 0.49$), highlighting the program's impact on enhancing foundational elements of writing, and that the program helped the students become a more effective writer in English, underscoring its positive influence on overall writing proficiency ($M= 4.67$, $SD = 0.49$). The students have also indicated that the writing enhancement part of the program is very effective ($M= 4.52$, $SD= 0.47$).

The result indicates an over- all high level of effectiveness as perceived by the students. In the context of the survey, where students have rated various aspects of a program such as vocabulary improvement, grammar competency, critical reading skills, and writing abilities, a grand mean of 4.64 suggests that the students found the program to be highly effective across these

different dimensions. This suggests that the program had a positive impact on a broad range of language skills, with students expressing a high degree of agreement in their assessments.

As stated in the research of Butler (2011) in Ho (2016), students learned most effectively when they were taught in a communicative setting since the improvement in the statistical results showed that the program, which was especially tailored for these students, worked successfully for them as they felt a sense of achievement when they were able to complete a simple task which was within their capability as hands-on activities were proven to be engaging as these weak learners had short attention span (Yang, 2014; Wiboolyasarin, et. al., 2022). The students conveyed that engaging in reading comprehension exercises enhanced their ability to think critically while reading texts. Existing literature supports the efficacy of remedial reading as an evidence-based approach designed to enhance both reading fluency and comprehension (Balinas et al., 2017). This method of practice not only improves language skills but also fosters the development of general knowledge, forming the basis for fundamental life skills (Manalastas, 2023). This is consistent with the findings of Aldaihani, et. al. (2015) when it comes to writing well- organized and coherent paragraphs and compositions, students need to be active in the actual phase of writing activities in which they need to undergo drafting, revising, and editing processes to make progress.

Overall, the students deemed that the program is well-executed and meets its objectives, with students experiencing valuable improvements in their English language abilities. The intensive English programs play a significant role in enhancing learners' proficiency in both oral and written language (Dahkiel and Ahmed, 2022). The study conducted by Tutor, et. al. (2016) substantiated a substantial enhancement in students' English language proficiency following their participation in a similar program. Additionally, Jones's (2010 in Cimermanová, 2015) research revealed that students who successfully completed an English competency program displayed a significant improvement in their academic writing skills and an overall boost in confidence when using English for academic purposes. These findings strongly indicate that English competency programs yield positive outcomes on students' language skills and academic performance. Furthermore, Solikhah

(2015) conducted a similar study that focused on the long-term effects of English competency programs on students' career prospects and their research highlighted the positive correlation

CONCLUSION

This study is aimed at determining the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) graduating students' preparedness by evaluating their self-assessed English language communicative competence through a survey questionnaire, the English language competency level of the graduating students through a teacher-made test and the factors that affect their readiness in their future careers through an open-ended questionnaire using the Descriptive-Correlational Research Design and Thematic Analysis. The result showed that the graduating students have evaluated themselves as competent in their overall competency in the English language, therefore, it was determined that the students are certain that their ability in the grammatical and discourse aspect in using the English language is sufficient for them to enter the global workforce. The overall scores of the students are also regarded as high. This shows that the graduating students demonstrated a high level of communicative competence, which is crucial in today's global workplace. The result also revealed that although the students perceived themselves as competent and their test result is high, the result of the test of relationship between the self-assessed competency and the English language competency level of the students indicated that there is no significant association with their self-assessed competency and their actual competence in the English language because there might be factors other than self-perceived competency such as grade goals, The statistical analysis revealed significant differences in reading comprehension and writing scores between the pre-test and post-test assessments, reinforcing the positive impact of the program. The overall English competency scores also shows that there is an increased from 92.00 in the pre-test to 102.40 in the post-test, indicating a positive shift in the overall competency level of the students. The statistically significant difference between the English competency pre-test and post-test scores (p -value= 0.00) reflected an encouraging improvement.

The students' perceived effectiveness of the program, as evidenced by high satisfaction and

between participation in such programs and future employment opportunities, especially in fields that require strong English language skills

agreement with its benefits, further emphasized its success in enhancing vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skills.

The students had also deemed that the English Competency Program is highly effective in improving their vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing competencies. The students also viewed that the program is well-executed, successfully meeting its objectives, and significantly contributing to the improvement of their English language proficiency and in creating a conducive learning environment that fosters their linguistic development and overall language competence. The findings not only affirm the strengths of the Communicative English Competency Program but also provide valuable insights for strategic refinements, ensuring a sustained positive impact on learners in the pursuit of improved English language proficiency. Thus, educators should ensure that instructional materials are clear, organized, aligned with learning objectives, and visually appealing to maximize students' engagement and comprehension.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are given:

1. To implement a long-term impact assessment strategy to track the continued effectiveness of the English Competency Program, program implementers should evaluate the progress of students over an extended period to measure the lasting impact of the instructional material on language competencies to inform future adjustments and refinements to meet evolving educational needs.
2. While the communicative English competency program has demonstrated positive impacts on various language competencies, continuous efforts, targeted interventions, and extended program duration are necessary to address remaining challenges and ensure a lasting enhancement in the overall English language proficiency of the students.
3. Given the perceived effectiveness of the English Competency Program by the

students, incorporating successful elements of the program into regular curriculum and extracurricular activities can further enhance

language proficiency and create a conducive learning environment.

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