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Soft Skills Communication and Cognitive Development of First-Year Purposive Communication Students

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Abstract

The importance of a student's soft skills communication in language learning, particularly in their cognitive development, cannot be overstated. These skills, in turn, provide the groundwork for the development of other characteristics related to students' personal and career development. The descriptive correlational study aimed to verify the significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development of the First-year Purposive Communication students. The findings revealed that there is a very high level of soft skills communication with a mean of 4.35. While cognitive development has a mean score of 4.44 which entails a very high distinction. On the other hand, when it comes to determining the significant relationship, it was found that there is indeed a great connection between the two variables with a relationship value of 0.51 while its significance has a value of 0.0000000867. As a result, it is suggested that soft skills communication will have the same impact on student's cognitive development. The findings of this study show that each student's soft skills communication attribute is distinctive, and it can be improved by applying the lessons learned in ways that promote cognitive development, such as providing performance-based, outcomes-based, and other related and appropriate activities that require them to apply what they've learned. Further, based on the findings, it is recommended that this soft skills communication be extended and developed to other English subjects in the higher education curriculum, particularly the syllabus and assessment to use, to achieve higher cognition.

Keywords: *cognitive development, higher education, purposive communication, soft skills*

1. Introduction

It is claimed that certain learners could not think or create complex concepts and were therefore unable to acquire cognition until they learned the language. It is now recognized that from the moment they are born, learners are aware of their environment and eager to

explore thus, they should be active learners from the moment they are born. They gather, sort, and interpret data from everywhere around them, then use it to improve their perceptual and reasoning abilities. For years, it has been known that students with poor cognitive development have difficulty acquiring languages (Hart & Johnston, 2010). Hence, the student's soft skills in communication are important in language learning, particularly in their cognitive development.

The lack of coordination between higher education in training workers and companies as users is a source of concern in today's education, particularly higher education. It is caused by inadequate understanding among higher education students of the needs of businesses for an appropriate workforce. Today, it has been discovered that one of the primary causes of career failure is a lack of mastery of abilities, such as honesty, cooperation, decision-making, problem-solving, and so on. In practice, studying outside of the classroom is often more important than studying inside these walls. Aside from arranging student life, the university provides opportunities for a highly structured experience that is linked to the curricula. This could include, for example, international education and/or real-world experience (Bogdan, 2017).

Some students in Canada do not have the opportunity to improve and employ their cognitive abilities, and as a result, they may struggle with ordinary chores and social activities later in life. When a learner grows up in a stressful environment, the architecture of his or her brain weakens, putting him or her at risk for cognitive deficits. As a result, the environment should encourage cognitive development and growth (Oswalt, 2008).

Moreover, there are still students in the Philippines who are unable to communicate well, particularly in English. According to teachers, this difficulty arises because of students' inability to assimilate information that would improve their ability to deal with the second language. As a result, students must be exposed to communicative activities that will aid their cognition (Abao, 2013).

Furthermore, a study titled Communication Capacity and Language Acquisition of First Year BSED-English Students, conducted at Northlink Technological College in Panabo City, found that certain students had a low degree of language acquisition because of their ability to think of complex ideas. Cognitive development has a significant impact on language acquisition (Gallera, 2015).

Generally, the importance of pursuing this study is for the researchers to determine the soft skills communication impeded by the aforementioned factors and their relation to the cognitive development of first-year purposive communication students. This will greatly assist researchers in providing people with the necessary actions, reinforcements, remediation, and programs to solve the study's problem. Student entities should be investigated from the perspective of their key action lines and the development of necessary competencies, particularly Soft Skills because we must consider student societies through the prism of the activity approach. These skills, in turn, serve as the foundation for the development of other characteristics relating to students' professional and personal development.

Additionally, the study is based on Swain's (2010) Languaging Theory, which says that humans can mediate cognitively by utilizing language (speaking and writing). Speaking and writing a language more specifically, can be utilized to aid in the development of an individual's thinking. Some people call themselves "verbal processors" because they learn new information while talking or writing. It claims that speaking and writing are how cognitive development takes place. The increase in a person's cognitive development can be measured in terms of language learning. As a result, learning a language is contingent on an individual's capacity to communicate in a variety of ways, including oral, written, multicultural communication, electronic communication, and even communication climate.

Language is used to help people think more clearly. When analyzing the concept of "advancedness" in language use, it is overly basic to think of language as merely a means of conveying meaning rather than as a means of creating meaning. Different advantages of learning the language include improved academic performance, cognitive development, and more favorable attitudes toward other languages and cultures. Simply said, students must study a language to perform well in today's dynamic business environment (Deters, 2008).

Furthermore, the research is based on Chomsky's (1965) Generative Grammar hypothesis, which says that rudimentary forms of language are stored in the human brain. Language is a skill that only humans possess. We think of language as the ability to understand and communicate ideas. Even when two people have the same knowledge, there is a noticeable variation in their ability to articulate it. He claimed that the mind has a distinct factor that he refers to as "the language factor," and that it has a well-defined structure and organization. As a result, communication ability improves a person's ability to learn a language.

Hence, the study attempts to determine the relationship between Soft Skills Communication and Cognitive Development of First Year Purposive Communication Students at the University of Mindanao Tagum College. The questions presented below are considered for thorough discussion:

1. What is the level of soft skills communication of the first-year purposive communication students in terms of:

    1.1. Oral Communication Skills;
    1.2. Written Communication Skills;
    1.3. Multicultural Communication Skills;
    1.4. Electronic Communication; and
    1.5. Communication Climate?

2. What is the level of cognitive development of the first-year purposive communication students in terms of:

    2.1. Activity-based Learning; and
    2.2. Language Learning Outcomes

3. Is there a significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development of first-year purposive communication students at the University of Mindanao Tagum College?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance using appropriate statistical tools:

1. There is no significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development of first-year purposive communication students at the University of Mindanao Tagum College.

2. Method

This study used a quantitative, non-experimental design. Furthermore, a descriptive-correlational method is used to determine the level of soft skills communication in terms of oral communication skills, written communication skills, multicultural communication skills, electronic communication, and communication climate, as well as the cognitive development in terms of activity-based learning and language learning outcomes.

Additionally, this research identifies a significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development among University of Mindanao Tagum College purposive communication students. This research study progress toward an intended result data to test hypotheses or answer questions about the study problem's present situation.

Nonexperimental designs are research methodologies that examine social issues without changing the individuals' surroundings. There is also no probability that participants will be randomly assigned to different groups. As a result, there is a scarcity of evidence to substantiate cause-and-effect relationships. Correlational design, on the other hand, is the study of relationships between two or more constructs. The association between high values of one variable and high values of another is described by a positive correlation (Frey, 2018).

This study included 132 first-year students from the University of Mindanao in Tagum City's Arellano Street for the school year 2021-2022. The total enumeration technique was used in this study, which included students enrolled in GE 2 with the Purposive Communication description. The entire population of the study consisted of 49 respondents from the 7:00-8:00 session, 40 respondents from 12:30-1:30, and 43 respondents from 1:30-2:30.

Further, the research study used an adapted and researcher-made questionnaire. The questionnaires were composed of the two variables and their indicators of the study – Soft Skills Communication (oral communication skills, written communication skills, multicultural communication skills, electronic communication, and communication climate) adapted from Arn, Kordsmeier, and Gatlin-Watts (2010), and a researcher-made questionnaire for Cognitive Development (activity-based learning and language learning outcomes). Also, the researcher-created questionnaire for the dependent variable was validated to ensure that the instrument was reliable and ready to be administered to

respondents. Hence, the goal of this instrument was to evaluate the indicators of the study's two variables.

The researcher followed the following procedure in gathering data for this study: the researcher sent a letter to the Dean of College at the University of Mindanao Tagum College requesting permission and recommendation to conduct this study among the respondents; in administering the tests, the researcher presented the letter and the questionnaire to the subject teacher and asked to administer the questionnaire to the respondents; and upon approval, the researchers gathered the data for this study.

The researcher requested written outputs and gathered them under strict confidentiality and solely for academic purposes. The data was then collected, tallied, calculated, and evaluated discreetly and appropriately.

In the analysis of data of this research, the statistical tools employed:

Mean was used to answer Problems 1 and 2 which determine the Soft Skills Communication of the students in terms of oral communication skills, written communication skills, multicultural communication skills, electronic communication, and communication climate, and the Cognitive Development of the students in terms of activity-based learning and language learning outcomes.

Pearson r was used to measure the significant relationship between students' Soft Skills Communication and Cognitive Development at the University of Mindanao Tagum College.

T-test was used to compute the r value.

3. Discussion

The Level of Soft Skills Communication among First-Year GE 2 Students

Table 1 shows the level of soft skills communication of First-year GE 2 students. Based on the table, it was found that ***electronic communication*** has the highest mean among the five (5) indicators of the said variable in the study with a mean score of ***4.47*** which describes as very high. This implies that the respondents have a high ability to communicate well with others in the world of online communication. This is possible since nowadays, wherein we are facing the pandemic and having these changes, we eventually adapt to this kind of communication and use the online method to express ourselves virtually.

Every teacher, across both teaching and related tasks, requires some level of assistance. Individualized support is required, as well as the ability to participate in a diverse range of activities. Beginning with the primary activities that make up the instructor's complete teaching experience, it is vital to analyze the functions this support should fulfill. As a result, the numerous aspects of support for the teacher's actions must be combined into a single system that is interactively available at all times (Hubalovsky & Sedivy, 2011). Effective communication between teachers and students, as well as between teachers and parents, is critical for the development of the working partnership that is necessary for a student's educational achievement. Parents and educators alike depended on the simple and

successful form of communication since it was perceived as a convenient source of quick engagement for classroom assignments, homework, and reminders.

Table 1. The Level of Soft Skills Communication of First-Year GE 2 Students

Indicators	Mean	Description
Oral Communication Skills	4.24	High
Written Communication Skills	4.31	Very High
Multicultural Communication Skills	4.35	Very High
Electronic Communication	4.47	Very High
Communication Climate	4.39	Very High
Over-all	**4.35**	**Very High**

Legend:

4.30 – 5.00 Very High
3.50 – 4.20 High
2.70 – 3.40 Moderate
1.90 – 2.60 Low
1.00 – 1.80 Very Low

On the other hand, ***communication climate*** has a mean score of ***4.39*** with a very high distinction. Followed by ***multicultural communication skills*** and ***written communication skills*** with an overall mean score of ***4.35*** and ***4.31*** which can also be interpreted as very high respectively. Still, this connotes that the respondents have high awareness and ability of this type of communication.

The social tone of a relationship is referred to as communication climate, and it refers to how people feel about each other while they go about their daily activities. The degree to which people believe they are valued shapes communication climates. Further, multicultural communication has become unavoidable as a result of globalization. Today's workplace, classroom, and community all require cross-cultural communication. According to Targowski and Metwalli (2003), this millennium will be marked by a greater emphasis on the crucial value of cross-cultural communication processes, efficiency and competency, and the cost of doing business. Knowledge and comprehension of cultural characteristics such as values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior should be obtained to properly communicate across cultures. To succeed in the global economy, effective cross-cultural communication provides practical tools how to create a communication strategy, educate people, and conduct business dialogues.

Moreover, comprehensive knowledge of the writing task's needs is essential to learning writing abilities. To write properly, students must first comprehend exactly what they are supposed to produce. As a result, detailed instructions are required. Because students have been writing relevant documentation since high school, it is generally thought that they already know what makes a good report.

On the other hand, the least among the five indicators is ***oral communication skills*** with a mean of ***4.24*** which can be interpreted as a high distinction. Although it can still be described as high, still the respondents find the indicator least among the others. This infers that the respondents need to practice their oral communication skills with other people they converse with in their everyday discourse.

Tuan and Mai (2015) as cited by Genelza (2021) stated that teachers should act as guides for students learning the language. Teachers should first improve their students' performance conditions by giving them time to prepare for a speaking activity, teaching them how to use a mind map to produce ideas, and providing adequate time for them to complete their duties.

Many teachers and students were experiencing online learning for the first time, and their anxiety was understandably high. The unknown consequences of a global epidemic, the unexplored territory of a midterm transition to entirely online instruction, and the uncertain effects of the crisis on our educational institution increased our stress levels. Public speaking and presentations took on a whole new meaning with Zoom sessions and cameras, and our speech anxiety spiked. Based on previous scholarship, an appreciation of our current conditions, and a look toward the future, we will build a list of best practices to educate youngsters to effectively manage their speech anxiety with agency, competence, and confidence (Gersham, 2020).

Students, according to Nation & Newton (2009) as cited by Genelza (2021), should first comprehend the value of speaking abilities. Second, they should practice speaking English outside of the classroom more often by practicing the speaking exercises in the textbook with their peers at home, joining a speaking club where they may communicate in English, and speaking in front of a mirror. Finally, they should make it a habit to speak English in class rather than their native language.

Overall, the total calculated mean score of the ***soft skills communication*** of the first-year purposive communication students is ***4.35*** which entails a very high level of description. This means that the respondents of the study have a high level of awareness when it comes to soft skills communication. Thus, this implies that soft skills communication is indeed important when we communicate with others.

When it comes to starting a profession or a firm, graduates and undergraduates of higher education must have a strong set of soft skills. As a result, higher education is now attempting to teach students soft skills, although many of them are not well-structured as a system. Soft skills will be implemented via a system called the soft skills management system in this study. The achievement of required soft skills must be planned, implemented, and assessed in a soft skills management system for the development direction and its achievement to be clearly visible (Schulz, 2008).

Finally, good communication and leadership are the soft skills that these students respect the most. They do, however, believe that the set of soft skills they received as part of their schooling is marginally significant for their future employment. The time students must commit to classes not directly relevant to the nurse's core training could be the cause of this impression (Dean, 2017).

The Level of Cognitive Development among First-Year GE 2 Students

Presented in table two is the level of cognitive development of first-year GE 2 students in terms of activity-based learning and language learning outcomes. Based on the result, ***activity-based learning*** has a mean score of ***4.52*** which entails as very high. This simply interprets that the respondents find the activity inside the classroom as beneficial to their learning. Further, this signifies that the activities should be more product and performance-based than theory-based to practice and apply their knowledge and understanding toward communication.

Table 2. The Level of Cognitive Development of First-Year GE 2 Students

Indicators	Mean	Description
Activity-based Learning	4.52	Very High
Language Learning Outcomes	4.37	Very High
Over-all	**4.44**	**Very High**

Legend:

4.30 – 5.00 Very High
3.50 – 4.20 High
2.70 – 3.40 Moderate
1.90 – 2.60 Low
1.00 – 1.80 Very Low

The value of a classroom's emphasis on successful learning is critical to student retention. Teachers must be adaptable to changing classroom and student needs so that students enjoy the course and achieve their objectives. Activity Based Learning (ABL) is one such method. It is characterized as a learning process in which students are constantly engaged (Panko et al., 2007). Activity-based learning is characterized as a learning environment in which students actively participate in the learning process rather than simply listening. These authors argue that active learning differs from traditional teaching methods in two ways: (a) the active role and involvement of students in the classroom, and (b) student collaboration in a learning environment. These two components of ABL work together to create a positive learning environment in the classroom. According to Churchill (2003), activity-based learning helps students and learners build mental models that enable higher-order performance such as applied problem solving and information and skill transfer.

Moreover, when it comes to the indicator ***language learning outcomes***, the mean score is ***4.37*** which entails very high merit. This describes that the language learning outcomes should be effective enough inside the classroom. Furthermore, the respondents find the language learning outcomes as a descriptor and a good factor in their meaningful learning process toward the development of their cognition.

Most theories of learning regarded to be relevant and applicable in different cultures, according to Watkins and Aalts (2014), should be compared so that the results can be used to construct theoretical frameworks, improve educational programs, and improve the quality of learning outcomes. Understanding the nature of the student learning process and knowledge constructs concerning teaching and learning environment was vital in this study, according to the constructivist framework. The learning experience and strategy selection were thought to be related to contact with the social environment, language acquisition, and problem-solving.

Overall, the level of ***cognitive development*** of the first-year GE 2 students as shown in the table has a total calculated mean score of ***4.44*** which describes as very high merit. This further explains the need to invest in and utilize substantive and effective outcomes-based activities for the cognitive development of the student that require them to analyze, evaluate and apply what they have learned and known.

Hence, it is vital for students to develop academic skills and cognitive talents. The evidence from contemporary studies on the bidirectional relationships between academic accomplishment and cognitive ability. Sustained and high-quality schooling and education directly promote academic and cognitive development in students and can also have an indirect effect by initiating cognitive-academic bi-directionality. Academic achievement is crucial to a student's development because academic skills, particularly in reading and mathematics, influence a variety of outcomes, including school attainment, employment performance and pay, physical and mental health, and lifespan (Peng & Kievit, 2020).

The Significant Relationship between Soft Skills Communication and Cognitive Development of First-Year GE 2 Students

As shown in Table 3 is a significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development among first-year purposive communication students at the University of Mindanao Tagum College. Based on the given data, it has a relationship value of ***0.51*** while its significance has a value of 8.67^{-09} ***or 0.0000000867*** which is interpreted that Soft Skills Communication has a significant relationship to Cognitive Development. Thus, the null hypothesis that claims, there is no significant relationship between the said variables is hereby rejected.

Table 3. Significant Relationship between Soft Skills Communication and Cognitive Development of First-Year GE 2 Students

Variables	Mean	r – value	p-value	Decision $\partial \propto = 0.05$
Soft Skills Communication	**4.35**			
Cognitive Development	**4.44**			
		0.51	**8.67^{-09}** (0.0000000867)	***H*o rejected**

*p<0.05

Further, the r-value of 0.51 associates a positive correlation between the two variables. Hence, this proves that there is a significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development. Correspondingly, this means that soft skills communication is a contributing factor to the cognitive development of a student. With this, it should be noted that to achieve higher development in the students' cognition, we should also take note of their soft skills communication.

These students place a high emphasis on soft skills such as communication, which they can use in any situation, and leadership, which is linked to their cognitive development. They do, however, believe that the set of soft skills they received as part of their schooling is marginally significant for their future employment. The time students must dedicate to courses not directly relevant to the subject's core coursework could be the cause of this view.

People with great soft skills have strong situational awareness and emotional intelligence, allowing them to negotiate challenging situations while still creating positive outcomes, thus achieving high cognitive development. Furthermore, some undergraduate students' performance errors are due to their lack of critical thinking ability and metacognitive skills (Vera, 2020). The evidence suggests changing the models that are so prevalent in college and university classrooms - primarily "teacher talk." Teachers dominate classroom talk speaking anywhere between 60% and 75% of the time (Davies, 2011). It was a cause for concern because communication skills were among the most wanted soft skills in much earlier research looking into competencies sought after by potential employers. As a result, students must be made aware of the necessity of communication skills for career advancement, as well as how to develop and practice essential skills.

4. Conclusion

The study aims to determine the significant relationship between soft skills communication and cognitive development of the first-year Purposive Communication students at the University of Mindanao Tagum College, Philippines. It was found out that truly, there is a

great significant factor in the student's soft skills communication to their cognitive development. This suggests that soft skills communication should not be taken for granted inside the classroom but instead should immerse students with the right amount of activities and learning processes that encourage them to learn and apply concepts regarding this matter. Moreover, the findings propose that the learning models should be learner-centered that highlight the active participation, high motivation, and interest of the learners.

With this, active methods, and extracurricular activities, as well as all courses that make up undergraduate training programs, should be included in plans and in the curriculum for introducing soft skills. The goal is to promote the development of soft skills in communication in formal, informal, and non-formal learning environments. Faculty members should abandon their teacher-centered approach in higher education classes and allow their students to become more independent learners.

Further, teachers and students must collaborate and work together in their classrooms to construct safe learning communities, and sound based on common goals, resources, designs, and norms for participation as genuine members of the school community. Both teachers and students assume certain identities and roles in their interactions with one another, allowing them to acquire an understanding of what constitutes not only the substance of what is to be learned but also the process of learning itself.

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