COMMUNICATIVE ADAPTABILITY: A MEASURE OF SOCIAL INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF EFL LEARNERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

This study is a quantitative research which aims to assess the validity of one of the aspects of the intercultural communicative competence of the foreign Medicine students in the Philippines which is Communicative Adaptability. Using the Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS) propelled by Robert L. Duran (2009), the administration of this test is to investigate their level of communicative adaptability in the inclusion of six dimensions: social confirmation, social experience, social composure, articulation, wit, and appropriate disclosure. The Communicative Adaptability Scale was administered to 54 foreign Medicine students. The relationships among the levels of their dimensions of the CAS self-esteem, and communication apprehension were examined. Results revealed that a program intervention must be employed and a functional foreign affairs office (ICC center) must be established to address the needs of the foreign students.

Keywords: Communicative Adaptability, Communicative Competence, Intercultural Communicative Competence, EFL Learners

INTRODUCTION

Communicative Adaptability in a learning environment is indeed an indispensable skill that every EFL learner must acquire. It is the ability of an individual to be flexible and have the ability to adapt to changing learning conditions with diverse learners belonging to diverse cultures. It is an important aspect of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), a developing avenue of concern. This hermeneutic approach towards intercultural competence is loading much empirical response specifically to the medical health care practice where communicative adaptability, a construct of intercultural communicative competence, is a valuable tenet. On the other hand, communicative competence which is a strong factor to determine the level of ICC has been related to communication apprehension (Spott, 2011), self-esteem (Sung Hee, 2010), communication effectiveness (Ang, 2013), and perceptions of attractiveness (Spitzberg, 2013). Relative to Communicative competence which is a capture of one's

ability to acculturate to divergent social phenomena and constraints, Communicative Adaptability was created to accommodate the conceptualization of communicative competence. Communicative adaptability is proposed by Duran (1983) as the ability to perceive socio-interpersonal relationship and adapt one's interaction goals and behaviors accordingly. The salient aspects of communicative adaptability are: 1) The requirement of both cognitive (ability to perceive) and behavioral (ability to adapt) skills; 2) Adaptation not only of behaviors but also interaction goals; 3) The ability to perceive and adapt to the requirements posed by different communication contexts; and 4) The assumption that perceptions of communicative competence reside in the dyad. It has been advanced to extend the content validity (Kerlinger, 1973; Carmines & Zeller, 1979) of the communicative adaptability construct. Initially the dimensional structure is expanded from its present two dimensions of social experience and social confirmation. Expert surveys, as suggested by Kerlinger (1973), were conducted and content analysis revealed four additional dimensions: social composure, wit, appropriate disclosure, and articulation. This additions furthered this study seeking to re-examine the construct validity (Kerlinger, 1973; Carmines & Zeller, 1979) of a measure of communicative adaptability.

Therefore, the dimensions of communicative adaptability are investigated as to their relationships with communication apprehension and self-esteem. Social Composure Competence researchers have suggested communication apprehension (Chen, 2010) may be the inverse of communicative competence (Al-Tamimi, 2014). Previous research has demonstrated a relationship between measures of communicative competence and communication apprehension (Chen, 2010), Several competence constructs have included dimensions measuring communication tension Gumus (2014) and (Sager, et.al, 2013). Included in Meyers, et.al (2009) dimensions of communicative competence is poise and social anxiety (Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010). Included in Ustuner (2014) and Chen (2010) as part of communicative competence is social relaxation. Ustuner found social relaxation was positively related to communication effectiveness. In health care settings, social relaxation was identified as one dependent measure of communicative competence (Ling and Wang 2013). Chen and Starosta (1999) included the exigency of social relaxation in intercultural dealings. Further, the communicator style construct (Norton, 1978) includes the dimension of relaxation. A relaxed communicator is described as calm, collected, and lacking nervous mannerisms. Social composure in this study refers to a calm, relaxed communicator who experiences little communication anxiety in social situations. Wiemann (1977) stated the competent communicator ", , . does not provoke anxiety in others by exhibiting anxiety in him/herself" (p. 197). Moreover, Cuesta-Briand (2014) concretized that the main agent of Medical Professionalism competence is being a good communicator. Therefore, the socially composed communicator serves to decrease tension and fosters respect within a communication encounter.

In the study conducted by Rossignol (2015) on the relationship of Patient-Family Centered Care (PFCC) training and communicative adaptability which was tested correlationally stated that many Medicine schools curricula in the United States consider PFCC training as an important component. Rosignol (2015) recommended Communicative Adaptability to be used as a tool to determine communication skills acquired by medical students. The study proved that there was a positive correlation on the social experience, wit and social confirmation form part of communicative adaptability since its

purpose is to determine skills acquired by Medical students to be ready for immersion in health care endeavours.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In view of the foregoing, this study aimed to identify the level of Communicative Adaptabilty of foreign students at Cagayan State University, Philippines.

Specifically, it attempted to answer the following questions: 1.What are the dimensions of communicative adaptability tested to the foreign student-respondents? 2. What are their level of communicative adaptability along these dimensions? 3. What is their over-all level of communicative adaptability? 4. What is the impact of communicative adaptability in their as students in a foreign land ?

5. What interventions and programs can be recommended to address their issues on communicative adaptability?

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE ADAPTABILITY

Social Experience

Social Experience litigates affect for and participation in varied social settings. Besnier (1990) proved that recent development in anthropological understanding both of emotional life and of the relationship between language and social context have caused many assumptions underlying of structure-oriented linguistic positions on affect to be seen as problematic. Affect and indulgence play a vital role in any language socialization. In this case it is empathy that is considered. Social affect starts within oneself but it is important to be participative on the other hand. It is also Sociolinguistically emotive of how one react accordingly in every social situation.

Yet, since the role of communication has increased in the modern society due to growth and expansion of interpersonal and intercultural relationships, Burganova and Valeev (2015) professed that one must be adaptable when one must take part in communication situations in professional activities with core competencies particularly on communication skills, the ability to rapidly integrate into the production team, willingness to adapt to new working conditions and regulate the relations between people in the process of joint activities. Burganova and Valeev (2014) revealed the essence of the basic characterisitcs of communicative competence and Jo (2014) pointed this out even in informal communication situations such as social networks.

Bartels et. al (2010) recommends that organizational managers, school administrators, for example, should find ways to foster unobstrusive control of organization to rhetorical environment so as to litigate apprehension in aid of proper disclosure. Vidnere (2014), on the other hand, suggests social experience should be innovative and quality so that communication exposure is worthy.

Social Confirmation

Social Confirmation taps maintenance of the other's projected social image. Respect toward others is evaluated in this avenue. Proper disclosure or revelation of oneself must be discrete. When one is deniable to confide his/ her personality one must be treated properly. It means that never ridicule people or undress ones personality if the person is not open to it.

Duran (2009) re-assessed communicative competence and found out that social confirmation as an important factor is to be considered to be socially competent. Vidnere (2014), Kovaleva, et.al (2015), Turkonova, et.al (2014), Ganieva (2014) and Shaidullina (2015) professed that the ability in social confirmation is a quality promoter of professional innovative activities.

Social Composure

Social Composure measures the degree to which one feels relaxed in social situations. Tension is one barrier to composure. This means the stuttering and stammering of a person when caught in the midst of a communication. Improper posture when dealing with audience is also one manifestation that a person is not confident. These types of people could hardly mix well or acculturate with others in the society. Their social composure is sacrificed due to lack of self-esteem.

Broadening the scope of communicative competence not in in linguistic context as part of the constructs of ICC, Gruyter (2008) specifically named social composure to be a tenet. As a development of communicative competence into a wider range, Ribiere and Worasinchai (2013) recognized social composure as an innovation to Starosta and Chen's (2009) study on stress and tension in social relaxation towards ICC dealings. Spott (2011) utilized this category as one of her measures in communicative adaptability. Ustuner (2014), and Puggina (2014) concretized the claim of having this factor important in every aspect of communication.

Wit

Humor or wit is a variable that has received little attention in the competence literature. However, much psychological research has investigated the cognitive (Weirs, 2012). A good sense of humor has been implicated as a quality that contribute to psychological well-being (Cann, 2014). In positive psychology Edwards and Kim (2014) professed that humor has been identified as one of 24 character strengths considered ubiquitously important for human flourishing. Psychological (Steenberg and Hommel, 2013) processes involved in the perception and creation of humor. Pedagogical studies on humor in classrooms (Davenport, 2015) endorses the idea of comprehensive study in this parlance. This points out that humor is an important tenet particularly its application to social settings. Further, the role of humor as it contributes to communicative adaptability is concretized. One area of research within the humor literature deals with disparagement of self and others (Janes and Olsen, 2010), and mitigation of

embarrassment (Sager, 2015). Self-disparagement is viewed as a means of recognizing and illuminating one's own weaknesses (Priego-Valverde, 2002). Self-disparagement in regards to embarrassing situations is a means of retaining one's composure and saving face (Barnes, 2012). Self disparagement can be viewed as a means of reducing real or potential anxiety created by a self-induced faux pas. The use of humor to mitigate the aggressive actions of others is a subtle and face-saving means of decreasing tension (Andeweg, et.al. 2011). The primary function of humor within the communicative adaptability construct is to diffuse anxiety and tension. Humor as a response to incongruity, embarrassment, or aggression serves to reduce the arousal of individuals in social situations. Anxiety is an aversive state which can lead to communication avoidance. Behaviors which contribute to the reduction of such anxiety should be perceived positively thus leading to greater perceptions of satisfaction within the communication encounter.

Appropriate Disclosure

Research indicates self-disclosure is related to perceptions of liking (Sprecher, 2012), attraction (Wright, 2012) and intimacy (Sheldon, 2013). However, inappropriate self-disclosure (high disclosure to a stranger) is perceived as maladjusted (Valkenberg, et.al 2012). Therefore, self-disclosure in and of itself does not generate perceptions of liking, attraction, and intimacy but rather appropriate reciprocal disclosure leads to these perceptions. Recognition of the appropriateness of disclosure has been termed self-disclosure flexibility (Puluckaite, 2015). Puluckaite (2015) found high disclosure flexibility reflected greater perceptual awareness of social-situational norms operating in disclosive interactions. Further, individuals who vary the intimacy of their disclosures were more aware of cues indicating the appropriateness of their messages. Several researchers have included self-disclosure or openness as a dimension of communication competence (Panggabean, et.al. 2013; Tang, 2013). Likewise, Chand (2013), Chodzkiene (2014) and Zhang (2015) recognized self-disclosure and openness as part of ICC constructs. However, little attention has been given to the notion of appropriateness or flexibility and self-disclosure. Communicative competence requires one to be adaptable to differing social situations (Zhang, 2015). Such adaptation is also necessary with one's self-disclosure. As a result, this study proposes appropriate disclosure as a dimension of communicative adaptability.

This dimension is important to gain because it means students have become more sensitive to the level of intimacy that the other person is seeking to offer for more information (Rossignol, 2015).

Articulation

The speech language pathology literature categorizes the communication process in four major areas: articulation, fluency, syntax, and symbolization. Caire (2013) stated, "Oral and written language involves four linguistic systems, each of which contributes to the development of acceptable words, phrases, and sentences; phonological (sound features), semantic (meaning), syntactic (word order), and morphologic (tense, person, number, age)". Articulation deals with the manner in which speech sounds are perceived and produced (Martinez, 2015). Proper articulation is important because it signals that

words with different speech sounds convey different meanings (Lindsay, 2012). Iedema and Manidis (2013) claimed articulation is as important as the other factors in communicative adaptability in that it was even included policy literatures and researches in Australian Commission in Safety and Quality in Health Care. This overview reiterated the importance of patient-clinician communication. How clinicians must be responsible in their patients in cognizance to health care services was included in the overview.

The preceding areas have focused upon the generation of a single message unit such as a sentence or phrase. Another consideration is the organization of multiple message units or thoughts. The difference is analogous to studying a sentence as opposed to a paragraph. The competent communicator must be concerned with the proper construction of her/his messages at both the micro (unitary message unit) and macro (multiple message units) levels. The articulation dimension consists of: correct pronunciation, fluent speech, proper grammatical construction of sentences, appropriate word choices, and clear organization of ideas. Articulation contributes to the communicative adaptability construct by increasing fidelity of message exchange. A speaker who is dysfluent, unorganized, or uses inappropriate words serves to distract attention from the content of his/her messages. Primarily, articulation increases the accuracy of the other's perceptions of the content of messages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a quantitative method of research. It utilized the Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS) by Duran, a standardized scale which has six dimensions namely: social experience, social confirmation, social composure, appropriate disclosure, wit and articulation. The respondents answered each category using likert scale. Weighted mean was elicited along the different dimensions. CAS was administered to 54 foreign students enrolled in the College Medicine, Cagayan State University, Philippines. These foreign student-respondents came from diverse cultures particularly in the countries: Nigeria, Ghana, India, Malaysia, and Zimbabwe.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to determine the level of communicative adaptability of the foreign student-respondents, Likert scale was used and classified their level in six (6) dimensions. The weighted mean of each category was computed and finally the total weighted mean of the six (6) dimensions.

Table 1. Communicative Adaptability of the Foreign Students.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
Social Experience		
comAda1	4.09	High Adaptability
comAda6	2.65	Average Adaptability

comAda20	4.18	High Adaptability
comAda24	2.41	Low Adaptability
comAda25	4.47	Very High Adaptability
Category Mean	**3.56**	**High Adaptability**
Social Composure		
comAda4	2.56	Low Adaptability
comAda10	2.85	Average Adaptability
comAda13	4.32	High Adaptability
comAda16	3.21	Average Adaptability
Category Mean	**3.23**	**Average Adaptability**
Appropriate Disclosure		
comAda9	3.5	High Adaptability
comAda11	2.24	Low Adaptability
comAda17	3.97	High Adaptability
comAda19	4.35	Very High Adaptability
comAda22	2.47	Low Adaptability
Category Mean	**3.31**	**Average Adaptability**
Wit		
comAda5	3.47	High Adaptability
comAda8	2.32	Low Adaptability
comAda12	3.97	High Adaptability
comAda18	3.71	High Adaptability
Category Mean	**3.37**	**Average Adaptability**
Articulation		
comAda3	2.94	Average Adaptability
comAda7	3.7	High Adaptability
comAda14	3.59	High Adaptability
comAda21	2.5	Low Adaptability
Category Mean	**3.18**	**Average Adaptability**
Social Confirmation		
comAda2	4.03	High Adaptability
comAda15	2.32	Low Adaptability
comAda23	3.91	High Adaptability
Category Mean	**3.42**	**High Adaptability**
Overall Weighted Mean	*3.35*	*Average Adaptability*

Legend:
1.00 – 1.79   Very Low Adaptability
1.80 – 2.59   Low Adaptability
2.60 – 3.39   Average Adaptability

3.40 – 4.19   High Adaptability
4.20 – 5.00   Very High adaptability

Table 1 shows the Level of Adaptability of the 35 foreign student-respondents enrolled in CSU College of Medicine in six (6) dimensions: (1) social experience, (2) social confirmation, (3) social composure, (4) appropriate disclosure, (5) articulation and (6) wit. This includes the indicators of which each item was categorized, weighted mean and description of the weighted mean.

Table 2.   Dimensions with Participants' Very High Adaptability Level

ADAPTABILITY DIMENSION	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF ADAPTABILITY
Appropriate Disclosure	While I am talking, I think about how the other person feels	Very High Adaptability
Social Experience	I try to make the other person feel good	Very High Adaptability

Table 2 shows the dimensions where the participants in this study garnered Very High adaptability. Result shows that the participants were exponentially very highly adaptive in appropriate disclosure and social experience particularly on comAda nos.19 and 25. The participants claimed that they are very highly adaptable about how other people think when they talk and how they make other people feel good.

Table 3. Dimensions with Participants' High Adaptability Level

ADAPTABILITY DIMENSION	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF ADAPTABILITY
Appropriate Disclosure	I know how appropriate my self-disclosures are	High Adaptability
Appropriate Disclosure	I enjoy socializing with various groups of people	High Adaptability
Articulation	I am aware of how intimate disclosures are	High Adaptability
Social Composure	I am relaxed when talking with others	High Adaptability
Social Confirmation	I try to make the other person feel important	High Adaptability

Social Confirmation	I am verbally and nonverbally supportive of other people	High Adaptability
Social Experience	I like to be active in different social groups	High Adaptability
Social Experience	I enjoy meeting new people	High Adaptability
Wit	I find it easy to get along with new people	High Adaptability
Wit	I try to be warm when communicating with another	High Adaptability
Wit	I am aware of how intimate the disclosures are to me	High Adaptability

Table 3 shows the high adaptability level of participants in the different categories with specific comAda items. For appropriate disclosure, they are highly adaptable in their knowledge of how appropriate disclosures are and enjoy socializing with various groups of people. Participants have high adaptability in their awareness of how important intimate disclosures are which lies under articulation. They claim that they have high adaptability in their relaxation when dealing with others which forms part of social composure. In social confirmation, participants claim that they have high adaptability in making other people feel important and verbally and nonverbally supportive of their co-interlocutors. In social experience they love to be active in different social groups and enjoy meeting other people. Lastly in humor/ wit, they claimed that they have high measures on getting along easily with new people, trying to be warm when communicating with another, and knowing how intimate disclosures are to them as interlocutors.

Table 4. Dimensions with Participants' Average Adaptability Level

ADAPTABILITY DIMENSION	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF ADAPTABILITY
Articulation	In most social situations, I feel tense and constrained	Average Adaptability
Social Composure	When I embarrass myself, I often make a joke about it	Average Adaptability
Social Composure	When I self-disclose, I know that I am revealing	Average Adaptability

Social Experience	I often make jokes when in tense situations	Average Adaptability

Table 4 reveals the average adaptability of the participants in the following areas/ ComAdas. In articulation, they feel tense and constrained in most social situations, they often make jokes when embarrassed and they know they are revealing when they self-disclose (social composure) and they often make jokes in tense situations (social experience).

Table 5. Dimensions with Participants' Low Adaptability

ADAPTABILITY DIMENSION	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF ADAPTABILITY
Appropriate Disclosure	My voice sounds nervous when I talk with others	Low Adaptability
Appropriate Disclosure	People think I am witty	Low Adaptability
Articulation	I do not "mix" well at social functions	Low Adaptability
Social Composure	When I am anxious, I often make jokes	Low Adaptability
Social Confirmation	When someone makes a negative comment about me, I respond with a witty comeback	Low Adaptability
Social Experience	When talking, my posture seems awkward and tense	Low Adaptability
Wit	I feel nervous in social situations	Low Adaptability

Table 5 shows where the participants have low adaptability which must be given careful attention. Appropriate disclosure reveal they are need reinforcement as they claimed that their voice sounds nervous when they talk with others and people think they are witty which in contrast they are not because they have low adaptability in this component. Participants even claimed that they have low adaptability in articulation particularly how they mix in other social functions. They often make jokes when they are anxious (social composure). When someone makes a negative comment about them, they don't respond with a witty comeback (social confirmation) and when they talk, their posture seems awkward and tense (social experience). In social situations, they feel nervous (wit).

Table 6. Foreign Students' Adaptability Along Awareness, Attribute and Ability On The Basis of Six (6) Dimensions

DIMENSION	HIGH ADAPTABILITY	LOW ADAPTABILITY
APPROPRIATE DISCLOSURE	I know how appropriate my self-disclosures are	My voice sounds nervous when I talk with others
	I enjoy socializing with various groups of people	People think I am witty
	While I am talking, I think about how the other person feels (very high)	
ARTICULATION	I am aware of how intimate disclosures are	I do not "mix" well at social functions
SOCIAL COMPOSURE	I am relaxed when talking with others	When I am anxious, I often make jokes
SOCIAL CONFIRMATION	I try to make the other person feel important	When someone makes a negative comment about me, I respond with a witty comeback
	I am verbally and nonverbally supportive of other people	
SOCIAL EXPERIENCE	I like to be active in different social groups	When talking, my posture seems awkward and tense
	I enjoy meeting new people	
	I try to make the other person feel good (very high)	
WIT	I find it easy to get along with new people	I feel nervous in social situations
	I try to be warm when communicating with another	
	I am aware of how intimate the disclosures are to me	

Table 6 reveals where the foreign student-respondents are high and low in their level of adaptability. Two comAdas where they garnered very high adaptability were included in the table including their high and low ComAdas.

Participants claimed that they are highly adaptable in the following measures in Table 7.

Table 7. High Level of Adaptability Along Awareness, Attribute and Ability

Level	Description
Awareness	Know how appropriate disclosures
	Know how others feel when they talk
	Aware of how intimate disclosures are
Attribute	Enjoy socializing
	Make others feel important
	Like to be active in social groups
	Enjoy meeting new people
	Warm when communicating
Ability	Relax when talking to others
	Verbally and nonverbally supportive of others
	Easy to get along

However, the participants display low adaptability in the following areas:

Table 8. Low Level of Adaptability Along Awareness, Attribute and Ability

Level	Description
Awareness	People think they are not witty
	When they are anxious, they do not make jokes
Attribute	When someone makes a negative comment about them, they don't respond with a witty comeback
	They do not mix well at social functions
Ability	Their voice sounds nervous when they communicate
	People think they are not witty
	They do not mix well at social functions
	When they are anxious, they do not make jokes

When someone makes a negative comment about them, they do not respond with a witty comeback
When talking, their posture seems awkward and tense

Table 8 displays low level adaptability along awareness, attribute and ability. In terms of awareness, the respondents are low in terms of adapting wherein people see them as not witty and when they are anxious, they do not make jokes. As to their attribute, they likewise display a low adaptability when someone makes a negative comment about them, they don't respond with a witty comeback. In their ability, results show that the respondents' voice sounds nervous when they communicate, people think they are not witty, they do not mix well at social functions, they do not make jokes when they are anxious, they do not respond with a witty comeback when someone makes a negative comment about then and their posture seems awkward and tense when talking.

Graph 1   Level of Adaptability in six (6) Dimensions

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6
Series 1	3.56	3.23	3.31	3.37	3.18	3.42
Level:	High	Ave.	Ave.	Ave.	Ave.	High

Legend:	
Category 1	Social Experience
Category 2	Social Composure
Category 3	Appropriate Display
Category 4	Wit
Category 5	Articulation
Category 6	Social Confirmation
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.35** *(Average Adaptability)*

The graph shows the level of adaptability of the participants in every dimension. Result show that they have high adaptability in Category 1 Social Experience and Category 6 Social Confirmation. On the other hand, Categories 2, 3, 4 and 5 reveals that they are fairly adaptable in Social Composure, Appropriate Display, Wit and Articulation.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants obtained average adaptability in Duran's Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS). The categories where they obtained high adaptability was as remarkable and equally important; the low measures of adaptability is likewise significant. Being a Medical practitioner plays a very big role in the society and adaptability competence is highly recommendable. The average adaptability level of the participants require development in the field and overseeing the factors for improvement must be endorsed. While it is opined to note that the low level adaptability of an individual may be associated with either lack of opportunity and not always incompetence neither do high level adaptability can be charged only to competence but also opportunity. There is almost always interrelatedness in all factors in the measure of communicative adaptability. Quantitatively true, that the participants have excelled in other aspects of communicative adaptability, it is necessary to give attention to the participants low competence. To address both the need to reinforce and the need to sustain, both aspects of their high and low adaptability is recommended. Thus, these aspects of communicative adaptability must be considered in the intervention program and an Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) center in the possible conceptualization of a functional Foreign Affairs Office to cater to the needs of the foreign students.

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