

## ***Purposive Communication is Not Enough: Exploring English Language Learning from the perspectives of English majors in a Philippine Higher Education Institution***

**Rafael Michael O. Paz**

[rmo.paz@pup.edu.ph](mailto:rmo.paz@pup.edu.ph)

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

### **Abstract**

*The structural changes brought by the K to 12 basic education program significantly impact not only ELT and ELL in basic education, but ELT and ELL in higher education as well. English language courses in the higher education general education domain were phased out, or for the majority of HEIs in the Philippines, reduced to a course called Purposive Communication. Using data from students who had taken Purposive Communication in their year 1 in the university, this paper argues that Purposive Communication is not enough to reinforce all the English language skills expected for higher education students to perform during and after their time in the university. This paper invokes policy implementers to consider the inclusion of additional English-language courses in higher education to provide avenues for students to practice their communication skills in English and address the country's declining proficiency in using the English language.*

**Keywords:** *Purposive Communication, ELT in higher education, English Language Learning.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The institutionalization of the K to 12 basic education program that started in the Academic Year 2012-2013 through Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 radically changed the landscape of Philippine education. From the ten-year basic education curriculum that started in 1945, two more years were added to high school education making the total years of basic education program 13 from 10 (or 11 if students started their school years in the optional kindergarten). While this delays students' progress to tertiary education, the additional two years of Senior High School (SHS) is envisioned to "provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship" (The K to 12 Basic Education Program). It is expected that the K to 12 basic education program would help students make better decisions about their career path, whether to immediately pursue a profession after SHS or pursue higher education (Mohammad, 2016; Okabe, 2013). Specifically, the track and strands or specialization that SHS students decide upon (with the aid of a test called the National Career Assessment Examination taken towards the end of Junior High School or year 11) is expected to help them intelligently choose the most appropriate degree program in college applicable to their interests and skills. Currently there are four major disciplines offered in SHS: (1) the academic track (which includes business, science and engineering,

the humanities and social science, and a general academic strand), (2) the technical-vocational-livelihood track offered by personnel certified by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), (3) the sports track, and (4) the arts and design track. While students are given the freedom to choose their track and strand, this may still be limited by the resources available in the schools accessible to them as well as the available opportunities and demands of their immediate communities (Mohammad, 2016).

While the implementation of K to 12 basic education program is expected to allow its finishers to enter the workforce earlier compared with those who decide to continue to higher education, results of studies conducted by the Philippine Business for Education (PBED) revealed that only 20 percent among the top 70 leading companies in the Philippines are ‘inclined’ to hire SHS graduates (Yee, 2018). In reality, even with K to 12, very little has changed in the hiring requirements of companies. But Undersecretary Tonisito Umali of the Department Education claims that, “It is too early to say if the implementation of the K to 12 program under the Enhanced Basic Education Act has been effective, specifically when it comes to graduate employability” (Paris, 2019).

At least two years before the majority of the first batch of K to 12 finishers proceed to higher education, the effects of the K to 12 basic education program started to make their way into the majority of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines. First, there was the rapid decline of enrollment in HEIs that challenged the sustainability of some private HEIs in the country. This was partially addressed by the assignment of the SHS courses to teachers in HEIs. This strategy was applied not exclusively to help teachers in HEIs stay afloat from the possibility of retrenchment or reassignment to teach in the basic education departments of schools, but because the K to 12 basic education program was indisputably prematurely implemented and the Department of Education (DepEd) (still applicable to the current situation as of writing this paper) did not have enough resources, i.e., manpower, infrastructure, learning materials, etc., to cover the initial batches of SHS students. In fact, the initial batches of SHS were offered not only by HEIs’ personnel but completely in and by HEIs with the guidance of DepEd. Second, the majority of tertiary education curricula across specializations were revised to adjust to the purportedly new skills that had been covered when students finish the the additional two years of basic education. The revision was facilitated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the national agency in charge of overseeing the performance of HEIs in the Philippines, through the release of relevant memorandum orders that set the guidelines and procedures for the revision of degree programs offering in tertiary education.

While major and specialization courses of the different degree programs may not have been greatly affected, a huge change can be observed in the offering of the general education component across all degree programs. General education courses are offered to help tertiary level students successfully navigate their more matured, more challenging university or college life, and even extend to providing knowledge and skills beyond academic life, and thus are significant components of higher education. CHED Memorandum Order 20 series of 2013 specifically states, “General education enables the Filipino to find and locate her/himself in the community and in the world, take pride in and hopefully assert her/his identity and sense and community and nationhood amid the forces of globalization” (p. 4). With the addition of two years in basic education, the number of general education courses was ‘reduced’ (CHED Memorandum Order 20 s.

2013, p. 5). Some general education courses were phased out (but some were simply renamed or realigned) to suit the changes in the education and professional landscapes.

A significant general education field greatly affected by all these changes is English language teaching (ELT). Depending on the degree program, higher education students prior to the implementation of CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 were required to take at least two English courses in the university: Communication Skills 1 and 2, or usually called Study and Thinking Skills in English and Writing in the Discipline, respectively. Study and Thinking Skills in English is geared towards composition writing while Writing in the Discipline is an introductory research writing course contextualized to the various specializations of students. Some HEIs require a Communication Skills 1 more focused on English grammar (usually using American English as standard) before the Communication Skills course designed to develop the writing skills of students (Study and Thinking Skills in English becomes Communication Skills 2 in effect). Depending on the degree program, students may even receive a third, fourth, and even fifth general education course in English such as Speech Communication, Business Communication, Technical Communication, English for Specific Purposes, and Advanced English Grammar. All these courses were phased out because, according to policy implementers, these courses had essentially been transferred and had already been covered by SHS English offerings (CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013, p. 1, para 3).

SHS follows the format of higher education with two semesters. For year 1, first semester (this corresponds to year 12 in the K to 12 basic education program), students take Oral Communication, and then year 1, second semester, Reading and Writing. Both courses are taken for approximately five months (72 hours long compared with 54 hours per course in the university or college level pedagogy). For year 2, either first or second semester (year 13 in the K to 12 basic education program), students take English for Academic and Professional Purposes (though this may also be taken in year 1 of SHS). See Table 1 below for the tabular presentation of the distribution of these English courses per SHS year level. While it may seem like the English courses in SHS are more specialized and perhaps, taken longer in terms of the greater number of hours, This study argued that language learning in the basic education is different from language learning in tertiary-level education. In my experience teaching SHS, students think and act with the ‘high school mindset’ even if they are physically located in the infrastructures of universities. Their valuation of what they learn is not as focused and contextualized compared with higher education students even if SHS is divided into tracks and strands. Their level of maturity seems to be affected as well since they are still, in fact, in high school even if they are in the traditionally college-age range. Pre-observation showed that students’ entry into the university as tertiary-level students force them to mature into young men and women who are soon expected to join the workforce and help their families achieve better chances in life. This seems to be lost even with the promise of policy implementers for the possibility of direct career pathing from SHS to professional life.

**Table 1. Distribution of English courses in the SHS year levels**

SHS grade level		English courses offered
Grade 11	Semester 1	Oral communication
	Semester 2	Reading and writing

Grade 12	Semester 1 or 2	English for Academic and Professional Purposes
----------	--------------------	--

These structural changes in the offering of English-language courses in SHS and higher education significantly impacts both ELT and English language learning (ELL). The reduction of the number of English-language course offerings in higher education has forced teachers to either migrate to SHS teaching or find work in other fields (i.e., TESOL, business process outsourcing, or going abroad [Overseas Filipino Workers] for available employment opportunities). What remains in universities today is a general education course called Purposive Communication that is left to the interpretation of schools. CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 states that the new set of general education courses “maybe [sic] taught in English or Filipino” (p. 5). This means that Purposive Communication may be offered in Filipino, or even extending the description provided by CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 to the course, “Writing, speaking[,] and presenting to different audiences and for various purposes” (p. 5, row 5 of the table ‘Description of GE Core Courses’), may be taught in any language that teachers and students deem suitable in their context. While many schools interpreted Purposive Communication as an English course, CHED’s description via Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 leaves the course in constant interrogation and even forces the English department of different HEIs to defend themselves on a regular basis for the right to teach Purposive Communication.

In terms of English language learning (ELL), while it may be too early to report explicit effects since the first batch of K to 12 finishers are still in their year 3 in higher education as of writing this paper, the reduction of several general education English-language courses from the old curricula pre-CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 to the bilingual (or may be multilingual) general education course Purposive Communication, which means the possibility of the absence of any course that explicitly teaches the rudiments of the English language to some students, may impact their employment after finishing their university degrees.

### **English as a Significant Industry in the Philippines**

ELT and ELL in the Philippines started alongside the American colonization of the archipelago at the turn of the 20th century. A few years after then United States President William McKinley's institutionalization of English as medium of instruction in Philippine schools, Filipinos started teaching their fellow Filipinos the English language, and not long after, even their fellow Asians. Today, TESOL or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, specifically to South Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and some European nationalities, is a large industry in the Philippines.

Truly, the English language plays a vital role in the Philippine economy. The BPO industry alone that relies mostly on Filipinos’ proficiency in the English language contributed \$26 billion to the Philippine economy and provided employment to more than 1.3 million Filipinos in 2019 (Thompson, 2020). It is also one of the most resilient professions during the Covid-19 pandemic, “exempted from closure during the quarantine periods” (Thompson, 2020, para. 1) and helping the Philippine economy stay afloat amidst the downward trajectory of the country’s gross domestic product (Venzon, 2021).

However, Filipino's English language proficiency has been in steady decline in the past years. EF Education First reports that the Philippines ranks 27th out of 100 countries in terms of English language proficiency ("Philippines", 2020). While the country remains second in rank in Asia and remains with "high proficiency" based on the quantitative score of 562, global trend from EF shows the downward direction of Filipino's proficiency in English: from rank 13 in 2016, 15 in 2017, 14 in 2018, 20 in 2019, and finally, 27 in 2020. This trajectory shows that either other countries are simply doing better, or the Philippines is doing worse, or both (see comment of CHED Chairperson Prospero de Vera in the report of Magsino, 2019).

The state of the Philippines' English proficiency index has been a matter of great importance for local and international audience (Cabigon, 2015; Enerio, 2018; Magsambol, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Baclig, 2020). In fact, 2020 was not the first time that the country's English proficiency was placed in critical enquiry. In 2018, Hopkins International Partners, a company that conducts English proficiency examinations in the Philippines, released the results of its two-year study: Filipino university graduates scored 630 on average in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) (Leonen, 2018; Magsino, 2019). This score is equivalent to B1 in the Common Framework of Reference. Moreover, the average TOEIC scores of Filipino university graduates is lower than the scores of taxi drivers in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; lower than the target set for high school graduates in Thailand and Vietnam; and only comparable to 5th and 6th graders in the United States and Great Britain. These news reports are testaments that English remains an important economic resource in the Philippines, often widely considered by the common folks as a significant instrument for upward economic mobility, and significant as well even for other countries, especially those who avail of the services of the Philippines' strongest capital – its people.

### **The state of English in the Philippines and Purposive Communication**

The changes in the valuation of English in tertiary education brought by the structural changes in educational policies in the past several years put the English language proficiency of Filipinos at great peril. Implicitly, in effect, English language learning in tertiary education has become optional despite its significance in many facets of university and professional life.

English plays a crucial role in the reading, writing, listening, and speaking requirements of students at the university. Major and minor term papers and theses are verbally presented in English. Books, journal articles, and Internet materials that teachers require their students to read are more often in English. Classroom discussions across specializations are largely conducted in English. Additionally, even extracurricular activities at school are conducted using the English language: from writing communication documents such as information, solicitation, and invitation letters; to the writing and designing and the actual performing of the different sections of the program of activities; and the preparation of post-activity reports, all of these are either written in English or a combination of English and Filipino, with the former taking the upper hand when frequency is considered. Knowledge reception, production, and dissemination at schools is uncontestedly largely in English.

Beyond the university, job interviews in both local and international markets are often conducted in English. The country's strongest resource, its people, are required

‘excellent communication skills’ that most often implicitly translate to high levels of English proficiency, often measured by gatekeeping forms and examinations, to qualify for jobs especially in international job markets. English is a useful resource for international communication, with, say multinational peers at work and with clients spread across the globe.

All these activities require rigid training and reinforcement in the learning process. Concepts learned in SHS English courses are often not contextualized for university learning and professional work but are closer to the context where students are at their specific moments of learning. Given these, I argue that Purposive Communication, the only course that teaches the skills closest to the pre-CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013 English-language courses offered in tertiary education, cannot carry the burden of the all the skills needed to ensure students’ success in and beyond the university.

### **What is purposive communication?**

Cruz (2014) approaches Purposive Communication from a multidisciplinary perspective. Using the preparation of a minutes of a meeting as example, Cruz (2014, para. 21) explains,

*In college, the writing of minutes of meetings cannot be approached merely as a language skill, but must involve organizational communication (for the management implications), the social sciences (for the developmental implications), critical theory (for the non-verbal implications of the words), accountancy (for the significance of the financial data to be reported), philosophy (for the ethical implications), and other disciplines.*

However, this multidisciplinary perspective is often disregarded because English teachers find their students lacking (or perhaps students have simply forgotten from their previous education) some basic English language skills needed to move forward into the course content. These skills include but is in no way limited to the analysis of basic written and aural texts; the preparation of technical documents; the confident presentation of one’s ideas before an audience; among many others.

Studies on Purposive Communication had been published since it was first offered in 2018. Avila (2020) investigated the effectiveness of ‘contextualized and localized’ technique in teaching Purposive Communication. She found that students perform better when they are exposed to ‘local materials, examples, conversations, [and] formative tests’ compared with students who receive the ‘usual lecture discussion technique.’ Bautista (2020) investigated the experiences of students who had taken the course Purposive Communication following the ‘interdisciplinary approach’. The students’ response to the researcher-made questionnaire revealed that the ‘interdisciplinary approach’ had been effective in their preparation of major written requirements and least effective in their preparation of minor requirements. Bulaquit (2019) analyzed the effectiveness of using Facebook as a supplemental tool in developing students’ communication skills in Purposive Communication. He found that using Facebook does not significantly affect the performance of students in the four macro skills.

These studies mostly focus on the effectiveness of techniques (Avila, 2020; Bautista, 2020) or tools (Bulaquit, 2019) employed in teaching Purposive Communication. Clearly,

there is a dearth of investigation (knowledge gap) about the sufficiency of Purposive Communication to carry the burden of the many roles the English language plays in the university life, and even professional life after university, of students.

This study aims to determine the self-assessed English language proficiency of students enrolled in Purposive Communication in an HEI in the Philippines. The self-assessment begins with their current English language proficiency, and then with English skills learned in SHS, and finally with the English skills learned in Purposive Communication. This study likewise aims to diagnose solutions to the previously conceived problems about the limitations of Purposive Communication by identifying whether an additional English course (or courses) is needed to improve the self-assessed English language proficiency of the selected University students.

## **METHOD**

This study employs the descriptive statistic survey analysis design in the presentation and analysis of the frequencies and percentages of the answers of the respondents to the survey questionnaire crafted to address the aims of this research. The respondents for this study involved the students of a higher education institution (HEI) who are enrolled in the Purposive Communication course in the first semester of Academic Year 2020-2021. The HEI is the largest in terms of number of students in the country that is why it is a viable choice for investigation. The course Purposive Communication is mostly offered to year 1 (freshmen) students, but there are a few degree programs that offer the course in year 2 and year 3.

The researcher-made instrument used to gather the necessary data for this project was designed using Google Forms. The instrument has three sections: part 1 seeks for the demographic profile of the respondents, i.e., their gender and degree program; part 2 is called Self-Assessment of English Language Skills; and part 3, English Language Learning and Purposive Communication. Part 2 allows the respondents to frame what they had learned in the English language courses taken in both SHS and higher education (Purposive Communication) to answer the questions in part 3. The survey is composed of multiple choice and checkboxes (for multiple responses) and Likert scale items. There is only one open-ended item at the end of the questionnaire that seeks for the respondents' comments, if there is any. The total time for the survey is approximately 10-15 minutes (based on the report of selected students who took the survey in the validation stage). Several stages of validity were implemented to ensure the soundness of the instrument. Face and construct validity were conducted by six English language teachers: three are officials of the HEI where the survey is being conducted; one is an English teacher at the English Department of the same HEI; and two are English teachers from schools other than the HEI under investigation (one in the Philippines and one located abroad). Apart from comments about the design of the survey on Google Forms and some additional suggestions, i.e., the addition of rubrics that guide the respondents in differentiating the different levels of proficiency in English in part 2 of the survey, all items were accepted by the expert validators. Furthermore, content validity was conducted among selected students of the English Department of the same HEI. From a total of 176 students targeted for content validity (officially enrolled year 3 students in the Academic Year 2020-2021; these students belong to the pioneer batch of the K to 12 basic education program in the

HEI and the first group who had taken Purposive Communication), only 117 responses were recorded. Content validation was conducted from the last week of November to the first week of December 2020 during the students' academic break. The students who conducted the content validity are in their year 3 when they validated the instrument. This means that they had taken Purposive Communication previously in the same HEI. Similar with the results from the validation of the instrument conducted by the expert validators, all the items were accepted by the student validators.

There are three phases to the data gathering stage of this project: Phase 1 happens at the end of the first term of Academic Year 2021 (February-March 2021); Phase 2 happens at the end of the second term (July-August 2021); and Phase 3 happens at the end of the 2021 summer term (September or October 2021). These three phases cover one batch of Purposive Communication takers in the Academic Year 2020-2021 spread between years 1-3. The different programs in the HEI under investigation were given the liberty to design their own curricula, so long as they strictly follow the minimum requirements of CHED, succeeding the implementation of K to 12 basic education program. This liberty included the year level where they think they should offer the course Purposive Communication to their students, that is why some programs offer the course in year 1 and others in years 2 and 3.

Before the survey form was disseminated to the respondents via the faculty members assigned to teach Purposive Communication in the Academic Year 2020-2021, an ethics clearance was secured from the University Ethics Board of the HEI.

Data is organized through simple ranking of frequency and percentage distribution and reported in tables and figures (generated from Google Forms) in the succeeding section. The data presented are the results of the validation conducted among 117 year 3 students. Apart from validating the questions, majority of these students answered all the questions in the survey.

One crucial limitation that must be emphasized at this point concerns the background of these 117 students. They are year 3 students of the English program of the HEI which means that they had taken several advanced English-language courses alongside and after Purposive Communication. However, this same limitation is the strength of the results that shall be reported in this presentation. Since they are English majors, it safe to assume that they have developed better valuation of both ELT and ELL compared with the originally intended respondents who belong to various degree programs. Consequently, they can make better judgment of the content of Purposive Communication as an English-language course.

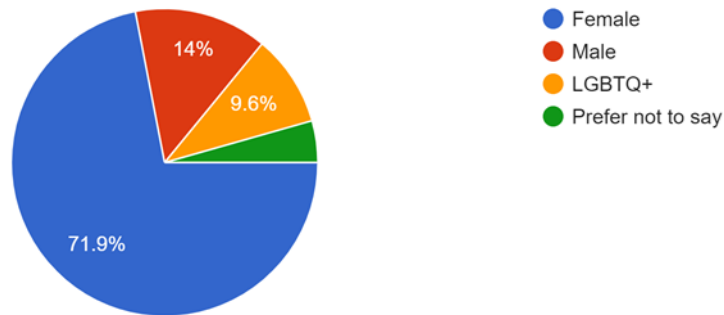
Finally, teacher quality and performance and quality of instructional materials are factors that were not included in this investigation.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Among the 117 total respondents, only 114 answered the demographic profile questions (part 1) and only 113 answered the self-assessment of English language skills (part 2) and the diagnosing solutions (part 3) sections of the survey.

Figure 1 below presents the respondents in terms of gender.





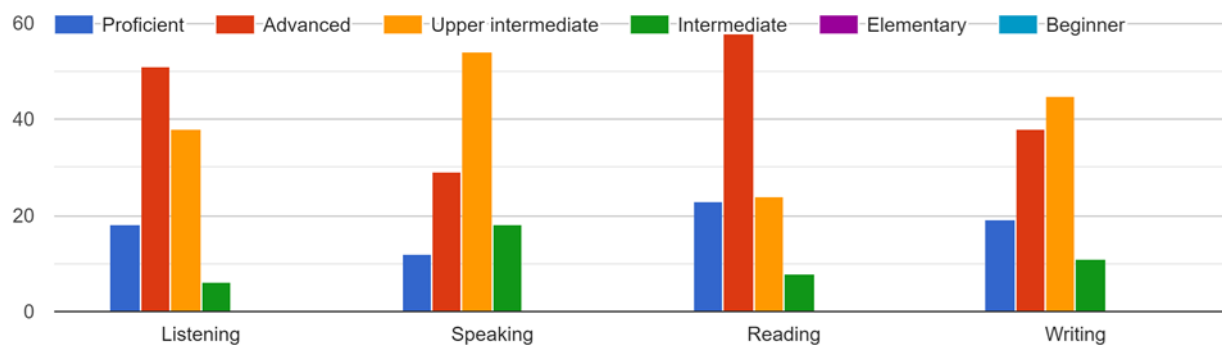
**Figure 1. Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender (Pie chart retrieved from Google Forms)**

Figure 1 shows that among the 114 respondents to this question, 71.90% are female, 14.00% are male, 9.60% are LGBTQ+, 4.40% answered “Prefer not to say”, and 2.56% did not leave any response.

**Respondents’ Self-assessed English Language Proficiency in the Four Macro Skills**

The Common Framework of Reference (CFR) was employed to make the descriptions that guided the respondents in making assessments about their own English-language proficiency in terms of the four macro skills. These descriptions are found in Appendix A. Since CFR has six levels, six points were used in the creation of the Likert-scale: proficient and advanced (corresponding with C2 and C1 levels, respectively), upper intermediate and intermediate (corresponding with B2 and B1 levels, respectively), and elementary and beginner (corresponding with A2 and A1 levels, respectively). Table 2 and Figure 2 below show the respondents’ self-assessment of their English language proficiency in terms of the four macro skills.

**Table 2. Self-assessment of English language skills**



Macro skills	Proficient		Advanced		Upper intermediate		Intermediate		Elementary		Beginner		Total
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Reading	23	20.35%	58	51.33%	24	21.24%	8	7.08%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	113
Writing	19	16.81%	38	33.63%	45	39.82%	11	9.73%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	113
Listening	18	15.93%	51	45.13%	38	33.63%	6	5.31%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	113
Speaking	12	10.62%	29	25.66%	54	47.79%	18	15.93%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	113

**Figure 2. Self-assessment of English language skills  
(Bar graphs retrieved from Google Forms)**

In terms of listening, 45.13% perceive their English language skills to be at advanced level (C1 level), 33.63% are upper intermediate (B2 level), 15.93% are proficient (C2 level), and 5.31% are intermediate (B1 level). No one among the respondents answered any of the A levels (elementary and beginner).

In terms of reading, 51.33% perceive their English language skills to be at advanced level (C1 level), 21.24% are upper intermediate (B2 level), 20.35% are proficient (C2 level), and 7.08% are intermediate (B1 level). Again, no one among the respondents answered any of the A levels (elementary and beginner).

In terms of speaking, 47.79% perceive their English language skills to be at upper intermediate level (B2 level), 25.66% are advanced (C1 level), 15.93% are intermediate (B1 level), and only 10.62% are proficient (C2 level). No one among the respondents answered any of the A levels (elementary and beginner).

In terms of writing, 38.92% perceive their English language skills to be at upper intermediate level (B2 level), 33.63% are advanced (C1 level), 16.81% are proficient (C2 level), and 9.73% are intermediate (B1 level). No one among the respondents answered any of the A levels (elementary and beginner).

The data shows that in terms of the respondents' assessment of their skills in the four macro skills, most are better in language inputs with a general C1 in both listening and reading. Most find themselves less proficient in the language outputs with a general B2 in speaking and writing. These results provide evidence to the respondents' answers in the latter part of the questionnaire.

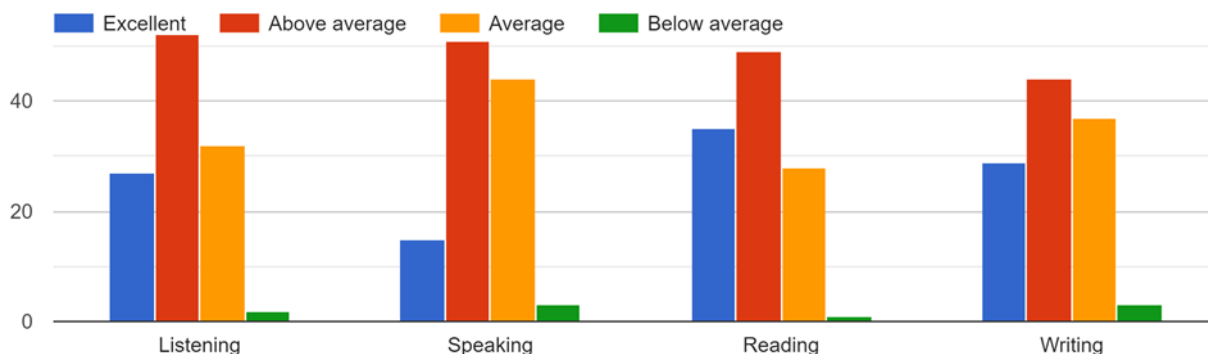
The respondents' self-assessment of their English language proficiency shows better self-appreciation compared with the results of the TOEIC scores conducted by Hopkins International Partners that reported Filipino university graduates' level at B1 (Leonen, 2018). While this self-appreciation may be logically attributed to the respondents' three-year background in their field of specialization in the university (year 3 English majors), it will be interesting to investigate the English language proficiency of the respondents further using scientific approaches such as a performance test and correlate their performance with the results of the tests conducted by Hopkins International Partners.

**Respondents’ English Language Skills Learned in SHS**

For the next two English language proficiency self-assessments, two sets of four-point Likert scales (excellent, above average, average, and below average) were designed to judge the quality of skills learned by the respondents. For this question, the first four-point scale was designed based on the consolidated objectives of the English courses in SHS that correspond to the four macro skills (refer to Table 1 for the SHS courses). The descriptions to each ‘point’ of the Likert scale that helped the respondents differentiate the levels is available in Appendix B.

Table 3 and Figure 3 below present the respondents’ self-assessments of their English language skills learned in SHS in terms of the four macro skills.

**Table 3. Self-assessment of English language skills learned in SHS**



Macro skills	Excellent		Above average		Average		Below average		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Reading	35	30.97%	49	43.46%	28	24.78%	1	0.09%	113
Writing	29	25.66%	44	38.94%	37	32.74%	3	2.65%	113
Listening	27	23.89%	52	46.02%	32	28.32%	2	1.77%	113
Speaking	15	13.27%	51	45.13%	44	38.94%	3	2.65%	113

**Figure 3. Self-assessment of English language skills learned in SHS (Bar graphs retrieved from Google Forms)**

In terms of listening, 46.02% perceive their own English language skills learned in SHS at above average, 28.32% are at average, 23.89% are at excellent, and 1.77% is at below average.

In terms of reading, 43.46% perceive their own English language skills learned in SHS at above average, 30.97% are at excellent, 24.78% are at average, and only 0.09% is at below average.

In terms of speaking, 45.13% perceive their own English language skills learned in SHS at above average, 38.94% are at average, 13.27% are at excellent, and 2.65% are at below average.

Finally, in terms of writing, 38.94% perceive their own English language skills learned in SHS at above average, 32.74% are at average, 25.66% are at excellent, and 2.65% are at below average.

The students generally feel that the English language courses in SHS developed their skills in terms of the four macro skills, with reading and writing taking the best responses in terms of the ‘excellent’ option and listening and speaking in the ‘above average’ option.

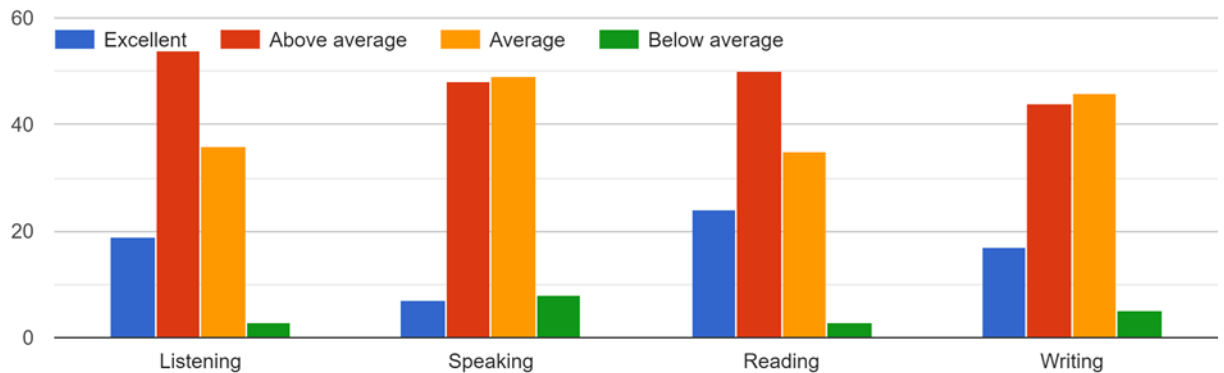
The best responses to the macro skills reading and writing in the ‘excellent’ option means that these macro skills are provided enough space in the English language courses in SHS. Table 1 shows that a specific course called ‘Reading and Writing’ is offered in the second semester of Grade 11 (year 12 in the K to 12 basic education program). Apart from this specific course that addresses basic reading and writing macro skills, the course English for Academic and Professional Purposes (usually offered in Grade 12 or year 13 of the K to 12 basic education program) is likewise a reading and writing course in nature. The curriculum guide for English for Academic and Professional Purposes shows that the course involves advanced reading (‘reading academic texts’ for the first three weeks) and writing (writing reaction papers, concept papers, position papers, and different types of reports in the succeeding weeks after the first three) lessons (Curriculum Guide for English for Academic and Professional Purposes, n.d.). The macro skills listening and speaking are likewise given enough space in SHS with a specific course Oral Communication offered in the first semester of Grade 11 (year 12 in the K to 12 basic education program).

### **Respondents’ English Language Skills Learned in Purposive Communication**

For this question, the four-point Likert scale was developed from the CHED-prescribed course objectives for the course Purposive Communication. The descriptions to the Likert scale that helped the respondents differentiate the levels is available in *Appendix C*.

Table 4 and Figure 4 below present the respondents’ self-assessment of their English language skills learned in Purposive Communication in terms of the four macro skills.

**Table 4. Self-assessment of English language skills learned in Purposive Communication**



Macro skills	Excellent		Above average		Average		Below average		Total
	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	
Reading	24	21.43%	50	44.64%	35	31.25%	3	2.68%	112
Writing	17	15.18%	44	39.29%	46	41.07%	5	4.46%	112
Listening	19	16.96%	54	48.21%	36	32.14%	3	2.68%	112
Speaking	7	6.25%	48	42.86%	49	43.75%	8	7.14%	112

**Figure 4. Self-assessment of English language skills learned in Purposive Communication (Bar graphs retrieved from Google Forms)**

In terms of listening, 48.21% perceive their own English language skills learned in Purposive Communication at above average, 32.14% are at average, 16.96% are at excellent, and 2.68% are at below average.

In terms of reading, 44.64% perceive their own English language skills learned in Purposive Communication at above average, 31.25% are at average, 21.43% are at excellent, and 2.68% are at below average.

In terms of speaking, 42.86% perceive their own English language skills learned in Purposive Communication at average, 42.86% are at above average, 7.14% are at below average, and only 6.25% are at excellent.

In terms of writing, 41.07% perceive their own English language skills learned in Purposive Communication at average, 39.29% are at above average, 15.18% are at excellent, and 4.46% are at below average.

Generally, the data show that the respondents slightly learned more about language inputs (listening and reading) and output (writing) in Purposive Communication with a marginal increase in the ‘above average’ percentages between Table 3 and Table 4. However, there is a decline in the ‘excellent’ percentages between Table 3 and Table 4, with a noticeable drop in the percentage of the macro skill ‘speaking’. This was coupled

with the increase in the percentage of ‘below average’ in the same macro skill. This means that students are not given enough chances to practice their oral communication skills in English in Purposive Communication.

In the HEI under investigation, classes range from 35 (minimum number of students per class) to a staggering 60 students per class. With only 54 hours for the whole semester, only some students are given the chance to speak with real-time feedback from course facilitators. There is simply no time, even for a class with only 35 students, to allow multiple oral exchanges with critical feedback between teachers and their students within the semester.

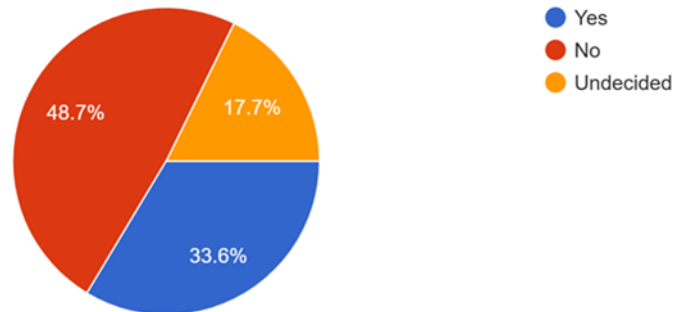
Comparing the results of the three sets of self-assessments, the respondents generally recorded better self-valuation of their reading skills. On the other hand, the macro skill speaking recorded the least number of proficient/excellent responses in all self-assessments. These results impact the respondents’ choices in the succeeding sections.

### **Diagnosing the Limitations of Purposive Communication**

The results presented in this section were retrieved from the third part of the survey, English Language Learning and Purposive Communication. Here, the respondents were asked to make judgments, decisions, and choices regarding the sufficiency of ELL they received in their English language courses in both SHS and higher education. They were likewise asked to make decisions (or suggestions) regarding solving the limitations of Purposive Communication by offering additional English courses in higher education. Finally, they make their choices among the number, placement, and specific English courses that may be offered as additional courses in higher education.

When the students were asked to make judgements about the sufficiency of basic English language skills learned in SHS, 48.70% answered that they were not enough to help them ensure success in their chosen college degree program (see figure 5 below).

It must be noted that the respondents are English majors and during the time of data gathering they had taken courses in phonology, morphology, syntax, and other major courses in English that have allowed them to understand the forms and uses of the English language. This undeniably affected their judgment of what they learned in SHS in two ways: first, it was a positive feedback because they were able to provide an explicit informed judgment of the limitations of the English language courses in SHS, but on the other hand, (second) the judgment was delivered from their limited perspective as English majors. It will be very interesting to find the responses of non-English majors to this question.

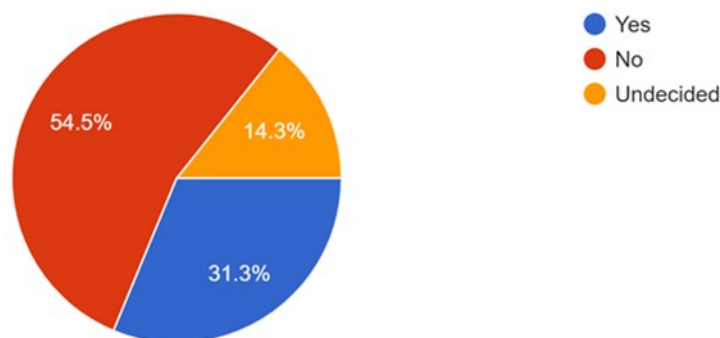


**Figure 5. Respondents' perceptions on the sufficiency of English language skills learned in SHS (Pie chart retrieved from Google Forms)**

Meanwhile, 33.60% answered yes, the basic English language skills learned in SHS were enough to help them navigate university life, and 17.70% were undecided whether the English language skills they learned were enough or not.

When the students were asked to make judgements about the sufficiency of basic English language skills learned from Purposive Communication, 54.50% answered that they were not enough to help them ensure success in and after the university (see figure 6 below).

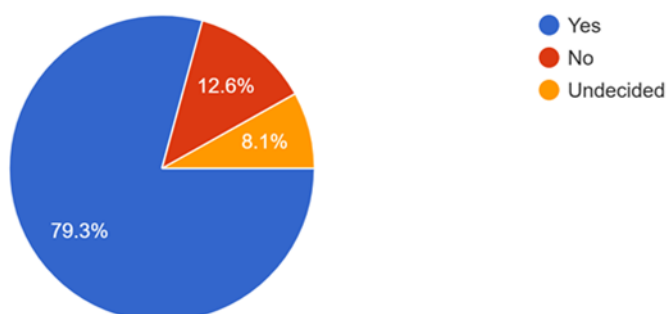
As English majors, the respondents are in better position compared with students from other degree programs to make this judgment since they had taken advanced English courses. After college, if they pursue a profession in teaching, there is a great chance that these same respondents will be assigned to teach Purposive Communication as well and will face the limitations and challenges of ELL and ELT in higher education.



**Figure 6. Respondents' perceptions on the sufficiency of English language skills learned in Purposive Communication (Pie-chart retrieved from Google Forms)**

Meanwhile, 31.30% answered yes, the basic English language skills learned from Purposive Communication were enough to help them navigate university and post-university life, and 14.30% were undecided whether the English language skills learned from Purposive Communication were sufficient or not.

When the students were asked to make decisions whether they think taking a separate English course in the university will help them develop their English language proficiency, 79.30% answered that an English language course (or English language courses) separate from Purposive Communication will definitely help them. For the rest of the respondents, 12.60% said no and 8.10% are undecided.

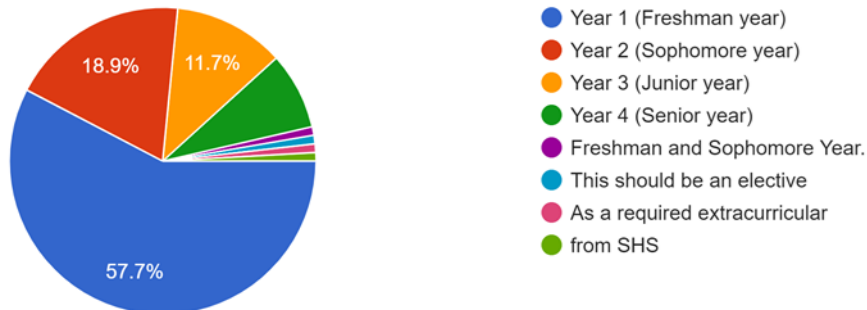


**Figure 7. Respondents' perceptions on the need to add English-language courses in higher education (Pie chart retrieved from Google Forms)**

When the respondents were asked to make decisions regarding the year levels when additional English courses may be offered, 57.50% answered Year 1 (Freshman year), 18.90% answered Year 2 (Sophomore year), and 11.70% answered Year 3 (Junior year). Meanwhile, there are interesting organic suggestions from the respondents such as (1) the additional English course may be an elective (0.90%) or a required extracurricular activity (0.90%). There was also one respondent (0.90%) who suggested that additional English courses should be added to SHS.

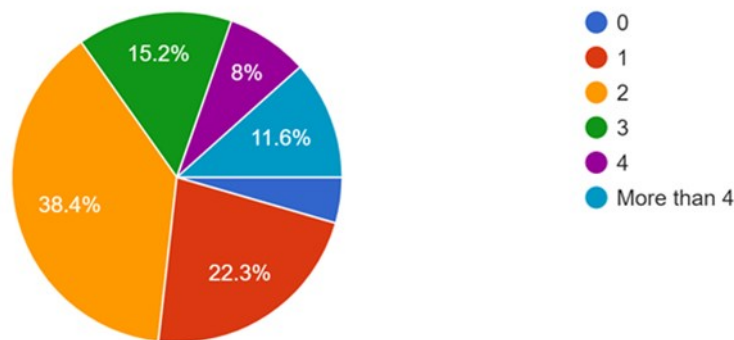
This last organic suggestion is related to the results of one of the questions in part 3 of the survey where the respondents were asked to judge the sufficiency of English language skills learned in SHS. The majority of the respondents (48.70%) claimed that the English language skills they learned were not enough to ensure success in the university. The results of the self-assessment of the English language skills learned in SHS per macro skill in part 2 of the survey further support this suggestion. It can be observed that only a few of the respondents answered 'excellent' in their self-assessment, with the macro skill speaking showing the lowest percentage compared with the other macro skills. This means that there can still be much to learn to strengthen students' readiness for higher education, or even professional life as K to 12 basic education program policy implementers promised, given that additional English courses are added to SHS.





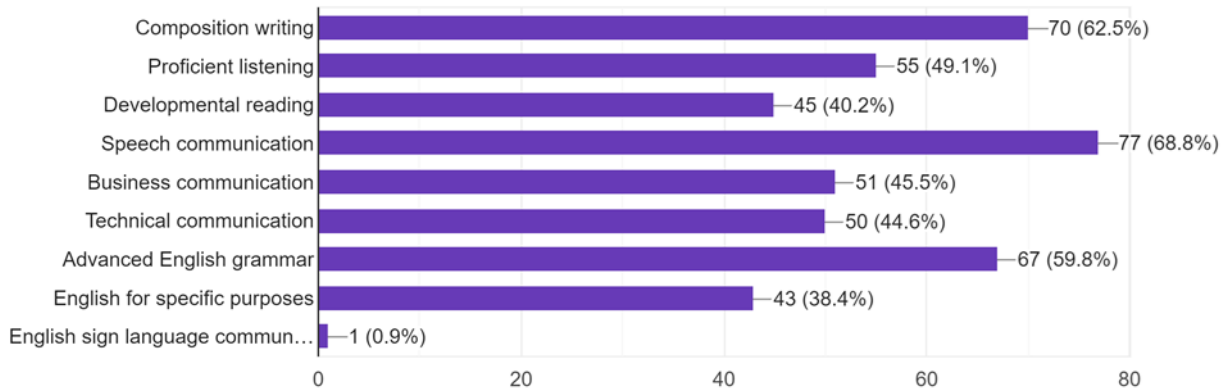
**Figure 8. Respondents’ perceptions on the year level(s) when the additional English language course(s) may be included in higher education (Pie chart retrieved from Google Forms)**

In terms of the ideal number of English language courses that may be added to their curriculum, the respondents mostly answered two (38.40%), but there are others who answered one (22.30%) and three (15.20%).



**Figure 9. Respondents’ perceptions on the number of English language courses that may be added to higher education (Pie chart retrieved from Google Forms)**

In terms of the choice of additional English courses, the top three choices are, (1) speech communication with 68.80%, (2) composition writing with 62.50%, and (3) advanced English grammar with 59.80%. An organic suggestion “English [for] sign language communication” (0.90%) also appears with the responses.



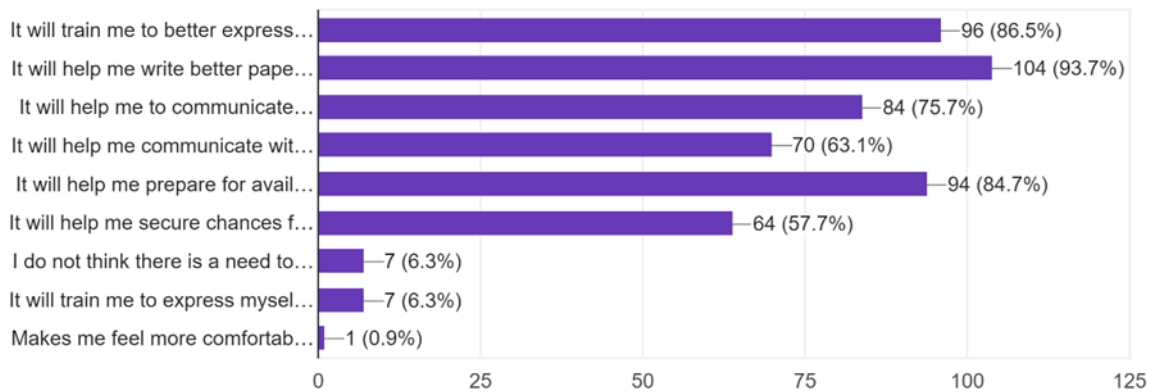
**Figure 10. Respondents' choice of English language courses that may be added in higher education (Bar graph retrieved from Google Forms)**

These choices reveal several realizations: (1) the SHS course Oral Communication and the higher education course Purposive Communication are not enough to provide students with avenues to strengthen their oral communication skills in English that may be applied to their university life, thus the high percentage that reveal preference for the course speech communication as an additional English course in higher education; (2) the respondents believe that investing in their written communication skills in English will help them navigate their university life better as revealed in the high percentage that show preference for composition writing as an additional English language course in higher education; and (3) the grammar lessons taken in the basic education need reinforcement in the university level revealed by the high percentage of preference for the course advanced English grammar as additional English course in higher education.

These results were undeniably shaped by the self-assessments conducted in part 2 of the survey. As observed among the three sets of self-assessments, the respondents find themselves less proficient in speaking and writing compared with reading and listening, thus the better preference for the specific English courses that teach the speaking and writing skills as shown in Figure 8 above.

Again, these results are from English majors, so it is interesting to learn about the choices of non-English majors that will be reported in the succeeding versions of this paper.

Finally, for the final section of the survey, the respondents were asked to identify from a list of choices the importance of offering a separate English language course (or courses) in higher education. They were given the chance to check all choices that align with their perceptions and were likewise given the chance to offer their organic perceptions ('others' field where respondents may type their own words).



**Figure 11. Respondents' reasons for their choice to include additional English language courses in higher education (Bar graph retrieved from Google Forms)**

Among the possible responses, the respondents' top three choices are, (1) It will help me write better papers, i.e., thesis, feasibility studies, term paper, for my other English language courses in college with 93.70%; (2) It will train me to better express myself in speaking and writing in English-language courses in college with 86.50%; and (3) It will help me prepare for available jobs after college with 84.70%.

Again, these results were undeniably shaped by the self-assessments conducted in part 2 of the survey that reveal the need to further enhance respondents' skills in writing and speaking. One organic response, "Makes me feel more comfortable and confident in speaking the English language" even strengthen this claim.

Furthermore, the top three results also show the priorities of students in relation to developing their communication skills in English: first is the priority to writing in English since this is greatly needed in the preparation of paper requirements not only in English language courses but in many of the college students' courses, major and minor alike, that use the English language; and then this is closely followed by speaking in English that students are often required to perform to communicate their ideas in both major and minor courses classroom discussions. The author previously also mentioned that even extracurricular activities (nonacademic activities) beyond the courses taken by students in higher education require proficiency in the written and spoken forms of English. The third highest choice, on the other hand, shows how the two previously emphasized English language skills are expected to be utilized post-university, i.e., preparation for the available jobs that require applicants to demonstrate their English language proficiency in joining job interviews and in preparing their curriculum vitae and in filling out forms required by companies.

Interestingly, the choice for “upward economic mobility” only ranked sixth with 57.70%. Responses that are closely related to intercultural and multicultural competence through English ranked slightly better, i.e., “It will help me communicate with English-speaking foreigners” with 63.10% and “It will help me to communicate better with people outside the academe” with 75.70%. These results reveal that at least in the setting of investigation, the English language is no longer simply valued for its economic worth, rather for its ability to bridge people from different languages, cultures, and identities within and beyond one’s context.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly, from the results of the investigation presented previously, Purposive Communication is not enough to bear all the English language skills needed by higher education students to successfully navigate university and professional life. There is a clear need for additional English language courses in the early years of higher education to rigorously reinforce the rudiments of the English language learned in basic education towards better communication skills in English. The addition of English language courses to higher education will significantly help students prepare for the requirements of university life, i.e., writing their term papers in their specialization courses, writing their theses, orally presenting their ideas to their teachers and peers inside and outside their classrooms, etc. The additional English language courses will likewise provide students with ample opportunities to practice their written and spoken communication skills in English with the guidance of teachers trained in teaching the target language in preparation for professional life after college. The additional English language courses will not only increase students’ chances to secure better employment after college but will likewise develop their inter- and multicultural competence.

It is time for policy implementers to listen to the perceptions of the recipients of the policies that they craft. The result of this preliminary investigation hopes to invoke CHED and the HEI under investigation to consider the inclusion of additional English-language courses in higher education not only for the many reasons cited previously but also to address the country’s declining proficiency in using the English language.

Finally, as a way to navigate forward, one of the limitations of the descriptive statistic survey analysis design applied to this project is its ability to only provide answers to the ‘what’ questions and less to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. For further investigation, it will be worthwhile to conduct one-on-one interviews or focused group discussions with selected respondents to know the specific aspects of SHS English language courses and Purposive Communication that they find limiting. It is equally interesting to find out how students make their decisions with regard to the number of additional English courses that they think needs to be added to their curriculum, placement of the additional English courses in the year levels, specific choice of English language courses, and their rationale for the need to add English language courses to their curriculum. The results of such investigations will be interesting to compare between the perspectives of English majors that is reported in this project and non-English majors that will be presented in future versions of this project.

**REFERENCES**

- Avila, M.O. (2020) Teaching Purposive Communication in higher education using contextualized and localized techniques. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(9). 861-864.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.10.09.2020.p105103>
- Baclig, C.E. (2020). Philippines drops further in global English proficiency rankings. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1362951/philippines-drops-further-in-global-english-proficiency-rankings>
- Bautista, A.C. (2020). The learners' view on interdisciplinary approach in teaching Purposive Communication. *DLSU Research Congress 2020*. Retrieved <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/category/research-congress-2020/>
- Bulaquit (2019) Utilization of Facebook as a supplemental tool in developing English communication skills: Basis for a proposed syllabus in Purposive Communication. *The CALA 2019 Proceedings Paper*. 264-268. Retrieved <https://cala2019.cala.asia>
- Cabigon, M. (2015). State of English in the Philippines: Should we be concerned? *British Council Philippines*. Retrieved <https://www.britishcouncil.ph/teach/state-english-philippines-should-we-be-concerned-2>
- CHED Memorandum Order 20 s. 2013. *Commission on Higher Education*. Retrieved <https://ched.gov.ph/cmo-20-s-2013/>
- Cruz, I. (2014). Purposive communication. *Philstar Global*. Retrieved on November 21, 2020 from <https://www.philstar.com/other-sections/education-and-home/2014/09/04/1365213/purposive-communication>
- Curriculum Guide for English for Academic and Professional Purposes. (n.d.). *Department of Education*. Retrieved [https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SHS-Applied\\_English-for-Academic-and-Professional-Purposes-CG.pdf](https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SHS-Applied_English-for-Academic-and-Professional-Purposes-CG.pdf)
- Enerio, D.A.M. (2018). PHL graduates' English edge seen narrowing. *Business World*. Retrieved <https://www.bworldonline.com/phl-graduates-english-edge-seen-narrowing/>
- Garcia, M.A. (2020). Filipinos' English proficiency drops to 27th place in global ranking. *GMA News*. Retrieved <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/764812/filipinos-english-proficiency-drops-to-27th-place-in-global-ranking/story/>
- Leonen, J.N. (2018). Inquiry into decline of English skill of PH students sought. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/969318/inquiry-into-decline-of-english-skill-of-ph-students-sought>
- Magsambol, B. (2020). PH slides down to 27th in global English proficiency index. *Rappler*. Retrieved <https://www.rappler.com/nation/philippines-ranking-global-english-proficiency-index-2020>
- Magsino, D. (2019). Pinoys losing edge in English proficiency. *GMA News*. Retrieved <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/690333/pinoys-losing-edge-in-english-proficiency/story/>
- Mohammad, N. K. (2016). The perception of the parents and students on the implementation of k–12 basic education program in the Philippines.

- In *International Conference on Education (IECO) FKIP UNMUH JEMBER* (Vol. 1, No. 1).
- Okabe, M. (2013). Where does Philippine education go?: the "K to 12" program and reform of Philippine basic education.
- Paris, J. (2019). Too early to say whether K to 12 effective or not – DepEd official. *Rappler*. Retrieved <https://www.rappler.com/nation/deped-official-too-early-say-k-to-12-effective-or-not>
- “Philippines.” (2020). *EF English Proficiency Index*. Retrieved <https://www.ef.com/ca/epi/regions/asia/philippines/#>
- R.A. 10533 An Act Enhancing the Philippine Basic Education System by Strengthening Its Curriculum and Increasing the Number of Years for Basic Education, Appropriating Funds Therefor and for Other Purposes or Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. *Official Gazette*. Retrieved <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15/republic-act-no-10533/>
- The K to 12 basic education program. (n.d.). *Official Gazette*. Retrieved <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/k-12/#section-7>
- Thompson, M. (2020). COVID-19 and the Philippines’ outsourcing industry. *LSE Southeast Asia Blog*. Retrieved <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/seac/2020/09/22/covid-19-and-the-philippines-outsourcing-industry/>
- Venzon, C. (2021). Philippines GDP shrinks 9.5% in 2020, worst since 1947. *Nikkei Asia*. Retrieved <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Philippines-GDP-shrinks-9.5-in-2020-worst-since-1947>
- Yee, J. (2018). Jobs a hit or miss for senior high school graduates. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/980738/special-report-jobs-a-hit-or-miss-for-senior-high-school-graduates>

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Rubrics for the Self-Assessment of English Languages Skills Based on CFR

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
<b>Proficient</b>	Can understand with ease practically everything heard from various sources.	Can express thoughts spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.	Can understand with ease practically everything read from various sources.	Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation.
<b>Advanced</b>	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning.	Can express thoughts fluently and spontaneously for social, academic, and professional purposes without obvious searching for expressions.	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer printed texts, and recognize implicit meaning from materials read.	Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects.
<b>Upper-intermediate</b>	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics.	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity using the English language; can explain a viewpoint on an issue.	Can understand the main ideas of complex text including technical documents in field of specialization.	Can produce clear, detailed written texts on a wide range of subjects; can explain a viewpoint on an issue.
<b>Intermediate</b>	Can understand the main points of familiar texts.	Can deal with situations most likely to arise in areas where English is spoken.	Can understand the main points of familiar texts read at school, work, or leisure activities.	Can produce simple connected texts of familiar or personal interest. Can describe personal details and provide reasons and explanations.
<b>Elementary</b>	Can understand sentences and frequently-used expressions.	Can communicate in simple and routine tasks. Can describe in simple terms in areas of immediate need.	Can understand sentences and frequently-used expressions in basic printed texts.	Can write simple descriptions of items in areas of immediate need.
<b>Beginner</b>	Can understand familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases. Can understand when other person talks slowly.	Can use familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases. Can introduce one's self and answer questions about personal details.	Can understand familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases on basic printed texts.	Can write familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases.

**Appendix B. Rubrics for the Self-Assessment of English Language Skills Based on the Objectives of SHS English Courses**

	<b>Listening</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Can employ various strategies to avoid communication breakdown	Can appropriately determine and respond to shifts in speech acts almost without teacher supervision; can effectively deliver speech before a group of audience almost without teacher supervision	Can critically analyze written texts across disciplines almost without teacher supervision	Can effectively write speeches, texts across disciplines (book review, research paper, position paper, etc.), and professional correspondence (letters, resumes, etc.) almost without teacher supervision
<b>Above average</b>	Can employ several strategies to avoid communication breakdown	Can suitably determine and respond to shifts in speech acts with very minimal teacher supervision; can effectively deliver speech before a group of audience with very minimal teacher supervision	Can critically analyze written texts across disciplines with very minimal teacher supervision	Can effectively write speeches, texts across disciplines (book review, research paper, position paper, etc.), and professional correspondence (letters, resumes, etc.) with very minimal teacher supervision
<b>Average</b>	Can employ some strategies to avoid communication breakdown	Can determine and respond to shifts in speech acts with the usual general guidance provided by teachers; can deliver speech before a group of audience with the usual general guidance provided by teachers	Can analyze written texts across disciplines with the usual general guidance provided by teachers	Can write speeches, texts across disciplines (book review, research paper, position paper, etc.), and professional correspondence (letters, resumes, etc.) with the usual general guidance provided by teachers
<b>Below average</b>	Needs help in listening to and determining cues to avoid communication breakdown	Needs help in determining shifts in speech acts; needs help in speech preparation and delivery	Needs help in reading and analyzing texts across disciplines	Needs help in writing speeches, texts across disciplines (book review, research paper, position paper, etc.), and professional correspondence (letters, resumes, etc.)



**Appendix C. Rubrics for the Self-Assessment of English Language Skills Based on the CHED-Suggested Objectives for Purposive Communication**

	<b>Listening</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Can listen to and evaluate a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts with critical awareness independently	Can orally present academic papers persuasively using appropriate speaking styles and language varieties	Can perform critical reading and evaluation of a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts independently	Can write persuasive academic papers using appropriate writing styles and language varieties
<b>Above average</b>	Can listen to and evaluate a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts with critical awareness and with very minimal guidance from teachers	Can orally present academic papers using appropriate speaking styles and language varieties	Can perform critical reading and evaluation of a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts with very minimal guidance from teachers	Can write academic papers using appropriate writing styles and language varieties
<b>Average</b>	Can listen to and evaluate a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts with critical awareness with the general guidance normally-provided by teachers	Can orally present academic papers using expected conventions	Can perform critical reading and evaluation of a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts with the general guidance normally-provided by teachers	Can write academic papers using expected conventions
<b>Below average</b>	Needs extensive help to be able to listen to a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts	Needs improvement to be able to orally present academic papers successfully	Needs extensive help to be able to read a variety of multimodal and multicultural texts	Needs improvement to be able to write academic papers successfully