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## Prospective Teachers Level of Communication Apprehension

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the oral communication (CA) levels of prospective teachers studying in the Teacher Education Centers of Kerala state in south India. The personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) to measure the level of CA of 215 trainee teachers from three subject streams: Language education, Science education, and social science education. Data were evaluated using percentage analysis, and ANOVA and Sheffe's post-hoc analysis. The results indicated that only 5 per cent of trainee teacher were free of communication apprehension and the trainees from science education showed higher apprehension than those in the other two streams. The study concluded that teacher educators should take greater care to reduce the communication apprehension of future teachers.

**Keywords:** Communication; Communication competence; Communication apprehension; Prospective teachers.

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## **1. Introduction**

Over recent decades there has been a growing tendency on the part of the academicians to promote higher communication efficiency among students and teachers to face the challenges of the teaching/ learning process because learning cannot occur without communication, which is the essence of learning. Communication is a process of sharing experience [1] and it places people in a shared situation that leads to acquisition of knowledge [2]. Communication plays a very crucial role not only in classroom processes but also in effective work performance. Research findings revealed that Communicative competence and career success are correlated each other [3,4].

One of the pressing concerns of those who are seeking to develop communication competence is communication apprehension. [5] Defined communication apprehension as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (p.78). An apprehensive person will usually exhibit ‘reticence’ [6] ‘unwillingness to communicate’ [7] and ‘avoidance and withdrawal’ [8].

Talking and writing are both forms of communication but generally people are more apprehensive about their oral communication and it is the most common form of apprehension. Oral communication apprehension can hamper person’s readiness and capability to communicate: the end result is that it can reduce the opportunity for communication skill development [9]. Students having oral communication apprehension often feel uncomfortable and unable to ask questions and raise doubts in class and they may ignore their doubts because of their fear of communication. [5] Suggested that a person who experience high level of CA will be perceived negatively by others in the environment so it will result in a negative impact on economic, academic, political and social lives. An extensive body of research has been conducted in the field of communication apprehension [10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15,16].

According to [17] “individuals with high Communication apprehension is more likely to avoid communication situations, and thus, is less likely to have sufficient opportunity, to improve their ability (39). A high level of CA will deter the individuals from interaction with the environment [18] The end result is that a person with communication apprehension has a tendency to withdraw from communication and thereby develop a negative attitude toward future success in both the academic and professional world[18].Research done on communication apprehension in the educational context [17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 15], has focused mainly on the oral communication apprehension of school- aged children. The purpose of this study was to extend our understanding of the level of oral communication apprehension among prospective teachers.

Throughout the world, educational reforms in the global scenario focus on various issues including standards, quality and teacher preparation [23]. In the opinion of [24] “one of the most critical variables in improving student learning is ensuring that students have high quality teachers” (p.81). The essence of the teaching/ learning process is communication and a teacher interacts everyday with students, teachers, heads, administrators and parents so his/her communication skills are of greater s the communication effectiveness of trainee teachers [25,26,27,28,]. [24] Describe three major functions of a teacher in the classroom: facilitation of

learning, class management and decision making. Teachers are responsible for helping their students to improve their communication skills and if they are apprehensive nothing will be achieved.

## **2. Research questions**

The purpose of conducting this study was to identify the oral communication apprehension of prospective teachers studying at various teacher education institutions in Kerala and the difference in apprehension with respect to subject streams. The following research questions were explored:

1. What are the oral communication levels of trainee teachers?
2. Is there any difference between the trainee teachers according to their subject specialisation (Science education, Social Science education and Language education)?

## **3. Method**

### ***3.1 Subjects***

The subjects were 215 trainee teachers studying for their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree in Kerala. The students were aged between 20 and 30 years, with a mean age of 25 years. There were 170 females and 45 males. The investigator selected students from three streams of study: Science, (Physical Science and Natural Science); Social Science (Economics, History, and Political Science); and language (English and Arabic). A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data.

### ***3.2 Instrument***

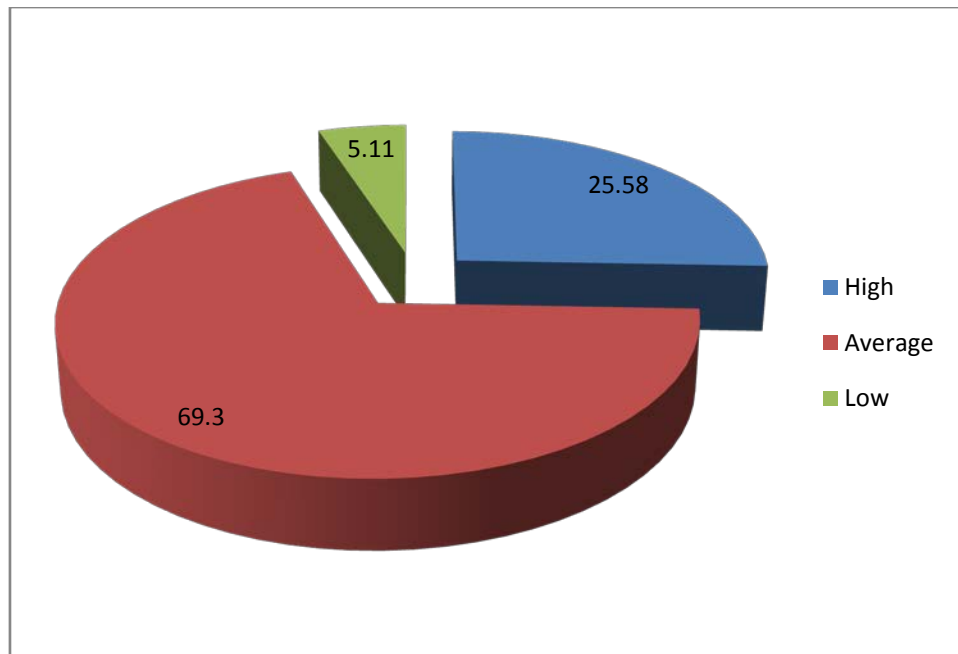
The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, or PRCA-24 [26], was used to measure the oral communication apprehension of trainee teachers. The scale assesses communication apprehension experienced by an individual during conversation, meeting, group discussion, and public speaking. It is a Likert-type 5-point scale, and the respondents indicated whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. According to [8] a score above 65 on the PRCA-24 indicates anxiety associated with communication. A person's overall score can be determined by summing responses across all four communication contexts (24 items).

### ***3.3 Data analysis***

The objective of this study was to assess the levels of communication apprehension of the trainee teachers studying in various B.Ed. Training Colleges of Kerala, the investigator utilized the survey method to collect data from the trainee teachers. Percentage analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA's) and Post-Hoc Comparisons of means (Scheffé tests) were used to investigate the difference between the three groups.

## **4. Results**

The level of communication apprehension of trainee teachers is shown in figure 1



**Figure 1: Level of communication apprehension of trainee teachers**

The pie chart clearly indicates the level of CA of trainee teachers. 25.58% of students having high CA, 69% of trainee are having moderate CA and 5% of trainees having low CA. Most of the trainee teachers have an average score that indicates that trainee teachers are apprehensive in their oral communication.

#### ***4.1 Research Question Two***

Which among the subject areas does significantly differ in their communication apprehension? To answer this the mean scores three subject areas viz., Language education, Science education, Social Science education were compared, by using one way ANOVA, and subsequently via, post hoc comparison with test of significance between means. For a summary view of trainee's communication apprehension viz., Language education, Science education, Social Science education, mean and standard deviation of scores of these subject streams are presented in Table 1.

#### ***4.2 Comparison of the Mean scores of Communication apprehension of trainee teachers based on Stream of study: Language education / Science education/ Social Science education***

Trainees from Language education, Science education, Social Science education streams were compared on their communication apprehension. For this comparison, the significance of difference between mean values of these groups was found out by calculating the F-ratio using ANOVA. The details are given in table 1.

**Table 1: Results of the Summary of ANOVA of communication apprehension Scores of trainee teachers based on their based on subject Stream**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F
Between groups	1010.78	2	505.39	
Within groups	29622.96	212	139.731	3.617*
Total	30633.74	214		

\*p<.05

The F ratio calculated, (F=3.617; P<0.05) was found to be greater than the table value 3.04 for degrees of freedom (2,212) at .05 level of significance. This reveals that there is significant difference in the mean communication apprehension scores of trainees studying in different subject streams at .05level of significance.

One-way ANOVA's indicated significant difference, between trainee teachers of different subject streams (e F = 3.617; p<0.05). A post – hoc comparisons of means (Scheffes tests) was performed to assess the scores of three groups and is given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Result of Scheffes' test of post-hoc comparison between the mean of communication apprehension of trainee teaches based on their subject stream**

Independent variable	Groups compared	Mean		SD		t	Level of significance
		M <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>		
Communication Apprehension	LE-SE	69.48	74.38	13.49	11.13	2.54	.05*
	LE-SSE	69.48	73.19	13.49	9.92	1.87	ns
	SE-SSE	74.38	73.19	11.13	9.92	0.57	ns

\* p<.05

(LE- Language education, SE- Science education, SSE- Social Science education)

Table 2 shows the result regarding the communication apprehension of three subject streams, viz., Language education (M= 69.48, SD= 13.19), Science education (M= 74.38, SD= 11.13), and Social Science education (M= 73.19, SD= 9.92). There is significant mean difference exists between Language education and Science education, t=2.54, p<.05. There is no significant mean difference exists between Language education and Social Science education, t = 1.87, p> .05 and for Social Science education and Science education, (t = 0.57, p> .05).

## **5. Discussion**

It is evident that a few trainees are free from communication apprehension. [8] stated that, “any score above 65 indicates that you are more generally apprehensive (scared) about communication than the average person” (p.44) and that indicates that students in the average score have oral communication apprehensions. So 95% of trainees are suffering from oral communication apprehension and that will leads to fear of communication and it will adversely affect the teaching competency of student teachers.

The findings suggest that majority of teacher trainees experience communication apprehension especially trainees of Science stream are more apprehensive when compared to other trainees. Future teacher’s oral communication will unfavorably affect the overall development of the students. The professional requirements of teaching demands effective interaction on the part of teachers so an apprehensive teacher may not perform up to the standards expected and he/she may put up their career due to over anxiety. [8] opined that “quiet people tend to choose occupation with low communication requirements and talkative people tend to choose occupation with higher communication requirements (p.63).

High or moderate CA will affect the effective transaction between the teacher and the learner. If the teacher is efficient in the sense that he/she should be active in the transaction process with their power of communication. A teacher is a role model before the community and he/she has the responsibility of raising children in a better way. If the teacher has good communication skill, they have a positive attitude towards their teaching profession [29].

The teacher educators have many options to deal with the trainee teacher’s in order to develop their communication skill. They can make the learning and teaching situation less stressful. The curriculum and the teacher training programs are mainly focusing on the written aspects and avoiding a total engagement of students in their communication activities. The provided practice teaching for one month is not sufficient for them to develop their communication skill. So the trainee teachers should provide more time for their practice teaching they could get out from the fear of communication. The teachers should create a student support system [30] and a non threatening environment [31] in the classroom. The teacher educators should be free to deal with the communication anxiety of student teacher. [31] Suggest one option for dealing with “CA is for the college or university to provide a special class section or workshop specifically designed for apprehensive students” (p.190) to reduce the trainee teachers communication apprehension because they are the responsible persons to mould their future generation to get out from communication apprehension. The paper concludes with the words of [28], encouraging a greater role for communication in teacher preparation seems a potent first step toward recognizing the inherent connections between the communication and education disciplines and toward helping students move ahead in their life long journeys towards improved communication skills.

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