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Language Instruction for Communicative Competence: A Phenomenological Study of Senior High School English Teachers as Basis for an Instructional Framework

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examined how Senior High School English teachers experienced language instruction for the sociolinguistic and strategic dimensions of communicative competence, the two dimensions Philippine research identifies as the hardest to promote. Anchored on Borg's teacher cognition and Canale and Swain's communicative competence model, the study involved five purposively selected Grade 11 English teachers in a public secondary school in Balamban, Schools Division of Cebu Province. Data from ten non-participant classroom observations, lesson plans and assessment tasks, and semi-structured interviews were analyzed through Moustakas's modified Van Kaam method, with trustworthiness established through Lincoln and Guba's criteria. Five themes emerged: Adapting Language Instruction to Classroom Conditions, Modeling Appropriate Language for Formal Communication, Practicing Appropriate Language Through Scripted Roles, Using Cebuano to Sustain Communication in English, and Encouraging Hesitant Learners to Communicate in English. The essence of the experience was that these competences were developed not as a separate strand of teaching but through the continual, in-the-moment work of keeping hesitant learners communicating in English within lessons constrained by limited time, large classes, and incomplete materials. From these themes, the study developed a Communicative Instruction Framework that maps classroom conditions to techniques and the competence each targets. The study contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly Targets 4.1, 4.6, and 4.c, by documenting context-appropriate practices that can strengthen the quality of English instruction and inform teacher training in resource-constrained public schools.

Keywords: *Communicative Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Strategic Competence, Teacher Cognition, Phenomenology, SDG 4*

1. INTRODUCTION

For over 50 years, language teaching has been predicated on the notion of communicative competence. Hymes (1972) first noted that language use depends as much on appropriateness and repair as on grammar and vocabulary, and Canale and Swain (1980) codified the four dimensions of this competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic), which remain the standard framework. Of these, sociolinguistic competence, adjusting language to audience, purpose, and situation, and strategic competence, sustaining communication when it falters, are consistently reported as the most difficult for teachers to foster (Ngitngit, 2021; Fortuno, 2025), and survey evidence places strategic competence among the weakest dimensions in Filipino Senior High School learners (Coidno & Magday, 2026).

Globally, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) commits states to inclusive, equitable, and quality education and to lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations [UN], 2025). In the Philippines, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) placed communicative competence at the center of Senior High School English, the MATATAG agenda stresses curriculum decongestion and foundational literacy, and the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028 carries forward the AmBisyon Natin 2040 vision of a society built on communication, collaboration, and lifelong learning (National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2023). Despite these reforms, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II, 2026a) reported a marked decline in learner proficiency, and its analysis of national literacy results showed that half of learners remain below grade level, with Central Visayas having nearly twice the proportion of struggling readers found in higher-performing regions (EDCOM II, 2026b).

Classroom research reveals continuing problems. Teachers under pressure of time and examinations tend to reduce lessons to the delivery of information rather than communicative interaction (Del Rosario, 2024), and plans for developing communicative competence are not always realized in the classroom (Andres-Kimkiman, 2025; Liu & Deris, 2023). The source of the constraint is contested: Nam (2023) found that teacher-related factors such as proficiency, motivation, and training, rather than external factors, predicted communicative practice, whereas Philippine teachers themselves name time, materials, and assessment pressure as their primary constraints (Del Rosario, 2024; Abdullah et al., 2025). In Cebu, teachers report unequal access to materials and difficulty with newly assigned subjects (Argate et al., 2024), and Grade 11 learners report speaking anxiety and low confidence (Tapado, 2025). Phenomenological studies with Senior High School English teachers have documented their challenges and coping strategies (Abdullah et al., 2025; Bacus & Alda, 2022; Syting et al., 2024), but none treats language instruction for sociolinguistic and strategic competence as the phenomenon under study.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in Borg's (2003, 2015) teacher cognition, which holds that what language teachers know, believe, and think shapes their instructional practice while being shaped in turn by the conditions of the classroom. Research in this tradition has shown that stated and enacted practice do not reliably coincide: Torres and Santos (2021) found that Filipino senior high school ESL teachers' grammar teaching did not always follow their stated beliefs, with time, the curriculum, and the learners cited as reasons for departures, and Chen and Abdullah (2023) found that contextual factors mediate the relationship between teachers' cognition and practice. Santillan et al. (2023) surveyed Philippine high school English teachers' cognition and called for in-depth qualitative follow-up. Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence model serves as the definitional framework, fixing the meaning of the two dimensions examined.

Phenomenology is not a third theory but the methodological approach governing access to the phenomenon and its analysis.

Research Problem

The gap this study addressed is methodological rather than a shortage of studies. The literature establishes that sociolinguistic and strategic competence are the hardest dimensions to promote and that Philippine classrooms deliver English more transmissively than intended, but few studies document which specific strategies teachers use for these two dimensions, how consistently they use them, or on what grounds they choose them. Ngitngit (2021) identified the difficulty but inferred rather than documented teacher intent, and few studies have examined teachers' accounts alongside the corresponding lesson observations, lesson plans, and assessment tasks. This study therefore asked: How do Senior High School English teachers describe their lived experiences in language instruction for communicative competence? Four sub-questions guided the inquiry: (1) how do the co-participants describe their experiences in selecting, adapting, and enacting strategies for developing learners' sociolinguistic and strategic competence; (2) what significant meanings can be derived from their responses; (3) what themes emerge from those meanings; and (4) what instructional framework can be proposed based on the findings?

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design within an interpretivist paradigm, following the Husserlian tradition as developed into a research procedure by Moustakas (1994). Phenomenology is the most suitable approach when the aim is to understand what a relatively homogeneous group has in common in its experience of a clearly defined phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2024), and earlier studies have shown the design to be workable with Philippine Senior High School English teachers (Fortuno, 2025; Argate et al., 2024). The inquiry was exploratory and descriptive rather than evaluative: it did not test hypotheses, measure learners' communicative competence, or establish causal relationships. Teachers were treated as co-participants, since meaning was jointly constructed through dialogue and member checking.

Research Locale and Co-participants

The study took place at Buanoy National High School, a public secondary school in Balamban, a coastal municipality on the western seaboard of Cebu under the Schools Division of Cebu Province, during the second term of School Year 2026–2027. Most learners speak Cebuano at home and use English only at school. A single school was chosen so that the co-participants shared the same pacing guide, assessment calendar, materials, and scheduling restrictions, allowing differences in their accounts to be attributed to how each teacher interpreted the task of teaching rather than to institutional variation.

Five Grade 11 English teachers were selected through purposive, criterion-based sampling. Eligibility required a current Senior High School English assignment, at least two scheduled lessons in the collection window in which a text or task was the main instructional material, and at least one year of experience teaching Senior High School English. Performance ratings and formal qualifications were deliberately not used as criteria. A sample of five is consistent with comparable Philippine phenomenological studies of this teacher group (Abdullah et al., 2025; Fortuno, 2025) and with evidence that saturation is reached with comparatively few interviews in homogeneous populations with narrowly defined objectives (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Four co-

participants taught Effective Communication and one taught Contemporary Literature; their experience ranged from two to eight years (Table 1).

Table 1. Profile of the co-participants

Code	Years teaching SHS English	Subject handled (Grade 11)	Specialization	Lessons observed and documents
T1	6–7	Effective Communication (three sections)	English	2 lessons; lesson plan
T2	7–8	Contemporary Literature	English/Literature	2 lessons; lesson plan, assessment task and rubric
T3	2–3	Effective Communication	English	2 lessons; lesson plan, assessment task and rubric
T4	4–5	Effective Communication	English	2 lessons; lesson plan
T5	2–3	Effective Communication	English	2 lessons; daily lesson log, formative assessment and application task

Note. Years of service are reported in ranges to prevent identification within a single-school sample, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173).

Data Generation and Instruments

Data were generated through three methods in a fixed sequence for each co-participant: non-participant classroom observation of at least two lessons (ten in total, conducted between 30 September and 15 October 2026), document analysis of the lesson plan or daily lesson log and the assessment task for each observed lesson, and one semi-structured interview built around what had been observed. A structured observation guide recorded instructional strategies, lesson structure and time allocation, teacher talk and questioning, interaction patterns, competence-development opportunities, contextual conditions, and departures from the plan. Learners were not co-participants; their responses entered the data only through teachers' reports and as they became visible in the teacher's handling of them.

The interview guide was validated by three content experts, who rated each item for clarity, relevance, and adequacy on a four-point scale. Across the three validators, the guide obtained overall means of 3.71 for clarity, 3.73 for relevance, and 3.51 for adequacy, for a grand mean of 3.65, interpreted as Highly Valid. Following their recommendations, probes were added to anchor reflective items to particular lessons, and two items were added asking separately about lessons in which learners were taught to use English appropriately for an audience and to keep communication going when stuck. Audio recording was optional and requested separately from consent to participate; only T5 consented, so the interviews with T1 to T4 were documented through handwritten notes expanded into a full account on the same day and member-checked.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher is a practicing Business English teacher of adult professionals online, which gave her familiarity with register-shifting and conversational repair but a setting different from the co-participants' face-to-face, curriculum-bound public school classes. Four assumptions were journaled before entry to the field and bracketed throughout: that English can be taught communicatively in Philippine public schools; that teachers using other methods respond to constraints rather than lack of interest or ability; that teachers can explain their choices when asked; and that learners' differing readings of texts are pedagogically significant. Epoche was operationalized as dated actions across the inquiry, including pre-interview journal entries, two-column field notes separating description from interpretation, and a disconfirming-evidence log.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modified Van Kaam method, following its recent application in educational research (Aguas, 2022). Every relevant statement in the interview records, observation records, and documents was listed and treated as having equal value (horizontalization). Statements were reduced to invariant constituents by setting aside those that were vague, overlapping, or outside the study's delimitation, and the constituents were clustered into themes that were checked against each co-participant's complete record. Individual textural descriptions (what was experienced) and structural descriptions (the conditions under which it was experienced, arrived at through imaginative variation) were combined and synthesized into a composite description of the essence of the phenomenon, from which the instructional framework was derived. Sociolinguistic and strategic competence functioned only as sensitizing terms rather than as a coding scheme imposed on the data.

Trustworthiness

Rigor was established through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, as restated by Ahmed (2024). Credibility was supported by observing each co-participant before the interview, triangulating interviews, observations, and documents, and member checking of interview records and preliminary themes, which carried particular weight for the unrecorded interviews. Transferability was supported through thick description of the setting and lessons. Dependability rested on an audit trail including the reflective journal, written definitions of each invariant constituent, and a reduction repeated after a two-week interval. Confirmability was supported through peer debriefing with the adviser and by presenting extracts separately from interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Horizontalization yielded 142 significant statements (T1, 19; T2, 18; T3, 21; T4, 39; T5, 45). After 33 statements were set aside, 109 invariant constituents remained, which were clustered into five themes (Table 2). The themes are arranged from the conditions of teaching to the techniques used within them. Interview data for T1 to T4 are cited from member-checked expanded notes, in which only phrases recorded verbatim appear in quotation marks; T5 is quoted from the verbatim transcript. Observation and document data are cited by code, for example T1-O2 for an observation or T4-LP1 for a lesson plan.

Table 2. Emergent themes and contributing co-participants

Emergent theme	Clustered meanings (summary)	Contributing
Adapting Language Instruction to Classroom Conditions	Strategies chosen, cut, or carried over according to short or interrupted class time, large classes in warm, crowded rooms, incomplete materials, and learners' readiness on the day	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5
Modeling Appropriate Language for Formal Communication	Modeling polite and formal expressions, explaining word choice, drawing on familiar situations and local texts, and requiring English in formal presentations	T1, T2, T3, T4
Practicing Appropriate Language Through Scripted Roles	Roundtable role-plays and mini-forums with assigned roles, short scripts prepared in groups, and roles matched to learners' comfort	T1, T3, T4
Using Cebuano to Sustain Communication in English	Allowing Cebuano when learners got stuck, translating difficult words, recasting Cebuano answers in English, and guiding learners back to English	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5

Emergent theme	Clustered meanings (summary)	Contributing
Encouraging Hesitant Learners to Communicate in English	Simplified instructions, guide questions, writing before speaking, humor, supporting roles, question cards, and encouragement not to fear mistakes	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5

Note. Themes were derived from 109 invariant constituents reduced from 142 significant statements and were checked against every co-participant's member-checked interview record, observations, and documents.

The observed classrooms shared several features that recur in the findings. Classes were large, with 31 to 38 learners in warm, crowded rooms with outside noise. Periods ranged from 50 minutes to 1.5 hours and were often shortened by late starts, school activities, and class suspensions due to typhoons and haze. Learners had no textbooks or activity sheets of their own, the school's internet connection was slow, and teachers supplied printed materials, Manila paper, and markers themselves.

3.1 Theme 1: Adapting Language Instruction to Classroom Conditions

Every co-participant described selecting or adapting a strategy because of a condition of the day rather than because of the competence it served. T1 chose strategies for being practical and responsive to learners' proficiency; T2 turned days lost to interruptions into seatwork and homework; T3 extended or shortened discussion according to the next period and the approach of a test; T4 chose groups, roles, and question cards because they needed only paper; and T5 cut a lesson when learners were "not into the topic" and resumed with a recall and a quiz. T2 explained that lessons went off plan on interrupted days:

> *"kay daghan school activities, class suspensions tungod sa bagyo, haze ug daghan pa" [because there are many school activities, class suspensions due to typhoons, haze, and many more] (T2, Interview Notes)*
>
> *"I always plan more than I can finish." (T4, Interview Notes)*
>
> *"The lesson exemplar is already given, there is already a budget of work, and the resources are available. So it's all up to the teacher how to deliver." (T5, Interview Transcript, Part 2, 04:05)*

In each co-participant's case, the enacted lesson departed from the plan, and the departures fell in the same places: the closing parts of a lesson, namely processing questions, application, wrap-up, and reflection, were cut or carried over. These accounts are consistent with Torres and Santos (2021) and Chen and Abdullah (2023), who traced departures from stated practice to time, the curriculum, and other contextual factors. The parts most often lost were also those in which learners would have used language most independently, suggesting that the conditions bore hardest on the very opportunities through which sociolinguistic and strategic competence are practiced. This is where teacher cognition, in Borg's (2003, 2015) sense, entered the lessons most visibly: the decisions were made by the teacher, within the lesson, on the basis of what the teacher knew about the class and the period.

3.2 Theme 2: Modeling Appropriate Language for Formal Communication

For the co-participants, developing learners' sociolinguistic competence meant, first of all, modeling the language that fits a formal situation. T1 and T3 modeled polite expressions and explained word choice during slide presentations (T1-O1, T3-O1); T2 replaced a poem from outside the region with one by a Cebuano poet "aron maka relate ang mga students" [so that the students can relate] (T2, Interview Notes); and T4 modeled respectful expressions for each forum role. T3 required English in all group presentations and noticed that learners became "more careful with their choice of words" (T3, Interview Notes).

> *"May I add to that point..." and "With respect, I see it differently because..." (T4, Interview Notes)*

Appropriateness was thus made visible by the teacher before learners were asked to produce it, and it was experienced largely as a shift from the informal vernacular to formal classroom English, with the teacher and classmates as audience. Other audiences and purposes did not figure prominently, so the sociolinguistic work described was narrower than the full range the dimension covers (Canale & Swain, 1980). T4 noted that outside the scripted parts learners "slipped back into more casual talk," suggesting that the formal register was held more securely in prepared than in spontaneous language. These occasions also arose more often in the enacted lessons than in the plans: most plans named neither competence, with T4's plan, which named culturally appropriate strategies and sensitivity to social roles, the exception.

3.3 Theme 3: Practicing Appropriate Language Through Scripted Roles

Role-plays and mini-forums were the clearest attempt to move sociolinguistic competence from explanation into use. In T1-O2 and T3-O2, assigned roles in a roundtable discussion gave learners an imagined audience and purpose, and T1 explained that performing before classmates made learners consider how language should be used in a formal discussion. T4 matched roles to learners' comfort, so that a shy learner could serve as timekeeper, question writer, or co-moderator, and attributed the success of the forum to the fact that

> *"every learner had a role and knew what it was." (T4, Interview Notes)*

The way the role-plays were carried out, however, limited what they could achieve. Learners prepared short scripts and read from them, so the language of each role was settled before the audience was faced, and moments requiring adjustment to an unexpected reply were largely absent; T4 observed that only the open forum, when the audience asked questions, required learners to think on their feet. Scripted roles were also most exposed to the pressure of time: they were compressed when a period started late, and T4 judged a full forum for every group, with feedback and reflection, unrealistic in a single session with 37 learners. The theme rests on three co-participants; T2 and T5 neither described nor were observed using role-play.

3.4 Theme 4: Using Cebuano to Sustain Communication in English

Using Cebuano to sustain communication in English was the most widely shared theme, present in the accounts of all five co-participants and in every observed lesson. The co-participants did not experience learners' use of Cebuano as a failure of the English lesson but as a way of keeping it going, and they differed mainly in when they allowed it: T1 and T2 when learners got stuck, T3 to ensure that all learners could follow, T5 when learners asked permission, and T4 during group preparation but not in the formal part of a task.

> *"I let them use Bisaya in my class so when they got stuck in the middle of their speech, they would just use 'Bisaya' term." (T2, Interview Notes)*

> *"Some of them will really panic; I can see it, but I really start everything with a joke. 'It's okay.' And then sometimes they will ask, 'Ma'am, is it okay to speak vernacular?' 'It's okay, just try. It's okay to speak, but just do your best to speak English.'" (T5, Interview Transcript, Part 2, 02:10)*

T4 summarized the stance: the learners' own language "is not a failure; it is how they get to English" (T4, Interview Notes). Switching languages to keep communication from breaking down is itself a strategic move in the sense of Canale and Swain (1980), and the permission was

granted with a direction attached, as each co-participant described leading learners back to English through recasting, gradual guidance, or a request to do their best in English. When teachers themselves rephrased or translated as soon as learners were stuck, however, often after a wait time of only one to two seconds (T1-O1), the work of resolving the breakdown was done by the teacher rather than the learner. Strategic competence was, in this sense, permitted and supported more than it was taught. T4 was the exception: moderators were taught to keep the discussion moving and to rephrase questions, the audience was taught to ask politely for clarification, and learners had sentence starters to fall back on. The literature reviewed gives little attention to this use of the regional language as a resource for strategic competence, which the Central Visayas setting brings into view.

3.5 Theme 5: Encouraging Hesitant Learners to Communicate in English

Learners' hesitancy to speak was the condition the co-participants returned to most often. It was recorded in every observed class in very short answers, long silences, chorus answers, and reading from paper, and the share of learners speaking aloud ranged from about one in twelve (T4-O1) to about two in five, higher during group work than during individual reports. The strategies described were largely affective and structural: encouraging learners to keep speaking "using the words they already knew" and "not to be afraid of making mistakes" (T3, Interview Notes), simplified instructions and additional examples (T1), writing before speaking (T2-O1-O2), supporting roles, question cards, and listening logs (T4), and humor:

> *"They used to speak the vernacular, but as time goes by, as I challenge them to do the English — 'carabao English' — and it's just a joke, but it really helps. I think it boosts their confidence." (T5, Interview Transcript, Part 2, 01:25)*

When a panelist stopped mid-answer, T4 rephrased the question and, when that did not work, passed it to another group member "so she would not be embarrassed," aware that if the teacher insisted too much on English, "they will just stop talking" (T4, Interview Notes). Hesitancy was experienced not as a fixed trait but as a state that changes with the day, the task, and the atmosphere the teacher creates, consistent with the speaking anxiety Tapado (2025) reports among Grade 11 learners. For these teachers, getting learners to speak at all came before refining how they spoke, and the format of the task and the emotional climate of the room were the levers within reach. Reports of learners becoming "more willing to participate" are the teachers' perceptions and are reported as such.

3.6 Essence of the Experience

The composite synthesis, member-checked with the co-participants, showed that language instruction for sociolinguistic and strategic competence was lived not as a separate strand of teaching but as the continual, in-the-moment work of keeping hesitant learners communicating in English within lessons bounded by content and time. Appropriateness was taught chiefly by modeling language for formal communication, and keeping communication going chiefly through the teachers' permission to use Cebuano and their readiness to step in when learners were stuck, while limited time, large classes, incomplete materials, and learners' uncertain confidence determined how much of that work a lesson could hold.

The findings support Ngitngit's (2021) report that these two dimensions are the hardest to promote and document the difficulty in the classroom rather than inferring it; each source of difficulty Ngitngit identified appears in the co-participants' experience, and the present study adds time as a further source. They converge with Andres-Kimkiman (2025) on the inconsistent translation of plans into practice, with Del Rosario (2024) on the pull toward teacher-led

information delivery, and with Argate et al. (2024) on unequal access to materials in Central Visayas. The study cannot test Nam's (2023) finding that teacher-internal factors predict practice, but it shows how the two kinds of constraint were lived together: external conditions decided which parts of a lesson survived, while the teacher's own preparation and reflection shaped how well a lesson fitted those conditions. T4, whose plan and lessons corresponded most closely, named reflection after each session and plan review by a Master Teacher as what had helped most. The apparent contradiction between Nam (2023) and Del Rosario (2024) may therefore reflect the different questions their designs ask.

3.7 The Communicative Instruction Framework

From the composite synthesis, the study derived a Communicative Instruction Framework (Figure 1) in three layers. The top layer, drawn from Theme 1, names the classroom conditions under which the co-participants chose their strategies and the teacher's decision to select, adapt, and enact a technique, the point at which teacher cognition enters instruction. The middle layer groups the techniques into four clusters drawn from Themes 2 to 5. The bottom layer names the competence each cluster targets, following Canale and Swain (1980). Because each technique is mapped to the condition under which it was used (Table 3), a teacher can enter the framework from the condition at hand rather than from an idealized lesson. The framework was confirmed with the co-participants through member checking and is offered as a resource for reflection and planning rather than as a curriculum or a validated instrument.

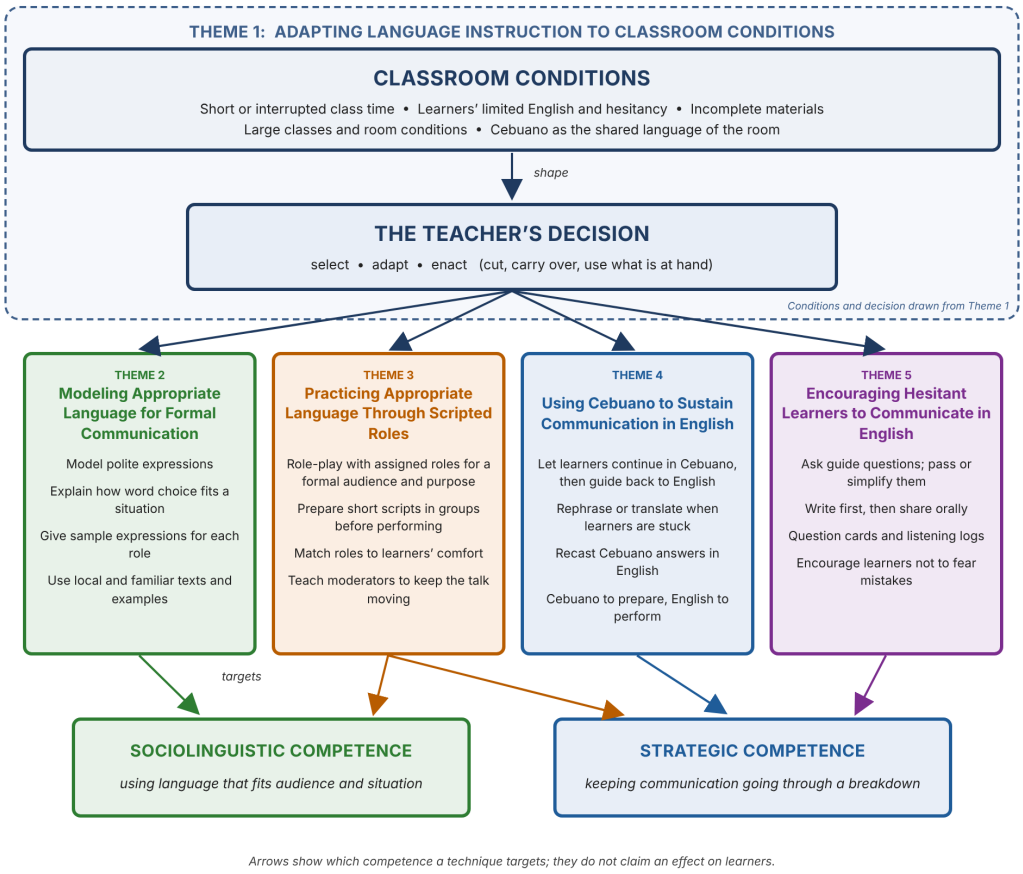


Figure 1. Communicative Instruction Framework

Table 3. Technique–competence–condition mapping of the Communicative Instruction Framework

Technique cluster	Technique	Competence addressed	Condition of use
Adapting to conditions	Plan a short application or reflection that can survive a shortened period, or carry it over deliberately	Both (protects occasions)	Period shortened by a late start, or a plan longer than the period
Adapting to conditions	Resume a cut lesson with a short recall and a quiz, and have the application presented at the next meeting	Both (protects occasions)	Lesson cut before the application; learners drained after examinations
Adapting to conditions	Prepare a catch-up route to discussion and generalization, with seatwork for interrupted days	Both (protects occasions)	Class days lost to school activities, typhoons, or haze
Adapting to conditions	Choose scaffolds that need only paper: roles, sentence starters, a model outline, question cards, a listening log	Both (protects occasions)	Large class; slides hard to read from the back of the room
Modeling appropriate language	Model polite expressions and explain how word choice fits a situation	Sociolinguistic	Presentation phase of a slide-based lesson
Modeling appropriate language	Replace a distant text with a local one, and draw examples from familiar situations	Sociolinguistic	Prescribed text far from learners' experience
Modeling appropriate language	Give sample expressions for each role and have learners pick out the words that fit	Sociolinguistic	Preparing for a formal forum before an audience
Scripted roles	Role-play with assigned roles for a formal audience and purpose	Sociolinguistic; Strategic	Performance task; carried out even in a shortened period
Scripted roles	Match roles to learners' comfort (timekeeper, question writer, co-moderator)	Sociolinguistic; Strategic	Large class with learners hesitant to speak before others
Scripted roles	Teach moderators to keep the discussion moving and the audience to ask politely for clarification	Strategic	Rehearsal and conduct of a forum
Using Cebuano	Let learners continue in Cebuano, then guide them back to English	Strategic	Learners stuck in the middle of an answer or a speech
Using Cebuano	Rephrase or translate a question or a difficult word; recast Cebuano answers in English	Strategic	Comprehension breaks down during questioning
Using Cebuano	Allow Cebuano during preparation, and ask for English in the formal part of the task	Strategic	Group preparation before a formal performance
Encouraging hesitant learners	Ask guide questions, pass a question on, or simplify an instruction	Strategic	No answer comes, or an answer is far from the intended concept
Encouraging hesitant learners	Have learners write first, then share orally	Strategic	Analysis tasks with learners reluctant to speak
Encouraging hesitant learners	Offer written question cards and a listening log as alternatives to speaking aloud	Strategic	Audience members hesitant to ask questions aloud

Note. Each technique is traceable to at least one interview, observation, or document extract retained in the audit trail. The mapping indicates the competence a technique is intended to develop and makes no claim about its effect on learners.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the single-school, teacher-only scope of the study, sociolinguistic and strategic competence were developed within lessons built around content rather than as stated objectives. Sociolinguistic competence was approached mainly by showing and requiring the shift from the vernacular to formal classroom English, a narrower range of audiences and purposes than the dimension covers. Strategic competence was permitted and supported more than it was taught, as teachers allowed Cebuano and repaired breakdowns themselves, except where learners were given roles and phrases for keeping a discussion going. Getting learners to speak at all came before refining how they spoke, group formats with clear roles drew more learners into speaking than whole-class discussion, and Cebuano functioned as a bridge to English rather than a barrier to it. The conditions under which teachers worked, above all time, decided which parts of a lesson took place, and the parts most often lost were those in which learners would have used language most independently.

Teachers may name both competences in their lesson objectives, protect or deliberately carry over the application and reflection phases of a lesson, favor group formats with assigned roles, allow a longer wait before stepping in so that learners can attempt their own repair, teach repair phrases explicitly, and make the return from Cebuano to English explicit. School administrators may protect class time from avoidable interruptions and institutionalize plan review and post-lesson reflection, while the Schools Division and curriculum developers may provide complete learning materials, size lesson exemplars to the actual length of a period, and offer training in facilitating speaking for hesitant learners and managing group tasks in large classes. Because the study involved five teachers in one school, relied on handwritten notes for four interviews, and did not measure learner outcomes, future research should validate the framework with experts, examine learners' experience and measured competence where it is applied, and replicate the inquiry in other schools and regions. By documenting what teachers can realistically do under the conditions they face, this study offers a practical path toward the quality, inclusive English instruction that SDG 4 envisions for learners in resource-constrained public schools.

5. COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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Conflict of interest statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Statement of ethical approval

The study was reviewed and approved by the University Ethics Review Board (UERB) of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, which granted ethics clearance under expedited review on September 21, 2026, before data collection began. Upon completion, the UERB issued a Final Report Clearance dated November 6, 2026, certifying that the research was conducted in the form approved and within its specified duration. Written permission was also obtained from the Schools Division Office and the school head. The study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). AI tools (Copilot, Grammarly, QuillBot, and ResearchRabbit) were used for

support during the research process; no AI was used to generate data, interact with co-participants, or conduct the qualitative analysis.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Consent to audio recording was sought separately, and declining it did not affect participation. Learners were present during observations but were not participants; no learner data were collected, recorded, or reported.

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