AN EXPLANATORY MIXED METHOD STUDY ON PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS' COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION TOWARDS THEIR INSTRUCTORS

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ABSTRACT

Promoting higher communication efficiency among teacher candidates and acting as models are among the main professional responsibilities of teacher educators. This makes the task of teachers even more important in language education classes where students are prospective language teachers and their development as language teachers highly depend on the way teacher educators teach and communicate (Wen & Clément, 2003). This sequential mixed-method study examined Communication Apprehension (CA) levels of a convenience sample of pre-service language teachers at a state university with an emphasis on the influence of gender, year level, and achievement on CA towards lecturers. Given that CA is a psychological experience, a self-reported questionnaire, Communication Apprehension with the Lecturers Scale (CALS), (Eren-Gümüş & Kolburan-Geçer, 2008) was used for measuring participants' levels of CA with their instructors. In order to compare CA levels of students in each group, a cross-sectional survey design was selected (Creswell, 2002). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, independent samples t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation coefficient. In addition to quantitative data analysis, the researcher purposefully elicited written comments of pre-service language teachers in order to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon. The data obtained through open-ended survey questions were subjected to qualitative content analysis. The findings indicate that communication should have a greater role in teacher education and teacher educators should refrain from exhibiting behaviors that can prevent prospective teachers from communicating with them.

Key Words: Communication apprehension, language teacher education, gender, achievement, year level, teacher misbehaviors

1. Introduction

Teachers are fundamental agents for creating effective learning environments (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). The task of teachers becomes even more important in language education classes where students are prospective language teachers and their development as language teachers highly depend on the way teacher educators teach and communicate (Wen & Clément, 2003). In order for teacher candidates to develop their capacity to become competent teachers, it is important that teacher educators act as role models models (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007; Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005) and create warm, open, and trusting learning environments.

Klausmeier (1961) presents a complex relationship of six factors that affect classroom learning: learner characteristics, learner and teacher behaviors, group characteristics, physical characteristics of the setting and outside forces (as cited in Ripple, 1965). Among these key factors, positive

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instructor communication behaviors are essential in influencing learners' development of positive attitudes towards learning the subject matter and their academic discipline (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000), involvement in classroom interaction (Booth-Butterfield, Mosher, & Mollish, 1992), instructor credibility (Banfield, Richmond & McCroskey, 2006; Santilli, Miller, & Katt, 2011), motivation (Dobos, 1996; Frymier, 1993; Velez & Cano, 2012) as well as academic performance (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976; Allen, Witt, & Wheeless, 2006 ; Robinson & Xavier, 2007).

When students have more opportunities to communicate with their teachers, they are more likely to get the information they need to be successful (Graham, 1997). Lack of communication, on the other hand, leads to a failure in understanding key concepts (Rubio, 2009). It is postulated that effective teachers are capable of presenting their lesson content through both verbal and non-verbal communication systems in a way that can easily be grasped by their students (Prozesky, 2000). The evidence from research supports that through effective communication, instructors make their course content explicit (Sorensen, 1989) and lessen classroom anxiety (Noland & Richards, 2014).

Communication plays another important role in establishing rapport among students. Students react positively to teachers described as understanding, warm, nurturing, and have tolerance (Ripple, 1965). While warm and considerate teachers unearth success of students (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008), demanding and depreciating teacher behaviors trigger aggression and apathy towards learning (Hsu, 2010). Despite possessing improved communication skills, students might still feel anxious associated with interacting with other people (Bloom, 1998).

Communication apprehension (CA) that is generally defined as a predisposition to avoid communication (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976) is a problem that requires the attention of teacher educators who are willing to improve teacher education programs. Unfortunately, educational process tends to get impaired when communication is compromised by communication apprehension. Since communication competency is an essential skill that should be established in pre-service teachers, communication apprehension levels of students preparing for teaching requires a closer inspection. It is important to note that when teacher educators create a supportive and a trusting environment, they do not only help teacher candidates realize their full potential but also demonstrate them how to be effective teachers.

To date there has been little research on communication apprehension of pre-service language teachers towards their lecturers. In order to fill this gap, the present study embarks on an investigation of communication apprehension among pre-service language teachers from a school of education at a state university. The necessity of the study depends on the belief that those who are going to be language teachers should not only master their subject matter, they should also be able to communicate with their instructors without feeling tense in order to develop and improve their performance as language teachers.

The following section first describes the context where communication behaviors of teachers are important. Next, communication apprehension is examined. Finally, qualitative and quantitative data from students regarding their communication apprehension levels with instructors are analyzed and results discussed.

2. Literature Review

Researchers have extensively explored CA (see for example Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998; Bloom, 1998; Olaniran & Roach, 1994; McCroskey, 1977) and described the causes of CA as a learned psychological response (McCroskey, 1977), "individuals' expression of inborn, biological characteristic" (Beatty et al., 1998, p.199) or social anxiety (Daly & Stafford, 1984). In stressing the significance of communication in the teaching and learning process, Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey (1978) state that communication is essential for teaching and learning because of its powerful mediating role in connecting teachers with learners. Teachers are viewed as one of the principal components of pedagogical programs. Therefore, an important concern for educators should be to facilitate learning and prevent barriers to student achievement (Goldhaber, 2002). Communication apprehension, the "fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p.78) is believed to have various effects on student achievement at all levels of education including teacher education.

Affection, security, acceptance, and rapport with students are defining features of a supportive language classroom climate (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). The presence of such environments encourages students to become more self-initiated, self-confident, and less anxious (Hsu, 2014) and as a result more positive instructional outcomes are likely to be achieved (Banfield et al., 2006; Boyle, 2011). In order to generate warmth and make a positive impact, teachers use some teaching behaviors such as gestures, movement, smiling, body position, and humor which are called "immediacy behaviors". Through these behaviors, teachers enhance closeness and interaction with students (Andersen, Andersen, & Jensen, 1979; Mehrabian, 1969). Lack of such nurturing environments creates tension and anxiety that jeopardizes the communication process and learning in general. It was found that students with high CA tend to talk less with their classmates and teacher during classes (McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978), they are less motivated and they have difficulty in working collaboratively (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Since language classrooms are typically marked by anxiety, creating a low-stress language-learning environment should be an important priority for language teachers (Finch, 2001). Language teachers are expected to gain such skills in teacher education departments under the guidance of their educators. Therefore, the way teacher educators communicate with pre-service language teachers and the way they create comfortable classroom atmospheres form models for teacher candidates.

There are certain variables that might have an impact on CA levels of individuals. An area of interest regarding CA is to what extent gender and CA are related to one another. McCroskey, Simpson, and Richmond (1982) investigated the effect of gender on general communication apprehension, shyness, and apprehension of college students and secondary school teachers. They found that while male participants are likely to be slightly shyer than females; female participants seem to be more apprehensive than males; nevertheless, the difference between two genders was not significant in terms of general communication apprehension. Similarly, a more recent study carried out in Nigerian context with in-service teachers in an education school showed that gender was not a significant predictor of CA among the sample (Oladipo, Agbajeola & Adenaike, 2012). On the other hand, there is substantial amount of research to indicate gender differences in CA. Frantz, Marlow and Wathen (2005) found a statistically significant difference between male and female undergraduate students at a liberal arts school with respect to their overall CA score. Similarly, Borzi and Mills (2001) found that the male participants experienced a higher level of CA than their female counterparts did. Focusing on a cross-sectional investigation of the CA of

accounting undergraduate students in New Zealand, Gardner, Milne, Stringer, and Whiting (2005) reported significant differences for overall oral CA for students, with females being significantly higher. According to the results of a quantitative study carried out among international undergraduates enrolled in an English language course in Malyasian context, frequency of female respondents who achieved high overall CA scores outweighs male participants (Singh, David & Choo, 2012).

Another variable that has an influence on CA is year level. Fordham and Gabbin (1996) investigated how CA is related to student' year level and found that senior students had low levels of CA. Nonetheless, the study by   Gardner et al. (2005) focused on a cross-sectional investigation of CA of students and found no significant differences between the years of study for mean levels of overall oral CA. Likewise, Frantz et al. (2005) examined the relationship between communication apprehension and year level among undergraduate students and did not find a significant difference.

It is also suggested that CA has an influence on the academic achievement of students. The students with high CA are more likely to attain lower grades than low CA students (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, Payne, 1989). In their study, Comedana and Prusank (1988) examined the relationship between communication apprehension and academic achievement among elementary and middle school students and found that students high in CA demonstrated the lowest levels of learning. McCroskey and Andersen (1976) claimed that high communication apprehensive students are disadvantaged because they attempt to participate less in activities in class and therefore they get lower grades compared to students with low CA. On the other hand, there is research to claim that there is no relationship between CA and academic achievement. For example, in their study with children, Comadena and Comadena (1984) found no relationship between these two variables. Still, they claimed that communication apprehension could have a negative impact on student achievement and retention.

Exploring communication apprehension within the population of language teacher candidates with a focus on the aforementioned variables can help teacher educators better understand the degree of fear or anxiety of their students when they are engaged in communication. Furthermore, on an educational level, various strategies can be developed to ameliorate probable communication problems. Hence, the objectives of the study are designed as follows:

1. To quantitatively measure CA levels towards lecturers among pre-service language teachers, and examine the influence of gender, year level, and achievement level on CA.

2. To qualitatively explore the phenomenon of CA from the perspective of language teacher candidates.

3. Method

Majority of the classes in English Language Teaching (ELT) department are conducted in English. In addition to getting specialized in the foundations of teaching, pre-service language teachers are usually in a position to share their knowledge and participate in classroom discussions using their non-native English language. A supportive learning climate in which the students do not feel threatened or intimidated is needed for facilitating their learning in such an environment (Boyle,

2011). It is essential that they have opportunities to interact freely with their peers and instructors. In order explain and understand communication apprehension from the point of view of the participants, the following research questions were formulated.

*Quantitative Research Questions***:**

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in CA levels of male and female prospective language teachers?

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in CA levels among prospective language teachers' year levels?

Research Question 3: How does academic achievement as represented by participants' Grade Point Average (GPA) correlate with CA?

Qualitative Research Questions:

Research Question 1. What behaviors prevent pre-service language teachers from communicating with their instructors?

The study employed explanatory sequential mixed methods research design in which there is focus on quantitative data followed by a qualitative phase that seeks for explanation (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The results of initial quantitative survey made it necessary to expand upon participants' CA levels through follow-up qualitative written accounts of participants. Following the numerical analysis, the qualitative results allowed a better understanding of quantitative findings.

3.1 Instrumentation

Quantitative data were collected using the Communication Apprehension with The Lecturers Scale developed by Eren-Gümüş and Kolburan-Geçer (2008). This 19-item instrument utilized a five point Likert scale. The responses range from Never = 1; Rarely = 2; are Sometimes = 3; Frequently = 4; Always =5. Prior research has provided substantial evidence to support both the reliability (.82 for the total scale) and the construct validity of the instrument (Eren-Gümüş and Kolburan-Geçer, 2008).

The scale has three sub-scales. The first subscale called "inclined personal traits has seven statements such as "Since I don't want the lecturer to notice my lack of self-esteem, I do not want to take a turn and speak" and I feel like I will forget the answer because of excitement while responding to the lecturer's question." The second sub-scale is called "the perceived threat concerning the lecturer's behaviour". It has eight statements like "Since I was subjected to strict teacher behaviours in the past, I still feel annoyed with communicating with lecturers," and "I avoid talking to lecturers who are reluctant to communicate". The third sub-scale that is comprised of four items is "the tendency to stay away from lecturers". The items in this sub-scale are "When the lecturer gets angry with somebody else in the classroom, I feel discouraged to speak" and "I feel tense when the lecturer forces me to talk". Internal consistency reliabilities of the scales were .86, .87, and .68 respectively (Eren-Gümüş and Kolburan-Geçer, 2008). The scale included a demographic section, which elicited the participants' gender, year level, and GPAs. For qualitative data collection, a survey that involved open-ended questions was prepared.

3.2 Procedure

Upon taking the necessary permission from the researchers who developed the scale, participants were met during their classes, were briefed about the research being conducted and their consent was sought regarding their willingness to participate in the study. After obtaining their consent, the research instrument was administered and collected back on the same day. Following the collection of data, subjects' responses were transferred to an electronic format.

3.4 Participants

This study used a convenience sample, which consisted of pre-service language teachers at a Turkish state university who were studying to be language teachers. Females (76. 3%, N=87) were more than males (23. 7%, N=27). The distribution of gender represents the overall representation of male and female students in the program (Females= 206, 70% Males= 88, 30%).Their ages varied between 18 and 28 (M=21.02). Participants were taking classes from grades 2 to 4 throughout which they learn the complexities of being a language teacher. Freshman students were excluded from the study because by the time of the data collection, their GPA scores had not been awarded yet.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative phase

The quantitative research design was correlational, comparing two and three groups on a dependent variable and measuring the relationship between variables (Creswell & Clark, 2007). There were three main kinds of variables identified in the study: The dependent variables are represented by gender (male and female), year level (sophomores. juniors and seniors), and grade point average while the independent variable is CA towards lecturers. Data screening indicated that 19 subjects in the sample had missing scores on academic achievement variable. Therefore, these cases were excluded from the data. Accordingly, the sample size in the data analysis procedure was 114. Descriptive and inferential data analysis techniques were utilized for all the analyses. The respondents' scores for each of the three constructs were calculated and the mean of the scores provided the overall CALS score. Participants' overall numerical score received up to that point in their education (GPAs) were used as representations of their achievement level. The participants' GPAs ranged from 1 (lowest) to 3.67 (the highest score).

Qualitative phase.

In addition to quantitative data analysis, the researcher purposefully elicited written comments of pre-service language teachers in order to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon. The data obtained through an open-ended survey given in Turkish were subjected to qualitative content analysis as described by Creswell and Clark (2007). The text was read and re-read in order to get an overall sense of the content, and then read more closely in order to identify meaning units, which were consequently coded. For the coding and labelling of the data the themes and categories suggested by Kearney, Plax, Hays and Ivey (1991) were used.

4. Findings

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 21.0 for descriptive statistics. Initially, in order to test normal distribution, Kolmogorov Smirnov test was performed. The results indicated a normal distribution (p>0.05), satisfying assumptions of normality. The reliability of the scale was calculated and a high coefficient was found (α =.92). The following table shows the reliability values for the total scale and for each sub-scale (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability results for CALS

Sub-scales of CALS	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Inclined Personal Traits (IPT)	.86	7
The perceived threat concerning the lecturer's behaviour (TCL)	.84	8
The tendency to stay away from lecturers (TSL)	.80	4
Total Scale CALS	.92	19

The means and standard deviations for the three subscale are; inclined personal trait (M = 1.69, SD = 0.70), the perceived threat concerning the lecturer's behavior (M=2.64, SD = 0.75), the tendency to stay away from lecturers (M = 2.77, SD = 0.90). Overall CALS mean score was 2.32±.68. TSL has the highest mean score in subscales of CALS. The mean scores for each of the three domains and of total CALS are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Communication Apprehension

	N	Mean	SD	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum
IPT	114	1.69	0.70	.48	2.71	1.00	3.71
TCL	114	2.64	0.75	.57	3.75	1.00	4.75
TSL	114	2.77	0.90	.80	4.00	1.00	5.00
CALS	114	2.32	0.68	.46	3.21	1.00	4.21

For the interpretation of the results, the following checklist was used: 1.00-1.80 (very low CA), 1.81-2.60 (low CA), 2.61-3.40 (moderate CA), and 3.41-4.20 (high CA), and 4.21-5.00 (very high CA). Scores below the mean in total score (<2.61) were regarded low CA for the total scale while mean score and above 3.40 were regarded as high CA. The same scoring continuum was used for sub-scales. Based on these values, it was observed that the participating students had low CA when considered as a whole (M=2.32). The first dimension in the scale, inclined personal traits, demonstrated a similar pattern. The students did not seem to possess any fear regarding their personal characteristics (M=1.69) that might interfere with their communication. They can be said to have very low CA. However, regarding the perceived threat concerning lecturer's behaviour, their CA level (M=2.64) indicates moderate degree of communication apprehension. Likewise, the third factor, tendency to stay away from the lecturers was at a moderate level (M=2.77).

Several potential demographic characteristics have been studied with communication apprehension towards lecturers. These variables include: (1) gender 2) year level 3) achievement level. Each research question is explained separately below.

Is there a significant difference in communication apprehension levels of male and female prospective language teachers?

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the level of sub-scales of CALS between male and female students. A 95% confidence interval was set and a 0.05 alpha level was established. The mean score for the male subjects was 2.20 (SD =.74) and the mean score for female subjects was 2.36 (SD = .66) for the whole scale. Independent samples test calculations revealed that there was not a significant difference (p=283, p>.005) between male and female students in terms of their gender for the total scale. Table 3 below shows the mean scores for CALS by gender. Likewise, no significant differences were identified on inclined personal trait (p=.768, p>.005), the perceived threat concerning the lecturer's behavior (p=.112, p>.005), and the tendency to stay away from lecturers (p=.106, p>.005) between male and female participants.

Table 3. Differences among students' CA levels in terms of gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig
IPT	Female	87	1.68	0.66	-295	112	.768
	Male	27	1.73	0.82			
TCL	Female	87	2.71	0.74	1.604	112	.112
	Male	27	2.44	0.79			
TSL	Female	87	2.85	0.89	1.632	112	.106
	Male	27	2.53	0.88			
CALS	Female	87	2.36	0.66	1.079	112	.283
	Male	27	2.20	0.74			

Is there a significant difference in CA levels among prospective language teachers' year levels?

In order to understand whether there is a significant difference in communication apprehension among different year levels, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. As shown in Table 4, second year students had a mean of 2.37 (SD=.71), third year students had a mean of 2.31 (SD=.72), fourth year students had a mean of 2.29 (SD=.63).

Table 4. Means and standard deviations for each year for total scale

	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Second Year Students	27	2.37	0.71	0.10
Third Year Students	29	2.31	0.72	0.12
Fourth Year Students	58	2.29	0.63	0.08

The results revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference among the overall communication apprehension levels of students based on their year level (p=.902, p>0.05). In a similar vein, the analyses did not reveal significant difference among students from different year levels in terms of inclined personal trait (p=.496), the perceived threat concerning the lecturer's behaviour (p=.963), and the tendency to stay away from lecturers (p=.945) as given in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA results for students' CA levels in terms of their year level

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
IPT	Between Groups	.687	2	.343	.706	.496
TCL	Between Groups	.044	2	.022	.038	.963
TSL	Between Groups	.093	2	.046	.057	.945
CALS	Between Groups	.097	2	.048	.103	.902

How does academic achievement as represented by participants' GPA correlate with CA?

For the purpose of this study, GPA was used as a representation of academic achievement. Students' achievement levels were coded by numbers from one to four. The mean score was M= 2.93 (SD=.44). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used as a measure of the linear dependence between the variables. While a value between +1 is total positive correlation, 0 is no correlation, and −1 indicates total negative correlation (Kalaycı, 2016).

Table 6. Pearson correlation results for academic achievement level

	GPA	IPT	TCL	TSL	CALS
GPA	1				
IPT	-.097	1			
TCL	.057	.639**	1		
TSL	.037	.615**	.792**	1	
CALS	.000	.848**	.928**	.882**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It was seen that students' total communication apprehension did not correlate with cognitive learning as evidenced by a higher score in the course (r=.00, p=.998). Other variables did not generate a significant correlation, either. The correlations for the sub-levels of the scale were not significantly related to academic achievement for [IPT] (r= -.097, p=.303), [TCL] (r=.057, p=.544), and [TSL] (r=.037, p=.700).

Qualitative Findings
As aforementioned, the objective of this study is to explore communication apprehension phenomenon among pre-service language teachers at a university setting. The quantitative findings made it obvious that while participants' personal inclined traits did not prevent them from communicating with their instructors, they perceived a certain amount of threat concerning lecturers' behaviosr, and correspondingly, they tend to stay away from their instructors. This finding required a deeper exploration of this topic and therefore a sequential qualitative procedure was incorporated into the research design. The necessity to understand what led the prospective language teachers to perceive their instructors as an important factor that influences their communication, the researcher used a qualitative method.

It was anticipated that qualitative exploration of communication apprehension in a naturalistic manner could generate rich and revealing descriptions of factors that affect pre-service language teachers' communication with their instructors. Open-ended questions designed for the participants allowed clarification of how students make sense of and evaluate what their teachers

say and do. In order to ensure that the participants' voices are heard and to support the interpretation of the data, suitable quotations from their written comments are given. The iterative cyclical process of data analysis was involved   (Miles & Huberman, 1984) and propositions were taken as units for data analysis. The informants were asked to define "problem behaviors" based on their own experiences and to answer questions such as "What prevents you from communicating with your instructors?", "What are the teacher qualities that increase your willingness to communicate with your instructors?"

In the analysis of qualitative data, the factors suggested by out by Kearney et al. (1991) were taken as a framework. In their study, Kearney et al. (1991) assumed that teachers can be potential instigators of instructional and/or motivational problems in the college classroom and called the teacher behaviors that are found irritating, demotivating, and hampering communication teacher misbehaviors. They identified 28 categories of teacher misbehaviors, which then they reduced to three main conceptual factors: teacher offensiveness, incompetence, and indolence. Offensive teachers are typically characterized as self-centered, arrogant and mean who intimidate students. Incompetence exemplifies ignorant teachers who are unable to provide answers to students'' questions. Indolent teachers are marked by their tardiness, disorganization, and negligence to students (Kearney et al., 1991).

The answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed using these 28 categories of teacher misbehaviors. In order to ensure reliability of the data, intra-rater reliability was calculated on the coding. The researcher herself coded the data from the participants' written accounts according to each emergent category and presented in frequencies on two occasions with a three-week interval. The comparison of all coded propositions showed excellent agreement (Cohen's kappa ≥ 0.8). The frequency rates of each theme are presented in Table 7. Additionally, representative expressions are displayed concerning relevant categories after the table.

Table 7.Themes emerging from students' perceptions of the teacher communication misbehavior

Themes	2nd year N	*f*	3rd year N	*f*	4th year N	f	Total N	*f*
Factor 1- Offensiveness								
Sarcasm/Putdowns	10	23.3	8	11.6	28	24.6	45	20
Verbally Abusive	4	9.3	10	14.5	9	7.9	23	10.1
Unreasonable Arbitrary Rules	1	2.3	3	4.4	3	2.6	7	3.1
Negative Personality	8	18.5	17	24.6	26	22.8	52	23
Favoritism/Prejudice	2	4.7	1	1.5	4	3.5	7	3.1
Offensiveness Total	25	58.1	39	56.5	70	61.4	134	59.3
Factor 2- Incompetence								
Confusing/Unclear Lectures			3	4.3	1	0.9	4	1.8
Apathy to Students	14	32.6	18	26.1	23	20.2	55	24.3
Does not know subject matter					4	3.5	4	1.8
Incompetence Total	14	32.6	21	30.5	28	24.6	63	27.9

Factor 3-Indolence								
Unresponsive to Ss' questions	4	9.3	9	13.0	16	14	29	12.8
Indolence total	4	9.3	9	13.0	16	14	29	12.8
Total	43		69		114		226	

When prospective language teachers were asked to provide descriptions of teacher behaviors that prevent them from communication, 27 second year students produced 43 propositions (M=1.6), 29 third year students generated 69 propositions (M=2.4) and 114 propositions were expressed by 58 senior students (M=1.9). The average number of propositions produced per student in each group was relatively similar. Themes derived from the content analysis of student teachers' written accounts are incompetence, offensiveness, and indolence. The majority of responses conglomerated on offensiveness, making up 59.3% of all the responses. This misbehavior was followed by incompetence (27.9%) and indolence (12.8%).

The first main theme, *offensiveness* entails teacher qualities that involve sarcasm/putdowns, verbally abusive behaviors, unreasonable arbitrary rules, negative personality, and favoritism/prejudice. Among the three main categories, the mostly articulated teacher behavior that prevented the students from communicating with their instructors was teachers' offensive behaviors (59.3%). Senior students reported a higher frequency of their displeasure about instructors who demonstrate offensive behaviors (61.4%). They are followed by second and third year students (58.1% and 56.5% respectively). Among offensive behaviors, sarcasm/putdowns and negative teacher behavior are the most frequently expressed qualities that prevent students from communicating with their instructors. For humiliating behaviors, they made the following comments;

> "Regardless of what I'm telling, s/he has to listen earnestly and finally offer suggestions and s/he should not tease me. On the contrary, s/he should offer suggestions so that I can understand my mistakes. Otherwise it would be uncomfortable for me to communicate." (4th year)

> "When faculty members show a strict and cynical attitude, this makes communication with them difficult. Instructor's understanding and friendly attitude affects communication positively." (3rd year)

Kearney et al. (1991) define negative personality by referring to teachers who are impatient and self-centered. The teachers' moody behaviors and acting as if they are superior than students are identified as negative personality .The participants expressed their views about such trait as;

> "The arrogant and 'I know everything' mood always affects me negatively. It discourages my willingness to speak and communicate with them." (4th year)

> "Having a tough temperament, treating me with a sullen face, pretending to take care of me, despising students, not listening to students' problems and hardly answering our questions refrain me from communicating." (3rd year)

Regarding favoritism and prejudice and teachers who make prejudicial remarks, the participants made fewer remarks (3.1%). For favoritism, the following expressions were observed:

> "The instructor's treating me or another friend of mine with prejudice without even getting to know us as individuals, and her/his maintaining this behavior throughout the year, prevents me from communicating." (2nd year).

The students are also intimidated by instructors whom they find rigid and inflexible concerning classroom rules. When they get the feeling that the rules exerted by the instructors are not reasonable, they do not want to communicate.

"I do not like grim and airy instructors who always lay down harsh but useless rules that do not help us at all. These unlovely instructors seem to forget that communicating with us is one of their duties." (4th year)

Verbally abusive behaviors are also included in the category of offensiveness. Students seemed to be intimidated by instructors who they perceive as angry and mean. Exposure to such verbally abusive behaviors discourage them from communication.

"How am I supposed to interact with her/him when s/he frequently screams in the classroom and never specifies exactly what s/he wants me to do?" (3rd year)

"When the instructor speaks in a cynical way, there is no way I can communicate with him/her?" (2nd year)

The second category *incompetence* was reflected in three sub-categories such as confusing/unclear lectures, apathy to students and lack of subject matter. Incompetence was the second category that was most frequently articulated by the respondents (27.9%). Particularly, second year students seemed to express their concerns about teachers' incompetence (32.6%). Junior and senior students followed this cohort of students respectively (30.4% and 24.5 %). The students feel uneasy when they communicate with instructors who do not care about the course or show any interest in students. In the presence of such classroom environments, they felt that there was no allowance for class discussions and participation. The participants expressed their views about such apathic behaviors as

"I hesitate to communicate if the teacher is strict. I cannot risk being reprimanded. (2nd year)"

"Having to communicate with instructors who do not even look at my face or do not respond when I greet makes me tense." (3rd year)

"The most important reason why I do not communicate with a lecturer is his/her stiff, unpleasant, and hurtful behaviors." (4th year)

Incompetence is also reflected in the form of confusing and unclear lectures, which are related to instructors' organizational skills. When the instructors do not convey their messages and make their expectations clear, they are perceived as confusing. Moving from one topic to the other and lack of consistency in the structure of the course delivery causes frustration on students and block their willingness to communicate. The following impressions display participants' views about the impact of such teacher quality on them.

"The instructors who cannot explain the lesson, who treats us harshly annoys me." (3rd year)

"When the instructor does not specify exactly what s/he wants us to do, I can't communicate with him/her." (3rd year)

A final negative personal attribute in incompetence category is instructors' lack of subject matter knowledge. The students do not want to interact with teachers who lack competency in providing correct and accurate answers to their questions. A fourth year student put this as;

"If the instructor is insufficient in his/her field, I do not communicate with him/her."(4th year)

The last theme *indolence* was found only in the form of instructors' being unresponsive to students' questions. Indolence makes up 12.9% of total responses. Senior, junior and sophomore students expressed their concerns in a descending order (14%, 13% and 9.3% respectively). Students expressed their discontent regarding instructors' indifference to their needs.

"When they see you at an inferior level and do not answer your questions, I no more want to talk to them."(4th year)

"It is an important barrier for me when they do not respond sincerely to the questions I ask, when they have a disruptive attitude, and appear disinterested." (2nd year)

The final impression stated by a senior student appears to encapsulate all the behaviors that block communication:

> *"When the instructor exhibits unbalanced, incoherent behaviors, when s/he disgraces you on your single mistake in the class, when s/he keeps extreme distances with everyone with no reason, when she doesn't accept any answers especially when she is angry…that is when the instructor displays these behaviors I never communicate with them." (4th year)*

The results of the qualitative data demonstrated that the most commonly reported behaviors that result in students' avoidance of communication with their instructors are predominantly negative criticism, embarrassment and humiliation, instructors' superior attitude, and their disinterest in the students. In students' opinions, the messages sent by the instructors through their communication indicate power distance and superiority. A notable outcome of this study is the necessity for teacher educators to be aware that when students perceive instructors as a threat, they have difficulty in interacting with instructors and eventually they might have problems in fully engaging in the learning process.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Communication apprehension has been examined a great deal in the past decades. Yet, there is almost no attention to communication apprehension towards lecturers particularly to that of pre-service language teachers. The study was designed to generate a profile of oral communication apprehension levels of undergraduate students in a language education department towards their teacher educators. Understanding the degree of their fear or anxiety about approaching their instructors, and the influence of gender, year level, and achievement on CA can help develop an effective system of support that can alleviate their apprehension levels. Since the findings of the quantitative measure indicated a certain level of communication apprehension that seem to originate from communication patterns of their instructors, there was a need for a deeper investigation. Therefore, participating student teachers were asked to indicate the behaviors that make them perceive their instructors as a threat and lead to avoidance of communication. It was believed that an acknowledgement of the existence of communication apprehension regarding their perceived threat concerning instructors' behaviours and tendency to stay away from them in a teacher-training program would highlight the role of teacher educators who, despite their prominent role, seem to miss from the   teacher education research (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

The evidence from this study reveals several findings. First, there were no gender differences relating to communication apprehension. The finding that there is no relationship between gender and CA is consistent with the outcomes of other empirical studies (Faris, Golen, & Lynch, 1999; Gardner et al., 2005) but inconsistent with other research that reports differences between females and males (Donovan and MacIntyre, 2004; Jaasma, 1997; Johnson & Faunce, 1973). The results of this study support the view that gender is not a significant factor in communication apprehension (Rosenfeld &Berko, 1990). In a similar vein, the analyses did not show significant differences among students from different year levels. This finding is supported by earlier research (Frantz et al., 2005) while at the same time contradicts with earlier research that reported a tendency for CA to increase as grade level progresses (Fordham & Gabbin, 1996; McCroskey, Andersen, Richmond, & Wheeless, 1981). In this context, the duration of students' interaction with their eductors did not seem to lead to any change in their communication apprehension.

Regarding academic performance, even though lower academic achievement levels for students who experience high communication apprehension when compared to students who experience low communication apprehension have been documented (Bourhis & Allen, 1992; McCroskey & Daly, 1976), this study found no relationship between CA and GPA. The finding that their GPA does not correlate with their CA levels differed from previous reseach which yielded a significant correlation between CA and cognitive learning (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976) but supported the results of earlier studies (Ericson & Gardner, 1992; Rubin & Graham, 1988; Watson & Monroe, 1990) that suggest no direct correlation between academic achievement and communication apprehension. This finding posits that participants' academic achievement is not affected by their communication apprehension levels in this context. Since the participants in this study were young adults, they might have learnt to cope with their fear and found some strategies to deal with negative feelings, which did not interefere with their academic learning.

The results of qualitative analysis demonstrated that participating students perceive their instructors' messages via verbal and non-verbal communication. Even though the instructors may not be aware of their communication behaviors all the time, these messages either motivate or discourage students. Eventually, students make decisions as to whether engage with the instructor or avoid him/her. When the instructors use inappropriate communication strategies while interacting with students and send demotivational   messages, the students tend to employ avoidance strategies. Consequently, the negative physical and verbal behaviors of teacher educators aggravate the psychological distance between teacher candidates and instructors. These findings lend support to the view that CA is a learned psychological response (McCroskey, 1977), and a social anxiety (Daly   & Stafford, 1984) rather than a genetic predisposition (Beatty et al, 1998).

Participants reported that when they have a high level of communication apprehension, they tend to stay away from the instructors. The findings obtained from qualitative data are in line with previous research that indicated the difficulty undergraduate students have in approaching their faculty members (Denzine & Pulos, 1995). However, when the instructors show verbal and nonverbal immediacy, they have a greater likelihood of emotional attachment to the course and to the course instructor. In spite of the research indicating that students view themselves as responsible for their own motivation to learn (Gorham and Christophel, 1992), teacher candidates think teachers are equally accountable for their demotivation.

Teacher educators who prepare future teachers should remember that certain teacher qualities could be developed by modeling. According to Lortie's notion of 'the apprenticeship of observation (1975), upon being exposed to prolonged observation through the educational process, pre-service teachers construct conceptions about the way they teach. However, these conceptions do not only include the way they teach but also the way they communicate. Particularly, if the subject matter is language used for communication, in order to be effective teachers, they should be exposed to models of proficient communicators who can communicate their caring as well as language. As high CA creates distance and signals hierarchy, teachers should create a class atmosphere that promotes egalitarianism and enhance students' affect for the subject matter.

There are several instructional implications related to this study. First, this study suggests that teacher educators' behaviors can lead to reticence and communication avoidance. As a result, the teacher candidates may not benefit from their teacher educators as much as expected. By using immediacy behaviors in communication, teacher educators can reduce psychological distance,

establish rapport with prospective teachers and create an enjoyable learning environment (Hsu, 2010). Creating a non-threatening, supportive environment will definitely affect the quality of learning and teaching.

6. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study sheds a critical light on the communication apprehension of prospective language teachers in a teacher education program. In this study, self-reports were chosen in order to elicit participants' perception of their instructors' communication behaviors. Observation was not used as a data collection tool for the reason that the presence of an observer could affect the classroom climate and thus introduce a different representation of communication patterns. Future research might involve observing classes. Another limitation is that this study reflects student teachers' perspectives and their perceptions. However, there could be a variety of reasons or situations underlying instructors' communication behaviors as well. Previous studies report students' problem behaviors such as their disrespectful and inappropriate behaviors towards teachers, rudeness, arguing with teachers, or offending them (Kowalski, 2003; Sun & Shek, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for further insights into how teacher educators view the way students communicate with them. As communication is a two way process, teacher educators' perceptions about student communication behaviors should also be explored.

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