

# A MODEL ON COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: ITS APPLICATION TO CULTURAL SENSITIVITY OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to develop a model of communicative competence and examine its relationship with cultural sensitivity among kindergarten teachers in the Division of Cotabato. Grounded in the framework of communicative competence, the study employed a mixed-methods design consisting of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from 300 kindergarten teachers through survey questionnaires and from 30 participants through in-depth interviews. Findings revealed that communicative competence is composed of four major dimensions: instructional communication support strategies, discourse organization and coherence skills, politeness and sociolinguistic competence, and written and multimodal clarity skills. The results further indicated that teachers demonstrated high levels of both communicative competence and cultural sensitivity. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant relationship between communicative competence and cultural sensitivity, suggesting that effective communication enhances teachers' ability to respond to cultural diversity. Qualitative findings supported these results by highlighting teachers' adaptive communication practices and culturally responsive strategies. The study concludes that communicative competence is a critical factor influencing cultural sensitivity in early childhood education and recommends strengthening teacher training programs to enhance both constructs.*

**Keyword:** *communicative competence, kindergarten teachers, cultural sensitivity*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental component of teaching and learning, particularly in early childhood education where language serves as the primary medium for instruction, interaction, and socialization. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learning through effective communication, enabling learners to understand concepts, express ideas, and develop foundational literacy skills. Communicative competence, as conceptualized by Canale and Swain (1980), extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies that enable individuals to use language effectively in various contexts. This multidimensional framework emphasizes that communication is both a cognitive and social process, requiring adaptability, clarity, and cultural awareness.

In contemporary educational settings, particularly in culturally diverse regions such as Cotabato, teachers must also demonstrate cultural

sensitivity in their communication practices. Cultural sensitivity involves awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable educators to interact effectively with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2018; Banks, 2015). Teachers who are culturally sensitive are better able to create inclusive learning environments, foster positive relationships, and support students' academic and social development. Research has shown that culturally responsive teaching enhances student engagement and achievement by aligning instructional practices with learners' cultural contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Despite the recognized importance of communicative competence and cultural sensitivity, limited research has explored the relationship between these constructs among kindergarten teachers, particularly in the Philippine context. Previous studies have focused primarily on higher education or general teaching populations, leaving a gap in understanding how these competencies manifest in early childhood

education. Kindergarten teachers face unique challenges, as they must communicate effectively with young learners who are still developing language skills while also addressing diverse cultural backgrounds.

This study seeks to address this gap by developing a contextualized model of communicative competence among kindergarten teachers in the Division of Cotabato and examining its relationship with cultural sensitivity. By integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication and cultural awareness intersect in early childhood education. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of teacher training programs and educational policies that promote effective and inclusive teaching practices.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to explore the constructs of communicative competence and their relationship with cultural sensitivity among kindergarten teachers. The research was conducted in three phases: model development, correlational analysis, and qualitative inquiry. The quantitative component utilized a cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for examining relationships among variables at a single point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative component employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of teachers and provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants of the study consisted of 300 kindergarten teachers from the three congressional districts of Cotabato Province. These participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across districts. For the qualitative phase, 30 teachers were selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria, including teaching experience and current employment status. This sampling approach ensured that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to the study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire measured communicative competence and cultural

sensitivity using Likert-scale items. It underwent validation by experts and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha to ensure accuracy and consistency. The interview guide was designed to explore teachers' experiences, communication strategies, and perceptions of cultural sensitivity in the classroom.

Data analysis involved multiple statistical and qualitative techniques. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were used to identify and validate the dimensions of communicative competence. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were conducted to examine the relationship between communicative competence and cultural sensitivity (Fraenkel et al., 2021). Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and identifying themes that represent participants' experiences.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The study also ensured voluntary participation and minimized potential risks to participants. Cultural sensitivity was maintained in all interactions, reflecting the diverse context of the research setting.

## 3. RESULTS

The findings of the study revealed that communicative competence among kindergarten teachers is a multidimensional construct composed of four key factors: instructional communication support strategies, discourse organization and coherence skills, politeness and sociolinguistic competence, and written and multimodal clarity skills. Factor analysis demonstrated strong loadings for most items, indicating that the identified factors effectively represent the construct of communicative competence. These results support the theoretical framework of communicative competence, which emphasizes the integration of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The level of communicative competence among teachers was found to be consistently high across all dimensions. Teachers demonstrated strong abilities in adapting their communication strategies, organizing discourse, using polite and culturally appropriate language, and integrating multimodal elements such as visuals and gestures.

These findings suggest that teachers are well-equipped to facilitate effective communication in early childhood classrooms.

Similarly, the study found that teachers exhibited high levels of cultural sensitivity, particularly in terms of cultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers showed an understanding of their own cultural backgrounds and demonstrated respect for the cultural diversity of their students. This aligns with previous research indicating that culturally responsive teaching enhances inclusivity and student engagement (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2021).

Statistical analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between communicative competence and cultural sensitivity. Regression analysis further indicated that communicative competence significantly predicts cultural sensitivity, suggesting that teachers who are effective communicators are more likely to be culturally responsive. This finding highlights the interconnectedness of communication and cultural awareness in educational settings.

The qualitative findings provided further support for the quantitative results. Teachers reported using various strategies to overcome communication barriers, including simplifying language, using visual aids, and incorporating students' cultural contexts into lessons. They emphasized the importance of empathy, respect, and adaptability in communication, which are essential components of both communicative competence and cultural sensitivity.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the importance of communicative competence as a critical factor in effective teaching, particularly in culturally diverse early childhood settings. The identification of four key dimensions of communicative competence reflects the complexity of communication in educational contexts. These dimensions align with existing theoretical frameworks and highlight the need for teachers to integrate multiple skills in their communication practices.

The high level of instructional communication support strategies observed in this study indicates that teachers are adept at adapting their language and instructional approaches to meet the needs of young learners. This finding is consistent with

research emphasizing the importance of scaffolding and multimodal instruction in early childhood education (Mayer & Moreno, 2020; Cabell et al., 2021). By using visual aids, repetition, and simplified language, teachers enhance students' comprehension and engagement.

Discourse organization and coherence skills were also found to be highly developed among teachers. The ability to structure lessons logically and present ideas clearly is essential for effective teaching, as it helps students understand and retain information (Howe & Mercer, 2021). This finding highlights the importance of clear and organized communication in facilitating learning.

Politeness and sociolinguistic competence emerged as the strongest dimension, reflecting teachers' ability to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. This is particularly important in culturally diverse classrooms, where respectful and inclusive communication fosters positive relationships and supports student development (Denham et al., 2020). Teachers' use of polite language and sensitivity to cultural differences contributes to a supportive learning environment.

The significant relationship between communicative competence and cultural sensitivity suggests that effective communication enhances teachers' ability to respond to cultural diversity. This finding supports the notion that communication and culture are closely intertwined, and that teachers must develop both competencies to be effective educators (Banks, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

However, the study also identified limitations in the model fit, indicating that further refinement is needed. Future research should explore additional factors and improve measurement tools to enhance the validity of the model. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the role of communicative competence in promoting culturally responsive teaching.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that communicative competence is a multidimensional construct that significantly influences cultural sensitivity among kindergarten teachers. The findings highlight the importance of effective communication in fostering inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. By developing a

contextualized model of communicative competence, the study contributes to the understanding of how communication skills can be enhanced to support early childhood education.

The results suggest that teacher training programs should focus on developing both communicative competence and cultural sensitivity. By integrating these competencies, educators can improve instructional quality and support the diverse needs of learners. Future research should continue to explore these constructs in different contexts to further validate and refine the proposed model.

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