

Understanding the Expressive Skills of Tertiary Students: Implications for Developing an Effective Communication Skills Curriculum for Children

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Abstract

Expressive skills are the use of words, sentences, gestures, and writing to convey meaning and messages to others through speaking and writing. These skills enable learners to be able to express their wants and needs, thoughts and ideas and be able argue a point of view. In this descriptive-quantitative study, this aimed to determine the expressive skills' needs of the BSHRM Students in terms of Speaking and writing skills. The data reveal that the respondents often need to enhance their expressive skills as these are important skills which they should master as part of their career. More so, the result of this study could serve as baseline for an effective communication skills curriculum for children. Thus, there is a need to develop the expressive skills of students from their early childhood education. These skills are necessary to form thoughts and express them using appropriate word and grammar combinations. This may also include gesturing and facial expressions, especially in early childhood.

Keywords: *expressive skills, tertiary students, effective communication skills, curriculum, children, writing skill, speaking skill*

Introduction

One of the most significant accomplishments of early life is the acquisition of language abilities. The foundation for success later in life is language acquisition, which opens up new possibilities in developmental domains like cognitive, social, and emotional growth (Schlichting et al. 1995). Thus, it is important to consider communication skills as well as language development.

Communication is a method of exchanging ideas or information with one another (Baraceros, 2011). It begins with speakers stocking their brains with ideas and sending these to receivers or speakers, who must in turn react or respond to the message they have received from the speaker. Communication is the most indispensable tool which enables individuals to transmit ideas and information to another individual or group of individuals. Through communication, people open avenues for understanding and chart boundaries for development.

Writing is a systematic way of expressing ideas and feelings (Baraceros, 2012). It requires choosing and arranging ideas to fit the purpose of the writing act. On the other hand, speaking is the process of transmitting ideas and information orally in a variety of situations. Effective oral communication involves generating messages and delivering them with attention to vocal variety, articulation, and nonverbal signals (Quianthy, 2000). It gives one the chance to apply one's knowledge and improve one's speaking skills; and writing affords to express one's ideas. Tabares (2012) stressed that effective communication skills are required for successful careers. Studies showed that people who enjoy public speaking actually earn much than those who do not. Over 90% of personnel managers said that more communication skill is required for a successful career today.

Strong links have been found between oral language proficiency and academic success (Spencer et al., 2017), support for the development of literacy, and significance for learning across the curriculum (Alexander, 2013). Beyond academic achievement, oral language has a significant impact on social, emotional, and mental health both in the classroom and in later life (Schoon et al., 2010). Thus, oral language is a prerequisite for both learning and success. However, many kids find it difficult to learn how to speak. According to studies, 40% of kids in economically disadvantaged areas have delayed language development (Law et al., 2011), with the most disadvantaged kids showing the most

pronounced delays (Law, Todd et al., 2013). Additionally, the 'linguistic gap' (Oracy All-Party) might have grown wider as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic-related school cancellations.

The foreign language in use is predominantly English, as evidenced by the extensive volume of reports related to English (Robinsons, 2001). English language plays a very crucial role as the predominant tool for communication in the global community. Some people whose native language is not English use the language in their daily lives. Most of these people live in countries where English is required for external purposes to communicate and do business with people in other countries, and to catch up with the advances in the field of business. In addition, English is used as a means to transfer thoughts and cultures and to create good relationships between people in different countries (Prachanant, 2012). Thus, English is quite important especially to tourism, which includes among others the hotel and restaurant industry, as a thriving cross cultural enterprise. In the Philippines at present, the tourism industry is the 5th growth driver of the country next to manufacturing, trade, real estate and agriculture, according to the latest report by the Philippine Statistics Authority.

English is the means by which the tourism and hospitality employees communicate, negotiate and execute transactions with tourists who originate from different cultural groups and speak varied languages. Thus, the hotel and restaurant management (HRM) profession significantly requires English being the universal language as a means of communication. The multicultural work practices increasingly demand that HRM students and graduates be equipped with enhanced soft-skill proficiency, specifically, foreign language ability, communication confidence and cross-cultural experience (Gilleard and Gilleard, 2002).

In Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology, the Hotel and Restaurant Management students are expected to achieve proficiency in English to help them cope with the rigors of their prospective careers. Although the present curriculum on ESP has been designed to enhance the learners' communication skills for wider opportunities to be employed and to succeed in their profession, the result of this study can prove to be quite useful. It will reveal the state of the students' communication peculiar to their field by identifying their communication weaknesses or needs. Such research output may be looked into by the academic planners of the College when considering a possible improvement or redesigning of the existing curriculum or syllabus to truly prepare the BSHRM students for the demands of the hospitality industry.

Related Literature and Studies

This study is anchored on communication theory of constructivism which explains individual differences in the ability to communicate skillfully. This constructivist approach to human communication attempts to understand how people's interpretations of the social world influence communicative behavior (Burlston, 2006). It viewed communication as a skill, as a practical art for accomplishing social purposes, is particularly interested in understanding how individual differences in the perception of people and social events are related to the use of more and less effective forms of communication.

Constructivist theory is applied successfully to a great many communication events and behaviors and has generated one of the largest bodies of empirical findings in the communication discipline (Burlson and Caplan, 2008). Constructivist theory continues to be refined and applied in new settings, leading to improved understanding of many communication events and behaviors (Coopman, 2007). For example, in recent years the constructivist framework has served as a foundation for theories of relationship development and maintenance, cultural influences on communication, language acquisition and communicative development, socialization processes, and communication instruction, as well as examinations of communication processes in business, educational institutions, health care contexts, the mass media, and political settings.

Despite its many elaborations and extensions, at base constructivism remains a general theory of communication skill. That is, constructivism aims to provide descriptions and explanations of

individual differences in communication skill. It does this by presenting models or accounts of several things. First, constructivism identifies what counts as skillful conduct with respect to several processes, including social perception (the ability to acquire, retain, manipulate, and use information about the social world), message production (the ability to generate verbal and nonverbal messages that efficiently and effectively accomplish various personal and social goals), and message reception (the ability to fully comprehend the meaning of others' messages and, when appropriate, go beyond those messages to understand the source's intentions and motives). Second, constructivism explains why there are individual differences in these communication skills. That is, constructivism specifies the characteristics and qualities people must possess if they are to communicate in a skillful way. Third, constructivism explains the source or origin of individual differences in the characteristics that lead some people to be more skillful communicators than others. The rest of this chapter explores the explanations of communication skill generated by constructivist theory. Because constructivism maintains that the interpretive or perceptual processes of individuals play a central role in all communicative conduct.

The following concepts give the researcher insights on the importance of communication skills to students, varied communicative activities as well as the use of several instructional materials. Communication skills figure prominently specifically in expressing thoughts clearly, articulating opinions crisply, communicating coherent instructions, motivating others (Wilczynski, 2009). Communication skills include reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Importance of Expressive Skills in Communication

Successful communication is a complicated matter that requires the mastery of several different types of knowledge or competencies (Clark and Delia, 2009). First, people must know the linguistic or grammatical rules that enable them to produce and comprehend sentences in a particular language. Such knowledge is referred to as linguistic competence; this kind of competence is studied mostly by linguists and psycholinguists (psychologists who are especially interested in how people generate and process grammatical sentences).

Second, successful communicators must know the social rules that govern the appropriate use of language for different situations and groups of people. Knowing how to use and interpret expressions in socially correct or appropriate ways (as determined by the rules of a relevant community or group) is referred to as sociolinguistic competence. Third, successful communicators must know how to generate and process messages in ways that enable them to accomplish their personal and social goals efficiently and effectively. Skillful individuals must know how to produce messages that inform others clearly, persuade others convincingly, and comfort others sensitively. They must also be able to appreciate the nuances in others' messages and must even be capable of "reading between the lines" to extract intended meanings.

Functional communication competence includes more than the ability to produce messages that effectively achieve personal goals (Hart, Newell, & Olsen, 2003). Successful functional communication requires mastering skills associated with several distinguishable communication processes, including interpreting people and social situations (social perception), producing messages (message production), and receiving and processing messages generated by others (message perception).

Apa-ap (2006) postulates that oral communicative activities can guide and encourage the students to use English language in expressing their thoughts and ideas more effectively and to the best way possible. This also serves as supplementary materials for teachers to be used in providing the students with meaningful experiences while using the language. Her instructional material developed was based on the following concepts: language can be learned through communicative approach; oral communication skills of the students are developed through language acquisition, student's confidence in the use of the language is through constant practice; teachers play an important role in providing

students with comprehensible input, children's interest in acquiring the language can be aroused through the use of authentic materials, such as, songs, poems, chants, stories, games and role plays.

Bertram (2002) explains oral language development in school does not mean teaching students to speak so much as providing them with the skills and opportunities to communicate more effectively. Effective communication is developed through practice and training. Since language acquisition is a natural practice, this does not mean that all students will automatically acquire effective communication. Attention and constant practice are necessary for optimum development in communication.

According to Stone (2001) oral communicative activities allow students to practice using all the language they know in situations that resemble real things. In these activities, students must work together to develop, plan, resolve a problem, or complete a task. Students' learning is most effective when there is a relationship of mutual trust, this when students' oral language is accepted and a variety of communicative systems are accommodated in the classroom, and when students have frequent opportunities to talk in formal and informal situations. He further says that oral communicative activities are vital components of the English language curriculum and that these provide the base for growth in other language skills.

According to Shil et al. (2012), early language development is thought to advance along a developmental continuum of increasing complexity with children developing at varying rates. According to this paradigm, successful universal interventions in the primary years are likely to expand on the ideas discovered in research involving younger children. Given that the effectiveness of practices has varied depending on the age of participants (Mol et al., 2009), it is crucial that approaches are evaluated with the age range they were intended for and in the context in which they will be used. This is also important given the need for ecologically valid interventions (Greenwood et al., 2020). Ages 4-5 in England are required to attend school, and the reception year is governed by the early years.

The results of studies focusing on the early years may provide the greatest direction for language-supporting practice throughout this first year of formal education. However, the reception year is taught in a primary school, and to aid in the transition into the more formal curriculum that starts in Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7), the degree of formal teaching increases throughout the year (Aubrey, 2004). Since prior research has emphasized the importance of integrating oral language work into the school curriculum in reception along with other key stages (Dockrell et al., 2012; Lindsay et al., 2012), it is important to understand effective language-supporting practice from reception through the end of primary phase (age 11). Accordingly, effective strategies may differ from those implemented in pre-schools/nurseries.

Research Objective

Determine the communicative skills' needs of BSHRM students in terms of their writing and speaking skills.

Methodology

Descriptive-quantitative research method was used in this study. According to Valdez (2010) descriptive research is concerned with the description of data and characteristics about a population. It seldom involve experimentation, as they are more concerned with naturally occurring phenomena than with the observation of controlled situations. This study was conducted in Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology (ZSCMST) standing on a 30 hectare lot at Fort Pilar, Rio Hondo, Zamboanga City, founded in 1956 as Southern Mindanao branch of the Philippine Institute of Fisheries Technology (PIFT), predecessor of the University of the Philippines in the Visayas-College of Fisheries.

The sample size is 63 from third year and 58 from fourth year. In the selection of respondents, simple random sampling using lottery technique with replacement method was used. Students' names were written in small pieces of paper, rolled and placed in a container. After which, these rolled pieces of paper were picked out one at a time until desired number of respondents was achieved.

To meet the objective, a 3-point Likert type questionnaire - checklist was used consisting of two (2) parts: Part I student profile: gender, mother tongue, socio-economic status and high school graduated from, Part II communicative needs of the students comprising four (4) indicators listening, reading, speaking, and writing with each indicator listing ten expected communicative practices accompanied by three choices: 3- often, 2 sometimes and 1 - rarely. The responses relative to these practices were later interpreted as students' communicative needs.

The research instrument has gone through validation with the help of the experts in the field of communications. The results were computed using Cronbach Alpha with reliability estimates of 0.921 speaking, and 0.891 for writing. Results showed that the questionnaire was highly reliable, hence, ready for gathering data.

Results and Discussions

On the Communicative Needs of the BSHRM Students in Terms of Writing

Table 1. presents the students' assessment of their communicative needs in writing using weighted mean and standard deviation. It is shown that students yielded the highest weighted mean 2.59 in giving polite responses to customers' complaints implying that they often respond politely in writing to customers' complaints. They knew how to appropriately deal with complaints from the customers/guests, SD 0.57 indicates their responses on this item is similar with one another. Similarly, they often take down menu order in a systematic manner 2.56 construing that the students know how to list down menu order properly and correctly. However, standard deviation 0.66 shows quite dispersed responses inferring quite a variation in their assessment of taking down menu order.

Furthermore, formulating communication using correct grammar, logical organization, spelling and punctuation was rated 2.45 with standard deviation 0.56 implying that students often make communication letters systematically with correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation marks. As such, it can be surmised that students have developed skills in preparing letters within workplace. The SD suggests that assessment of students is quite similar with one another.

Table 1. Communicative Needs of the BSHRM Students in Terms of Writing

Item	Weighted Mean	SD	Description
1. Formulate communication using correct grammar, logical organization, spelling and punctuation.	2.45	0.56	Often
2. Take down menu order in a comprehensible and systematic manner	2.56	0.66	Often
3. Fill out reservation forms properly and adequately	2.38	0.72	Often
4. Handle effectively electronic reservations	2.27	0.74	Sometimes
5. Send clear and responsive mails to answer queries of customers' on hotel accommodation, restaurant menu, etc.	2.20	0.72	Sometimes
6. Produce comprehensive and accurate reports (occupancy,	2.17	0.70	Sometimes

accident, sales, etc.)			
7. Give polite responses to customers' complaints	2.59	0.57	Often
8. take down sufficient and correct notes during meetings.	2.38	0.65	Often
9. Come up with Substantive minutes of meetings.	2.28	0.65	Sometimes
10. 10. Write an memorandum effective upward communication or memorandum.	2.19	0.70	Sometimes
Average Weighted Mean	2.35	0.67	Often

2.34 - 3.00 *Often*

1.68 - 2.33 = *Sometimes*

1.00 - 1.67 *Rarely*

Likewise, it reveals that students rated filling out reservation forms properly and adequately 2.38 and has a standard deviation 0.72 implying that students often filled out reservation forms properly and adequately, knew the procedures and information to write in the reservation forms. The standard deviation value indicates that their responses are very much dispersed. Some rated themselves with high ratings while others low, resulting to great variation.

Analysis suggests that the students are used to these kinds of work in their respective workplace and have honed their writing skills through routine tasks. On the other hand, students rated 2.27 in handling effectively electronic reservations at and a standard deviation 0.74 implying that they sometimes handled effectively electronic reservations. However, they were less accustomed to handle electronic reservations resulting to failure in achieving effectiveness in the task. The standard deviation value shows that their responses are varied. Some rated themselves high and others low.

Moreover, students rated themselves 2.20 in sending clear and responsive mails to queries of customers on hotel accommodation, restaurant menu and etc at and standard deviation 0.72 showing that students sometimes sent clear and responsive mails to customers' queries on hotel accommodation, restaurant menu and others. It can be surmised that they have not achieved the desired proficiency level in this task and still need assistance to perform this task. Standard deviation value 0.72 suggests that students' responses were greatly dispersed from the mean manifesting variations in their assessment.

Likewise, they rated 2.17 in producing comprehensive and accurate reports with standard deviation 0.70 implying that they sometimes produced comprehensive and accurate reports, and such skills need to be strengthened. The standard deviation value indicates varying assessment of this particular task.

Furthermore, they rated 2.28 in coming up with substantive minutes of meetings and 2.19 in writing effective upward communication or memorandum at. It means that students sometimes came up with substantive minutes of the meeting showing non- attainment of the desired proficiency level in taking notes during meeting. However, the bigger standard deviation value manifests varying responses. Although sometimes they prepare effective memorandum for their superior, their skill in preparing memorandum or communication letter addressed to their superior is still lacking. Analysis suggests that they cannot always prepare comprehensive reliable reports and write comprehensive minutes of the meeting or prepare effective communication letter or memorandum to the manager surmising that students still need to enhance these writing skills.

The study is parallel to that of Wei and Flaith (2003) claiming that writing is a crucial area of academic language needing extension beyond the classroom.

On the Communicative Needs of the BSHRM Students in Terms of Speaking

Table 2. indicates that students yielded the highest weighted mean 2.79 in welcoming or greeting customers/guests warmly showing that they often greet or welcome guests/customers as part of routine. Likewise, standard deviation value 0.51 suggests that students have a little similar assessment of such task. Moreover, they rated 2.76 in speaking to guests in clear, appropriate and courteous language with standard deviation 0.40 indicating that they often communicate with guests appropriately, respectfully and courteously. Likewise, standard deviation indicates that they have similar responses on such behavior. In the same manner, they rated 2.68 in responding to complaints or dissatisfaction of customers in respectful and calm manner with standard deviation 0.58 signifying that they often respond in such manner. The standard deviation value suggests that they manifested similar responses.

Analysis suggests that students often practiced these tasks and therefore became accustomed to speaking with guests/customers either with or without complaints or dissatisfaction surmising that they have developed such skill in their job. On the other hand, they rated 2.32 in conveying to guests' informative details about the locality and its people with standard deviation 0.65 implying that they sometimes only express to guests informative details about the locality and its people construing that this particular topic is not always asked by customers or guests. The standard deviation suggests that their responses on this behavior were quite similar.

Table 2. Communicative Needs of the BSHRM Students in Terms of Speaking

Item	Weighted Mean	SD	Description
1.Speak to guests in clear, appropriate and courteous language.	2.76	0.48	Often
2.Welcome or greet customers/guests warmly.	2.79	0.51	Often
3.Describe the menu clearly.	2.58	0.61	Often
4.Respond to complaints or dissatisfaction of customers in a respectful and calm manner.	2.68	0.58	Often
5.Give responsive answers to queries on hotel accommodation, facilities and transport arrangement.	2.48	0.64	Sometimes
6.Convey guests informative details about the locality and its people, neighboring hub spots and establishments.	2.32	0.65	Often
7.Answers telephone calls warmly and courteously.	2.39	0.79	Often
8. Inquire politely from guests about their needs,or desires.	2.62	0.58	Often
9.Give clear oral report regarding work to manager.	2.45	0.69	Often
10.Take part in meetings actively.	2.42	0.69	Often
Average Weighted Mean	2.55	0.62	Often

2.34-3.00-Often
 1.68-2.33 Sometimes
 1.00-1.67 Rarely

These findings are parallel to Bertram's (2002) idea claiming that oral language development in school means providing students with the skills and opportunities to communicate more effectively. He further states that effective communication is developed through practice and training.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Children with expressive skills are better able to communicate their needs, wishes, ideas, and arguments. They can also improve their language use in speaking and writing, as well as engage and interact with others. When children are unable to express their needs and wants, they frequently become frustrated. In this study, it was found that tertiary students often need enhancement in their writing and speaking skills. The average weighted mean of 2.35 of the students' responses on their communication needs in writing described often implies that BSHRM students consistently carry out writing activities in the workplace. It can be inferred that through constant writing, they are able to enhance their writing skills. The average weighted mean of the students' responses to the communicative needs of the students in terms of speaking is described as often, suggesting that students often communicate orally with guests or customers. They became used to speaking and, therefore, developed speaking skills. Thus, this study recommends that English teachers are encouraged to provide classroom exercises sufficient for the improvement of the students' writing and speaking, including simulation activities resembling the workplace for job internships and employment.

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