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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF FILIPINO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS: BASIS FOR A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Abstract
Ongoing professional development and implementation of supportive educational policies are important to address the linguistic challenges faced by non-native English language teachers (NNETs). These would enhance educational outcomes for students and improve the quality of basic education. This mixed-method exploration of the communicative competence of NNETs in Arakan, North Cotabato, Philippines, used descriptive-evaluative design, correlation, and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). The findings showed that predominantly young female NNETs with diverse educational backgrounds had significant deficiencies in phonology and notable inadequacies in syntax, morphology, lexicon, and orthography despite their diligence in lesson preparation. Significant correlations were found between the subjects taught and lexicon proficiency, as well as the number and types of subjects handled and morphology competence. However, no significant correlations existed between their competence and educational attainment, job description, or seminar attendance. Additionally, significant differences were observed in orthographic proficiency by age and syntactic proficiency by gender, while civil status did not significantly impact competence levels. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted professional development for NNETs. Specialized training or advanced English courses are essential to address linguistic shortcomings. With improved grammatical and linguistic skills, NNETs can enhance their pedagogical effectiveness and ensure the delivery of quality basic education.

Keywords: communicative competence, English language teaching (ELT), non-native English language teacher (NNET), Philippine English, world English

Introduction
In the field of English language teaching (ELT), the role of non-native English language teachers (NNETs) has been a topic of considerable interest and debate (Fitria, 2023; Mermelstein, 2015; Wright, 2022). NNETs bring unique perspectives and experiences to the classroom, yet their communicative competence in English, particularly in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and discourse, has been a subject of concern (Calafato, 2019; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014; Yufrizal, 2017).

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NNETs constitute a significant portion of the ELT workforce worldwide, especially when English is taught as a foreign or second language (Deng et al., 2023; Maganaka, 2023). Despite their linguistic diversity and cultural richness, NNETs often encounter difficulties in achieving native-like proficiency in English (Li & Jin, 2020; Maharjan, 2017; Mauludin, 2015; Ozturk & Atay, 2010). These challenges stem from various factors, including differences in linguistic backgrounds, exposure to English-speaking environments, and access to professional development opportunities focused on language improvement (Altaai & Gokgoz-Kurt, 2023; Domingo, 2020; Huo, 2020; Kekana & Montle, 2023; Perrodin & Suharyatun, 2021; Wardak, 2014).

The communicative challenges of NNETs are evident through pronunciation errors, grammatical inaccuracies, and difficulties in maintaining coherent discourse (Arcaya, 2020; Demirezen & Kot, 2016; Huda & Dewanti, 2022; Utami & Mahardika, 2023). These issues can impact their credibility as language instructors and hinder effective communication with students, potentially affecting students' language learning outcomes. Additionally, NNETs may face discrimination or bias based on their linguistic background (Hiratsuka et al., 2023; Lasula, 2022; Orian et al., 2023; Peters, 2023; Tan et al., 2021), further complicating their professional experiences and advancement opportunities as NNETs constitute a significant portion of the ELT workforce worldwide.

While extensive literature exists on NNETs in ELT (Aoyama, 2023; Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2023; Estaji & Jahanshiri, 2022; Floris & Renandya, 2020; Llurda & Calvet-Terre, 2024; Saba & Frangieh, 2021; Selvi et al., 2024; Tajeddin et al., 2023), there remains a gap in understanding the specific challenges they face in developing communicative competence. Existing research tends to focus on broader issues of teacher identity and cultural awareness, overlooking the nuances of linguistic proficiency. By addressing this gap, this paper aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing NNETs' communicative competence and its implications for their teaching practice.

Recognizing these challenges, the researcher conducted a study to assess the communicative competence of Filipino NNETs in the Municipality of Arakan, Province of Cotabato, Philippines. Specifically, this paper aimed to determine their level of communicative competence (grammatical/linguistic) and sought to:

1. describe the personal profile of the respondents (age, sex category, and civil status);
2. look into the professional profile of the respondents (educational attainment, major field of specialization/s, related seminars/trainings attended, length of service, number of subject preparation/s, and type of subject preparation/s);
3. identify the level of communicative competence of the respondents in terms of linguistic/grammatical skills;
4. determine the kind of relationship between the professional profile and the level of communicative competence among respondents;
5. find out if there is a difference on the level of communicative competence when analyzed according to the personal profile; and
6. design a development program for the NNETs based on the findings of the study.

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the premise that the communicative competence, specifically in terms of linguistic and grammatical skills, among NNETs in Arakan public secondary schools is influenced by their professional profiles, which directly or indirectly impact their proficiency in English communication. Additionally, intervening variables further shape their communicative competence levels. The research paradigm (Figure 1) posits that the independent variables consist of elements from the professional profiles of NNETs, including educational attainment, major fields of specialization, participation in relevant seminars and training, length of service, as well as the number and types of subjects they prepare to teach. Conversely, the dependent variable is the communicative competence of English language teachers, specifically focusing on their linguistic and grammatical abilities. These independent and dependent variables may be influenced either directly or indirectly by the intervening variables, which encompass personal characteristics such as age, gender, and civil status.

Moreover, this study adopts the Proposed Model of Communicative Competence developed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), which builds upon the seminal works of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). This model provides a comprehensive framework encompassing five core components of communicative competence: linguistic, strategic, sociolinguistic/sociocultural, actional, and discourse. Each component plays a vital role in understanding and effectively using a language in real-life contexts. In this study, the researcher specifically focused on evaluating the linguistic and grammatical skills of NNETs in Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines. This assessment aimed to delve into essential aspects of communication, such as sentence construction, grammatical structures, morphological variations, vocabulary usage, and the phonetic and orthographic systems essential for both spoken and written communication.

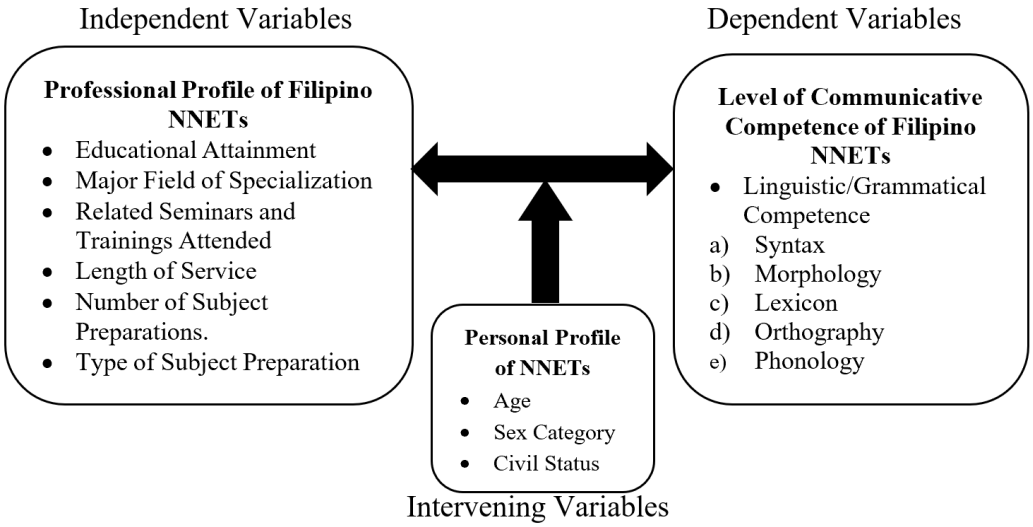


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study "Communicative competence of Filipino English language teachers: Basis for a development program."

Method

Research design

This mixed-method research utilized the descriptive-evaluative design to approach methodologically the gathered information that would appropriately describe and interpret (Creswell, 2009; Gu & Warren, 2017) the communicative competence of Filipino NNETs. Further, the correlation method, using the Spearman Test, was employed to find out the kind of relationship (Al-Hameed, 2022; Christmann, 2012; Yu & Hutson, 2024) that existed between their professional profile and their level of communicative competence. The researcher also used the In-Depth Interview (IDI) among five (5) randomly selected informants to confirm, triangulate, and validate the quantitative data collected (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023). They then transcribed, encoded, and analyzed the results of the in-depth interview to back up the findings of this research study. By using different methods and designs (Creswell et al., 2011; Wisdom et al., 2012), robust pieces of evidence or data are collected for a better understanding of the present study.

Research respondents and sampling technique

Thirty (30) NNETs in all public secondary schools from the Municipality of Arakan, Province of Cotabato, Philippines, were purposely chosen as the respondents of the study. The researcher used complete enumeration and non-probability sampling techniques, personally reached the respondents, administered the test tool, and interviewed the participants in IDI. The mean age of the English language teachers was 32.1 years old. The oldest was 57 years old, while the youngest was only 22 years old. 46.7% of the respondents were 22 – 27 years old, while only 6.7% of them were 52 – 57 years old. Also, there were more female teachers (66.7%) than their male counterparts (33.3%). In addition, 50% of the respondents were single, and the other 50% were married.

Table 1. Personal profile of the NNETs of Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines

		Frequency (N = 30)	Percent (100%)
Age	22 – 27	14	46.7
	28 – 33	4	13.3
	34 – 39	4	13.3
	40 – 45	6	20
	46 – 51	0	0
	52 – 57	2	6.7
Sex Categories	Male	10	33.3
	Female	20	66.7
Civil Status	Single	15	50
	Married	15	50

Research instrument

The following parts composed the research instrument: Part I (personal and professional profile of the NNETs) and Part II (Researcher-Made Standardized Test designed to identify the level of NNET-respondents' linguistic/grammatical competence). The standardized test in this study serves as a crucial tool designed to assess the linguistic and grammatical competence of non-native English teachers (NNETs) in Arakan. It consists of both written and oral components to comprehensively evaluate their proficiency in various aspects of English language

usage. The test includes written questions that cover syntax, morphology, lexicon, orthography, and phonology. These written assessments gauge the NNETs' understanding and application of grammatical rules, vocabulary usage, and spelling conventions. Additionally, the oral test requires respondents to read passages, including excerpts from literary works, to assess their pronunciation and oral proficiency in phonology. The test is administered as part of the research instrument following the completion of Part I, which gathers personal and professional profiles of the NNETs. It was conducted under controlled conditions to ensure consistency and fairness in evaluation. The researcher-developed instrument and the criteria used were loosely adopted and modified from the Proposed Model of Communicative Competence developed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) based on the works of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983).

The instrument went through rigorous validation processes involving expert review. Criteria such as clarity of language, presentation of topics, suitability of items, adequateness of content, attainment of purpose, respondent-friendliness, and objectivity were considered. Its overall validity rating of 3.857 out of 5 indicates effectivity in measuring what it intends to assess. Furthermore, the reliability of the written exam component was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient through a computer software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS®), achieving a value of 0.82, which indicates a good level of internal consistency among the test items.

Data collection

The researcher obtained authorization from the Department of Education, Cotabato Schools Division Office, which was acknowledged by the Cluster Head of Arakan Secondary Schools. Data collection began upon approval. Participants were guided through questionnaire completion, given adequate time for responses, and instructed on phonological sound passages while being recorded. Tools were retrieved after the questionnaire was completed and were subjected to Analysis of Variance. After the analysis, the quantitative data were validated by conducting in-depth interviews with five randomly selected informants to verify their responses from written and oral examinations.

Data analysis

This mixed-method study used descriptive statistics (mean and frequency) to profile NNET respondents. The Spearman test assessed communicative competence and its correlation with professional profile. ANOVA analyzed differences in communicative competence by personal profile. Post-standardized testing and in-depth interviews explored participants' challenges, which were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized for confidentiality. Qualitative insights were triangulated with quantitative data to enrich analysis, discussion, and conclusions.

Ethical consideration

The researcher maintained strict confidentiality to safeguard respondents' identities and data integrity, ensuring no falsification occurred. It was made sure to adhere to the ethical principles: informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, non-coercion, and participant freedom to withdraw without penalty (Halai, 2006). Tokens of appreciation were offered to participants post-study in recognition of

their valuable contributions. Participant identities were anonymized with codes during analysis (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Proper citation and acknowledgment of supporting authors were diligently observed to prevent plagiarism (Miller et al., 2012).

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Professional profile of the Filipino NNETs

Educational attainment

The analysis reveals diverse educational backgrounds among NNETs. Half (50%) of them hold a Bachelor of Secondary Education in English (BSE-English), providing a strong foundation for teaching at the secondary level. Additionally, 10% have completed varying levels of a Master of Arts in English, offering deeper insights into language and literature. Another 6.7% have pursued non-English-related Master's programs (21 units or more), bringing diverse academic perspectives. Additionally, 6.7% hold doctorates in unrelated fields, demonstrating high academic achievement and broad applicability in educational settings.

Table 2. Educational attainment of NNETs of Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines

Educational Attainment	Freq. (N=30)	100%
Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE-English)	15	50.0
Bachelor of Arts in English	2	6.7
Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication	2	6.7
Non-BSE, With Professional Education Units		
18 Units	2	6.7
53 Units	1	3.3
Master of Arts in English (Graduate)	2	6.7
Master of Arts in English (On-Going)		
9 units	1	3.3
18 units	3	10.0
30 units	2	6.7
33 units	1	3.3
Master of Arts in Education (non-English) Graduate	1	3.3
MA/MAT/MAEd/MS (non-English) On-going		
9 units	1	3.3
21 units	2	6.7
34 units	1	3.3
39 units	1	3.3
Doctor of Education or Doctor of Philosophy (non-English) Graduate	2	6.7
Doctor of Education or Doctor of Philosophy (non-English) On-going	1	3.3

Related seminars attended for the last three years

Over the past three years, data on seminars attended by NNETs in the K to 12 education framework reveal diverse professional development participation. Local or municipal seminars for Grade 9 English attracted 3.3% of teachers, addressing immediate curriculum needs. At the division level, 26.7% participated in Grade 8 English seminars, indicating a broader interest in professional growth. Regionally,

30% attended seminars covering Grades 9 and 10 English, reflecting efforts in curriculum alignment. Additionally, 3.3% participated in national-level Grade 10 English seminars, aligning with national educational policies. These findings highlight NNETs' proactive approach to enhancing pedagogical skills in K to 12 education.

Table 3. Related seminars of Filipino NNETs attended for the last three years

Related Seminars Attended	Municipal Level		Division Level		Regional Level		National Level	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Grade 7 English			7	23.3	7	23.3		
Grade 8 English			8	26.7	7	23.3		
Grade 9 English	1	3.3	5	16.7	9	30		
Grade 10 English			4	13.3	9	30	1	3.33
Grade 11 English			2	6.7	3	10		

Length of service (years)

Among NNETs, the average teaching experience is about 6.9 years, indicating a mid-career stage for most. The distribution shows that 63% have 0.3 to 5.2 years of experience, focusing on building skills. About 13% have 5.3 to 10.2 years, with growing experience and responsibilities. Another 3% have 10.3 to 15.2 years, bringing deep subject knowledge. Additionally, 13% have 15.3 to 20.2 years, showing stability and expertise. Finally, 8% have 20.3 to 25.3 years, representing the longest-tenured educators. This diverse experience enriches the educational environment, blending fresh perspectives with seasoned expertise for student learning and ongoing professional growth.

Table 4. Length of service of Filipino NNETs

Number of Years	Frequency (N = 30)	Percent (100%)
0.30 – 5.2	19	63
5.3 – 10.2	4	13
10.3 – 15.2	1	3
15.3 – 20.2	4	13
20.3 – 25.3	2	8

Number of subject preparation

Data on subject preparations among NNETs reveal varied workloads and responsibilities. Notably, 36.7% of NNETs prepare materials for four English subjects, indicating extensive planning to meet curriculum requirements across multiple subjects. Conversely, 6.7% prepare for two English subjects, reflecting a lighter workload with focused teaching responsibilities. Additionally, 23.3% prepare for one non-English subject, demonstrating versatility in managing diverse subjects. Moreover, 3.3% handle materials for five non-English subjects, highlighting workload variations. These findings emphasize the complexity of NNETs' roles in balancing multiple subject preparations to meet educational standards and student needs.

Table 5. Number of subject preparation of Filipino NNETs

Number of Subject Preparation	Frequency (N = 30)	Percent (100%)
One preparation (English)	2	6.7
Two preparations (English)	3	10
Three preparations (English)	2	6.7
Four preparations (English)	11	36.7
Five preparations (English)	8	26.7
Six preparations (English)	4	13.3
One preparation (Non-English)	7	23.3
Two preparations (Non-English)	2	6.7
Three preparations (Non-English)	2	6.7
Four preparations (Non-English)	5	16.7
Five preparations (Non-English)	1	3.3

Types of subject preparation

Types of subject preparation among NNETs reflect their diverse responsibilities and instructional contexts. A significant proportion (36.6%) prepare materials for both English and non-English subjects in Junior High School Grades 7 to 10, showcasing versatility in educational support. Additionally, 6.7% prepare for both Junior and Senior High School levels, indicating broad teaching responsibilities and adaptable approaches. Moreover, 30% focus exclusively on preparing English subjects for Junior High School Grades 7 to 10, while 10% concentrate on Grade 11 in Senior High School. These roles emphasize specialized language instruction and academic preparation at critical stages, underscoring NNETs' adaptability and commitment to quality education across diverse levels.

Table 6. Types of subject preparation of Filipino NNETs.

Type of Subject Preparation	Freq. (N=30)	Percent (100%)
English only for Grade 7-10 JHS	9	30
English only for Grade 11 SHS	3	10
English and other subjects for JHS	11	36.6
English and other subjects for SHS	5	16.7
English and other subjects for JHS & SHS	2	6.7

Level of communicative competence of Filipino NNETs.

Analysis of communicative competence among NNETs in Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines, based on a standardized test, reveals critical insights into their linguistic skills. Syntax averaged 16.3 (62.69% competence, categorized as incompetent), indicating significant deficiencies in sentence structure. Morphology scored 21.2 (62.35% competence, also categorized as incompetent), highlighting weaknesses in word form understanding, including prefixes and suffixes, impacting their ability to teach language effectively. The average lexicon score was notably lower at 13.3, indicating 34.10% competence, categorized as incompetent due to deficiencies in vocabulary knowledge essential for effective communication. Teachers scored an average of 35.8 in orthography, reflecting challenges in spelling and writing conventions critical for accurate written communication and language proficiency. In phonology, particularly vowel sounds, teachers were rated less competent with

an average score of 1.86, indicating weaknesses in pronunciation and recognition fundamental for clear and accurate speech.

The findings highlight gaps in NNETs' communicative competence, which hinder their effectiveness as language instructors and impact students' language learning outcomes. Professional interventions are crucial for enhancing pedagogical practices, promoting effective communication in the classroom, and enhancing English language education quality in Arakan and similar contexts.

Table 7. Level of communicative competence of Filipino NNETs in terms of linguistic/grammatical skills

Communicative Competence	Mean	Rating	Description
Syntax	16.3	62.69%	Incompetent
Morphology	21.2	62.35%	Incompetent
Lexicon	13.3	34.10%	Incompetent
Orthography	35.8	51.88%	Incompetent
Phonology			
Vowel Sounds	*1.86*		*Less Competent*
Consonant Sounds	*2.94*		*Competent*
Syllable Type	*3.19*		*Competent*
Stress (Content Words)	*1.56*		*Less competent*
Declarative Sentences	*1.61*		*Less competent*
Questions with Yes or No Answers	*1.60*		*Less competent*
Questions Requiring Explanations	*1.65*		*Less competent*
Overall Mean of Phonology	2.05		Less competent

Equivalent Rating for Syntax, Morphology, Lexicon, Orthography

90-100 (highly competent) **80-89** (competent)

75-79 (less competent) **74 below** (incompetent)

Mean Rating for Phonology

4 (3.51-4.00) highly competent **3** (2.51-3.50 competent

2 (1.51-2.50) less competent **1** (1.00-1.50) incompetent

The results of in-depth interviews among NNETs provided deeper insights into the challenges observed in their communicative competence, as reflected in their responses to the standardized tests. These qualitative insights complement the quantitative data by providing context and personal perspectives.

Many participants struggled with both the written and oral components of the tests, confirming the quantitative findings of the study. One participant highlighted the difficulty they faced due to their educational background not aligning closely with English language training. Specifically, the participant, who had professional education units but lacked a Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) in English, expressed challenges in comprehending and answering the test questions:

> *The oral and written questions seem to be hard for me because I am not a BSE-English graduate; I just earned professional education units. It is difficult for me to answer those questions because my English subjects in AB Mass Communication were purely about literature. I really had a hard time answering those questions* (**IDIQ$_1$A$_1$).**

This statement highlights a significant issue: the mismatch between educational background and the skills required for effective English language

instruction. The participants, whose training focused on literature rather than language pedagogy, faced challenges in practical teaching scenarios. The response underscores the critical need for tailored professional development programs addressing specific linguistic deficiencies among NNETs. Interventions should accommodate diverse educational backgrounds and provide targeted support to enhance communicative competence. Addressing these challenges can improve educators' effectiveness in teaching English, positively impacting student learning outcomes and overall educational quality.

One informant highlighted orthography as the most difficult component of the communicative competence test. They expressed difficulty with interpreting symbols and letters, emphasizing a lack of familiarity due to inadequate training during their university education:

> *Phoneme-Grapheme correspondence is the hardest one for me because these are symbols that I don't know how to read or interpret. As far as I could remember, we didn't have any discussion regarding phoneme-grapheme correspondence when we were in school* (**IDIQ$_2$A$_1$**)

This statement highlights a critical gap in their educational preparation, reflecting broader issues among NNETs. Inadequate training in specific linguistic aspects, such as orthography, hinders their ability to effectively teach English language skills. Without a solid foundation in phoneme-grapheme correspondence, educators may struggle with spelling rules, pronunciation guides, and decoding strategies. Qualitative data supports quantitative findings identifying orthography as a significant area of incompetence among NNETs. These insights emphasize the need for targeted interventions in teacher education and professional development. Addressing these gaps through specialized training and ongoing support can empower NNETs to enhance orthographic skills, improving communicative competence and pedagogical effectiveness. Bridging these educational gaps enables educators to better deliver quality English language instruction and promote improved learning outcomes among students.

Moreover, one participant highlighted their experience where college professors emphasized literature over grammar and phonology:

> *Our college professors focused more on literature, and we did not really deal with grammar and phonology as much* (**IDIQ$_2$A$_2$**).

This statement exposes a systemic issue in teacher education programs where literature takes precedence over essential language teaching aspects. Literature-focused coursework often prioritizes literary analysis, criticism, and history, neglecting grammar, sentence structure, and phonetic principles crucial for language instruction. As a result, NNETs may start teaching with limited knowledge of fundamental linguistics, affecting their ability to teach grammar accurately and guide language acquisition. Qualitative findings support quantitative assessments showing incompetence in syntax and weaker competence in phonology among NNETs. These challenges underscore the need for curriculum reforms to balance literature and language teaching in teacher education. Targeted professional

development should address these gaps to enhance NNETs' communicative competence and teaching effectiveness.

The informants were also asked as to what their reasons were for finding the components of the communicative competence test hard. The statement from the informant sheds light on their personal and educational journey, revealing significant insights into their challenges with English language competence, particularly in phonology. The informant initially expresses a lack of passion for English, revealing that their original intention was to major in Filipino language teaching:

> *Although English is my major, to be honest with you, my first choice when I was in college was to take Filipino as my major subject; however, I felt I was compelled to take English major because somebody prodded me to do so. According to that person, if I major in English, there would be a lot of work opportunities waiting for me. But when I looked at the prospectus, I found out that the majority of our subjects are literature-related rather than grammar. I even assumed that elementary teachers are spending more time with grammar and phonology than we do in high school. That is why I really have a difficulty with phonology.* (**IDIQ$_3$A$_2$**)

This narrative highlights a significant mismatch between the informant's interests and academic path, driven more by external pressures than intrinsic motivation toward English. Emphasis on job opportunities rather than passion for the subject may lead to disengagement and challenges in mastering English language components. Moreover, the informant observes a critical gap in their English major, which focused predominantly on literature rather than essential language teaching components like grammar and phonology. This oversight in training could contribute to difficulties in phonology during the communicative competence test. This experience underscores the importance of aligning educational pathways with personal interests and ensuring comprehensive training in all aspects of language teaching within teacher preparation programs. Addressing these gaps could enhance NNETs' effectiveness as language instructors, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

The informant identifies a lack of specific training, seminars, or refresher courses as a significant factor contributing to their difficulty with the test questions:

> *These components are difficult for me because I guess I lack the training and seminars about them. That is why I guess I need to undergo some refresher courses pertaining to these topics. It does not mean that I lack the knowledge; it is just that I should have more input about these components of communicative competence. Our topics before were totally different from what we have now. I guess we really need some updating of knowledge* (**IDIQ$_3$A$_3$**).

This admission underscores the importance of continuous professional development for enhancing language teachers' competencies. The informant acknowledges foundational knowledge in these areas but notes their previous education did not fully prepare them for the nuances required by the communicative competence test. This gap highlights a mismatch between current skills and

evolving language instruction demands. Furthermore, the informant stresses the need to update knowledge, reflecting a proactive approach to addressing shortcomings and staying current with English language teaching practices. Their willingness to undergo refresher courses shows openness to improvement despite initial challenges. Overall, the informant's perspective underscores ongoing professional development's critical role in supporting NNETs to enhance communicative competence, thereby improving effectiveness as English language teachers and benefiting both professional growth and student learning outcomes.

Correlation between professional profile and the level of communicative competence among the Filipino NNETs

While several correlations were tested, only a few variables showed significant relationships with communicative competence among NNETs, which revealed several insights. The significant relationship observed between the subjects handled (specifically non-English subjects), and morphological skills suggests that NNETs who handle more non-English subjects tend to demonstrate better morphological skills. This relationship is moderate, indicating a meaningful connection where higher involvement in non-English subjects might contribute positively to morphological competence. Similarly, the moderate relationship between the number of non-English subjects handled and morphological skills implies that NNETs handling a greater variety or number of non-English subjects may have enhanced morphological competencies compared to their peers.

The low relationship between the type of subjects handled and morphological skills suggests that the specific mix of subjects (English-only vs. English and other subjects) impacts morphological competence. NNETs handling both English and other subjects tend to exhibit better morphological skills than those exclusively teaching English. Age showed a significant difference in the level of orthography skills among NNETs. This finding suggests that older teachers may demonstrate different levels of proficiency in orthography compared to younger ones. However, the nature of this relationship—whether older teachers perform better or worse—requires further investigation.

There was a significant difference in the level of syntax skills based on sex category. This implies that male and female NNETs may exhibit differences in syntax competence. Understanding these gender-related differences can be crucial for tailored professional development and support strategies. No significant difference was found in the communicative competence of NNETs based on civil status. This indicates that marital status does not influence the overall communicative competence levels observed in this study.

These findings underscore the complexity of factors influencing language teaching proficiency and highlight areas where targeted interventions or support mechanisms could potentially enhance NNETs' competencies in specific linguistic domains. Future research could delve deeper into these relationships to uncover additional nuances and implications for teacher training and professional development in the field of English language teaching.

Table 7. Correlation of professional profile and the level of communicative competence among NNETs of Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines

Variables	r-value	P-value	Remarks	Interpretation
Educational Attainment vs.				
Syntax	-0.042	0.825	ns	-
Morphology	0.143	0.451	ns	-
Lexicon	-0.064	0.736	ns	-
Orthography	0.095	0.618	ns	-
Phonology	0.182	0.336	ns	-
Length of Service vs.				
Syntax	-0.015	0.939	ns	-
Morphology	-0.142	0.455	ns	-
Lexicon	-0.189	0.317	ns	-
Orthography	-0.158	0.403	ns	-
Phonology	-0.060	0.753	ns	-
Number of Non-English Subject/s Handled vs.				
Syntax	-0.277	0.138	ns	-
Morphology	-0.554	0.01	Significant	Moderate
Lexicon	-0.167	0.377	ns	-
Orthography	-0.317	0.088	ns	-
Phonology	-0.356	0.053	ns	-
Type of Subject/s Handled vs.				
Syntax	0.085	0.655	ns	-
Morphology	0.400	0.028	significant	Low
Lexicon	0.100	0.598	ns	-
Orthography	0.248	0.186	ns	-
Phonology	0.237	0.202	ns	-
Related Seminars and Trainings Attended vs.				
Syntax	0.097	0.611	ns	-
Morphology	0.154	0.417	ns	-
Lexicon	0.231	0.220	ns	-
Orthography	0.236	0.208	ns	-
Phonology	0.294	0.115	ns	-

ns (not significant); Significant at 0.05

Legend: below $\pm$ 0.20 (negligible relationship)
$\pm$ 0.21 – $\pm$ 0.40 (low relationship)
$\pm$ 0.41 – $\pm$ 0.70 (moderate relationship)
$\pm$ 0.71 – $\pm$ 0.90 (high relationship)
$\pm$ 0.91 – $\pm$ 1.00 (very high relationship)

Discussion

Educational attainment

Table 2 illustrates a notable trend among teacher-respondents, where half possess qualifications directly aligned with the subjects they teach, while the remainder lack formal training in BSE English. This situation underscores a significant challenge in basic education, as many educators teach English without specialized training, impacting effective pedagogy that relies on subject-specific knowledge (Romadhon et al., 2024). These concerns are supported by Van den Bergh and Ros (2014), who emphasize the impact of teachers' qualifications on students' English proficiency. Adu and Abe (2013), along with Boyd et al. (2008), also highlight the pivotal role of teacher qualifications in enhancing academic performance across subjects, including English.

Related seminars

Table 3 reveals a significant trend in NNETs' seminar participation, predominantly at division and regional levels. These seminars often focus beyond grammar and linguistics, placing notable emphasis on literature as a discussion conduit, as advocated by the Department of Education (DepEd). However, a more dedicated focus on grammar and linguistics could offer distinct pedagogical advantages. There is a pressing need for NNETs to actively seek opportunities to enhance their English language proficiency beyond DepEd offerings, which is particularly beneficial for educators without formal English education training. Sadeghi and Richards (2021) and Yusuf and Dada (2016) emphasize continuous professional development's pivotal role in equipping teachers with the necessary skills. Additionally, the DepEd's (2012) initiative underscores institutional commitment to improving pedagogical quality, especially for educators handling Grade 1 to Grade 7 curricula since the 2012 – 2013 academic year.

Length of service

The data in Table 4 highlight a prevailing trend where a majority of NNETs are new to the profession, characterized by their youthfulness, vigor, and enthusiasm. Recent graduates from teacher education programs are attracted to public school employment due to competitive salaries and professional growth opportunities. Department of Education recruitment initiatives have bolstered these numbers, bringing in younger teachers with less experience. Government incentives, such as early retirement options and competitive salaries, further attract educators to join the public education sector. These findings align with Alufohai and Ibhafidon's (2015) observations on teacher disillusionment due to inadequate remuneration after years of service; thus, legislative measures by the 17th Congress (House of Representatives, 2015) aim to address these challenges by adjusting retirement ages, allowing educators more flexibility in their later career stages.

Number of subject preparation

NNETs frequently face assignments to teach subjects beyond their specialized expertise, reflecting a common practice in public schools. This scenario arises when English instructors are required to teach additional subjects due to shortages of qualified teachers, despite challenges, such as those highlighted by Ingersoll (2007; 2017), where out-of-field teaching is prevalent in Asian countries, including Hong Kong's unique primary school system. There, teachers teach multiple subjects, contrasting with specialized approaches in other countries like the US, UK, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and China. In Australia, Lynch (2012) found similar challenges in mathematics education, with significant percentages of teachers lacking adequate qualifications. These issues underscore broader challenges in teacher preparation and subject assignment practices across educational systems.

Types of subject preparation

NNETs are frequently required to teach subjects outside their expertise, a practice highlighted in the data. This raises questions about their effectiveness compared to teachers specializing in English or other subjects. The figures suggest that teaching efficiency can vary based on subject preparation. Scholars like Cinkir

and Kurum (2015), Dee and Goldhaber (2017), and Ingersoll (2019) note that assigning teachers outside their specialties is often a pragmatic approach to staffing challenges. For instance, administrators may redistribute teaching duties among staff to cover English classes, prioritize candidates with diverse skills for hiring, or assign additional classes to maximize resource use when student enrollment is low.

Level of communicative competence

The identified lack of competence among the respondents is primarily attributed to deficiencies in articulating words accurately and proficiently. Moreover, evaluators noted a notable inadequacy in the respondents' utilization of their oral articulatory mechanisms—comprising the lips, tongue, teeth, and jaw—to produce correct phonetic sounds. Furthermore, the observed tendency to generate erroneous vowels, particularly in conjunction with consonant blends, highlights an additional area of concern. Additionally, inadequate jaw positioning was identified as a contributing factor to incorrect pronunciation and the production of flat segmental sounds. Notably, vowels emerged as the most problematic aspect of pronunciation. These findings underscore a disquieting reality regarding linguistic and grammatical proficiency, particularly in syntax, morphology, lexicon, and orthography, among NNETs in various secondary schools in Arakan, North Cotabato, Philippines. This poses a significant concern as proficiency in the English language is imperative for effective teaching. It is crucial to recognize that grammar and linguistics are universal constructs, transcending linguistic boundaries, and as such, the assessment items employed in this study were designed to gauge proficiency in commonly used grammar and linguistics, applicable to English speakers worldwide, including Filipino NNETs. This observation aligns with the findings of Xuefeng and Xinguang (2015).

In contrast, Philippine English stands out from Standard English norms within the framework of "World Englishes" (Bautista & Gonzales, 2006) by showcasing distinct phonological, lexical, grammatical, and discursive characteristics. Developed in the Philippines as a second language acquisition, Philippine English reflects adaptations influenced by local languages and cultures. These adaptations enrich the language with unique phonetic pronunciations, lexical borrowings from Filipino languages, and grammatical structures that differ from those found in traditional native varieties. This diversity challenges the perception of English as a monolithic entity and underscores its dynamic evolution across global contexts. Moreover, the variations in Philippine English do not denote inferiority but rather signify linguistic adaptability and cultural resonance. In the broader discourse of English language ownership, the inclusion of both native and non-native speakers in shaping global English standards and pedagogical practices is crucial (Bolton, 2006). This inclusive perspective promotes a more comprehensive understanding of English as a tool for global communication, accommodating diverse linguistic practices and identities. It fosters educational environments where linguistic diversity is valued, enhancing mutual understanding and cross-cultural communication on a global scale (Ningsih & Lengkanawati, 2023; Prabandari et al., 2024).

Correlation between professional profile and the level of communicative competence among the Filipino NNETs.

Number of subject/s handled and morphology

The reverse relationship between the number of non-English subject/s handled and the morphological competence of English teachers could have been due to the fact that these teachers were teaching the more non-English subjects, the less that they developed their adeptness in the types and functions of parts of speech, inflection, and word derivation. Put simply, the more time they spend teaching subjects that do not need English, the less they have to improve their English language skills.

Types of subject/s handled and morphology

There was a positively low significant relationship between the subjects taught and the morphological competence of the respondents. This suggests that the various subject preparations undertaken by teachers—whether they involve different subjects across grades, solely English instruction within a single grade, or English instruction across different grade levels—had a limited impact on enhancing their communicative proficiency. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that teaching subjects, even if not primarily in English, could still contribute to the refinement of teachers' abilities to identify different parts of speech, recognize changes in tone and word structure, and appropriately derive words.

The non-significant relationship between educational attainment, length of service, and related seminars attended to the communicative competence of the respondents could lead to the inference that "the is a negative correlation between the number of non-English subjects handled and the morphological competence of English teachers suggests that as teachers spend more time teaching subjects other than English, their proficiency in understanding the structure and form of English words decreases".

Conversely, the weak positive correlation between the types of subjects handled and morphological competence indicates that while the diversity of subjects taught may not significantly enhance communicative proficiency in English, exposure to various subjects, even non-English ones, still contributes to the development of skills related to identifying parts of speech, word structure, and derivation. Therefore, although the primary language of instruction may vary, pedagogical experiences across different subject areas can still play a role in shaping teachers' linguistic abilities.

Training-seminar for Filipino NNETs

A comprehensive 56-hour (seven-day) enhancement training and seminar in grammar and linguistics is ideally scheduled during mid-term or summer school breaks, periods conducive to professional development courses for basic education teachers. This structured curriculum aims to bridge communicative gaps and empower Filipino NNETs with advanced competencies in grammar and linguistics. The training specifically targets the enhancement of syntax proficiency (formation of constituents, identification of word order, mastery of sentence structures), morphology competence (understanding parts of speech, word inflections, and derivation processes), vocabulary level (effective usage of content and function words, idiomatic expressions, and collocations), orthographic accuracy (spelling

and adherence to grammatical conventions and punctuation rules), and phonological precision (pronunciation of vowels, consonants, stress patterns, and intonation variations). Modular sessions allocated for each competency ensure a balanced and thorough approach tailored to the specific learning needs and pace of participants throughout the training period. This adaptable framework allows for dynamic adjustments based on participant feedback and evolving educational standards, ultimately aiming to elevate English language instruction and educational outcomes in diverse classroom settings.

It must be made sure that the training-seminar program designed for NNETs is rooted in a rigorous needs assessment, which identifies key areas where these educators encounter challenges in their communicative abilities, including syntax, morphology, lexicon, orthography, and phonology. These seminars are strategically crafted to significantly enhance the grammatical and linguistic skills of NNETs, thereby improving their teaching effectiveness and confidence (Anho & Akpokiniovo, 2023; Padillo et al., 2021). Research indicates that such improvements correlate positively with enhanced classroom outcomes and student performance (Essein et al., 2016; Hafeez, 2021), aligning with educational policies aimed at raising standards and ensuring student proficiency. However, successful implementation of these training seminars may face challenges such as accommodating varying proficiency levels among participants, necessitating tailored programs, sufficient resources, and ongoing support (El Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018; Lee, 2023). Thus, follow-up sessions and continuous professional development are recommended to optimize the effectiveness and sustainability of the program.

Conclusion

The findings highlight several key aspects of English language education among Filipino NNETs. Firstly, there is a critical need for ongoing professional development programs focusing on both linguistic and pedagogical skills beyond grammar, including phonology, syntax, and discourse. Institutions and policymakers should prioritize providing resources and training opportunities to keep educators updated with best practices. Secondly, aligning teacher training with subject-specific qualifications is essential to effectively teach English at various educational levels, possibly requiring curriculum reforms. Thirdly, supporting novice educators through mentorship programs can bridge theoretical knowledge with practical classroom skills, improving teaching quality and retention. Additionally, adopting inclusive pedagogical approaches that celebrate linguistic diversity, including Philippine English, is crucial. Legislative and institutional support, such as competitive remuneration and improved working conditions, are also vital to enhance workforce satisfaction and education quality. These insights emphasize the need for continuous professional development to strengthen educators' instructional abilities and improve student learning outcomes.

It is also important to emphasize that the current study acknowledges several inherent limitations. Firstly, its geographical confinement potentially restricts the generalizability of its findings to other contexts where similar NNETs operate. The chosen descriptive-evaluative design, while offering valuable insights into the current state of communicative competence among the teachers studied, might not fully capture the dynamic evolution of their linguistic proficiencies over time.

Despite efforts to mitigate problems through objective methodologies (Spearman's correlation method and in-depth interviews), the inherent subjectivity remains a challenge. Furthermore, variability in raters' judgments, especially in assessing phonological and grammatical skills, poses another limitation despite attempts at standardization through rubrics and rater training. Lastly, the study's exclusive focus on linguistic and grammatical competencies potentially overlooks other critical aspects of communicative competence, such as strategic and sociolinguistic skills, which are essential for effective ELT but were not within the study's scope.

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Appendix

Research instrument of the study

The research instrument comprised two parts: Part I detailed the personal and professional profiles of NNETs, including demographics, educational background, seminar participation, teaching experience, job description, and subject preparation. Part II involved a Standardized Test assessing NNETs' communicative competence in grammar and linguistics. The test included written and oral components where respondents read passages, including selections from literature, to evaluate phonological skills. Video recordings were analyzed by a panel of three Applied Linguistics experts using established rubrics. The components of the standardized test were the following:

A. Syntax (26 items)

A.1 Constituent/phrase structures formation
- A.1.1 Topicalization (1 item)
- A.1.2 Pronoun form (Pro-Form) substitution (replacement in place of a phrase or clause) (1 item)
- A.1.3 Passivization (1 item)
- A.1.4 Omission (1 item)

A.2 Word order (canonical and marked) (1 item)
A.3 Sentences with agreement or concord (1 item)
A.4 Sentence types (statements, negatives, questions, imperatives, exclamations) (1 item)
A.5 Special construction (1 item)
A.6 Modifiers/intensifiers (quantifiers, comparing and equating) (4 items)
A.7 Coordination and correlation (2 items)
A.8 Subordination (5 items)
A.9 Embeddings (noun clause, relative clause) (7 items)

B. Morphology (34 items)

B.1 Types and functions of parts of speech (21 items)
B.2 How inflection works (change in pitch and word form) (4 items)
B.3 Word derivation (9 items)

C. Lexicon (39 items)

C.1 Content words (Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives) (12 items)
C.2 Function words (pronouns, prepositions, verbal auxiliaries) (9 items)
C.3 Form and use of collocations (Verb-Object, Adverb-Adjective, Adjective-Noun) (10 items)
C.4 Idioms (8 items)

D. Orthography (69 items)

D.1 Correct identification and spelling and word formation with letters in a conventionally accepted order or rules. (20 items)
D.2 Correct writing and spelling of the equivalent word from sound/spoken to written symbol (phoneme-grapheme correspondence)
- D.2.1 Consonant Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondence (25 items)
- D.2.2 Vowel Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondence (18 items)

D.3 Ability to use and apply conventions for mechanics and punctuations correctly (6 items)

E. Phonology (115 items)

E.1 Vowel pronunciation (19 items)
E.2 Consonant pronunciation (24 items)
E.3 Production of three-consonant onset cluster (segmental) (9 items)
E.4 Production of two-consonant onset cluster correctly (segmental) (35 items)
E.5 Proficiency to produce two-consonant termination cluster correctly (segmental) (8 items)
E.6 Production of stress in the content words (suprasegmental) (5 items)
E.7 Intonation (suprasegmental) (6 items)

The respondents' ratings in all components of the written standardized test (Syntax, Morphology, Lexicon, and Orthography) were computed using this formula:

$$\text{Respondent's Rating} = \frac{\text{Respondent's Total Raw Score}}{\text{Highest Possible Score}} \times 100$$

The following descriptors and rating scale were used to transmute the respondent's rating above:

Respondents' Rating	Descriptor
90 – 100	highly competent
80 – 89	competent
75 – 79	less competent
74 below	incompetent

Phonological assessment involved three raters selected for their expertise in Applied Linguistics. The following scales were used in rating the phonological competence (vowel sounds, consonant sounds and syllable type) of the respondents:

Scale	Qualifying Description
4 (3.51-4.00)	highly competent (zero/no mispronounced word)
3 (2.51-3.50)	competent (one mispronounced word)
2 (1.51-2.50)	less competent (two mispronounced words)
1 (1.00-1.50)	incompetent (three mispronounced words)

In addition, the following scales were used for the proficiency to produce suprasegmentals (stress of content words such as: noun, main verb, adjective and adverb):

Scale	Qualifying Description
4 (3.51-4.00)	highly competent (three or more content words are given stress)
3 (2.51-3.50)	competent (two content words are given stress)
2 (1.51-2.50)	less competent (only one content word is given stress)
1 (1.00-1.50)	incompetent (all content words are not given stress)

For the proficiency of producing correct intonation for declarative sentences, the following scales were used:

Scale	Qualifying Description
4 (3.51-4.00)	highly competent (able to produce a slight falling intonation)
3 (2.51-3.50)	competent (produced an inquisitive rising intonation)
2 (1.51-2.50)	less competent (produced an inquisitive falling intonation)
1 (1.00-1.50)	incompetent (produced no intonation)

Moreover, the proficiency to produce correct intonation for questions requiring yes or no answer/s was rated using the following scales:

Scale	**Qualifying Description**
4 (3.51-4.00)	highly competent (able to produce a rising inquisitive intonation)
3 (2.51-3.50)	competent (able to produce a falling inquisitive intonation)
2 (1.51-2.50)	less competent (produced a declarative intonation)
1 (1.00-1.50)	incompetent (produced no intonation)

Finally, the proficiency to produce correct intonation for questions requiring explanation/s was scaled using the following:

Scale	**Qualifying Description**
4 (3.51-4.00)	highly competent (able to produce a falling intonation)
3 (2.51-3.50)	competent (able to produce a rising intonation)
2 (1.51-2.50)	less competent (produced a declarative intonation)
1 (1.00-1.50)	incompetent (produced no intonation)

The instrument, loosely based on the Proposed Model of Communicative Competence by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell (1995), adapted and modified criteria from Canale and Swain (1980, 1983). Validation involved three experts assessing clarity, topic presentation, item suitability, content adequacy, purpose attainment, respondent-friendliness, and objectivity, yielding an overall validity rating of 3.857 out of 5. Reliability of the written exam, assessed using Cronbach's Alpha by a statistics expert, required a minimum rating of 0.80. Items falling short underwent revision until all achieved the required reliability threshold.