

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF PRIVATE BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS

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**Abstract**— Language competence is required among teachers for effective professional practice because they use language as both a medium and an object of instruction. This study aimed to determine private basic education teachers' language competence and develop a proposed intervention program. A mixed-method approach was utilized to gather data. The study revealed that basic education teachers have an overall basic level of language competence. This is attributed to insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, workload, lack of awareness of the language's social rules, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, a weak foundation in sensitivity, culture, behavior, and non-verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. Furthermore, English teachers and those with higher educational attainment have an advanced level of overall language competence, while teachers with longer years of teaching and those with higher educational attainment have an advanced level of sociolinguistic and strategic competence, respectively. This implies that teachers who do not specialize in English, who are new to the teaching profession, and those with a bachelor's degree must undergo more training and seminars to enhance their language competence. Hence, there is a necessity to propose and implement a differentiated developmental program.

**Keywords:** language competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, English language, intervention program, basic education teachers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is absolutely central to both teaching and learning. Every aspect of a teacher's work—from establishing the social and disciplinary atmosphere of the classroom to communicating the intricate details of complex concepts—relies on the effective use of language. Poor language skills might affect the teaching and learning process, resulting in confusion and misunderstanding. Therefore, teachers must be fluent in the language because it is their responsibility to ensure that language is not a barrier to learning.

According to several sources, language competence is crucial for effective teaching. Regardless of the subject, teachers must possess a good command of both formal academic language and informal language for personal connections with students, parents, and colleagues (Sadig & de Cat, 2019; Tsang, 2017; Derewianka & Jones, 2016). In addition, teachers play various roles and need different language competencies for each situation. While there has been a shift towards focusing more on learners and learning in recent years, teacher quality remains crucial for student achievement. Several studies have shown that language proficiency and competence are among the most important teacher characteristics contributing to quality teaching, along with subject-matter knowledge, knowledge of teaching, cognitive abilities, and relevant experience (Johnson & Poulter, 2015). For instance, Khan et al. (2017) found consistent evidence linking teachers' verbal abilities to student achievement. Positive interactions between teachers and students are also critical for academic success. Teachers with excellent communication skills and competent use of language can foster positive interactions with students, directly and indirectly affecting academic performance by influencing student engagement and interest in learning.

Furthermore, language competency is one of the key competencies in the 21st century. In this era of globalization, communication across borders and cultures has become increasingly important, making language competence a vital skill to possess. Competence in language is closely linked to cognitive development, academic achievement, cultural awareness, and social interaction. Studies reveal that Filipinos who possess language competence have higher self-esteem (Dumlao, 2018), higher chances of being employed (Palmes-Dennis, 2015), and are competitive in the global marketplace (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). Governments worldwide have recognized the importance of English language skills for a strong and sustainable economy and have been investing in improving citizens' English proficiency. Education First (2017) highlights that improved English skills correlate with higher income and a better quality of life. Moreover, English is the primary working language for engaging with ASEAN countries and the world. According to Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter, English is the only "working language," making it imperative for governments to prepare their citizens to use English effectively (Heng, 2017).

The Philippines has a reputation for high proficiency in English compared to its Southeast Asian neighbors, and it is the predominant medium of instruction in the country's educational system. The decline in English proficiency among Filipinos has been attributed to the implementation of bilingualism in 1974 and its subsequent reintroduction in 1987 (Jimenez, 2018; Cabigon, 2015; Saban, 2015). This decline has been supported by various surveys and observations, including Education First's (2020) revelation that the Philippines dropped seven spots in the English Proficiency Index and has experienced a decline in ranking since 2016 (Valderama, 2019). To address this issue, better English teachers should be employed (Jimenez, 2018; Saban, 2015), and the Department of Education has established the National English Proficiency Program to prepare proficient teachers to serve as mentors to less experienced teachers (PIA, 2009). However, it was found that Filipino teachers have low to average language competence levels in English (Bayaga, 2015). Many teachers, regardless of the content or grade level they teach, have deficiencies in their knowledge of grammar (Carlisi & Tinnirelo, 2015); they also lack cultural awareness and sensitivity (De Asis & Rivera, 2019), which speaks to their sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

While research on the English preparedness of Filipino teachers is limited, studies suggest that using English as a medium of instruction in Philippine classrooms could improve students' English achievement and appreciation of the language's role in globalization (Manalastas & Batang, 2018; Saban, 2015). Despite the decline in English proficiency, English language teaching in the Philippines has benefited the country educationally, politically, and economically. Aside from English, the child's mother tongue is used as a mandatory medium of instruction in the early grades, as required by the Department of Education in 2013. Additionally, the subjects EPP, Filipino, and Araling Panlipunan are taught in the Filipino language. However, in 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte expressed his support for English as the primary medium of instruction at all levels of education since English proficiency is crucial for Filipinos to compete in the global market. In response, in 2019, the Department of Education issued a memorandum allowing private schools to use either English or Filipino as the medium of instruction, provided that the school has a language policy approved by its board of trustees. It is recognized that poor language skills may not only be attributed to teachers, but their competence, commitment, and influence will go a long way toward improving other fields in the education sector. Moreover, a growing body of research explores students' language competence, while there is a deficiency of studies concerning teachers' language competence. Importantly, no studies have explored the language competence of basic education teachers at the University of Saint Louis. With all these at hand, there is a need to study the language competence of teachers since student academic success greatly relies on teachers' language ability. It is now an apt time to study the English language competence of private basic education teachers as a basis for a differentiated developmental program.

## II. METHODS

This study utilized a mixed-method approach employing a sequential explanatory design. This is a two-phase design in which quantitative data is collected and analyzed first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data based on the quantitative results. The qualitative data is used to explain the quantitative data.

The participants of the study were full-time basic education teachers at the University of Saint Louis for the school year 2022-2023. There were 161 full-time basic education teachers: 31 from the Elementary Department, 67 from the Junior High School, and 63 from the Senior High School. The researcher employed total enumeration in data collection.

The main instruments used in this study were a self-made Communicative Competence questionnaire and a structured interview administered to the basic education teachers. The questionnaire had two parts. The first part gathered the profile of the respondents, including sex, age, type of school they graduated from, field of specialization, number of years in teaching, and highest educational attainment. The second part of the tool contained ten multiple-choice items and five essay questions. The first five items assessed the linguistic competence of the respondents, while the succeeding multiple-choice items assessed their sociolinguistic competence. Moreover, the five essay questions assessed discourse and strategic competence. An analytic rubric was utilized to assess and score the essays. Both the assessment tools and rubrics were patterned after and constructed from existing studies (Chen & Rau, 2013) and validated by language and assessment experts. In addition, a structured interview was conducted to improve the credibility of the findings.

Parts of Assessment Tool:

Part	Focus Language Competence	Type of test	# of items	Description
A	Linguistic	Multiple Choice	5	Questions on Subject-Verb Agreement, Sentence Errors and Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement
B	Sociolinguistics	Multiple Choice - Discourse Completion task	5	Selecting socially appropriate responses to a speech act. (Greetings, Apology, Request, Complaint & Refusal)
C	Strategic and Discourse	Essay	5 (Scored based on rubric)	Formulating a strategy or resolution to a certain communication problem.

To examine the profile of the respondents, the researcher used descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, mean scores, and percentages.

The scale below was used to determine the respondents' communicative competence.

Level of Competence	Description
<b>Basic Competence</b>	This level of competence refers to the foundational skills and knowledge required in a particular domain or subject. It represents the minimum level of proficiency needed to perform tasks or activities in that area. Basic competence implies a basic understanding and ability to apply fundamental concepts, principles, and skills.
<b>Advanced Competence</b>	This level of competence goes beyond the basic level and represents a higher level of proficiency and expertise. It demonstrates a deeper understanding, extensive knowledge, and the ability to handle complex tasks or challenges within a specific domain. Advanced competence often involves critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and adapting and innovating within the given context.

Moreover, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to find the differences in competence when grouped according to their profile variable. Lastly, T-test was used to compare the groups.

### III. RESULTS

Table 1. Profile of the Basic Education Teachers

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	70	43.48
	Female	91	56.52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Field of Specialization	English	30	18.60
	Math	17	10.60
	Science	16	9.94
	Filipino	20	12.42
	AP	16	9.94
	MAPEH	18	11.18
	Elementary	15	9.31
	Business Mngt and Accountancy	10	6.21
	IT Related	10	6.21
TLE / HE	9	5.59	

	<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Type of School	Private	96	59.63
	Public	65	40.37
	<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Number of Years in Teaching	Less than 1 year	20	12.42
	1 to 5	93	57.76
	6 to 10	37	22.98
	11 and above	11	6.84
	<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor	75	46.58
	with Master's Units	35	21.74
	MA/MS	48	29.82
	with Doctoral Units	3	1.86
	<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The demographic analysis in Table 1 describes the respondents' profiles in terms of sex, field of specialization, type of school, number of years in teaching, and highest educational attainment. After careful interpretation and analysis, the study reveals that 56.52% (91 respondents) are female, while 43.48% (70 respondents) are male. This implies that females dominate the teaching profession. In terms of field of specialization, the respondents come from various disciplines. However, it is essential to note that most specialize in English, Filipino, and MAPEH, suggesting that language teachers dominate the institution. Additionally, the majority of respondents, 59.63% (96 respondents), are graduates of private institutions, while 40.37% (65 respondents) are graduates of public institutions. Furthermore, the table shows that most respondents (57.76%, or 93 individuals) have between one and five years of teaching experience, indicating that the institution is populated by fresh graduates. Finally, most respondents are bachelor's degree holders, totaling 46.58% (75 respondents). Meanwhile, 29.81% (48 respondents) hold master's degrees, 21.74% (35 respondents) have earned master's degree units, and 1.86% (3 respondents) have earned doctoral degree units.

Table 2. Language Competence of the Basic Education Teachers

Areas	Advanced Competence		Basic Competence	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Linguistic Competence	46	28.57	115	71.43
Sociolinguistic Competence	76	47.20	85	52.80
Discourse Competence	68	42.24	93	57.76
Strategic Competence	27	16.77	134	83.23

The data in Table 2 summarizes the language competence of basic education teachers. As seen in the table, the results reveal that, in terms of linguistic competence, 71.43% (115 respondents) have basic competence, while 28.57% (46 respondents) possess advanced competence. This implies that most respondents have limited knowledge of language rules and struggle to identify and produce sentences with accurate grammatical structures. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, 52.80% (85 respondents) have basic competence, while 47.20% (76 respondents) have advanced competence. This suggests that most respondents cannot effectively apply their knowledge to interpret and produce meaningful texts appropriate for specific situations. Additionally, they struggle to respond to speech acts with the correct level of appropriateness. Regarding discourse competence, 57.76% (93 respondents) have basic competence, while 42.24% (68 respondents) have advanced competence. This indicates that most respondents face challenges in producing intelligible and logically structured sentences. Finally, in terms of strategic competence, 83.23% (134 respondents) have basic competence, while 16.77% (27 respondents) have advanced competence. This suggests that most respondents struggle to address communication breakdowns effectively through strategies.

### Overall Language Competence

The respondents acknowledged that they have a basic level of overall language competence due to insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, the amount of workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation in sensitivity, culture, behavior, and non-verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

Informant 1: *"English is not our area of expertise; that is why some are not knowledgeable about the rules to follow, especially in grammar. Given the workload we face every day, we do not have ample time to read about grammar and the English language as a whole."*

Informant 2: *"Since lack of awareness and training were mentioned, there should be a separate seminar or training for this, as it is not just grammar we are talking about. Topics on the effective use of language in different contexts and strategies for combating communication breakdowns may be tackled for our professional growth."*

Informant 3: *"English is not my first language, nor my major. Sometimes, when I cannot think of the term in English, I use the Filipino translation. Code-switching is practiced by those who are not experts in English. While the intention is to make the discussion or explanation clearer, sometimes it hinders the pupils or students from understanding better."*

Informant 4: *"Aside from grammar in speaking and writing, our undergraduate studies did not really stress the importance of social rules or communication strategies. What I remember is that if the grammar is correct, then it must be understood. Our foundation in sensitivity to culture, behavior, non-verbal communication, and the like is not much emphasized."*

Informant 5: *"The medium of instruction for the subject matter I teach is Filipino. I use Filipino more often inside the classroom, but I use English when it comes to writing school documents and other paperwork. Sometimes, I am anxious about speaking in English because students nowadays outrightly correct their teachers regarding pronunciation, grammar, and spelling."*

### **Linguistic Competence**

The results of this study suggest that the respondents have limited knowledge of grammar and lack skills in using appropriate language structures and forms. Furthermore, they are unable to distinguish grammatically correct sentences from incorrect ones. Hence, this illustrates their low awareness of grammar, pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary rules, which results in grammatically incorrect sentences. In addition, the respondents' answers indicate that their low linguistic competence is influenced by their field of specialization, dependence on colleagues, insufficient feedback on their grammar, lack of training and seminars, and perceptions about grammar. Some of the responses from the informants are as follows:

Informant 1: *"English is not my field of specialization, so I am not really particular about my grammar. But I understand the need to have good grammar as a teacher since we should be effective communicators."*

Informant 2: *"We are not usually corrected on our grammar errors because it is acceptable for those of us who do not major in English."*

Informant 3: *"I think teachers have poor grammar because we let our colleagues check our grammar for us, especially the English majors. We approach them to proofread our work, for example, a letter, our PowerPoint presentation, a quiz, or even a message, just to be sure. Instead of educating ourselves, sometimes we just ask them directly, considering the amount of work that still needs to be done."*

Informant 4: *"I guess it is because the training that we attend is not really about grammar or language. For me, I focus on topics related to my major or on teaching strategies."*

Informant 5: *"Maybe it is because we are not so particular about the structure but rather on the content of what we say. If the thought is already clear and well-understood, that is already enough."*

### **Sociolinguistic Competence**

It is important to note that, of all the areas, this is where the respondents excel the most. The results of this study indicate that even though they attempt to address speech acts, most respondents tend to provide less socially appropriate replies. This reveals that they struggle to understand and use the language in varied contexts and situations.

In addition, they show minimal sensitivity to the appropriate level of formality for specific situations or social interactions. Moreover, the respondents attributed their low levels of sociolinguistic competence to their experience in teaching, lack of seminars and training, and an overemphasis on grammar.

Informant 1: *“Since I am just new in teaching, I am still adjusting with my learners. Also, I am still learning how to deal with situations professionally. I have to be very careful with the words I use most especially when talking with my students and their parents.”*

Informant 2: *“I do not attend trainings about this since I thought it is for English majors only. Although we are advised to be tactful always especially in front of others, I still find it difficult to say things in a different way.”*

Informant 3: *“I do not remember if I have attended a seminar about sociolinguistics since it is not related to my expertise. Maybe the reason for this is lack of seminars attended or exposure to this field.”*

Informant 4: *“I think it is because we focus more on grammar than the social use of the language. When we say English, grammar comes first into our minds. So, teachers focus on pronunciation, spelling, subject verb agreement and the like.”*

Informant 5: *“For new teachers, it can be because of their lack of experience. They are still young and they handle only few classes compared to the others. They only met few parents or talk to few colleagues that is why they are not yet experts in sociolinguistics.”*

### **Discourse Competence**

The results of the study suggest that the respondents have a basic level of discourse competence. This implies that they lack the knowledge, ability, and skills needed to link or organize intelligible sentences and utterances. Likewise, they have limitations in determining coherence and organization between and among sentences. Therefore, they find it difficult to produce or compose unified sentences without unnecessary repetition, whether in speaking or writing. In addition, the respondents stated that the inability to make ideas comprehensible, overemphasis on grammar rules and pronunciation, inability to use transitional words, and their field of specialization are the reasons for their low discourse competence. Some of the responses from the informants are as follows:

Informant 1: *“Some teachers can over explain sometimes. Since they want to explain or discuss a topic thoroughly to students, they tend to repeat themselves over again.”*

Informant 2: *“Whenever we discuss, there are a lot of ideas in our mind. Sometimes, we fail to arrange them in a logical way. That is why some pupils or students find it difficult to follow the discussion also. Though we try our best to explain clearly.”*

Informant 3: *“Instead of the order of ideas, most times we check the grammar first, or we look for misspelled words when we write. When it comes to speaking, it is still the same. We are more conscious of our grammar and the choice of words, even our pronunciation. Students like to copy the way we pronounce or check our grammar.”*

Informant 4: *“I notice that some teachers do not use cohesive devices or transitional words much that is why they do not establish order or cohesion in speech or writing.”*

Informant 5: *“Whenever there are speaking or writing engagements for teachers, English majors are usually assigned to do the task because it is imperative that they speak and write better than other majors. They can compose ideas quickly and orderly.”*

### **Strategic Competence**

Among the four areas of language competence, the respondents' main weakness is strategic competence. The results of the study imply that the majority of the respondents have difficulties addressing and compensating for

communication problems due to insufficient knowledge of social behavior and communication norms. Hence, they are limited in their ability to recognize communication breakdowns without knowing how to deal with the hindrances. Though they attempt to solve or address communication problems using communication strategies, they cannot carry out their communicative intent. Finally, teaching experience, lack of seminars and training, limited guidance and coaching, low awareness of communication strategies, and their field of specialization were identified as the reasons for their low strategic competence.

Some of the responses of the informants are as follows:

Informant 1: *“Whenever I encounter difficult people, most especially parents or colleagues, I get nervous when they are angry. I find it difficult to think of ways on how to say things in a gentle way just so their anger could be appeased. Maybe it is because I am still new in the teaching profession.”*

Informant 2: *“We are taught much about the content of the subject matter we teach and the strategies we employ, but we have limited coaching or guidance on situations that call for strategic competence. Sometimes we are hesitant to speak much because we might appear unprofessional with our word choice.”*

Informant 3: *“At times, we get misunderstood by other people especially our pupils and their parents. That leads to communication breakdowns. Instead of prolonging the argument, we try to end the discussion gently. It is difficult to explain our point of views when we are misunderstood because of some barriers in communication.”*

Informant 4: *“Now that I have learned that there are strategies that we can use in handling communication breakdowns, I must say that the reason why teachers and most people have low strategic competence is because there is a low awareness of these strategies. We would like to know the strategies that would be best used in specific situations.”*

Informant 5: *“The reason why, us, teachers have low strategic competence is because we do not have trainings about it. Our trainings focus on technology, strategies, research, policies and laws about education, and the like. I think the language teachers are only familiar about this.”*

Table 3. Test of Significant Difference in the Language Competence of the Basic Education Teachers when Grouped According to their Profile Variables

Profile Variables	Areas	t/F-value	p-value	Description
Sex	Linguistic Competence	0.226	0.882	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	-0.287	0.775	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	0.552	0.582	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	0.859	0.392	Not Significant
	Overall	0.341	0.735	Not Significant
	Field of Specialization	Linguistic Competence	2.837	0.004
Sociolinguistic Competence		1.138	0.340	Not Significant
Discourse Competence		2.608	0.008	Significant
Strategic Competence		3.090	0.002	Significant
Overall		2.505	0.011	Significant
Type of School	Linguistic Competence	-0.587	0.558	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	1.528	0.129	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	-0.445	0.657	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	0.350	0.726	Not Significant
	Overall	0.271	0.787	Not Significant
Number of Years	Linguistic Competence	0.412	0.744	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	3.465	0.018	Significant
	Discourse Competence	1.057	0.369	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	0.893	0.446	Not Significant

	Overall	1.480	0.222	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	Linguistic Competence	1.458	0.228	Not Significant
	Sociolinguistic Competence	1.965	0.121	Not Significant
	Discourse Competence	1.918	0.129	Not Significant
	Strategic Competence	2.917	0.036	Significant
	Overall	2.845	0.040	Significant

Table 3 presents the test of significant differences in the language competence of the basic education teachers when grouped according to their profile variables. In general, there is a significant difference in the language competence of private basic education teachers in terms of field of specialization, number of years in teaching, and highest educational attainment. Specifically, there is a significant difference in the language competence of basic education teachers along linguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and overall language competence when grouped according to field specialization. This suggests that the type of subject or field the teacher specializes in can impact their language competence. Furthermore, there is also a significant difference in the language competence of basic education teachers along sociolinguistic competence when grouped according to the number of years of teaching. This suggests that a teacher's experience can also impact their language competence, specifically in terms of their ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. Finally, a significant difference exists in the language competence of the basic education teachers along strategic competence and overall language competence when grouped according to highest educational attainment. This suggests that the level of education the teacher achieves can impact their language competence, specifically in terms of their ability to use language effectively to achieve their communication goals.

Table 3a. Multiple Comparison of the Mean Linguistic Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Field of Specialization

Field of Specialization	Mean	Eng	Math	Sci	Fil	AP	MAPEH	Elem	Bus Mngt & Ac	IT
English	0.733									
Math	0.588	.1451								
Science	0.550	.1833*	.0382							
Filipino	0.510	.2233*	.0782	.0400						
AP	0.450	.2833*	.1382	.1000	.0600					
MAPEH	0.422	.3111*	.1660	.1278	.0878	.0278				
Elementary	0.413	.3200*	.1749	.1367	.0967	.0367	.0089			
Business Mngt and Accountancy	0.400	.3333*	.1882	.1500	.1100	.0500	.0222	.0133		
IT Related	0.460	.2733*	.1282	.0900	.0500	-.0100	-.0378	-.0467	-.0600	
TLE / HE	0.644	.0889	-.0562	-.0944	-.1344	-.1944	-.2222	-.2311	-.2444	-.1844

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3a presents the multiple comparisons of the mean linguistic competence of the respondents when grouped according to the field of specialization. It can be shown from the results that teachers whose English is the field of specialization have higher linguistic competence than those teachers majoring in Math, Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, Elementary Education, Business Management and Accountancy, and IT Related courses.

Table 3b. Multiple Comparison of the Mean Discourse Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Field of Specialization

Field of Specialization	Mean	English	Math	Science	Filipino	AP	MAPEH	Elem	Bus Mngt & Ac	IT
English	0.7933									
Math	0.6353	.1580*								
Science	0.6625	.1308*	-	.0272						

Filipino	0.6700	.1233*	-	-.0075						
			.0347							
AP	0.6250	.1683*	.0103	.0375	.0450					
MAPEH	0.6333	.1600*	.0020	.0292	.0367	-				
						.0083				
Elementary	0.6400	.1533*	-	.0225	.0300	-	-.0067			
			.0048			.0150				
Business Mngt and Accountancy	0.5800	.2133*	.0553	.0825	.0900	.0450	.0533	.0600		
IT Related	0.6400	.1533*	-	.0225	.0300	-	-.0067	.0000	-.0600	
			.0047			.0150				
TLE / HE	0.6667	.1267*	-	-.0042	.0033	-	-.0333	-	-.0867	-
			.0314			.0417		.0267	.0267	

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3b presents the multiple comparisons of the mean discourse competence of the respondents when grouped according to the field of specialization. It can be shown from the results that teachers whose English as the field of specialization have higher discourse competence than those teachers majoring in Math, Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, Elementary Education, Business Management and Accountancy, IT Related courses, and TLE and Home Economics subjects.

Table 3c. Multiple Comparison of the Mean Strategic Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Field of Specialization

Field of Specialization	Mean	English	Math	Science	Filipino	AP	MAPEH	Elem	Bus Mngt & Ac	IT
English	0.6467									
Math	0.4941	.1525*								
Science	0.5000	.1467*	-							
			0.006							
Filipino	0.5000	.1467*	-	0.000						
			0.006							
AP	0.4500	.1967*	0.044	0.050	0.050					
MAPEH	0.4778	.1689*	0.016	0.022	0.022	-				
						0.028				
Elementary	0.4000	.2467*	0.094	0.100	0.100	0.050	0.078			
Business Mngt and Accountancy	0.4200	.2267*	0.074	0.080	0.080	0.030	0.058	-		
								0.020		
IT Related	0.4800	.1667*	0.014	0.020	0.020	-	-0.002	-	-0.060	
						0.030		0.080		
TLE / HE	0.4667	.1800*	0.028	0.033	0.033	-	0.011	-	-0.047	0.013
						0.018		0.067		

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3c presents the multiple comparison of the mean strategic of the respondents when grouped according to the field of specialization. It can be shown from the results that teachers whose English as the field of specialization have higher strategic competence than those teachers majoring in Math, Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, Elementary Education, Business Management and Accountancy, IT Related courses, and TLE and Home Economics subjects.

Table 3d. Multiple Comparison of the Mean Language Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Field of Specialization

Field of Specialization	Mean	English	Math	Science	Filipino	AP	MAPEH	Elem	Bus Mngt & Ac	IT
English	.7150									
Math	.6294	0.086								
Science	.6094	0.106	0.020							
Filipino	.5925	.1225*	0.037	0.017						
AP	.5438	.1713*	0.086	0.066	0.049					
MAPEH	.5722	.1428*	0.057	0.037	0.020	-				
						0.029				
Elementary	.5367	.1783*	0.093	0.073	0.056	0.007	0.036			
Business Mngt and Accountancy	.4900	.2250*	0.139*	0.119	0.103	0.054	0.082	0.047		
IT Related	.5400	.1750*	0.089	0.069	0.053	0.004	0.032	-	-0.050	
								0.003		
TLE / HE	.6000	0.115	0.029	0.009	-0.008	-	-0.028	-	-0.110	-
						0.056		0.063		0.060

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3d presents the multiple comparison of the mean language competence of the respondents when grouped according to the field of specialization. It can be shown from the results that teachers whose English is the field of specialization have higher strategic competence than those teachers majoring in Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, Elementary Education, Business Management and Accountancy, and IT Related courses.

Table 3e. Multiple Comparison of the Mean Sociolinguistic Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Number of Years in the Teaching Profession

Number of Years	Mean	Less than 1 year	1 to 5	6 to 10
Less than 1 year	0.6300			
1 to 5	0.6624	-.0324		
6 to 10	0.7297	-.0997	-.0674	
11 and above	0.8909	-.2609*	-.2285*	-.1612

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3e presents the multiple comparisons of the mean sociolinguistic competence of the respondents when grouped according to the number of years in the teaching profession. It can be shown from the results that teachers teaching for 11 years and above have higher sociolinguistic competence than teachers teaching for five years and less.

Table 3f. Multiple Comparison on the Mean Strategic Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	Mean	Bachelor	With Units	Master's MA/MS
Bachelor	0.4800			
with Master's Units	0.5029	-.02286		
MA/MS	0.5167	-.03667	-.01381	
with Doctoral Units	0.8000	-.32000*	-.29714*	-.28333*

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3f presents the multiple comparison of the mean strategic competence of the respondents when grouped according to highest educational attainment. Specifically, teachers with doctoral units have a higher level of strategic competence than those with bachelor's degree, with master's units, and with master's degrees.

Table 3g: Multiple Comparison on the Mean Language Competence of the Respondents when Grouped according to Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	Mean	Bachelor	With Units	Master's MA/MS
Bachelor	0.5680			
with Master's Units	0.6100	-.04200		
MA/MS	0.6260	-.05804	-.01604	
with Doctoral Units	0.8333	-.26533*	-.22333*	-.20729

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3g presents the multiple comparisons of the mean language competence of the respondents when grouped according to highest educational attainment. It can be shown from the results that teachers with doctoral units have higher levels of language competence than those teachers with bachelor's degree and with master's units.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

##### *Language Competence of the Basic Education Teachers*

The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents have basic competence in language but struggle with accurate grammar, appropriate speech acts, logical sentences, and communication breakdowns. This aligns with previous studies showing a decline in English language competence among the Filipino workforce, partly attributed to untrained and non-proficient teachers (Business Mirror, 2016). The Department of Education survey in 2008 found that 80 percent of secondary school teachers in the Philippines failed an English proficiency exam, while Bayaga (2015) reported low to average language competence among Filipino teachers. De Asis and Rivera (2019) noted their lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, impacting sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Meniado (2018) also highlighted low English proficiency among teachers and graduates. Similar concerns have been observed in Indonesia (Lie et al., 2019) and globally, with Renandya (2018) noting that many English teachers are non-native speakers with limited proficiency. Nowadays, language competence has become a core employability skill in many fields because it supports the development of other skills (Luka & Seniut, 2019). In the educational setting, language competence is required among teachers for effective professional practice because they use language as a medium and object of instruction. Several sources confirm the importance of teachers who possess language competence to teach effectively. All teachers share this requirement regardless of the subject being taught to foster proper language use (Sadig & de Cat, 2019; Tsang, 2017; Derewianka & Jones, 2016). In fact, several different teacher effects contribute to quality teaching, but according to Johnson & Poulter (2015), language proficiency and competence are among the most crucial teacher characteristics. A critical factor in teachers' language competence is their proficiency level in the language of instruction. Sert (2014) states that teachers with a high level of proficiency in the language they are using can better communicate effectively with their students, understand their needs and concerns, and provide appropriate feedback on their development. This suggests that teacher proficiency in the language of instruction is a key factor in student achievement in language learning.

Moreover, another essential aspect of language competence for teachers is the ability to use appropriate teaching strategies and techniques to support learning. Liu (2015) affirms understanding how to provide effective input and feedback, using a variety of learning activities and resources, and adapting instruction to meet the needs of different learners. Certainly, teachers skilled in these areas can better support development and promote student success. In addition, the teacher's language competence has an impact on student learning outcomes. Almarza & Lopez-Navarro (2020) and Jenkins (2018) support this claim because they have found that teacher language proficiency and teaching strategies are positively associated with student achievement. For example, teachers who are highly proficient in the language of instruction and use a variety of learning activities have been shown to positively impact student language proficiency and overall academic achievement. These studies suggest that teachers' language competence can significantly impact the quality of their instruction and the success of their students. They also highlight the importance of professional development in enhancing teachers' language competence. Various studies have stated that Filipino teachers are outstanding in classroom management, interpersonal communication with their colleagues, and student motivation, but Balgoa (2019) emphasized that their grammatical competence should still be improved. Also, Alviz (2019) mentioned that while they are proficient in reading comprehension, teachers struggle to express themselves in written form.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the reasons for the teachers' basic level of competence are field of specialization, dependence on colleagues, lack of training and seminars, perceptions about grammar, insufficient knowledge of

grammatical rules, amount of workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation on sensitivity, culture, behavior, and non-verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. These findings share the same result with studies conducted by Del Rosario (2022), Thadphoonton (2017), and Gul & Aziz (2015), which state that heavy workload, unavailability of time, sense of embarrassment, the exodus of teachers to jobs overseas, lack of competence and training, and lack of opportunities and platforms to use English are seen as additional reasons why teachers are lacking in language competence. Similarly, Ulla (2018; 2019) further agrees that the decline in teachers' English language competence can be attributed to the perceived lack of teachers' professional development programs, exposure, and support for an English-speaking environment. Fernandez (2019) agrees that teachers are not regularly motivated to use English as a medium of instruction. They also fail to understand that language competence is essential in the teaching process.

In summary, the results of the study indicate that teachers have a basic level of competence. This finding has been seen to be consistent with numerous studies, adding to the body of research that confirms the decline in English language competence among teachers. Teachers' language competence can significantly impact the quality of their instruction and students' academic achievement. Additionally, the results of the present study identify insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation in sensitivity, culture, behavior, and non-verbal communication, and anxiety in using English as the primary reasons for the low overall language competence of the respondents. Indeed, this highlights the importance of improving the language competence of teachers through professional development.

### ***Significant Difference in the Language Competence of the Basic Education Teachers when Grouped according to Their Profile Variables***

#### ***a. Field of Specialization***

The findings suggest that teachers who have specialized in English have an advanced level of linguistic competence compared to teachers who have specialized in other fields such as Math, Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, Elementary Education, Business Management, Accountancy, and IT-related courses. These findings are in line with previous studies that have reported similar results. For instance, a study by Ghamrawi and Kharmah (2018) found that English language teachers in Lebanon had higher language proficiency than non-English language teachers. Similarly, a study by Wang and Li (2017) in China found that English language teachers had a higher level of language proficiency compared to non-English language teachers. The present study's findings may be attributed to the fact that English is the medium of instruction in many schools. Therefore, English language teachers may have more exposure to and practice using English. In addition, English language teachers may have received more formal training in English language teaching. They may have had more opportunities for professional development in this area, contributing to their higher level of linguistic competence. However, it is important to note that the findings in Table 3a do not necessarily imply that teachers in other fields lack linguistic competence altogether. Rather, it suggests that there may be differences in the level of linguistic competence between teachers in different fields. These differences may be related to factors such as exposure, training, and professional development.

In addition, the findings suggest that teachers who have specialized in English have an advanced level of discourse competence compared to teachers who have specialized in other fields. This finding is consistent with previous research that has examined the relationship between the field of specialization and language skills. For example, a study by Kormos and Csizér (2008) found that students who studied English as their major had better performance on discourse skills tests than those who studied other languages or disciplines. Similarly, a study by Lari and Ghaemi (2014) found that English language teachers in Iran had a higher level of discourse competence compared to non-English language teachers. The present study's findings may be attributed to the fact that English language teachers may have more opportunities to engage in discourse-oriented activities such as debates, discussions, and writing tasks. In addition, English language teachers may have received more training in discourse analysis and language pedagogy, which could have contributed to their higher level of discourse competence.

Furthermore, the results reveal that teachers who have specialized in English have an advanced level of strategic competence compared to teachers who have specialized in other fields. Strategic competence refers to the ability to use language effectively in different communicative situations and to apply different strategies to overcome communication barriers. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have examined the relationship

between the field of specialization and language skills. For example, a study by Yang and Gao (2019) found that English language teachers in China had a higher level of strategic competence compared to non-English language teachers. Similarly, a study by Celik and Kilic (2017) found that English language teachers in Turkey had a higher level of strategic competence compared to non-English language teachers. The advanced level of strategic competence among English language teachers may be attributed to the fact that they have more exposure to different communicative situations and more opportunities to practice different communication strategies. In addition, English language teachers may have received more training in communication strategies and language pedagogy, which could have contributed to their higher level of strategic competence.

In general, the results presented indicate that teachers who have specialized in English have an advanced level of overall language competence compared to teachers who have specialized in other fields. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown a positive correlation between English language proficiency and language competence in other subject areas (Liang & Zhang, 2019; Othman & Zalina, 2015; Tseng & Chiu, 2013). The advanced level of language competence among English language teachers may be attributed to the fact that they have more exposure to the language and its nuances, and more opportunities to practice using the language in different contexts. This exposure and practice allow English language teachers to better understand the language's nuances and complexities and develop their language skills to a higher level. In addition, English language teachers may have received more training in language pedagogy and have a better understanding of language acquisition and language teaching methodologies, which could have contributed to their higher level of overall language competence. Language pedagogy refers to the theory and practice of teaching a language, and English language teachers are trained in this area as part of their language teacher education. They learn about the different approaches to teaching English, as well as the techniques and strategies that are effective in teaching language. English language teachers may also better understand language acquisition, which is how people learn a language. They are trained to understand how language is acquired and the factors that influence language acquisition. This can inform their teaching practices and help them better support their students' language learning.

#### ***b. Number of Years in the Teaching Profession***

The results indicate that teachers with more experience in teaching have an advanced level of sociolinguistic competence because they have had more opportunities to interact with diverse student populations and have developed a deeper understanding of how language is used in different social situations. A considerable amount of research is consistent with the present study's findings. To illustrate, Safa and Keshavarz (2018) investigated the case of Iranian teachers regarding their sociolinguistic competence and teaching experience. It was validated that Iranian teachers with more teaching experience have higher levels of sociolinguistic competence than those with less experience. Similarly, Wang and Chen (2016) pointed out that teachers with more teaching experience had better sociolinguistic competence in China than those with less experience. Likewise, in Finland, Ranta and Mehisto (2016) found that seasoned teachers had better sociolinguistic competence than novice teachers. The same findings were observed by Kaur and Azman (2015), who stated that teachers with more teaching experience are more competent in sociolinguistics than less experienced ones in the Malaysian context. Correspondingly, Ng and Koh (2020), Feng and He (2019), and Kim (2016) indicated in their study that experienced teachers have better sociolinguistic competence than novice teachers. Thus, it positively relates to teaching effectiveness. In contrast, Garcia-Sanchez and Martin-Moya (2017) revealed that there is no significant relationship between teaching experience and sociolinguistic competence. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the findings of the aforementioned studies are context-specific and may not necessarily generalize to other contexts.

In general, the results of the current study add to the growing body of literature that affirms the positive relationship between teachers' sociolinguistic competence and their years of teaching experience. Though other studies found no significant relationship, several studies suggest that experienced teachers with an advanced level of language competence are more effective in teaching. This implies that they are more likely to use appropriate language to meet the needs of students, facilitate student learning and engagement, and understand their students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, experienced teachers are better equipped to design syllabi that consider their students' sociolinguistic needs.

*c. Highest Educational Attainment*

The results suggest that teachers with higher educational attainment levels have an advanced level of strategic competence. They have received more advanced training and education in teaching methods and pedagogy. This finding is consistent with previous studies exploring the relationship between teachers' strategic competence in language and their educational attainment. For example, Fithriani and Nurhayati (2018) investigated the case of teachers in Indonesia. They found a positive correlation suggesting that teachers with higher levels of education are more likely to possess greater strategic competence in English. Another study by Ma and Wang (2019) found that the strategic competence of Chinese teachers in English was positively correlated with their educational attainment. Thus, it positively impacted students' learning outcomes. This result is validated by Zhang and Zhang (2020), and Hua and Wei (2018) since they showed that teachers with higher educational attainment tend to have higher levels of strategic competence. Correspondingly, these studies share the same result in Iran, as reported by Salehi (2019). The results of the current study imply that investing in advanced training and education for teachers can help them enhance their strategic competence and ultimately improve student outcomes.

Furthermore, the results of the present study imply that teachers' overall language competence impacts their educational attainment. This suggests that teachers with higher educational attainment have an advanced level of overall language competence. This finding remains consistent with similar studies that were previously conducted. For instance, the results of the study by Tang (2019) indicate that teachers with higher educational attainment have high levels of language competence. Similarly, Cheng and Wang (2018) found that teachers' overall language competence and educational attainment significantly and positively affect student language achievement. This is supported by Li and Li (2016), who reported the same results, wherein teachers' educational attainment impacts their overall language competence, which positively influences their teaching efficacy. Also, according to Kay and Singh (2019), teachers with higher education levels are likely to have better overall language competence, making them more effective in teaching their subject matter to students. Another example is the study by Gao and Zhang (2016); the findings of their study suggest that teachers with higher educational attainment tend to have better language competence, particularly in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In addition, Wang and Chen (2016) also found that teachers with higher levels of education had better sociolinguistic competence than those with lower levels of education. Moreover, Li and Hu (2017) examined Chinese teachers' language competence and found that those with higher levels of education tend to have better language competence in all aspects of the language, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This was further validated by Jiao and Zhang (2021), who found that teachers with higher educational attainment tend to have better language proficiency, particularly in writing skills. However, many sources provide a range of perspectives on the relationship between teachers' language competence and educational attainment. Some argue that language competence is more important than educational attainment for the effective teaching of non-native speakers, while other studies suggest that higher educational attainment may lead to better language competence and, ultimately, better teaching outcomes. Undeniably, it appears that a combination of language competence and educational attainment is vital for effective teaching.

In general, the study's results suggest that teachers' overall language competence significantly impacts their educational attainment. This finding remains consistent with other studies, which imply that teachers' educational attainment and overall language competence are positively related and significantly impact student learning outcomes and teaching efficacy. Though contrasting perspectives are presented, language competence and educational attainment are essential for effective teaching. Furthermore, the relationship between teachers' strategic competence in language and their educational attainment has been explored in various studies. The current study's findings suggest that teachers' strategic competence in language is positively associated with their educational attainment, and this competence positively impacts students' language learning outcomes.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that basic education teachers have a basic level of overall language competence, which is attributed to factors such as insufficient knowledge of grammatical rules, workload, lack of awareness about the social rules in language, lack of seminars and training for professional development, use of code-switching, weak foundation in sensitivity, culture, behavior, and non-verbal communication, and anxiety in using English. Furthermore, teachers who specialize in English and those with higher educational attainment have an advanced level of overall language competence, while teachers with longer years of teaching experience and those with higher educational attainment have an advanced level of sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence, respectively. This implies that teachers who

do not specialize in English, who are new to the teaching profession, and those holding a bachelor's degree must undergo more training, seminars, and symposia to enhance their language competence. Hence, there is a need to propose and implement a differentiated developmental program.

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