

**COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: AN INITIAL ASSESSMENT IN STUDENT
TEACHERS**

**COMPETÊNCIA COMUNICATIVA: UMA AVALIAÇÃO INICIAL EM ESTUDANTES
DE FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORADO**

**COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA: UNA EVALUACIÓN INICIAL EN ESTUDIANTES
DE MAGISTERIO**



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ABSTRACT: This article aims to analyze the perceptions of communicative competence in the roles of sender and receiver among student teachers. A non-experimental descriptive-cross-sectional design was used, with a sample of 184 students selected through non-probabilistic sampling. A reliable instrument was administered to assess the achievements and limitations in the roles of receiver and sender through self-assessment of the subjects in the dimensions of linguistic and pragmatic sub-competencies. The results indicate that women perceive their communication skills slightly better. In some items, Elementary school students value better linguistic skills than students studying in the preschool series, and they are considered better receivers than senders. Further research and integrating communicative competence into teacher formation programs are suggested.

KEYWORDS: Competence. Communication. Teachers. Early childhood education. Primary education.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar as percepções sobre a competência comunicativa, nas funções de emissor e receptor, dos alunos docentes. Utilizou-se um delineamento descritivo-transversal não experimental com uma amostra de 184 estudantes selecionados por amostragem não probabilística. Um instrumento confiável foi aplicado para identificar as conquistas e limitações nas funções de receptor e emissor por meio da autoavaliação dos sujeitos nas dimensões de subcompetências linguísticas e pragmáticas. Os resultados indicam que as mulheres têm uma percepção um pouco melhor de suas habilidades de comunicação. Os alunos ensino fundamental valorizam, em alguns itens, melhores habilidades linguísticas do que os alunos que estudam na série infantil, além de serem considerados melhores receptores do que emissores. Sugere-se a necessidade de aprofundar a pesquisa e a integração da competência comunicativa nos programas de formação de professores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Competência. Comunicação. Professores. Educação infantil. Educação primária.

RESUMEN: Este trabajo se propone analizar las percepciones sobre la competencia comunicativa, en las funciones emisor y receptor, de los estudiantes de magisterio. Se usó un diseño no experimental de tipo descriptivo-transversal con una muestra de 184 estudiantes seleccionada mediante un muestreo no probabilístico. Se aplicó un instrumento confiable para identificar los logros y limitaciones en las funciones de receptor y emisor a través de la autovaloración de los sujetos en las dimensiones de las subcompetencias lingüística y pragmática. Los resultados indican que las mujeres tienen una ligera mejor percepción de sus habilidades comunicativas. Los alumnos del grado de maestro de primaria valoran en algunos ítems unas mejores competencias lingüísticas que los alumnos que cursan el grado de infantil, y se consideraren mejores receptores que emisores. Se sugiere la necesidad de profundizar en la investigación e integración de la competencia comunicativa en los programas de formación de maestro.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Competencia. Comunicación. Maestros. Educación infantil. Educación primaria.

Introduction

Many authors and researchers have conceptualized the term communication since antiquity. This concept has shifted from having a central focus on the source and the message to considering the receiver and meanings more; from being unidirectional to circular or spiral; from being static to process-oriented; from placing exclusive emphasis on information transmission to emphasizing interpretation and relationships; from a conceptual framework of oratory to one that considers different contexts such as individual, relational, group, organizational, intercultural, media, technological, and social contexts (DE LA UZ *et al.*, 2010). This evolution makes us consider that action and knowledge of society are conditioning the development of schools and education. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the training of professionals based on competence development, specifically communicative competence.

Hymes (1971, p. 5), defining coined the concept of communicative competence of skills and knowledge that enable speakers of a linguistic community to understand each other. In other words, it is the ability to interpret and appropriately use the social meaning of linguistic varieties in all circumstances about the functions and varieties of language and the cultural assumptions in the communication situation. In short, it refers to using a system of rules of social interaction.

In functional linguistic approaches, communicative competence is referred to as the ability to understand, produce, and interpret various communicative events, taking into account not only their explicit or literal meaning (what is said) but also the implications, the explicit or intentional meaning (what the sender wants to say or what the receiver wants to understand). The term refers to the social, cultural, and psychological rules that determine the particular use of language at a given moment. The expression was created to counter the notion of linguistic competence typical of generative grammar. According to the functional approach, linguistic competence alone is insufficient to convey a message correctly. Communicative competence is the ability of language users to negotiate, exchange, and interpret meanings with appropriate action. According to Beltrán (2004), communicative competence is the set of skills that enables appropriate participation in specific communicative situations. This author states that participating adequately in a communicative interaction consists of fulfilling the purposes of personal communication, that is, achieving what one wants or needs and doing so within what is socially reasonable (sense and coherence). Aguirre Raya (2005, p. 1, our translation) defines communicative competence "as the potential of individuals to relate adequately to others, expressed in three dimensions: affective-cognitive, communicative, and sociocultural."

Lomas (2015, p. 14, our translation) takes a position around the idea raised by the ethnography of communication, considering that being competent in a language goes beyond the knowledge of its grammatical code, stating that "it is not just about knowing how to construct grammatically correct utterances, but also about knowing how to use them in specific communication contexts and assessing whether they are socially appropriate or not."

Hymes' (1971) model of communicative competence, which includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and psycholinguistic competence, is still valid today, but it has been reduced from four sub-competencies to three. The Council of Europe (2002), in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), considers communicative competence to have three sub-competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competence. This structural model has also been adopted by Neira-Piñero, Sierra-Arizmendiarieta, and Pérez-Ferra (2018), Pérez-Ferra, Quijano-López, and García-Martínez (2019); Quijano-López, Pérez-Ferra, and García-Martínez (2017). This model is assumed for its validity and empirical verification in the latter research. These sub-competencies are acquired through people's involvement in familiar, educational, social, and institutional environments and can be improved if their importance is recognized and followed by a self-critical process of improvement.

Linguistic sub-competence is managing the system of articulated symbols that allows understanding between people, as supported by a prior social convention. It is related to the acquisition and development of language regarding spelling, punctuation, handwriting, vocabulary mastery, and morphological and syntactic correctness. Its mastery is fundamental in a university student and essential for integration into work (KONG, 2014).

Sociolinguistic sub-competence: the ability to adapt to context, paralinguistic features, kinesics, proxemics, and chronemics, come into play. Posture, gestures, gaze, facial expressions, hair, hands... All of these are communication devices through which we constantly say things, even if we are unaware. Kinesic competence is responsible for advising us on how to manage our bodies according to the context we find ourselves. Similarly, the body delimits certain areas of action that some can access and others cannot. Not everyone can touch our personal belongings or our body. We may not tolerate certain people being too close to us; on the other hand, we may request their proximity. The institutional life of an organization is another scenario to exemplify the experience of proxemics (POYATOS, 1993). Time falls within the domain of chronotics, understood as the management of communication in time, the production of meaning with and from the temporal coordinate. On many occasions, we create

problems not by what we say but by when we say it. Its mastery is paramount for education professionals, as words have significant meaning, but how they are expressed holds great relevance in communication and nonverbal language.

Pragmatic sub-competence: is the set of resources, strategies, and tactics we use to influence the decisions and opinions of others. In other words, it refers to organizing linguistic elements in discourse and how they are used. Pragmatics is a fundamental competence in education professionals, as every day, we need to make decisions, and we need the support of others for those decisions to be made. In short, it is the development of skills to convince, persuade, and influence the decisions, opinions, knowledge, attitudes, or preferences of others. Ultimately, our communication always seeks to achieve something from someone.

In reviewing the research conducted on communicative competence, it can be observed that at the national level, studies have been carried out on communicative competence about the lack of proficiency among university students in generating written texts based on their thinking (ESPAÑA, 2011; GUZMÁN-SIMÓN; GARCÍA-JIMÉNEZ, 2014).

In a study conducted at the University of Seville with first-year students in the Master's program in primary education, an initial diagnosis was made through a questionnaire to assess their level of communicative competence as senders and receivers (RODRÍGUEZ-GALLEGO, 2011). For this, a criterion of mastery of skills above 70% was considered. Thus, for the receiver with 15 items, those with 11 correct answers (73%) were considered good communicators, and for the sender with 16 items, those with 12 correct answers (75%) were considered good communicators. 51% of the evaluated individuals were considered good senders, and 49% were good receivers. Likewise, a matrix analysis was carried out, combining the competencies of good receivers with those of good senders. Individuals who met both criteria were qualified as good communicators. According to this, only 20 out of 210 students were prepared as good communicators (10%).

The study by Conchado and Carot (2013) shows that graduates consider their oral communicative competence deficient. In other words, the ability to present products, ideas, or reports in public is a weak point in their university studies. They also lack negotiation skills, closely linked to communicative competence, and they have little ability to write and speak in foreign languages. The research conducted by Mayoral, Timoneda, and Pérez (2013) with students in early childhood education and elementary education programs concluded that they do not adequately use the metacognitive processes necessary for reading comprehension. Constantly seeks to achieve something from someone.

Studies conducted at the University of Granada with future teachers (DOMINGO *et al.*, 2010; DOMINGO; GALLEGU-ORTEGA; RODRÍGUEZ-FUENTES, 2013) conclude that students have deficiencies in both oral and written communicative competence. This competence is not systematically addressed in their education program, although the teaching staff believes it should be promoted more in each discipline and the curriculum. They are aware that students do not possess adequate communicative competence to face the professional practice of teaching. In a subsequent study conducted at the same university, with students from the Faculty of Education Sciences, deficiencies were detected in metacognitive writing strategies. There were inadequacies in the knowledge and structural control of texts and insufficiencies in correction, production, and communication skills during meetings and tutorials (GALLEGU-ORTEGA; RODRÍGUEZ-FUENTES, 2014, 2015).

Internationally, authors such as Lukyanova, Daneykin, and Daneikinaa (2015) propose methodological recommendations for gradually including communicative practices to develop communicative competence in university programs. They suggest programs in the initial training stage where individuals can express thoughts clearly, feel confident during any communication, speak brilliantly, interestingly, and fascinatingly, control voice and expressive speech, have practical skills for public speaking, and know how to give presentations, lectures, debates, arguments, exams, and interviews. In the educational programs of the second training stage, competencies should be formulated based on effective work technologies with the public. These include sufficient knowledge of speech structure, effective use of technologies to convey content and deliver consistent presentations, knowledge of audience interests and the ability to speak their language, understanding of visual perception peculiarities, and techniques to respond to audience questions. In the third stage of training, skills should be acquired to obtain knowledge to identify and overcome communication barriers, methods and techniques for effective communication based on logic and psychology, and the ability to recognize aggressive, passive, and manipulative behavior styles to neutralize them successfully, and the ability to defend one's interests without conflicts.

According to Cortés Vásquez *et al.* (2019), the topic of communicative competence is closely linked to the use of technology, and this combination should be present in university training programs in a cross-cutting manner, as proposed by the Tecnológico de Monterrey with the Tec21 model. The use of professional networks such as LinkedIn to familiarize oneself with professional applications and understand the logic of these platforms so that individuals can establish employment connections and create business opportunities. Writing emails and letters

to provide students with communication strategies that enable them to effectively interact on these media with brevity, clarity, and cordiality.

The development of communicative competence should stimulate university students, who are protagonists of a new teaching and learning paradigm, to combine information, knowledge, and its production. For future teachers, communicative competence in university education is of great importance due to direct contact with people, as it involves transmitting messages and creating situations that facilitate learning (CASTELLÁ *et al.*, 2007). However, this competence is not addressed in all subjects of the degree or is addressed to a lesser extent. Therefore, education professionals must master this competence, along with interpersonal communication (effective use of linguistic and non-linguistic codes, register and linguistic style, etc.) and adapting discourse to the communicative situation and the level of understanding for learning and comprehension. Future education professionals must demonstrate mastery of communicative competence because "the teacher's discursive style can promote or hinder the construction of conceptual meanings in students" (MÓNACO, 2013, p. 209, our translation).

Any university student should be able to enter the world of work and acquire personal qualities such as communicative competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic) from their own culture and other cultures, along with the demands of professional qualifications (LUKYANOVAA *et al.*, 2015). In this context, there is a need to address the reality of training for professional teaching practice, supporting this research on the relevance of communicative competence by incorporating students' perspectives as subjects in formation. In summary, this study aims to analyze the perceptions of the level of communicative competence, in both sending and receiving functions, of students in the degrees of preschool and primary school teaching at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of the Autonomous University of Madrid.

Method

Participants

The target population selected consists of students studying teaching at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of the Autonomous University of Madrid, resulting in a sample of 184 subjects, comprised of students in the degrees of preschool teaching, primary school teaching, and dual degree of preschool and primary school teaching. The students were selected through non-probabilistic sampling. The inclusion criteria for the sample were being 18 or older

and being enrolled in these degree programs. We considered that the majority of them, due to their age and chosen career, have very similar cultural patterns, i.e., specific ways of perceiving, interpreting, judging, and behaving from the same culture and that they possess a similar team culture (SEIZ ORTÍZ *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, the exclusion criteria were language and cognitive difficulties and not wanting to participate in the study.

Procedure

This descriptive cross-sectional study analyzes communicative competence in students with a Master's degree in preschool and primary school education at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of the Autonomous University of Madrid. This study was designed to detect effect sizes larger than 0.3 (medium effect size) for contrast with the “ X^2 test assuming a Type I error and a Type II error of 0.05 and 0.2, respectively. The software Gpower 3.1.0 © (Franz Faul, University of Kiel, Germany) was used, resulting in a minimum sample size of 133 participants.

The questionnaire developed by Fernández, Reinoso, and Alvarez (2002) is used to identify the achievements and limitations in the roles of the receiver and sender through participant self-assessment. With the support of the Google Drive tool, the questionnaire is digitized, creating an online instrument where respondents access it through the Moodle platform.

Instrument

The questionnaire on communicative skills is structured into 31 items (15 to assess receptive competence and 16 to assess expressive competence) evaluated with response options: Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were verified using the most commonly used methods by social researchers (CEA D'ANCONA, 2001; MCMILLAN; SCHUMACHER, 2005), including Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis and Cronbach's alpha if an item is removed.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis is performed using the SPSS® version 22 statistical package for Windows. In all hypothesis tests, a significance level of 0.05 is considered. Firstly, the

normality of the sample distribution is examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Secondly, the reliability of the communication scale is analyzed using Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis of the questionnaire. Thirdly, descriptive statistics are conducted, with qualitative variables summarized using frequencies and percentages and quantitative variables summarized using mean and standard deviation. Finally, contingency tables are used to compare competencies, specifically the Chi-square test, once the requirements are met. Fisher's exact test is conducted if these requirements are not met.

Results

Reliability and consistency of the test

Table 1 shows that the questionnaire achieved good reliability for the proposed research objective and for the use of information as an indicator to promote informed discussion. A high $\alpha = 0.791$ is observed with the 31 questionnaire items and then subdivided into sender ($\alpha = 0.763$) and receiver ($\alpha = 0.746$), it remains reliable.

The factor analysis indicates that the questionnaire is coherent and that its variables are well-defined and grouped. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's sphericity test assessed the factor analysis's applicability. The statistics show acceptable suitability of the sample (KMO = 0.774; Bartlett = 1678.02, $p = 0.0001$), and exploratory factor analysis of the scale was conducted.

Using the generalized least squares extraction method, ten components with initial eigenvalues greater than one were found, accounting for 63.21% of the variance. Factor 1 captures the highest percentage of variance at 20.35%. Regarding the rotated factor matrix, the orthogonal rotation method called Varimax with Kaiser normalization was employed (converged in nine iterations). The rotated component matrix and item loadings were examined, and all items had factor loadings above 0.30 (BANDALOS; FINNEY, 2010).

Table 1 - Analysis of validity and reliability by competencies and sub-competencies

Linguistic knowledge	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	Number of items
General questionnaire	0,781	0,791	31
Receiver	0.748	0.746	15
Sender	0.755	0.763	16
Sub-competencies			
Host sociolinguistics (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9,13)	0.549	0.538	8
Receptive Pragmatics (5, 7, 10, 11, 12,14, 15)	0.633	0.635	7
Emission Linguistics (17,18,31)	0.483	0.493	3
Sociolinguistic Emission (16,20,22,25,29)	0.427	0.431	5
Pragmatic Sender (19,21,23,24,26,27,28,30)	0.611	0.618	8

Source: Research data

Self-assessment of competence as a sender and receiver

The main characteristic that characterizes the studied sample is the predominance of women (73.9% women and 26.1% men). Similarly, most participants are of Spanish nationality (92.9%), with an average age of 20.68±3.90 years.

Regarding qualification, 43.48% have a degree in primary education, 34.24% have a degree in early childhood education, and only 22.28% are pursuing a dual degree in primary and early childhood education. As for employment status, 47.28% are unemployed, followed by 33.70% employed, 11.41% self-employed, 6.52% non-public employees, and only 1.09% are public employees. Regarding previous training in communication, 94.02% stated that they had not taken any specific courses (see Tables 2 and 3).

Descriptive statistics are performed for the collected questionnaire items' receiver and sender levels. The data are summarized, and the percentages are indicated, as well as the mean

of each item, for better evaluation. The Likert scale weighting ranged from 1 to 4, with 4 being "frequently" and 1 being "never". As for the students' perception as receivers, they feel competent (Mean: 3.52(0.25) IC95: 3.48-3.56). Therefore, they perceive themselves to have good skills in the sociolinguistic receiver sub-competence (Mean: 3.52(0.26) IC95: 3.48-3.55) and pragmatic receiver (Mean: 3.53(0.31) IC95: 3.48-3.57).

Likewise, students as senders feel competent (Mean: 3.40(0.29) 95% CI: 3.35-3.44). Thus, they perceive themselves to have good skills in the linguistic sender sub-competence (Mean: 3.37(0.31) IC95: 3.30-3.44), the sociolinguistic sender (Mean: 3.31(0.34) IC95: 3.26-3.36), and pragmatic sender (Mean: 3.46(0.32) IC95: 3.42-3.51).

Finally, inferential analysis was conducted using the chi-square test regarding participants' gender, qualification, and academic year and the analysis between the items composing each sub-competence (Table 4). Regarding gender, significant differences are evident in some items. Women have a higher prevalence of *frequent* responses than men. However, it should be noted that there is a significant bias in the sample, as the majority is female. Both genders have a relatively high perception of their communication skills.

As for the academic year, they are studying, students in the primary education year value certain linguistic skills better than students in the early childhood education year, with those in the dual qualification program being more conservative in their responses. Regarding the academic program, second-year students value their skills better in the pragmatic receiver, linguistic sender, and pragmatic sender sub-competences.

Regarding the receiver, in the sociolinguistic sub-competence, items 3, 6, and 13 show a different response pattern compared to the other items. On the other hand, in the pragmatic sub-competence, changes in response are evident in items 10, 12, and 14.

Regarding the sender, item 17 shows a distinct behavior in the linguistic sender sub-competence compared to the other items in the sub-competence. Similarly, the same occurs with items 25 and 30 in the sociolinguistic and pragmatic sender sub-competences.

Table 2 - Descriptive statistics at the receiver level

Item do questionário do destinatário	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean (DP)
1. As a receiver, I [expect the other person to be done speaking before responding]	61.96%	36.41%	1.63%	0.00%	3.62 (0.52)
2. As a receiver, I [look at the speaker's face while they are talking]	76.63%	22.83%	0.54%	0.00%	3.76 (0.44)
3. As a receiver, I [take all the necessary time to listen]	52.72%	46.20%	1.09%	0.00%	3.52 (0.52)
4. As a receiver, I [encourage the speaker with	67.93%	30.98%	1.09%	0.00%	3.67

a smile or supportive gesture]						(0.49)
5. As a receiver, I [ask questions to make sure I understood correctly]	55.98%	33.15%	1.87%	0.00%		3.22 (0.62)
6. As a receiver, I [let the speaker talk without interrupting]	45.11%	51.63%	3.26%	0.00%		3.42 (0.55)
7. As a receiver, I [try to understand the meaning of words based on the context of what is being said]	65.22%	31.52%	3.26%	0.00%		3.62 (0.55)
8. As a receiver, I [can speak calmly even if the other person is excited]	30.43%	59.78%	9.24%	0.54%		3.20 (0.61)
9. As a receiver, I [observe gestures, movements, and tone of voice]	68.48%	27.72%	3.80%	0.00%		3.65 (0.55)
10. As a receiver, I [try to put myself in the other person's shoes to better understand them]	70.75%	26.63%	2.72%	0.00%		3.68 (0.53)
11. As a receiver, I [respect the ideas and opinions of others, even if I don't share them]	69.02%	28.80%	2.17%	0.00%		3.67 (0.51)
12. As a receiver, I [listen instead of developing my response]	40.22%	53.26%	6.52%	0.00%		3.34 (0.59)
13. As a receiver, I [am patient during the conversation]	37.50%	58.15%	3.80%	0.54%		3.33 (0.57)
14. As a receiver, I [try to perceive the other person's feelings, even if they don't express them openly]	66.30%	29.35%	3.80%	0.54%		3.61 (0.59)
15. As a receiver, I [enjoy listening to others]	59.24%	39.13%	1.63%	0.0%		3.58 (0.52)
Sociolinguistic Score of the Receiver						3.52(0.26) IC95: 3,48-3,55
Pragmatic Score of the Receiver						3.53(0.31) IC95: 3,48-3,57
Final Receiver Result						3.52(0.25) IC95: 3,48-3,56

Source: Research data

Table 3 - Descriptive Statistics at the Emitter Level

Items from the emitter questionnaire	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean (SD)
16. As an emitter, [I allow interruptions when I'm speaking].	11,96%	54,35%	28,26%	5,43%	2,37 (0,74)
17. As an emitter, [I pronounce words well to ensure they are well understood]	47,28%	47,28%	4,89%	0,54%	3,41 (0,61)
18. As an emitter, [I use vocabulary corresponding to my interlocutor's level]	60,33%	35,33%	3,80%	0,54%	3,55 (0,59)

19. As an emitter, [I avoid irony and mocking when addressing others]	35,33%	46,74%	15,76%	2,17%	3,15 (0,76)
20. As an emitter, [I look at the face of the person I'm addressing]	77,17%	21,20%	1,09%	0,00%	3,76 (0,76)
21. As an emitter, [I observe the other person to assess if they understand what I'm saying]	78,80%	20,11%	1,09%	0,00%	3,78 (0,44)
22. As an emitter, [I speak in an appropriate tone of voice: not too loud or soft]	50,00%	41,85%	7,61%	0,54%	3,41 (0,65)
23. As an emitter, [I reflect on what I will say to organize my ideas]	46,20%	46,74%	6,52%	0,54%	3,39 (0,63)
24. As an emitter, [I acknowledge the accomplishments and achievements of the people around me when necessary]	35,33%	57,07%	7,07%	0,54%	3,27 (0,61)
25. As an emitter, [I can have calm conversations, even if the other person is enthusiastic]	38,4%	51,63%	8,70%	2,72%	3,26 (0,68)
26. As an emitter, [I enjoy expressing my opinions to others]	47,83%	40,76%	8,70%	2,72%	3,34 (0,75)
27. As an emitter, [I respect the ideas and opinions of others, even if they differ from mine]	65,22%	32,07%	2,72%	0,00%	3,63 (0,53)
28. As an emitter, [I ask for the opinions and perspectives of others on what I propose]	55,98%	38,04%	5,98%	0,00%	3,50 (0,61)

Source: Research data

Discussion and Conclusions

This research aims to analyze the perceptions of communicative competence at the levels of sender and receiver among students in the degrees of Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of the Autonomous University of Madrid. To achieve this, we will articulate the conclusions considering the variables of receiver and sender, as well as their respective linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic sub-competencies. Students generally consider themselves better receivers than

senders, although the difference is small. Regarding gender, there are significant differences in some items, with women *more frequently* selecting specific responses than men. It is essential to acknowledge that the sample is predominantly female, which may introduce bias. Regarding the grade level they are studying, elementary school students prioritize communicative competence more effectively than preschool students, with the former group being more moderate.

Receiver

Students generally perceive themselves to have good skills in *sociolinguistic and pragmatic* sub-competences. Regarding sociolinguistics, they consider themselves moderately proficient in kinesics (gestures and body movements) and proxemics (communication related to personal space). However, they find it challenging to incorporate chronotics (timing in the communication) as they do not dedicate enough time to listening and often interrupt others. They do not consider themselves patient during conversations. This tendency is more pronounced in women than men, although caution should be exercised in interpretation due to the higher prevalence of women in the sample. For the *pragmatic sub-competency*, students generally report not asking many questions to ensure understanding and tend to focus more on formulating their responses rather than actively listening. However, they make an effort to empathize with others and understand them better, as well as perceive each other's feelings during conversations. In terms of courses, second-year students demonstrate a better understanding of the contextual meaning of words spoken compared to first-year students, which may be attributed to their more advanced level of study. Scores for both sociolinguistic and pragmatic sub-competencies are very similar.

Emmitter

The students consider themselves competent and possess good communicative skills in the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic sub-competencies. In *linguistic sub-competence*, students believe they use correct pronunciation, employ vocabulary corresponding to their interlocutor's level, and are precise and direct in their language (PHILLIPPI; AVENDAÑO, 2011). This aspect is more prevalent among women and in elementary education. Regarding the course, second-year students value their skills in the emission of linguistic sub-competencies more highly. In the *sociolinguistic sub-competence*, they excel in managing

kinesics (gaze, gestures, and paralanguage) and maintaining composure when the interlocutor is agitated. This fact is more pronounced among women than men and, to a greater extent, in elementary education. In the *pragmatic sub-competence*, which involves developing the ability to persuade and influence the opinions or preferences of interlocutors, they avoid irony, try to observe others to determine if they understand what is being said to them, and respect their ideas and comments. Women stand out in terms of gender, and in terms of the course, second-year students value their skills in the pragmatic sub-competency more highly.

In this context, it is evident that students perceive their communicative competence as good, although it should be contrasted with teachers' perceptions. In conclusion, they should strengthen their learning as receivers regarding time management in communication, maintaining calmness, and learning to ask questions to ensure message comprehension. As senders, they should improve linguistic sub-competence, which was underestimated in this questionnaire. For future research, it is necessary to delve deeper into this line of inquiry to update their training and enhance their performance. Therefore, it is essential to explicitly integrate the study and analysis of professional, communicative competence into teacher qualification programs (DUMITRIU; TIMOFTI; DUMITRIU, 2014; GERTRUDIS-CASADO; GERTRUDIX-BARRIO; ÁLVAREZ-GARCÍA, 2016; NASILENKO, 2014; TAREVA; POLUSHKINA, 2018; TAREVA; TAREV, 2018; WILSON; WOLFORD, 2016). According to Prendes, Castañeda, and Gutiérrez (2010) and Romero-Martín, Castejón-Oliva, López-Pastor, and Fraile-Aranda (2017), many investigations present the same weakness, which is the analysis of perceptions from different educational sectors.

In this research, the questionnaire assessed students' perception of their communicative competence as senders and receivers, and it is evident that in many cases, they are satisfied with it, although the reality may differ. This fact helped us conduct an initial assessment of the situation and become aware of the aspects that need improvement, but further evidence will be necessary to continue investigating from the perspectives of the faculty and professional tutors in external practices. Regarding gender bias, it is challenging to neutralize this variable because most students studying in teacher education programs are women

Table 4 - Inferential analysis according to sociodemographic variables and communicative competencies of the receiver and the sender

Linguistic Competencies	Sex P-value	Degree being pursued P-value	Academic course P-value
Receptive Sociolinguistics (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9,13)	0.789	0.674	0.640
	0.289	0.610	0.340
	0.005*	0.790	0.463
	0.427	0.507	0.453
	0.826	0.115	0.408
	0.523	0.325	0.463
	0.075	0.579	0.584
	0.073	0.014*	0.283
Pragmatic Competencies (5, 7, 10, 11, 12,14, 15)	0.179	0.512	0.207
	0.961	0.016*	0.040*
	0.074	0.844	0.668
	0.603	0.570	0.211
	0.181	0.535	0.440
	0.160	0.546	0.308
	0.016*	0.537	0.032*
Emmitter Linguistics (17,18,31)	0.428	0.531	0.050*
	0.075	0.040*	0.043*
	0.297	0.033*	0.187
Emmitter Sociolinguistics (16,20,22,25,29)	0.462	0.556	0.490
	0.018*	0.571	0.114
	0.936	0.502	0.569
	0.567	0.024*	0.269
	0.166	0.040*	0.001
Emissive Pragmatics (19,21,23,24,26,27,28,30)	0.002*	0.248	0.050*
	0.050*	0.704	0.245
	0.636	0.168	0.754
	0.882	0.807	0.693
	0.155	0.680	0.117
	0.025*	0.511	0.576
	0.134	0.547	0.889
	0.125	0.398	0.093

Source: Research data.

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