

Competencies of pre-service language teachers: Towards developing a language training program

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Structured abstract

Background: To provide proper and quality teaching and training of would-be teachers is the mandate of teacher education institutions. Hence, they are expected to ensure that the would-be teachers that they are training are able to demonstrate the essential competencies required in various domains to become effective and competent teachers. If well-equipped, they can efficiently establish the meaning and purpose of education and promote the potentials of their future learners.

Purpose: Identify the competency levels of pre-service language teachers and develop a competency-based training program for their improvement.

Participants: The respondents of this research were 65 pre-service language teachers in five Philippine teacher education institutions, cooperating teachers in the laboratory schools, and supervising instructors during the second semester of academic year 2013–2014.

Research design: Mixed-method design (explanatory sequential design)

Data collection and analysis: A 100-item examination identified the competency levels of the pre-service teachers in the areas of language curriculum, foundations of language and literature, and teaching methodology. In the treatment of the qualitative data, significant statements of the respondents that helped clarify dubious results in the quantitative data were filtered. To identify the significant statements, frequent or common statements were considered. These statements were then used within the results and discussion section to clarify, substantiate, and confirm the outcome of the quantitative results.


Findings: The quantitative results of the study revealed that the language competency levels of the pre-service teachers in the areas of curriculum, theoretical foundations in language, theoretical foundations in literature, and methodology are at the beginning level. The qualitative results presented the suggestions given by the in-service teachers in improving the performance of the pre-service teachers, namely: intensified pre-service language teachers' training, updated in-service language teachers' training, inflamed love for reading, aligned language curriculum, defined admission policy, and mastered basic language skills for language teachers, thus the formulation of the Helm of Competency Improvement.

Recommendation: It is highly recommended that teacher education institutions strengthen their curricular alignments and trainings in their different course offerings using existing international standards for language education.

Keywords

helm of competency improvement, language competency, pre-service training

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Introduction

Quality pre-service teacher education is one of the significant elements in providing quality education (Commission on Higher Education, 2004, Article 1, Section 1). Quality education in the Philippines will only be achieved if the teachers are properly trained and prepared to take various roles and functions of a real teacher. It is imperative to set high standards in setting and defining

objectives, competencies, and pre-service teacher education curriculum standards.

In the Philippines, fourth among the nine urgent and critical tasks of the Education for All (EFA) 2015 Plan (*Philippine Education for All 2015: Implementation and Challenges*, n.d.) is to continuously help all teachers improve their teaching practices. There must be an adoption of measures to enhance capacity and competencies

for quality teaching practices among future teachers eligible for admission into the teaching profession, who will later work in schools. Improving teachers' teaching practices and competencies is essential for improving basic education outcomes. Teacher proficiency, performance, and competencies are significant determinants of students' achievements in school and other settings.

As agents of social change and cohesion, teachers are considered the forerunners of any educational system. As transforming forces in the classroom, they need to be taught and trained correctly. The proper teaching and training of would-be teachers are significant responsibilities of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). TEIs ensure that future teachers will become effective and competent to teach in this milieu. Teacher quality is the top contributing factor to student achievement. These skilled teachers can efficiently establish the meaning and purpose of education and high-quality teacher preparation will better serve the nation's children (Aypay, 2009; Rampai & Sopeerak, 2011; *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, 1996).

This primary task of TEIs in training qualified teachers is essential and happens to be the most crucial role since the nation's future depends upon the schools of education. They prepare teachers who can enable their students to learn in ways that will allow them to maximize their potentials in this 21st century (Aypay, 2009; Dorrington & Ramirez-Smith, 1999).

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (2007) (CHED) stipulated that quality pre-service teacher education is a critical factor in ensuring quality Philippine education. Given this premise, the TEIs have defined high standards and competencies for the training of would-be teachers. Therefore, it is vital for pre-service programs to suitably prepare would-be teachers to face the realities of teaching so that the teaching practices of pre-service teachers will be turned into a more fruitful teaching-learning experience. As such, they can grow and continually develop the skills they first learned in their pre-service teacher preparation programs (Gratch, 2001 as cited in Chong et al., 2011; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002 as cited in Chong et al., 2011). Finger et al. (2010) also mentioned that pre-service teacher education programs prepare future teachers who are likely to be teaching their students in a world characterized by ongoing technological changes.

Since basic education is the primary recipient of graduates from various TEIs, the Department of Education (DepEd) has been implementing initiatives to develop highly competent teachers (Lapus, 2009 as cited in *Experiential Learning Courses Handbook*, 2009). If the teaching force is composed of talented teachers, we can be assured of quality education that would guarantee success among students. DepEd started implementing a Teacher Education and Development Program (TEDP)

that seeks to plan a teacher's career path that begins with entry to a teacher education program and ends when a teacher retires from the service. The TEDP addresses each stage of this career path as a blended part linked closely to preceding and ensuing elements. A critical feature in the program is establishing a set of standards. These standards are observed so that the schools' stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) can appreciate the elaborated set of competencies (skills, attitudes, and behaviors) that each teacher must possess to perform their roles and responsibilities as teachers. The competencies are integrated into a Teacher Performance and Development Framework anchored on Filipino teachers' prescribed characteristics and competencies and the principles of effective and meaningful teaching and learning (*Experiential Learning Courses Handbook*, 2009).

DepEd (2017) adopted the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), recognizing the importance of professional standards in continuing professional development advancement of teachers. TEIs of the country are also using the standards in the PPST to guide them as they prepare the pre-service teachers for the field. The PPST is an enhanced version of the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) that sets performance indicators classified in appropriate domains and strands that guide teacher professional development. The Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) also referred to the NCBTS in designing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Thus, the competencies mentioned in the NCBTS, which is now PPST, are emphasized in the training of would-be teachers. TEIs audit their curriculum using the PPST since the primary objective of each TEI is to produce high-quality teachers for a high-quality teaching force. They see to it that the competencies prescribed by the national agency are given emphasis in the program preparing teachers and that the pre-service language teachers (PSLTs) will be well-versed with the defined competencies.

To ensure quality preparation of pre-service teachers, the proposal of the EFA 2015 Plan (*Philippine Education for All 2015 Plan of Action: An Assessment of Progress Made in Achieving the EFA Goals*, 2014) to adopt basic education standards is given emphasis. These standards should be acceptable to both TEIs and DepEd to guarantee the competence of would-be teachers. As defined, competency is technical know-how, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that empower someone to perform a given task effectively and efficiently. Therefore, competence in teaching refers to the skills, knowledge, and performance standards needed by the PSLTs before they conduct actual classroom teaching. These would identify their capability to demonstrate knowledge and skills that have significant implications for successful teacher training (Aitken, 1998 as cited in *Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes*, 2008;

Cheng and Cheung, 2004; Dubois et al., 2004; Grushka et al., 2005 as cited in Kenny, 2010; Gultekin, 2006; Laursen, 2006 as cited in Ogienko and Rolyak, 2009; Mrowicki, 1986 as cited in Weddel, 2006; Parry, 1996 as cited in Sharbain and Tan, 2012; Schenck, 1978 as cited in Weddel, 2006; Sharbain and Tan, 2012).

Once competencies and standards are developed among teachers, the quality of teaching and classroom performance will also be improved; hence higher quality education will be accorded to the learners. This quality in education can only be obtained through reflective teaching, where teaching competencies and standards are developed and applied by teachers who practice all their knowledge and employ their abilities to forward and incite learning and assess the outcome of their performance. The ability to successfully respond to complicated demands involving knowledge, attitudes, values, and capacities in a significant and productive way happens through developed teaching competencies. In other words, it is how the knowledge, beliefs, capabilities, abilities, values, and pedagogical knowledge of a teacher are performed and articulated (Sarracino & Alcaraz, 2008).

In various research studies, language teachers are characterized as competent and effective when they demonstrate proficiency or advanced mastery of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, language proficiency, contextual knowledge, and transferring language and literary theories into practice (Borg, 2006; Park & Lee, 2006; Richards, 2011; Shulman, 1994).

In 1976, Finocchiaro (as cited in Vadillo, 1999) used the mnemonic MOTIVATION to give some inputs for language teachers.

- M Motivation, Methodology, Meaning, Mother tongue, and Mastery: There is a need to consider methodology's integrative and instrumental motivation and flexibility and intelligently use mother tongue in the classroom.
- O Objectives: The primary aim of language teaching is to teach the learners to use language in different affairs in real life and develop their communicative competence.
- T Technique: Good language teachers always involve their students in practice leading to habit formation and the internalization of rules that govern the learning and application of a language.
- I Involvement, Integration: It is of great significance to motivate learners to become actively involved in and integrated into all facets of the teaching-learning process.
- V Values: Learners should be helped to appreciate the general purpose of human experience and the importance of their own and other people's cultures.
- A Attitudes, Activities, Achievement, and Articulation:

Teachers should plan lessons and activities that satisfy and make their learners productive.

- T Transfer, Translation, Textbooks, and Testing: Teachers should consider that when learners learn a foreign language, they need to have equivalent words that will help them structure their schema. Assessment and evaluation should be frequently given to monitoring the learners' progress.
- I Interference, Individualization: To make the learning of language more meaningful, individual differences and characteristics of learners should be considered.
- O Observation: Observing and mentoring other teachers is very important in coaching and assisting teachers (especially the new ones) in teaching language.
- N Native culture, Needs: It is vital in a language class to always integrate language learning in the students' culture and needs for them to really feel that they are secured and respected.

In 1996, Brosh (as cited in Vadillo, 1999) initiated an investigation regarding the characteristics of good language teachers. The practical aspects of effective language teachers are:

1. Knowledge and command of the target language,
2. Ability to organize, explain, and clarify, and arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students,
3. Fairness to students by showing neither favoritism nor prejudice, and
4. Availability to students.

Brosh emphasizes the weight of teachers' personalities in determining their achievement or deficiency in teaching.

In April 1997, the Texas State Board of Education adopted content and performance standards known as *LOTE Teacher Competencies for Professional Development* (n.d.) designed for language teachers and experts as an individual tool in assessing their competencies. Language teachers should use these competencies as a tool for their personal and professional assessment and rate themselves in each area. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English (TEKS for LOTE) are organized around five program goals that serve as skill and competency evaluation for language teachers: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities.

Education experts around the Philippines worked tirelessly to identify the crucial points or areas needed, which is tuned with the plan of modifying the Filipino teacher into a globally competent one. Thus, the NCBTS were created. This assimilated theoretical framework defines the different dimensions of effective teaching. Effective teaching means the ability to consider and teach varied types of learners to learn the different learning objectives in the curriculum. The NCBTS are designed for

the professional development of Filipino teachers. They are for student teachers to be aware of new teaching approaches that will help them improve their performance, and it will assist them as they undergo practice teaching. Hence, standards could greatly benefit all Filipino teachers who excel in teaching and assist teachers in continuously reflecting on how to improve professionally and become good facilitators of the teaching-learning process. The NCBTS provide a profile that will explain and characterize effective teaching in all facets of a teacher's professional life and development. The set of standards is integrated into a Teacher Performance and Development Framework based on Filipino teachers' core values and on the principles of effective teaching and learning. According to the *National Competency-Based Teacher Standards Framework Table of Specifications* (2006), this framework will allow teachers to self-assess their own performance against the Competency Standards in order to identify areas of strength as well as areas that need to be developed further in order for them to function more effectively as facilitators of learning. The determined competencies are grouped into theoretical foundation, pedagogical, content, and assessment and evaluation of knowledge.

Theoretical knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). It is information that consists of facts and data that are organized to describe a particular situation or condition. Knowledge is distinguished from information by the addition of "truths, beliefs, perspectives and concepts, judgments and expectations, methodologies and know-how" (Wiig, 1993). Nevertheless, knowledge can also become information once it is codified in symbolic forms such as text, charts, or images (Alavi & Leidner, 1999). Having that defined can help PSLTs be competent and face the needs of their future students. If PSLTs have this kind of competency, then they will have an extensive range of bases which they can use to teach their subject area.

Kagan (1992) identified the challenges of assessing the teacher's condition. Many of her concerns are in studying pedagogical content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is partly an internal construct; it is the teachers' understanding of context-specific examples that best represent specific topics and knowledge of typical students' difficulties with particular issues. Pedagogical knowledge refers to the ability that provides a basis for language teaching. It is a knowledge that refers to the how of teaching and how to facilitate learning among the language learners for them to learn the

practical uses of language in the context of teaching. It includes courses like curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, classroom management, teaching children, and teaching the four skills (Richards & Farrell, 2001).

There is always an assumption that pre-service teachers should be able to transfer the pedagogical theories and approaches they learned in school to real-life classroom teaching (Cubukcu, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Robinson et al., 2007). In this light, researchers recommend that pre-service teachers be provided with opportunities for them to be involved in exploring pedagogical experiences, self-reflection, and critical analysis of teaching (Johnson, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 2000). "If beginning teachers are to be successful, they must wrestle simultaneously with issues of pedagogical content (or knowledge) as well as general pedagogy (or generic teaching principles)" (Grossman, 1990).

Shulman (1987) introduced the phrase "content knowledge" and sparked a whole new wave of scholarly articles on teachers' knowledge of their subject matter and its importance for successful teaching. In Shulman's theoretical framework, teachers need to master two types of knowledge: (a) content, also known as "deep" knowledge of the subject itself, and (b) knowledge of curricular development, which includes curriculum planning. Content knowledge encompasses what Bruner (as cited in Shulman, 1994) called the "structure of knowledge"—a particular discipline's theories, principles, and concepts. Content knowledge deals with the teaching process, including the most valuable forms of representing and communicating content and how learners will best demonstrate the specific ideas and topics in context. Thus, content knowledge also includes knowledge about the subject matter (Gürbüz, 2012; Tüzel & Akcan, 2009).

Assessment is classroom research to provide helpful feedback to upgrade the practice of teaching and learning. Assessment is feedback from the student to the instructor about the student's education. This is very important for PSLTs to know so that they will be able to handle their students, assess the status of the educational phenomenon, and measure the quality of the interest of every student in learning. An assessment framework for teaching and learning will address the need for producing teachers who have high assessment literacy and who are able to adopt the best practices in the classroom in order to effectively evaluate student outcomes. Assessment results such as grades are used to provide reports on the attainment of institutional learning outcomes. Reporting assessment results is one of the means employed to provide feedback and is necessary to enable students to fully understand their own learning and check if the goals they are aiming are achieved (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Existing educational laws and research studies pre-

sent the need to meet international standards in teaching through improving teachers' competency levels. However, these focus more on identifying and enhancing the teaching competencies of in-service teachers. Far too little attention has been paid to studying language student teachers' competencies. In the Philippines alone, no research has identified and assessed the competency levels of PSLTs. Thus, the problem arose.

The present study aimed to identify the competency levels of PSLTs and develop a competency-based training program for their improvement. The study specifically answered the following research questions:

1. What are the PSLTs' competency levels in the following areas?
 - a. Curriculum
 - b. Theoretical Foundations in Language
 - c. Theoretical Foundations in Literature
 - d. Methodology
2. What strategies will be employed to enhance the PSLTs' competencies?
3. What language training program can be developed aligned with the competencies for language teaching?

The study results are deemed to serve as a source of data to TEIs in developing the competencies of their students majoring in English. Results of the study will help them identify which competencies of the PSLTs must be enhanced and reinforced in their curriculum development and delivery.

Method

Research design

This study utilized a mixed-method design, specifically a sequential explanatory design. The researcher first collected and analyzed the quantitative data and then obtained qualitative data that followed up and refined the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2002). The competency levels of PSLTs were gathered and analyzed quantitatively. Afterward, qualitative data were gathered through interviews to validate the quantitative findings.

Population and locale of study

This study was conducted in the five TEIs in Baguio City, Philippines. The respondents were 65 PSLTs, cooperating teachers in the laboratory schools, and supervising instructors during the second semester of academic year 2013–2014. The total population was considered.

The PSLTs were the respondents of the first phase of the research from whom the quantitative data were gathered, while the cooperating teachers and supervising instructors were the participants of the interviews.

Data gathering tool

A 100-item examination following the Table of Specifications for the LET for English majors was the main tool that was utilized in this study. The items were contributed by language experts from different universities. The development of the test items was based on the competencies identified by the Teacher Education Council of DepEd in collaboration with CHED and PRC during a convened series of five workshops with experts/subject specialists from the TEIs (*NCBTS-Based Table of Specifications for LET*, 2010). The test items' competencies, which were identified in the research instrument, focused on gathering and gaining authentic and credible information on the areas of Curriculum, Theoretical Foundations in Language, Theoretical Foundations in Literature, and (language) Methodology. To ensure the instrument's reliability, this was tested at the Benguet State University College of Education through the participation of their student teachers. As per result, the research instrument is highly reliable, with a reliability coefficient of .7245.

The guide questions that were utilized during the interview with the cooperating teachers and supervising instructors were crafted after the quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Prior to the interview phase, the results of the quantitative data collection and analysis helped shape the qualitative research questions, sampling, and data collection (Creswell, 2012).

Data gathering procedure

At the initial phase, letters of request addressed to the heads of offices concerned and to the respondents were given. With the permission of the offices and the willingness of the participants involved, the administration of the test questions was scheduled. The administration of the test questions to the PSLT respondents was done personally by the researcher to ensure the gathering of appropriate data. After the data were gathered, these were subjected to statistical treatment with the help of recognized statisticians of the Saint Louis University Research and Extension Office. The quantitative results were utilized to develop the qualitative research questions that were based on dubious results, as shown by the quantitative data that called for further clarification and confirmation.

After the framing and validation of the research questions, the identification of the target participants from the group of teacher respondents for the gathering of the qualitative data followed next. After which, the focus group interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the respondents. To elicit more natural responses from the respondents to answer the problem, they were interviewed in locations of their own choice, assuming that they would be more comfortable in a familiar environment. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity and were told that they could refuse to answer any question

or stop the interview at any time and that participation is exclusively voluntary (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Before conducting the focus group interviews, the purpose and design of the study were presented to assure that everyone would receive a consistent orientation. The transcribed result of the discussions was used to help explain the quantitative results that need further exploration and to answer new questions that emerged from the quantitative results (Creswell, 2012).

Treatment of the data

To find the reliability level of the test items, the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR20) was utilized to treat the gathered quantitative data during the first phase of the study. This formula, the most frequently employed in determining the consistency of an instrument, has become the standard for estimating the reliability for a single administration of a single form test. It measures inter-item consistency and is tantamount to doing split-half reliability on all combinations of items resulting from the different splitting of the test. The KR20 formula is:

$$r_{KR20} = \left(\frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum pq}{(sd)^2} \right)$$

where r_{KR20} is the reliability coefficient using KR20, k is the number of items in the given test, p is the proportion of students who passed the test per item, q is the proportion of students who did not pass the test per item, and $(sd)^2$ is the variance of the total scores of the respondents in the test (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

To know the PSLTs' competency levels in every area, raw scores were converted into percentages and the following competency levels were employed:

Beginning: (74% or below) The PSLT at this level struggles with their competencies; prerequisite and fundamental knowledge and/or skills have not been acquired or developed adequately.

Developing: (75%–79%) The PSLT at this level possesses the minimum knowledge and skills and core competencies, but needs help throughout the accumulation of competencies.

Approaching competency: (80%–84%) The PSLT at this level has developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and core competencies and, with little guidance and assistance, can perform the competencies.

Proficient: (85%–89%) The PSLT at this level has developed the fundamental knowledge and skills and core competencies, and can perform them independently.

Advanced: (90% or above) The PSLT at this level exceeds the core requirements in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies, and can perform them automatically and flexibly.

In the treatment of the qualitative data, significant statements of the respondents that helped clarify dubious results in the quantitative data were filtered. To identify the significant statements, frequent or common statements were considered. These statements were then used within the results and discussion section to clarify, substantiate, and confirm the outcome of the quantitative results.

The language training program that was designed was based on the results and discussions done. The program focused on the enhancement of the competencies that got the lowest level.

Results and discussions

This section has three parts. The first part presents the results and discussions of the quantitative phase. The quantitative data are presented in four tables based on the clusters of the language competencies of the respondents. Discussion follows next after every table. The second part presents the results of the qualitative phase. The summary of the qualitative data is presented through a simulacrum followed by a discussion of its themes or elements. The third part presents the training design, which was developed based on the analyses of the quantitative and qualitative results of the study.

Quantitative data analysis

The competencies are clustered in four areas: Curriculum, Theoretical Foundations in Language, Theoretical Foundations in Literature, and Methodology.

Curriculum refers to the means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes. It consists of all the school's planned experiences as part of its academic responsibility (Ebert et al., 2011). It also represents the results of a highly complex and dynamic interaction of events and acts, and it clearly shows the validity of any single variable or linear conceptualization of curriculum planning (Macdonald, 1986).

Table 1 shows the competency levels of the PSLTs in the area of Curriculum. Having acquired 44.62% ("beginning") for all the competencies, the PSLTs struggle with their competencies. The prerequisite and fundamental knowledge and skills have not been acquired or developed adequately on Curriculum, specifically in the areas of Remedial Instruction in English, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Language Curriculum for Secondary School. The PSLTs were not well-informed of some of the most relevant knowledge that will prepare them for the LET and prepare them to facilitate the language courses captured in the basic education curriculum. An in-depth understanding of a curriculum is crucial in the preparation of PSLTs for the actual field because it will help them understand the expected learning

Table 1. Competency levels of PSLTs: Curriculum

Areas		Number of items	Raw score	Percentage of scores	Rank	Competency level
A	Remedial Instruction in English	1	30/65	46.15%	2	Beginning
B	English for Specific Purposes	2	62/130	47.69%	1	Beginning
C	Language Curriculum for Secondary School	2	52/130	40.00%	3	Beginning
Overall				44.62%		Beginning

outcomes that must be demonstrated by every student at the end of the entire program, at the end of every year level, and at the end of every course or learning activity.

The lowest competency level among the three areas is that for the secondary language curriculum. It is important to note that the student teachers who are being prepared to facilitate courses in the secondary level have a beginning competency level for this area. One of the possible reasons why this is low is the number of courses offered for this purpose in the existing Curriculum. The Curriculum taken by all the respondents has only a three-unit course for this purpose, which is limited to introducing the concepts of curriculum development. As noted, the experience of developing a curriculum will likely lead to developing a higher competency level. This supports Dewey's contention that actual experience is needed to internalize the innovation.

The competencies of PSLTs are expected to be developed in these areas because Remedial Instruction in English talks about organizing, designing, implementing, and evaluating remedial English programs in any of the macro skills. As such, there is a need for the PSLTs to take into consideration inadequacies in language and literature competencies for remediation purposes. In the area of ESP, there is a need to improve on understanding language in context and in identifying features of language specific to the career needs of the learners. There is a need to enhance mastery in applying content-based principles and strategies in developing language proficiency for specific disciplines. The area of Language Curriculum for Secondary School encourages PSLTs to exhibit a clear understanding of the design, development, and dissemination of the existing language curriculum of DepEd. This competency provides the different theoretical foundations, content, and the development process of evaluating the current secondary education program.

From the analysis done in the course descriptions of the various subjects, it was observed that the subject offering on Language Curriculum for Secondary School does not have any specific follow up major subjects that explicitly enhance their skills on this competency. Hence, there is a little deepening of mastery of skill because the teachers need to introduce the concepts in one semester only. As per the curriculum schedule, there is not enough time to further enhance and do practice or drills that will lead to the mastery of the competency.

It is possible that the competency Language Curriculum for Secondary School is at a beginning level because the K to 12 Curriculum was just introduced in the academe; they had been learning about the basic education curriculum in their professional education subjects while the question items were about the K to 12 Curriculum.

Remedial Instruction for English covers the five macro-skills, so teachers have to divide the 54 hours teaching to listen, speak, read, write, and view. This is barely 10 hours per macro skill. Hence, it will be on the level of introducing only, and it is difficult to reach the level of higher understanding and demonstrating. As for ESP, the syllabus reflected a discussion of the historical beginnings of ESP, its branches, and drills on module preparation. There is no exposure for them to practice the skills and competencies in this area.

The results of this study are further explained through the accounts of the interviewed supervising instructors and instructors who are facilitating the major subjects of the PSLTs. The interviewees were able to shed light on the reasons why the competency level is at the beginning level. The beginning level of the PSLTs is traced by the interviewees to the inadequate number of hours in training and unequal distribution of subjects. As the interviewees mentioned,

T9: Schools should provide more units (hours) to major subjects. General Education subjects for English majors should focus on the foundations of language and literature.

T10: The English Curriculum must be revisited. Literature and Grammar/Language subjects are not equally distributed or balanced. There should be more exposure to the teaching experience. If possible, increase observation and practice teaching time. The competencies per subject in the Curriculum (especially in major and basic language subjects) must also be re-evaluated. This would mean enhancing the skills needed for teaching.

T11: Intensive training must be given to the language student teachers.

The teachers' responses clearly present that the focus of the language curriculum, time allotment, provisions of training, and experiential learning contribute to

Table 2. Competency levels of PSLTs: Theoretical Foundations in Language

Areas		Number of items	Raw score	Percentage of scores	Rank	Competency level
A	Introduction to Linguistics	15	508/975	52.10%	2	Beginning
B	Structure of English	11	466/715	65.17%	1	Beginning
C	Introduction to Stylistics	7	180/455	39.56%	4	Beginning
D	Literary Criticism	7	231/455	50.77%	3	Beginning
Overall				51.90%		Beginning

the low competency levels of the students in this area. Thus, the teacher respondents recommend a revisit or reevaluation of the Curriculum per se and have it aligned in the expected content in the LET and in the actual teaching. This is aimed at enhancing the skills needed by the PSLTs.

The low result in this area is supported by Kauffman et al. (2002) as they explored the issue of how new teachers experience curriculum, and the respondents expressed their frustration over perceived lack of guidance, support, and materials. Lack of guidance, support, and materials in teaching the areas in Curriculum indeed results in low performance in these competencies. Shawer and Alkahtani (2013) mentioned that Curriculum is readily grasped by learners if they are provided with various experiences necessary for them to learn. However, if they are not provided with the training and experiences they need, necessarily, the achievement is lower than expected.

The lack of a set of clear standards for training of the students is also an effect of a low competency level in teaching and discrepancies between the course curriculum and course requirements resulting in incompetent students if the competency level for Curriculum is at the beginning level (Măță, 2014; Pattanapichet & Chinokul, 2011).

Table 2 shows the competency levels of PSLTs in the area of Theoretical Foundations in Language. Having garnered an overall evaluation of 51.90% with a qualitative interpretation of “beginning,” this shows that the student teachers have not fully acquired or developed their knowledge and/or skills adequately in all the Theoretical Foundations in Language areas. Specifically, this competency deals with Introduction to Linguistics, Structure of English, Introduction to Stylistics, and Literary Criticism. In the area of Introduction to Linguistics, the PSLTs need to demonstrate understanding of the structural aspect of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics), and apply concepts and principles of language learning, teaching, and language use in specific contexts for language acquisition and learning. They also need to learn how to draw implications of linguistics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics to language teaching and learning. In the area of Structure of English, PSLTs are expected to demonstrate an understanding

of grammatical concepts by describing and analyzing various language structures’ form, meaning, and use. Introduction to Stylistics suggests that these would-be language teachers use conceptual framework and schema of linguistics and literature in understanding literary language. In Literary Criticism, PSLTs need to demonstrate knowledge of the basic approaches to problems in critical theory from the classical to modern times as applied to literary works.

Just like how it was observed in the analyses done for Curriculum, the PSLTs got a low score in this competency, possibly because the subject offerings in this area are all introductory. The different course checklists and course descriptions lack major follow-up subjects that will enhance their theoretical foundations in language. Hence, there is no deepening of mastery of skills in the theoretical foundations in language. Introduction to Stylistics got the lowest score which is 39.56 percentage competency level, simply because this subject is very new to the PSLTs. Yet no major follow-up subjects for Stylistics were given. The competencies Structure of English and Introduction to Linguistics got the top percentage competency levels because the PSLTs have enough experience and background in the English language since they were in basic education. However, they are also at the beginning level because there is a limited avenue for them to practice the use of the English language. They use the English language during their subjects in English, but this may not be followed up in their other subjects. As per observation, they sometimes do not mind their grammar in making their outputs, whether oral or written. It is also observed that PSLTs lack reading habits. Reading is essential to develop communication and grammar skills since model grammar, like a simple subject-verb agreement, is presented in the different texts.

In the interviews conducted, the teacher respondents explained the phenomenon. Their accounts explain why the PSLTs have low ratings in this area. In the interviews, the language level and reading habits of the PSLTs and the school’s admission policy were mentioned as reasons. The following responses from the teacher respondents clarify the need for a strong foundation in the language.

T1: They still need to realize the problems with

teaching language in the different competencies, thus, the need for language student teachers to gather and critique information from different sources for specific purposes.

- T2: Reading competence of language student teachers is low. Grammar proficiency is low. They have not mastered their grammar yet.
- T3: Communication skills should be given priority for the training of a language student-teacher (macro-skills).
- T5: Love for words or reading has not been developed in childhood. This forms the basic foundation for language competence. Entering college students do not have the expected language competencies to handle the academic requirements for college. No or lack of school-wide measures or interventions to enable college students to develop / enhance their language competencies needed to cope with more difficult ones.
- T6: The mastery of basic skills in English was not fully developed. Language student teachers do not apply/use what they have learned inside the classroom. An example is in communicating. There is no consistency in the use of the target language. Some teachers who teach the course are really not English majors or they are not proficient in communicating using the language.
- T7: The nature of the subjects is independent and introductory. Independent because the subjects are not dependent [on] other subjects (they are not prerequisite[s] of other major subjects). Introductory because you will discuss features of the subject matter in passing and there is no[t] much time to go into details.
- T8: No prerequisite or follow-up subjects when taking major subjects.
- T9: There is no qualifying examination for incoming English majors. This is relevant in order to assess their proficiency in English. The language student teachers lack exposure to avenues where their language competence could be improved. One semester of practice teaching is not enough. Seminars and pieces of training should also be improved.
- T10: There is also a need to give a qualifying exam per major/specialization.
- T11: Even English teachers are not masters of the English language.

The above-cited responses of the respondents clarify the PSLTs' competency levels in Theoretical Foundations

in Language. As the facilitators of the subjects of the PSLTs, they are in a position to shed light on the results. As they explain the phenomenon, their recommendation for enhancing the Curriculum is also expressed.

Indeed, a strong foundation in English basics is essential as it dovetails to all complex areas. Indeed, if mastery of the basic skills is not fully developed, the problem will follow until their tertiary level. Another reason underscored is reading. Reading is a gateway to other discoveries and learning, yet the interviewees identified the PSLTs as having low reading competence. This foundation then affects their competency level.

The admission policy is a factor that resulted in the beginning level of PSLTs, as seen by the interviewees. Since there is no qualifying examination for English majors, anyone with low English proficiency may enroll as there was no instrument to measure their ability. As one of the participants said,

- T9: There is an absence of a certain selection process qualifying any college student desiring to have a degree in Education major in English.

This participant believes that a specific selection process is necessary to determine the gems among the stones. Many of those who opt for a degree in Education major in English/Language are subpar with the expectations of their desired course. They have not acquired the necessary skills or reached this academic level to qualify as language student teachers at the tertiary level.

Finally, one of the interviewees mentioned,

- T7: The nature of the subjects is introductory; hence there is no deeper understanding of each subject. The courses were independent of each other too. Thus, not reaching the level of competency required.

This result is seen as problematic, as supported by Wiig (1993). He said that a problem arises since the PSLTs lack competency in the know-how of their specialization. Beijaard et al. (2000) stated that subject matter expertise is a prerequisite of good teaching. Given this result, PSLTs lack the basics of their expertise. This competency opens up vivid new perspectives on every significant aspect of language and communications: grammar and vocabulary, learning, origins of language, and the relationships of language and thought to the real world. It puts linguistics at the center of the research for understanding human nature and human cognition (Jackendoff, 2002). Teachers must already know about the language when they enter courses and how important they consider this knowledge in their future teaching career. This result implies that teachers who have a low-level language competency will also have a limited understanding of their ability to analyze the parts and

Table 3. Competency levels of PSLTs: Theoretical Foundations in Literature

Areas	Number of items	Raw score	Percentage of scores	Rank	Competency level
A Mythology and Folklore	5	119/325	36.62%	1	Beginning
B Afro-Asian Literature (including Philippine Literature)	8	158/520	30.38%	3	Beginning
C English and American Literature	7	158/455	34.73%	2	Beginning
Overall			33.91%		Beginning

structure of sentences. Since mastering grammar is the foundation in the proficiency of a language (Wang, 2010), it is inevitable for educators who teach well to master English grammar. This area is very important because if the PSLT will not improve on this competency, then they may fail to establish successful communication in either getting the interlocutor's message or putting their messages across, may not function effectively as facilitator to the students, and will also have limited understandings in their ability to analyze the parts and structures of sentences (Aina et al., 2013; Arslan, 2013; Penn-Edwards, 2010).

Table 3 shows the competency levels of PSLTs in the area of Theoretical Foundations in Literature. Having garnered an overall evaluation of 33.91% with a qualitative interpretation of "beginning," the PSLTs struggle with their competencies and their prerequisite and fundamental knowledge and/or skills have not been acquired or developed adequately. In the areas of Mythology and Folklore, Afro-Asian Literature (including Philippine Literature), and English and American Literature, language student teachers are expected to use literary concepts in interpreting and analyzing various literary texts, and to identify characteristics, motifs, archetypes, and symbols of different literary texts.

Aside from the reason that the subjects in this competency are introductory and no follow-up major subjects were given to deepen the competencies of the PSLTs, of the four competencies, the Theoretical Foundations in Literature got the lowest overall percentage competency level because the students lack literary appreciation and reading habits. These PSLTs lack love for reading, as observed in their lack of interest in reading different literary genres. Another observation is the lack of teachers who are experts and majors in literature. The researcher learned that minimal training and seminars in teaching literature are provided. One way to demonstrate love for reading and studying literature is a teacher who exemplifies enjoyment and in-depth teaching of literature. It is also observed that the teaching of literature is limited to plain reading, film viewing, and role-playing, after which answering of the given guide questions follows.

In the interviews, the teacher respondents mentioned the following reasons why PSLTs got a low rating in this competency.

T2: Language student teachers' interest in literature is low. Instructors have inadequate trainings in literature instruction.

T3: Lack of mastery on the theoretical foundation in language and literature. Lack of mastery on content affects methodology and vice-versa.

T5: Curriculum in the basic education does not motivate learners to read for fun and learning. Even classroom instruction and school activities do not encourage learners to read beyond what is assigned them.

It is true that one way to deepen and develop love for literature is to exemplify strong interest in learning literature by providing more meaningful and enjoyable strategies and approaches in presenting literature inside the classroom. Encouraging the PSLTs to develop reading habits and skills is also important and very significant to enhance their competencies in Theoretical Foundations in Literature.

Brumfit and Carter (1986) believed that literature is a language partner. Works of literature can help learners learn a skill in the target language, learn the usage of idiomatic expressions, speak legitimately, and become more fluent and creative in the target language (Obeidat, 1997). Theoretical Foundations in Literature plays a significant role in language curriculum and teaching. However, insufficient training in this area has made them unable to fully achieve their goals of mastering this competency (Babaee & Yahya, 2014).

Khajloo (2013) found that students are not interested to learn English due to the lack of subjects that will deepen their understanding in a particular course. In the case of language arts, literature courses are fundamental to deepen the students' understanding of certain concepts in literature and grammar.

Table 4 shows the competency levels of PSLTs in the area of Methodology. Having garnered an overall evaluation of 37.82% with a qualitative interpretation of "beginning," the PSLTs struggle with their competencies and their basic requirements and fundamental knowledge and/or skills have not been acquired or developed adequately. It is possible that the PSLTs got the lowest percentage score in the many competencies mainly because the competencies are taught separately and not

Table 4. Competency levels of PSLTs: Methodology

Areas	Number of items	Raw score	Percentage of scores	Rank	Competency level
A The Teaching of Speaking, Listening, and Reading	5	116/325	35.69%	6	Beginning
B Teaching Literature	5	130/325	40.00%	3	Beginning
C Preparation and Evaluation of Instructional Materials	5	141/325	43.38%	2	Beginning
D Language and Literature Assessment	5	121/325	37.23%	5	Beginning
E Language Research	3	99/195	50.77%	1	Beginning
F Campus Journalism	3	77/195	39.49%	4	Beginning
G Translating and Editing of Text	3	61/195	31.28%	8	Beginning
H Speech and Stage Arts	3	65/195	33.33%	7	Beginning
I Creative Writing	3	57/195	29.23%	9	Beginning
Overall			37.82%		Beginning

integratively, as seen in the different curriculum checklists. From the various areas in this competency, the PSLTs should use and demonstrate understanding of the nature of the four language macro-components (listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including grammar) and the theoretical bases, principles, methods, and strategies in teaching these components. They also need to demonstrate basic concepts in language and literature testing in assessing language proficiency and achievement and literary competence, basic theories and concepts in translation as applied to the writing and editing of various types of text, and the process of oral communication and the various forms of speech arts, from public speaking and group discussions to debate, oral interpretation, and dramatics. They are also expected to apply: principles, skills, and strategies gained to literature instruction; knowledge of principles and processes involved in developing and evaluating various types of instructional materials for language and literature instruction, including the use of technology for assisting instruction and independent language learning; principles and approaches in research to find answers to questions in language and literature teaching and learning; principles and strategies in writing the various parts of a campus newspaper; rules of discourse and rhetoric in editing various kinds of written materials; principles and strategies in translating texts of various types from English to another language or from another language to English; and the theories, concepts, and skills in creative writing to include biographical sketches, fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry.

Creative Writing got the lowest rating; its rating was lower than that of Language Research because, in the curriculum, there is only one major subject that talks about creative writing. In contrast, the curriculum gives two subjects for research: Research 1 and 2. It is evident that the language research skills and competencies of PSLTs are enhanced because of two essential subjects that will deepen the understanding and skills of the

students in research. It is in this context that competencies should be taught and be developed integratively in order for the PSLTs to see the connection of each competency embedded in the different English major subjects. Teaching involves continuous analysis of one's work, the experiences of other teachers, and the search for new means to improve teaching.

Tamura (2006) stated that methodology enhances the process of teaching by empowering and facilitating teachers to work proficiently. Having knowledge and skills in methods, the teacher will have a precise competency in teaching a particular subject matter. PSLTs must be knowledgeable in using a variety of teaching methodologies to respond to the varied learning needs and requirements of a multi-lingual and multi-cultural learning environment. A well-trained teacher knows strategies in teaching or integrating lessons about the proper alignment of the competencies, strategies, and assessment. Previous studies mentioned that if there is a low-level competency in this area, the teacher will struggle in preparing a sufficient number of high-quality works and good discussion with proper teaching methods for the class and will not have adequate knowledge of the occupational task of teaching a subject matter (Beare et al., 2012; Filatov & Pill, 2015).

As a result of the interviews with the teacher respondents, the following are why the PSLTs got low ratings in this competency.

T1: We need to improve and develop teaching and create [more] purposeful classroom activities and employ the suited strategies and methodologies to improve the competencies of teachers and they also lacked the knowledge for the preparatory training which requires a lengthy time to provide and utilize different sources of knowledge. They need to understand more on the theoretical concepts, principles, and practice of teaching language for them to enhance

their competencies.

- T2: Teaching strategies of the instructors can also be a factor why the qualitative interpretation was “beginning.”
- T3: The language student teacher may be prepared ideally but may find difficulty in classroom management in actual teaching.
- T6: Teachers who teach the course lack the training they need. Schools don’t have the necessary facilities/materials that would help supposedly in the teaching and mastery of the language.
- T10: There should be more exposure to the teaching experience. If possible, increase observation and practice teaching time. Seminars and trainings may also be given since not all are learned in the classroom.
- T11: Intensive training must be given to the language student teachers. Lack of exposure and proper training.

With this outcome, the problem arises on the issue that PSLTs struggle and lack knowledge on how to deliver language teaching since this competency provides the basis for language teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2001). TEIs should see that PSLTs master this competency since they will experience problems delivering their language lessons to their future classes (Cubukcu, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Robinson et al., 2007).

The same result is very evident in Gan’s (2013) study revealing that pre-service teachers had difficulty in preparing pedagogical practices they learned in their methodology courses. Similarly, pre-service teachers had problems in choosing appropriate teaching methodology and strategy as presented in Yunus et al.’s (2010) research.

Qualitative data analysis

As gleaned from the results of the study, the PSLTs’ competency levels in all the following areas need enhancement: Curriculum (beginning level), Theoretical Foundations in Language (beginning level), Theoretical Foundations in Literature (beginning level), and Methodology (beginning level).

From the analyses of these results and the observations of the teacher respondents, the teacher respondents recommended during their interviews strategies and activities to enhance the PSLTs’ language competencies. The recommended strategies were thematized and stipulated through the Helm of Competency Improvement (shown in Figure 1). This helm, in summary, captures the activities suggested by the teacher respondents that will enhance the PSLTs’ competency levels.

The helm is the equipment that controls the direction of boats or ships. It is manually steered to guide the boat

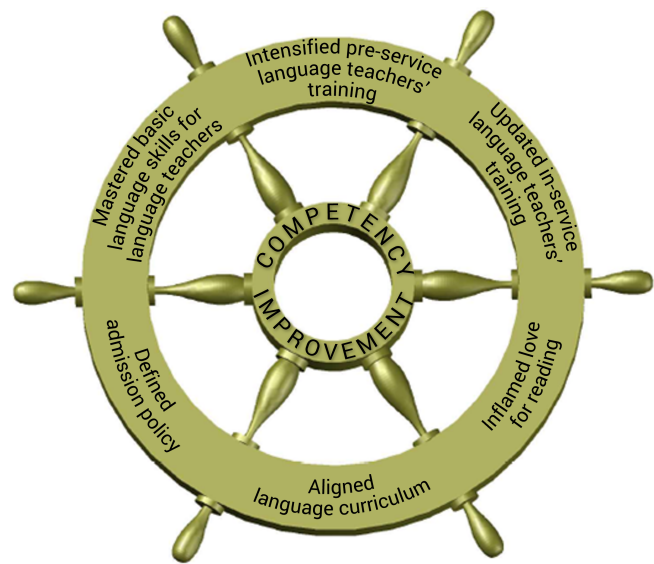


Figure 1. Helm of Competency Improvement

or vessel where it is heading. Likened to education, the helm is the driving force guiding the PSLTs to reach their expected language teacher competencies. The helmsman (the teacher) steers the helm in the right direction to ensure that the expected competency of a PSLT is achieved, thus becoming a competent language teacher. The helm is not just focused on one specific activity to enhance the competency of a PSLT. All the activities seen in the six felloes are equally important to ensure that the needed competency of PSLTs is developed.

The helm summarizes the suggested activities mentioned by the teacher participants to increase the PSLTs’ competency levels. The six felloes of the helm represent the themes simplified in this study: intensified PSLTs’ training, updated in-service language teachers’ training, inflamed love for reading, aligned language curriculum, defined admission policy, and mastered basic language skills for language teachers.

Intensified pre-service language teachers’ training

To ensure quality language teaching, intensive training for PSLTs is a necessity. Intensification of PSLTs’ training means focusing on teaching the essentials and looking into possible ways to improve the competencies of each PSLT teacher, especially in the areas where they experience difficulties. As emphasized by the teacher informants, this kind of training will empower the PSLTs with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge of language arts. Through training, seminars, conferences, lengthened classroom observation, and practice teaching, PSLTs will be more exposed to deepening their knowledge, hence, gaining more information, knowledge, and necessary skills to master their specialization.

- T1: They need to understand more on the theoretic-

cal concepts, principles, and practice of teaching language to enhance their competencies.

- T2: Go to literature instruction. Students' interest in literature is low.
- T3: Lack of mastery on the theoretical foundation in language and literature. Communication skills should be given priority for the training of a [PSLT] (macro-skills).
- T9: The [PSLTs] lack exposure to avenues where their language competence could be improved. One semester practice teaching is not enough. Seminars and trainings should also be improved.
- T10: Seminars and trainings may also be given since not all are learned in the classroom. There should be more exposure to the teaching experience. If possible, increase observation and practice teaching time.
- T11: Intensive training must be given to the pre-service teachers.

The beginning level of the PSLTs is workable as suggested by the informants through training programs given to the PSLTs. T9, T10, and T11 mentioned seminars and trainings. These are avenues for things not discussed or not enhanced in the classroom, as it is not enough to say all content in 54 hours. So the training and seminars will be supplemental for all the learners and be avenues for their improvement.

Theoretical concepts also need to be strengthened, as mentioned by T1 and T3. This is vital so that the PSLTs will have enhanced knowledge of the competencies. Lack of expertise in theories of language and literature affects students' competencies. Further, T2 capitalized on literature instruction. There is a suggestion to increase this part to be more competent in teaching.

Finally, communication skills must be given strong emphasis in the training as mentioned by T3. This means training or improvement in the macro skills—speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing. A good or high level of mastery of language skills is a must among English majors as this is their content and not only their medium of instruction. Therefore, English speaking skills must not be faulty to teach the subjects.

Updated in-service language teachers' training

As per teacher informants, the PSLTs should have intensified training. Teachers facilitating the major subjects should also be trained on the content and pedagogies of teaching the English major subjects. Updated in-service language teachers' training means giving in-service training for all teachers teaching English major subjects in order for them to become updated on the trends and issues in language teaching and on the nature of language teaching anchored on the Curriculum Guide of

the K to 12 Curriculum. These teachers should also be continuously trained for them to teach meaningfully all the essential information and concepts needed by PSLTs to become competent enough in teaching the English subject. Teachers of the English major subjects should master the different competencies required in the different English major subjects. The goal of producing highly competent PSLTs can be done once meaningful in-service training for language teachers is provided to have a continuous training of English teachers.

T1: They still need to realize the problems with teaching language in the different competencies, thus, the need for language teachers to gather and critique information from different sources for specific purposes.

T1: We need to improve and develop teaching and create [more] purposeful classroom activities and employ the suited strategies and methodologies to improve the competencies of teachers and they also lacked the knowledge for the preparatory training which requires a lengthy time to provide and utilize different sources of knowledge.

In-service teacher training is also a very vital factor in enhancing the competency levels of the PSLTs. T1 explained that in-service teachers need to continuously study the different language competencies to teach significantly needed competencies for the PSLTs.

Improving and developing teaching and creating more purposeful classroom activities among in-service teachers will surely improve the performance level of the PSLTs, as mentioned by T1. Training and seminars must also be provided among in-service teachers in order for them to guide and teach well the PSLTs. A well-trained in-service teacher can produce a well-rounded PSLT in this context.

Inflamed love for reading

Reading is a known foundation of knowledge and forms the basic foundation for language competence. Inflamed love for reading focuses on developing the innate love for reading since this is one of the macro skills PSLTs need to learn, develop, and enhance. Once they learn, develop, and enhance this macro skill, PSLTs will be motivated to continuously search for the meaning and substance of their subject through reading. It is expected that language teachers should have deepened desire for reading. According to the teacher informants, one of the reasons PSLTs are at the beginning level is that the reading competence of the PSLTs is low. It is so because love for reading has not been developed since childhood. When they reached becoming a PSLT, they groped to survive the challenges of reading many texts, especially in literature subjects, and understanding and studying lessons and competencies in grammar/linguistics.

PSLTs become complacent by studying only a specific lesson's focus. They do not usually exert extra effort in conducting an advanced reading of the lessons, in both literature and grammar.

T5: English teachers relied on to teach/encourage reading when this should be a learned effort for all teachers.

T5: Curriculum in the basic education does not motivate learners to read for fun and learning. Even classroom instruction and school activities do not encourage learners to read beyond what is assigned them. This should be included in the curriculum.

T5: Love for words or reading has not been developed in childhood. This forms the basic foundation for language competence.

Reading is an important skill that needs to be learned and developed in all students and not only among PSLTs. Reading then can be a solution to the beginning level of the PSLTs if they are encouraged to love reading and appreciate its many benefits.

Most of the contents teachers share are primarily from their readings—further, vocabulary increases as one reads. Therefore, reading must be developed among the PSLTs, be it reading for pleasure or reading for academic purposes.

T5 also intensified this skill by saying that it should be included in the curriculum. This means it will also be strengthened in the school's activities, not only as a subject matter.

Aligned language curriculum

An aligned language curriculum means ensuring that the language curriculum is integrated in such a way that the different subject offerings (English major subjects) are linked to one another. Subjects should not be seen as compartmentalized; instead, subjects should be treated in ways that they are interconnected, meaning the competencies are enhanced and intensified as the PSLTs progress from one subject to another. The teacher participants saw the curriculum to be important in the improvement of the PSLTs' competency levels. As emphasized by the teachers, curriculum must be revised, curriculum must be evaluated again, and schools must provide more units of major subjects. Indeed, in this fast-changing era, the curriculum must be in pace and abreast with the needs of the learners and society. An in-depth understanding of the content of the curriculum is also a must so that the teacher can teach well the competencies of the subject aligned with the strategies and assessment.

T9: Schools should provide more units (hours) to major subjects. GE subjects for English major should focus on foundations of language and literature.

T10: The competencies per subject in the curriculum (especially in the major subjects and basic language subjects) must also be evaluated again. This would mean enhancing the skills needed for teaching.

T10: The English curriculum must be revisited. Literature and grammar/language subjects are not equally distributed or balanced.

These key informants saw a revisit of the curriculum as a way of improving the PSLTs' competency levels. The supervising instructors believe that the subjects to be offered to the PSLTs, especially major subjects, be evaluated so that these will be geared towards the improvement of the competencies of the students.

Since English majors are also expected to teach literature subjects, T10 saw the importance of balancing the subjects in such a way that it will be focused not only on grammar or linguistics but also on literature.

These suggestions of the in-service teachers are timely as the curriculum is already revised for the 2018 incoming education students.

Defined admission policy

The TEIs are suggested to have a more defined admission policy or requirement among English majors. Defined admission policy denotes that before an education student is admitted to enroll as an English major, schools should devise a stringent policy before a student qualifies to become an English major. The admission policy will focus on the testing and identifying the education students' readiness and preparedness in taking English major subjects. They should have a screening process that will identify the student's readiness to become a PSLT. Two teachers mentioned qualifying exams for incoming English majors. This suggestion implies that there should be stricter rules in the admission of English majors; they should certify their proficiency so that they will be qualified to be one.

T9: There is no qualifying exam for incoming English majors. This is relevant in order to assess their proficiency in English.

T10: There also be a need to give qualifying exam per major/specialization.

As mentioned by two teacher informants, a qualifying examination is needed for all incoming English majors to assess their proficiency level in the language. This qualifying examination will be of great help to evaluate and monitor the language competency of the PSLTs. A well-defined admission policy in the TEIs will help aspiring language teachers assess their language abilities and skills, guiding them to become good in their chosen major.

Mastered basic language skills for language teachers

Mastered basic language skills for language teachers involves communicative competence of a PSLT focusing on grammar (oral and written), more so on the use of the English language. One of the reasons mentioned by the key informants for the PSLTs' beginning competency levels is the lack of proficiency in communication and language as a whole. Hence, as one of the fellows of the helm, mastery of basic grammar, structure, and components of language is needed so that PSLTs can handle the academic requirements of college, more so when they are English majors.

- T5: Entering college students do not have the expected language competencies to handle the academic requirements for college.
- T6: Students do not apply/use what they have learned inside the classroom. An example is in communicating. There is no consistency in the use of the target language.
- T6: The mastery of basic skills in English was not fully developed.

Going back to basics is emphasized by the teachers. Hence, mastery of basic language skills would elevate the PSLTs' competency levels. If one knows the basics, then there is an easy transfer of knowledge as compared to when the subject matter becomes more complex. For example, suppose there is mastery of basic sentence structure and subject-verb agreement. In that case, there will be a transfer of learning and more accessible learning of the form of language and syntax. The same is true in literature. It will be an easier literary criticism if literary concepts are understood in basic literature.

Conclusion and recommendation

Conclusion

The study results revealed that there is a need to provide intensive training for the students to improve the language competency levels as PSLTs. Hence, an enhanced program is recommended to be conducted to help fill in the gap between teachers' beginning level and their expected proficiency. As shown by the results of the study, the level of the language competencies of the students in all areas indicates that the preparation of the PSLTs is not enhanced. While it is true that their field of specialization is English, their competency levels show that they are not well-prepared to take the LET and to work in the actual workplace. Furthermore, the respondents are fully aware of what must be done to ensure that the low-level performance in the different competencies will be improved.

Recommendation

Based on this research, it is highly recommended that TEIs develop curricular alignment of the different course offerings, especially in the areas of language education, using the curriculum guides of the K to 12 Curriculum for English. There is a need to match the different content and performance standards and learning competencies in enhancing the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English course syllabi. There is also a need to have a stringent admission policy for those who would like to major in English to ensure that these would-be teachers will be prepared to take the English courses as their field of specialization. The deans of the different TEIs may recommend to the Technical Panel of CHED mechanics on how to improve curricular offerings in different fields of specialization in the teacher education programs like the alignment of English major courses with the subjects in the K to 12 Curriculum. It is also recommended that PSLTs should have thorough training in the lowest competencies following the language training program for competency improvement as prepared by the researcher. Lastly, university professors teaching English major courses need to undergo in-service training for them to have an in-depth understanding of the new language curriculum to help PSLTs enhance their competencies.

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