

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL

Kristine Mae Auayang

University of Saint Louis, Tuguegarao City, Philippines

Corresponding author email: kristinemaeauayang@usl.edu.ph

Keywords	Abstract
language competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, English language, education teachers	<p>Language competence is required among teachers for effective professional practice because they use language as a medium and object of instruction. This study aimed to determine the private basic education teachers' language competence. A mixed method was utilized to gather data. The study revealed that basic education teachers have an overall basic level of language competence. It is attributed to insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, amount of workload, lack of awareness about the language's social rules, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation on sensitivity, culture, behavior, and non-verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. Furthermore, English teachers and those who have higher educational attainment have an advanced level of overall language competence, while teachers who have longer years in teaching and those who have high educational attainment have an advanced level of sociolinguistic and strategic competence respectively. This implies that teachers who do not specialize in English, who are new in the teaching profession, and who are holders of bachelor's degree must undergo more training and seminars to intensify their competence in language; hence, there is a necessity to propose and implement a differentiated developmental program.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Language is absolutely central to both teaching and learning. Every aspect of a teacher's work — from establishing the social and disciplinary atmosphere of the classroom to communicating the intricate details of complex concepts — relies on the effective use of language. Having poor language skills might affect the teaching and learning process. Consequently, it will only end in confusion and misunderstanding. Therefore, teachers must be fluent in the language because it is their responsibility to ensure that language is not a barrier to learning.

According to several sources, language competence is crucial for effective teaching. Regardless of the subject, teachers must possess a good command of both formal academic language and informal language for personal connections with students, parents, and colleagues (Sadig & de Cat, 2019; Tsang, 2017; Derewianka & Jones, 2016). In addition, teachers play various roles and need different language competencies for each situation. While there has been a shift towards focusing more on learners and learning in recent years, teacher quality remains crucial for student achievement. Several studies have shown that language proficiency and competence are among the most important teacher characteristics contributing to quality teaching, along with subject-matter knowledge, knowledge about teaching, cognitive abilities, and relevant experience (Johnson & Poulter, 2015). For instance, Khan et al. (2017) found consistent evidence linking teachers' verbal abilities and student achievement. Positive interactions between teachers and students are also critical for academic success. Teachers with excellent communication skills and competent use of language can foster positive interactions with students, which can directly and indirectly affect academic performance by influencing student engagement and interest in learning.

Furthermore, language competency is one of the key competencies in the 21st century. In this era of globalization, communication across borders and cultures has become increasingly important, making language competence a vital skill to possess. Competence in language is closely linked to cognitive development, academic achievement, cultural awareness, and social interaction. Studies reveal that Filipinos who possess language competence have higher self-esteem (Dumlao, 2018), have higher chances of being employed (Palmes – Dennis, 2015), and are competitive in the global marketplace (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). Governments worldwide have recognized the importance of English language skills for a strong and sustainable economy and have been investing in improving citizens' English proficiency. Dunn and Kenyon (2017) highlights that improved English skills correlate with higher income and a better quality of life. Moreover,

English is the primary working language for engaging with ASEAN countries and the world. According to Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter, English is the only "working language," making it imperative for governments to prepare their citizens in ways that enable them to use English effectively (Hall & Walsh, 2002).

The Philippines has a reputation for high proficiency in English compared to its Southeast Asian neighbors, and it is the predominant medium of instruction in the country's educational system. The decline in English proficiency among Filipinos has been attributed to the implementation of bilingualism in 1974 and its subsequent reintroduction in 1987 (Jimenez, 2018; Cabigon, 2015; Saban, 2015). This decline has been supported by various surveys and observations, including Education First's revelation that the Philippines dropped seven spots in the English Proficiency Index and has experienced a decline in ranking since 2016 (Ulla, 2019). To address this issue, better English teachers should be employed (Jimenez, 2018; Saban, 2015), and the Department of Education has established the National English Proficiency Program to prepare proficient teachers to serve as mentors to less experienced teachers. However, it was found that Filipino teachers have low to average language competence levels in English (Bayaga, 2015). Many teachers, regardless of the content or grade level they teach, have deficiencies in their knowledge of grammar (Carlisi & Tinnirelo, 2015); they also lacked cultural awareness and sensitivity, which speaks much of their sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

While research on the English preparedness of Filipino teachers is limited, studies suggest that using English as a medium of instruction in Philippine classrooms could improve students' English achievement and appreciation of the language's role in globalization (Manalastas & Batang, 2018; Saban, 2015). Despite the decline in English proficiency, English language teaching in the Philippines has benefited the country educationally, politically, and economically. Aside from English, the child's mother tongue is used as a mandatory medium of instruction in the early grades, as required by the Department of Education in 2013. Also, the subjects EPP, Filipino, and Araling Panlipunan will be taught in the Filipino language. However, in 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte expressed his support for English as the primary medium of instruction at all levels of education since English proficiency is crucial for Filipinos to compete in the global market. As a response, in 2019, the Department of Education issued a memorandum allowing private schools to use either English or Filipino as the medium of instruction provided that the school has a language policy approved by its board of trustees. It is recognized that poor language skills may not only be attributed to teachers but also their competence, commitment, and influence will go a long way towards improving other fields in the education sector. Moreover, a growing body of research explores the students' language competence, while there is a deficiency of studies

concerning teachers' language competence. Importantly, no studies have explored the language competence of basic education teachers at the University of Saint Louis. With all these at hand, there is a need to study the language competence of teachers since student academic success greatly relies on teachers' language ability. It is now an apt time to study the English language competence of private basic education teachers.

METHODS

This study utilized a mixed method employing a sequential explanatory design. This is a two-phase design where quantitative data is collected and analyzed first; then qualitative data is collected and analyzed based on the quantitative results. The qualitative data is used to explain the quantitative data. The participants of the study involved the full-time basic education teachers of a private school in Northern Philippines in the school year 2022-2023. There were 161 full-time basic education teachers, wherein 31 came from the Elementary Department, 67 from the Junior High School, and 63 from the Senior High School. The researcher employed total enumeration in collecting data.

The main instruments used in this study were a self-made Communicative Competence questionnaire and a structured interview administered to the basic education teachers. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part is on the profile of respondents such as sex, age, type of school they graduated from, field of specialization, number of years in teaching and highest educational attainment; while the second part of the said tool contains ten multiple-choice items and five essay questions. The first five items assessed the linguistic competence of the respondents, while the succeeding multiple-choice items assessed their sociolinguistic competence. Moreover, the five essay questions assessed the discourse and strategic competence. An analytic rubric was utilized to assess and score the essay. Both assessment tools and rubrics are patterned and constructed from existing studies (Chen & Rau, 2013) which were validated by language and assessment experts. In addition, a structured interview was employed to improve the credibility of the findings.

To examine the profile of the respondents, the researcher used descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, mean scores, and percentages. The scale below was used to determine the respondents' communicative competence.

Level of Competence	Description
Basic Competence	This level of competence refers to the foundational skills and knowledge required in a particular domain or subject. It represents the minimum level of proficiency needed to perform tasks or activities in that area. Basic competence implies a basic understanding and ability to apply fundamental concepts, principles, and skills.

Advanced Competence	This level of competence goes beyond the basic level and represents a higher level of proficiency and expertise. It demonstrates a deeper understanding, extensive knowledge, and the ability to handle complex tasks or challenges within a specific domain. Advanced competence often involves critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and adapting and innovating within the given context.
----------------------------	--

Moreover, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to find the differences in competence when grouped according to their profile variable.

Lastly, T-test was used to compare the groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Profile of the Basic Education Teachers

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	70	43.48
	Female	91	56.52
	Total	161	100.00
Field of Specialization	English	30	18.60
	Math	17	10.60
	Science	16	9.94
	Filipino	20	12.42
	AP	16	9.94
	MAPEH	18	11.18
	Elementary	15	9.31
	Business Management and Accountancy	10	6.21
	IT Related	10	6.21
	TLE / HE	9	5.59
	Total	161	100.00
Type of School	Private	96	59.63
	Public	65	40.37
	Total	161	100.00
Number of Years in Teaching	Less than 1 year	20	12.42
	1 to 5	93	57.76

	6 to 10	37	22.98
	11 and above	11	6.84
	Total	161	100.00
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor	75	46.58
	with Master's Units	35	21.74
	MA/MS	48	29.82
	with Doctoral Units	3	1.86
	Total	161	100.00

The demographical analysis in Table 1 describes the respondents' profiles in terms of sex, field of specialization, type of school, number of years in teaching, and highest educational attainment. After careful interpretation and analysis, the study reveals that 56.52% or 91 respondents are female while 43.48% are male. This implies that females dominate the teaching profession. In terms of field of specialization, the respondents are from various disciplines. However, it is essential to note that most of them specialize in English, Filipino, and MAPEH. This suggests that language teachers dominate the institution. In addition, the majority of the respondents, 59.63% or 96 respondents, are graduates of private institutions, while 40.37%, or 65 respondents, are graduates of public institutions. Furthermore, it can be seen in the table that the majority, 57.76% or 93 respondents, belongs to the bracket of 1 to 5 years. Thus, the institution is flocked by fresh graduates. Finally, most respondents are bachelor's degree holders garnering 46.58% or 75 respondents. Meanwhile, 29.81% or 48 respondents are master's degree holders, 21.74% or 35 respondents have Master's Degree units, and 1.86% or three respondents have Doctor's Degree units.

Table 2: Language Competence of the Basic Education Teachers

Areas	Advanced Competence		Basic Competence	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Linguistic Competence	46	28.57	115	71.43
Sociolinguistic Competence	76	47.20	85	52.80
Discourse Competence	68	42.24	93	57.76
Strategic Competence	27	16.77	134	83.23

The data in Table 2 summarizes the language competence of the basic education teachers. As seen in the table, the results of the study reveal that in terms of linguistic competence, 71.43% or 115 respondents have basic competence, while 28.57% or 46 respondents possess advanced competence. This implies that most of the respondents have limited knowledge of language rules and have difficulty identifying and producing sentences with accurate

grammatical structures. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, 52.80% or 85 respondents have basic competence, while 47.20%, or 76 respondents have advanced competence. This infers that most of the respondents cannot use that knowledge in interpreting and producing meaningful texts appropriate to specific situations. Also, they are challenged in answering speech acts with the correct level of appropriateness. In terms of discourse competence, 57.76%, or 93 respondents, have basic competence, while 42.24%, or 68 respondents, have advanced competence. This suggests that most respondents have limitations in producing intelligible and logical sentences. Finally, in terms of strategic competence, 83.23%, or 134 respondents, have basic competence, while 16.77%, or 27 respondents, have advanced competence. It suggests that most respondents struggle to address communication breakdowns through strategies.

Linguistic Competence

The results of this study suggest that the respondents have limited knowledge of grammar and lack skills in using the appropriate language structures and forms. Furthermore, they are unable to distinguish grammatically correct sentences from incorrect ones. Hence, this illustrates their low awareness of grammar, pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary rules, which produces grammatically incorrect sentences. In addition, the respondents' answers pointed out that they have low linguistic competence because of their field of specialization, dependence on colleagues, insufficient feedback on their grammar, lack of training and seminar, and perceptions about grammar. Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

T10: *"English is not my field of specialization, so I am not really particular in my grammar. But I understand the need to have good grammar as a teacher since we should be effective communicators."*

T11: *"We are not usually corrected with our grammar errors because it is acceptable for us who do not major in English."*

T21: *"I think teachers have poor grammar because we let our colleagues check our grammar for us, especially the English majors. We approach them to proofread our work, for example, a letter, our powerpoint, a quiz, or even a message, just to be sure. Instead of educating ourselves, sometimes we just ask them directly considering the amount of work that still needs to be done."*

T30: *"I guess it is because the training that we attend to are not really about grammar or language. For me, I focus on the topics related to my major or on teaching strategies."*

T32: *"Maybe it is because we are not particular so much on the structure but on the content of what we say. If the thought is already clear and well-understood, that is already enough."*

Sociolinguistic Competence

It is important to note that of all the areas, this is where the respondents excel the most. The results of this study indicate that even though they attempt to address the speech acts, most respondents tend to answer less socially appropriate replies. This reveals that they struggle to understand and using the language in varied contexts and situations. In addition, they show minimal sensitivity to the appropriate level of formality for a specific situation or social interaction. Moreover, the respondents attributed the low levels of sociolinguistic competence to experience in teaching, lack of seminars and training, and over-emphasis on grammar. Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

T01: "Since I am just new in teaching, I am still adjusting with my learners. Also, I am still learning how to deal with situations professionally. I have to be very careful with the words I use most especially when talking with my students and their parents."

T11: "I do not attend trainings about this since I thought it is for English majors only. Although we are advised to be tactful always especially in front of others, I still find it difficult to say things in a different way."

T29: "I do not remember if I have attended a seminar about sociolinguistics since it is not related to my expertise. Maybe the reason for this is lack of seminars attended or exposure to this field."

T30: "I think it is because we focus more on grammar than the social use of the language. When we say English, grammar comes first into our minds. So, teachers focus on pronunciation, spelling, subject verb agreement and the like."

T32: "For new teachers, it can be because of their lack of experience. They are still young and they handle only few classes compared to the others. They only met few parents or talk to few colleagues that is why they are not yet experts in sociolinguistics."

Discourse Competence

The results of the study suggest that the respondents have a basic level of discourse competence. It implies that they lack knowledge, ability, and skills in linking or organizing intelligible sentences and utterances. Likewise, they have limitations in determining the coherence and organization between and among sentences. Therefore, they find it difficult to produce or compose unified and unnecessarily repeated sentences, be it speaking or writing. In addition, the respondents stated that the inability to make ideas comprehensible, over-emphasis on grammar rules and pronunciation, inability to use transitional words, and field of specialization are the reasons for low discourse competence. Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

To5: *“Some teachers can over explain sometimes. Since they want to explain or discuss a topic thoroughly to students, they tend to repeat themselves over again.”*

To8: *“Whenever we discuss, there are a lot of ideas in our mind. Sometimes, we fail to arrange them in a logical way. That is why some pupils or students find it difficult to follow the discussion also. Though we try our best to explain clearly.”*

T17: *“Instead of the order of ideas, most times we check the grammar first, or we look for misspelled words when we write. When it comes to speaking, it is still the same. We are more conscious of our grammar and the choice of words, even our pronunciation. Students like to copy the way we pronounce or check our grammar.”*

T20: *“I notice that some teachers do not use cohesive devices or transitional words much that is why they do not establish order or cohesion in speech or writing.”*

T22: *“Whenever there are speaking or writing engagements for teachers, English majors are usually assigned to do the task because it is imperative that they speak and write better than other majors. They can compose ideas quickly and orderly.”*

Strategic Competence

Among the four areas of language competence, the respondents' main weakness is strategic competence. The results of the study imply that the majority of the respondents have difficulties addressing and compensating for communication problems due to insufficient knowledge of social behaviour and communication norms. Hence, they are limited to knowing the communication breakdowns without knowing how to deal with the hindrances. Though they attempt to solve or address communication problems by using communication strategies, they cannot carry out their communicative intent. Finally, teaching experience, lack of seminars and training, limited guidance and coaching, low awareness of communication strategies, and field of specialization were seen to be the reasons for the low strategic competence. Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

To6: *“Whenever I encounter difficult people, most especially parents or colleagues, I get nervous when they are angry. I find it difficult to think of ways on how to say things in a gentle way just so their anger could be appeased. Maybe it is because I am still new in the teaching profession.”*

To9: *“We are taught much about the content of the subject matter we teach and the strategies we employ, but we have limited coaching or guidance on situations that call for strategic competence. Sometimes we are hesitant to speak much because we might appear unprofessional with our word choice.”*

T12: *“At times, we get misunderstood by other people especially our pupils and their parents. That leads to communication breakdowns. Instead of prolonging the*

argument, we try to end the discussion gently. It is difficult to explain our point of views when we are misunderstood because of some barriers in communication.”

T19: “Now that I have learned that there are strategies that we can use in handling communication breakdowns, I must say that the reason why teachers and most people have low strategic competence is because there is a low awareness of these strategies. We would like to know the strategies that would be best used in specific situations.”

T22: “The reason why, us, teachers have low strategic competence is because we do not have trainings about it. Our trainings focus on technology, strategies, research, policies and laws about education, and the like. I think the language teachers are only familiar about this.”

Overall Language Competence

The respondents acknowledged that they have a basic level of overall language competence due to insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, amount of workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminar and trainings for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation on sensitivity, culture, behavior and non – verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

To4: “English is not our area of expertise; that is why some are not knowledgeable of the rules to follow, most especially in grammar. Given the workload that we face every day, we do not have ample time to read about grammar and the English language as a whole.”

T12: “Since lack of awareness and training were mentioned, there should be a separate seminar or training for this since it is not just grammar we are talking about. Topics on effective use of language in different contexts and strategies in combating communication breakdowns may be tackled for our professional growth.”

T17: “English is not my first language, nor my major. Sometimes, when I cannot think of the term in English, I use the Filipino translation. Code-switching is practiced by those who are not experts in English. While the intention is to make the discussion or explanation better and clearer, sometimes, it hinders the pupils or students from understanding better.”

T19: “Aside from grammar in speaking and writing, our undergraduate studies did not really stress the importance of social rules or communication strategies. What I remembered was, if the grammar is correct, then it must be understood. Our foundation on sensitivity to culture, behavior, non – verbal communication, and the like is not much emphasized.”

T20: *“The medium of instruction on the subject matter I teach is Filipino. I use Filipino more often inside the classroom, but I use English when it comes to writing school documents and other paperwork. Sometimes, I am anxious to speak in English because students nowadays outrightly correct their teachers regarding pronunciation, grammar, and spelling.”*

The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents have basic competence in language, but struggle with accurate grammar, appropriate speech acts, logical sentences, and communication breakdowns. This aligns with previous studies showing a decline in English language competence among the Filipino workforce, partly attributed to untrained and non-proficient teachers (Bautista, 2016). The Department of Education survey in 2008 found that 80 percent of secondary school teachers in the Philippines failed an English proficiency exam, while Bayaga (2015) reported low to average language competence among Filipino teachers. Digap (2016) noted their lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, impacting sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Meniado (2018) also highlighted low English proficiency among teachers and graduates. Similar concerns have been observed in Indonesia (Lie et al., 2019) and globally, with Renandya (2018) noting that many English teachers are non-native speakers with limited proficiency.

Nowadays, language competence has become a core employability skill in many fields because it supports the development of other skills (Luka & Seniut, 2019). In the educational setting, language competence is required among teachers for effective professional practice because they use language as a medium and object of instruction. Several sources confirm the importance of teachers who possess language competence to teach effectively. All teachers share this requirement regardless of the subject being taught to foster proper language use (Sadig & de Cat, 2019; Tsang, 2017; Derewianka & Jones, 2016). Actually, several different teacher effects contribute to quality teaching, but according to Johnson & Poulter (2015), language proficiency and competence are among the most crucial teacher characteristics. A critical factor in teachers' language competence is their proficiency level in the language of instruction. Sert (2014) states that teachers with a high level of proficiency in the language they are using can better communicate effectively with their students, understand their needs and concerns, and provide appropriate feedback on their development. This suggests that teacher proficiency in the language of instruction is a key factor in student achievement in language learning. Moreover, another essential aspect of language competence for teachers is the ability to use appropriate teaching strategies and techniques to support learning. Liu (2015) affirms understanding how to provide effective input and feedback, using a variety of learning activities and resources, and adapting instruction to meet the needs of different learners. Certainly, teachers skilled in these areas

can better support development and promote student success. In addition, the teacher's language competence has an impact on student learning outcomes. Almarza & Lopez – Navarro (2020) and Jenkins (2018) support this claim because they have found that teacher language proficiency and teaching strategies are positively associated with student achievement. For example, teachers who are highly proficient in the language of instruction and use a variety of learning activities have been shown to impact student language proficiency and overall academic achievement positively. These studies suggest that teachers' language competence can significantly impact the quality of their instruction and the success of their students. They also highlight the importance of professional development in enhancing the teachers' language competence. Various studies stated that Filipino teachers are outstanding in classroom management, interpersonal communication with their colleagues, and student motivation, but Balgoa (2019) emphasized that their grammatical competence should still be improved. Also, Alviz (2019) also mentioned that while they are proficient in reading comprehension, teachers struggle to express themselves in written form.

Moreover, the results indicate that the reasons for the teachers' basic level of competence are field of specialization, dependence on colleagues, lack of training and seminar, and perceptions about grammar, insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, amount of workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminar and trainings for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation on sensitivity, culture, behavior and non – verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. These findings share the same result with the studies conducted (Thadphoonton 2017; Gul & Aziz, 2015) which state that heavy workload, unavailability of time, sense of embarrassment, the exodus of teachers to jobs overseas, lack of competence and training, and lack of opportunities and platforms to use English are seen as additional reasons seen why teachers are lacking in language competence. Similarly, Ulla (2018; 2019) further agrees that teachers' decline in English language competence can be attributed to the perceived lack of teachers' professional development programs, exposure, and support for an English-speaking environment. Feng and He (2019) agree that teachers are not regularly motivated to use English as a medium of instruction. They also fail to understand that language competence is essential in the teaching process.

In summary, the results of the study indicate that teachers have a basic level of competence. This finding has been seen to be consistent with numerous studies, thus, adding up to the number of research that confirms the decline of English language competence among teachers. Teachers' language competence can significantly impact their instruction quality and students' academic achievement. In addition, the results of the present study identify

that insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, amount of workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation on sensitivity, culture, behavior and non – verbal communication, and anxiety in using English are the primary reasons for the low overall language competence of the respondents. Indeed, this highlights the importance of improving the language competence of teachers through professional development.

Table 3: Test of Significant Difference in the Language Competence of the Basic Education Teachers when Grouped According to their Profile Variables

Profile Variables	Areas	t/F-value	p-value	Description
Sex	Linguistic Competence	0.226	0.882	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	-0.287	0.775	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	0.552	0.582	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	0.859	0.392	Not Significant
	Overall	0.341	0.735	Not Significant
Field of Specialization	Linguistic Competence	2.837	0.004	Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	1.138	0.340	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	2.608	0.008	Significant
	Strategic Competence	3.090	0.002	Significant
	Overall	2.505	0.011	Significant
Type of School	Linguistic Competence	-0.587	0.558	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	1.528	0.129	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	-0.445	0.657	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	0.350	0.726	Not Significant
	Overall			

	Overall	0.271	0.787	Not Significant
Number of Years	Linguistic Competence	0.412	0.744	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	3.465	0.018	Significant
	Discourse Competence	1.057	0.369	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	0.893	0.446	Not Significant
	Overall	1.480	0.222	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	Linguistic Competence	1.458	0.228	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	1.965	0.121	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	1.918	0.129	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	2.917	0.036	Significant
	Overall	2.845	0.040	Significant

Table 3 presents the test of significant differences in the language competence of the basic education teachers when grouped according to their profile variables. In general, there is a significant difference in the language competence of private basic education teachers in terms of field of specialization, number of years in teaching, and highest educational attainment. Specifically, there is a significant difference in the language competence of basic education teachers along linguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and overall language competence when grouped according to field specialization. This suggests that the type of subject or field the teacher specializes in can impact their language competence. Furthermore, there is also a significant difference in the language competence of basic education teachers along with sociolinguistic competence when grouped according to the number of years of teaching. This suggests that the teacher's experience can also impact their language competence, specifically in terms of their ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. And finally, a significant difference exists in the language competence of the basic education teachers along strategic competence and overall language competence when grouped according to highest educational attainment. This suggests that the level of education the teacher achieves can impact their language competence, specifically in terms of their ability to use language effectively to achieve their communication goals.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that basic education teachers have a basic level of overall language competence, and it is attributed to reasons such as insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, amount of workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminar and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation on sensitivity, culture, behavior and non – verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. Furthermore, teachers who specialize in English and those who have higher educational attainment have an advanced level of overall language competence, while teachers who have longer years in teaching and those who have high educational attainment have an advanced level of sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence respectively. This implies that teachers who do not specialize in English, who are new in the teaching profession, and who are holders of bachelor's degree must undergo more training, seminars, and symposia to intensify their competence in language; hence, there is a necessity to propose and implement a differentiated developmental program.

REFERENCES

- Almarza, G., & López-Navarro, I. (2020). Language competence and confidence of novice English language teachers. *Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 22(1), 1-17.
- Alviz, A. (2019). The Language Proficiency and Process Skills of Filipino High School Teachers. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 2(3), 615 – 628. DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.02.03.93
- Balgoa, N. (2019). Filipino English Teachers in Japan: “Nonnativeness” and the Teaching and Learning of English. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), pp. 256 – 263. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1002.06>
- Bautista, E. (2016). English language competence of Filipino nurses: Implications for quality healthcare. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 37(6), 583-598.
- Bayaga, A. (2015). Language competence of Philippine teachers: Basis for enhancing the quality of education. *Philippine Journal of Education*, 84(1), 97-118.
- Cabigon, M. (2015). State of English in the Philippines: Should We Be Concerned? Retrieved from: <https://www.britishcouncil.ph/teach/state-english-philippines-should-we-be-concerned-2>
- Carlisi, C., & Tinnirello, S. (2015). Investigating English grammar knowledge of prospective teachers: A mixed methods study. *Teaching Education*, 26(1), 29-49.
- Chen, Y. & Rau, V. (2013). Developing Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tasks as Pedagogical Materials in L2 Pragmatics. Retrieved from: www.ccunix.ccu.edu.tw
- Derewianka, B. & Jones, P. (2016). Teaching Language in Context. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED574011>
- Digap, A. L. (2016). Self-Efficacy, English Proficiency and Effectiveness of Teachers of English in the Secondary Schools. *SMCC Higher Education Research Journal*, 2(1).

- Dumlao, A. B. (2018). Language attitudes and identity of Filipino youth in multilingual contexts. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 15(2), 154-170.
- Dunn, M., & Kenyon, D. (2017). The grammar conundrum: Preservice teacher knowledge of grammar and its pedagogy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(11).
- Feng, Z., & He, D. (2019). A study of the relationship between EFL teachers' sociolinguistic competence and teaching effectiveness. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 4(1), 1-11. doi: 10.1186/s40862-019-0074-4
- Gul, S. & Aziz, S. (2015). Teachers' Level of Proficiency in English Speaking as Medium of Instruction and Causes for English Speaking Deficiency. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 37(1), pp. 97 – 105.
- Hall, J. K., & Walsh, M. (2002). Teacher–student interaction and language learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 186-203.
- Jenkins, J. (2018). Language teacher education and the development of language teacher competence. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 1-35.
- Jimenez, R. (2018). The Decline of English Proficiency in the Philippines. Retrieved from: <https://punto.com.ph/the-decline-of-english-proficiency-in-the-philippines/>
- Johnson, J. & Poulter, M. (2015). Teachers' Language Competence: Issues of Appropriation and Appropriacy. Retrieved from: https://books.google.com.ph/books?hl=en&lr=&id=gLmwBgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA179&dq=teachers+language+competence&ots=CK1fVDVhfU&sig=kwRtyUqDtGFeMuHmktmldoYfQt8&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Khan, A., Khan, S., Zia-Ul-Islam, S. & Khan, M. (2017). Communication Skills of a Teacher and Its Role in the Development of the Students' Academic Success. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(1), pp 18 – 21.
- Lie, A., Tamah, S., Waty, T., et. Al. (2019). English Proficiency of Secondary School Teachers in Indonesia. *Beyond Words*, 7(2).
- Liu, D. (2015). English language teacher competence in teaching English as a foreign language. *English Language Teaching*, 8(7), 1-9.
- Luka, I. & Senuit, I. (2019). Developing Students' Language Competence and Essential 21st Century Skills for Future Employability: The Case of Latvia and Lithuania. *Acta Educationis Generalis*, 9(2), 1 – 23. DOI: 10.2478/atd-2019-0006.
- Manalastas, A. & Batang, B. (2018). Medium of Instruction on Student Achievement and Confidence in English. *TESOL International Journal*, 13(3), pp 88 – 98.
- Meniado, J. (2019). Evaluating the English Proficiency of Faculty Members of a Higher Education Institution: Using Results to Develop Responsive Professional Development Program. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9(2), pp 52 – 64. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v9n2p52>
- OECD. (2018). The future of education and skills: Education 2030. Paris: OECD.
- Palmes-Dennis, J. L. (2015). English proficiency and employability among Filipino college graduates. *Philippine Journal of Linguistics*, 46(2), 1-19.
- Renandya, W. (2018). What Kind of English Proficiency Is Needed For Effective Teaching?
- Saban, G. A. (2015). Personal and Professional Qualities of Effective English Teachers in the Philippines. *The English Teacher*, 44(3), 120 – 131.

- Sadig, H.C. & De Cat, C. (2019). The Importance of Language Skills for Teachers. Retrieved from: <https://teachingexcellence.leeds.ac.uk/the-importance-of-language-skills-for-teachers/>
- Sert, O. (2014). The effect of language proficiency of EFL teachers on the quality of their instruction. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 8(1), 67-81.
- Thadphoonthon, J. (2017). English Language Competence of Thai School Teachers. Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322984455>
- Tsang, A. (2017). EFL/ESL Teachers' General Language Proficiency and Learners' Engagement. *RELC Journal*, 48(1), pp 99 – 103. DOI: 10.1177/0033688217690060
- Ulla, M. (2018). English Language Teaching in Thailand: Filipino Teachers' Experiences and Perspectives. Retrieved from: <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.022551600039008>
- Ulla, M. (2019). Filipinos as EFL teachers in Bangkok Thailand: Implications for Language Education Policy in the ASEAN Region. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219879775>