Linguistic Tokens Among High School Students' Discourse: A State University Experience

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Abstract

This study explores the sociolinguistic aspects of English language use among Junior High School students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) in Dapitan City, focusing on cultural norms and social practices. Using Oral Discourse Completion Tasks (ODCTs), the study examined students' speech acts in refusal, compliment responses, and apologies. Findings indicate that students exhibited varying degrees of sociolinguistic competence, with personal addresses, nicknames, and role-based titles such as "ma'am" and "sir" commonly used. Participants demonstrated politeness strategies, often refusing requests indirectly to maintain social harmony. The study also reveals that sociolinguistic behaviors did not significantly vary based on gender, grade level, religion, ethnic affiliation, home language, or parents' educational attainment. Moreover, students with strong motivation in learning English displayed higher proficiency and confidence in communication. The research underscores the need for enhanced instructional strategies that incorporate cultural and social dimensions of language learning. It recommends periodic language proficiency assessments and continuous teacher development programs to further improve students' communicative competence.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic competence, Speech acts, Cultural norms, English language learning, Oral communication

Introduction

In today's globalized society, the ability to express oneself in a second or foreign language is an essential skill. English, as a widely used language for communication, plays a key role internationally due to the cultural diversity of its speakers, its geographical reach, and the various domains in which it is used. With globalization facilitated by technology and increased immigration across linguistic and cultural boundaries, English has become the primary language for international discourse. It allows individuals to engage in conversations on various topics, from casual discussions to formal speeches. This worldwide spread of English underscores the necessity of communicating effectively across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds

The majority of English users today are found in countries where it is spoken as a foreign or second lan-

guage. However, mastering English for oral communication is a complex process that requires more than just vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Effective communication in a second language depends on cognitive understanding and the ability to apply language skills in appropriate, real-life contexts. The way learners use language is influenced by their knowledge of its structure and their capacity to engage in meaningful interactions. Therefore, developing strong oral communication skills in English is essential for both personal and professional growth.

Language serves as the primary vehicle for cultural transmission, allowing individuals to understand and access the thoughts of others. Just as social life influences language use, language also shapes social interactions. In today's globalized world, English-speaking skills have gained significant importance, as they are used for various purposes, such as making requests, describing experiences, and even entertaining others. Proficiency in speaking is often how individuals are judged in real-life situations, whether in social settings or professional environments. Thus, the ability to communicate effectively in English contributes to better career opportunities and interpersonal relationships.

Despite its popularity as a second language, English remains challenging to master due to various linguistic and social factors. Fauziati (2016), as cited in the International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), emphasized that speaking is the most critical aspect of language learning. The success of second-language acquisition is often measured by the ability to carry out a conversation. However, many learners continue to struggle with oral communication, facing persistent difficulties despite years of studying vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures. These challenges highlight the need for improved teaching strategies and more practice opportunities to enhance speaking skills.

Foreign language learners from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds often experience frustration when they cannot effectively participate in conversations in a second language. Eloquence in speech requires a balance between thought and expression, making communication both an intellectual and emotional skill. Goldenberg (2011) noted that learners come from diverse backgrounds, making it necessary to address their varied linguistic and social needs. Tanveer (2007) further suggested that oral communication problems can be mitigated through increased exposure to vocabulary and structured practice. Understanding these challenges can help educators design more effective teaching approaches, ensuring that learners develop the confidence and skills needed for successful English communication.

This study is a sociolinguistic inquiry into the English language art of talk among Junior High School students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University, Main Campus, Dapitan City. It seeks to determine the profile of participants in terms of gender, grade level, religion, ethnic affiliation, language spoken at home, and parents' educational attainment. Additionally, it examines the sociolinguistic manifestations in students' responses, focusing on cultural norms and social practices, and explores how these aspects vary based on demographic factors. The study also aims to uncover patterns in language use and communication styles influenced by these factors, providing insights into linguistic diversity. Ultimately, the research seeks to determine the implications of these sociolinguistic findings for English teaching and learning, contributing to more effective language instruction strategies that enhance students' communication skills and cultural competence.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method, using actual speaking exercises, informal interviews, and classroom observations to analyze second language speaking challenges in a

sociolinguistic context. The Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) were utilized, with students responding orally to prompts to elicit natural speech. Following Eslami and Mirzaei's (2014) findings, oral DCTs were preferred over written ones due to their ability to generate authentic speech. Additionally, closed role plays were used, where students assumed predefined roles to respond to various situations categorized into refusal, compliment response, and apology. These responses were videotaped for validation and verification, ensuring accurate data collection.

The study was conducted at Jose Rizal Memorial State University, Main Campus, Dapitan City, involving 169 Junior High School students across Grades 7 to 10. Participants engaged in closed role plays for an hour daily, responding to five prompters each. The research also examined the role of English in Philippine education, highlighting challenges in English proficiency due to bilingual policies and language interference. The study emphasized the importance of improving students' speaking skills and identified factors affecting their oral communication abilities. The findings are expected to guide educators in addressing speaking difficulties and enhancing English language instruction.

Results and Discussions
Profile of the Participants
Gender
There were 69 or 40.83 percent who were masculine, 91 or 53.85 percent were feminine; 7 or 4.14 percent were gay; and only 2 or 1.18 percent were lesbians. This means that there were more than 50 percent of the participants who were feminine or having the female genetalia. This implies that the junior high school students are dominated by 'great talkers' and very sociable and gregarious young ladies. Further, this implies that they have to develop skills in communication as they need the skills for interaction and good relation with others. One generalization could be drawn that in today's population, there are generally more females compared to the males. The finding is also supported by the 2007 Census as cited by Cuevas (2009) that more girls are born compared to boys. This corroborates also the result of her study which reveals that majority of the participants are females and the male participants are inferior in number.

Table 1. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Masculine	69	40.83
Feminine	91	53.85
Gay	7	4.14
Lesbian	2	1.18
Total	**169**	**100.00**

Grade Level
There were 52 or 30.77 percent Grade 7 students, 47 or 27.81 percent Grade 8 students, 41 or 24.26 percent Grade 9 students, and 29 or 17.16 percent Grade 10 students as the least number of student-participants. As regard to the number of enrolled students in the Junior High School Department during the school year vis-à-vis acquired number of participants, the researcher claimed that there was a hundred percent participation. Looking at the trend of enrollment, it is evident that the number of students enrolled in the Junior High School follows the increasing trend.

Table 2. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Grade Level

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent
Grade 7	52	30.77
Grade 8	47	27.81
Grade 9	41	24.26
Grade 10	29	17.16
Total	169	100.00

Religion

Roman Catholic students outnumbered with the other religion which constituted about 54 percent. On the other hand, about 16 percent composed the Seventh Day Adventist and about 15 percent made up the Iglesia ni Kristo and Born-Again Christian, respectively. Moreover, Jehovah's Witnesses comprised three (3) or 1.78 percent while Islam was the least consisting about two (2) percent. Finding means that the junior high school students are dominantly Roman Catholic. This implies that students remain to believe the Roman Catholic teachings and practices despite of the many existing religions in the community. They always believe that Roman Catholic is still the first-choice religion and the only religion to be affiliated. However, observations revealed that due to influences of other religions, some students tend to embrace other sects rather stay and endure catholicism that they once belong. Lampman (2009) averred that most people who switch their religion, leave their childhood faith and the opportunities for attracting them to another religion appear to continue for some time. Due to influences of other religions and bad experiences with catholicism people tend to shift to other sects and enjoy teachings and eventually get contented with it.

Table 3. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Roman Catholic	90	53.25
Jehovah's Witness	3	1.78
Born Again Christian	24	14.20
Islam	2	1.18
Iglesia ni Kristo	24	14.20
Seventh Day Adventist	26	15.38
Total	169	100.00

Ethnic Affiliation

One hundred sixty-seven (167) or 98.82% were Cebuanos and two (2) or 1.18% who were Muslim students comprised the population of the Junior High School Department. This further means that the junior high school students in the University share common culture, beliefs, customs and tradition. This means further that students are culturally associated and interconnected and unity and respect is the prevailing climate in the Department. Yu (2014) supported that people of the same cultures could perceive the role of the hearer in the same manner. No matter what, these students typically understand each other and racism is not evident in the learning environment. Although there are Muslims in the learning environment, still racial problems and conflicts are not observed in the high school department. Hence, oneness and camaraderie exist in the learning environment.

Table 4. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Ethnic Affiliation

Ethnic Affiliation	Frequency	Percent
Cebuano	167	98.82
Muslim	2	1.18
Total	169	100.00

Language Spoken at Home

About 99 percent of the participants used Cebuano at home. However, the table reflects one (1) respondent who used English language and another one (1) who used Filipino in everyday conversation at home. This means that Cebuano is the daily language used by the junior high students when they are at home with their family members and even when they are with their classmates in school. Mullick (2016) corroborates the present finding whose study revealed that 46.2% of participants never used English with their family members, 38.1% used little English, mere 0.6% used English all the time, and only 8.1% of the participants claimed that they used English most of the time with their family members. Gan (2012) reported that English is little used in social intercourse as students do not have many opportunities to speak English in their daily life. Spoken language production is often considered one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. In reality, many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in spoken language in the target language.

Table 5. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Language Spoken at Home

Language Spoken	Frequency	Percent
English	1	0.59
Filipino	1	0.59
Cebuano	167	98.82
Total	169	100.00

Educational Attainment of Mothers

Manifested in Table 7 is the profile of Junior High School students in terms of the educational attainment of their mothers. The table shows that about 76 percent of the mothers attended college with about 3 percent proceeded to graduate education. However, a considerable percent (about 22%) of the mothers was able to take high school education. This means that more than 78 percent of the mothers are educated and experience a more advanced instruction. Still, educational attainment of mothers as teachers is contributory to their language performance. Mothers being their first teachers expectedly should have the knowledge about English as a target language. This implies that education of the junior high school students is reflective of the education obtained by their mothers. This implies further that mothers of the junior high school students prioritize education of their children. In similar vein, mothers support the government program that no students should be left behind. Briones as cited by Mateo (2016) vowed to strengthen government efforts to ensure that no student is left behind. These students potentially can exhibit satisfactory performance in English if not excellent.

Table 6. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Educational Attainment of Mother

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
High School	36	21.30
College	128	75.74
Graduate Studies	5	2.96
Total	169	100.00

Educational Attainment of Fathers

Indicated in Table 8 is the profile of the Junior High School students in terms of educational attainment of their father. The table shows that about 75 percent of the fathers of the participants attended college education with about 3 percent went to graduate studies. Though the table reflects further that considerable percent (23.08%) of the fathers only obtained high school education, yet, it can be inferred that educational attainment of bulk of fathers is exemplary. Fathers of these students had made their meritorious step in education and, hence, equipped themselves with knowledge needed to become better communicators which could be transferred to their children through random teaching of English at home during their spare time.

Fathers often are not obliged to teach their children at home as they are generally responsible for bringing food and wealth to the family. However, due to a significant change of behavior in the society, the jobless father may stay at home and look after the welfare of the children. In this case, fathers also considerably affect the performance of students since they are the one who will carry out the duties of the mother such as doing the home chores and looking after the children at home which of course includes making follow-ups on the performance of these children.

Table 7. Profile of the Junior High School Students in Terms of Educational Attainment of Father

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
High School	39	23.08
College	126	74.56
Graduate Studies	4	2.37
Total	169	100.00

Sociolinguistic Manifests

Prompter 1

Results were conglomerates of speech acts of refusal (Category 1). Situations under Prompter 1 required participants to refuse invitations and to decline requests and offers. Here, situations like a friend declining a party invitation and refusing a coffee offered by a friend, a subordinate refusing an overtime work requested by the boss, a professor refusing a teaching method requested by a student, a classmate declining a borrowing request coming from a classmate, a business owner refusing salary-raising request to a worker and a company president declining a dinner offered by a salesman were treated. In the linguistic aspect of the study, the way utterance was formed was looked into. This dealt with word order and grammatical structure of the language, too.

To clarify their responses, to the situations under this category, some of the students provided a variety of subsequent explanations to their refusals. In each drawn situation, junior high school students were

asked to refuse invitations or decline offers orally. For example, students provided responses to social situations such as refusing a friend's invitation to a party by saying, "Sorry my friend, I can't go to your party because we have three exams to take this Monday". Each situation is written as it was presented to the students in the study. In Prompter 1, some replies from the students are listed as follows:

- Could I finish the task tomorrow? My husband will be angry if I'm late.
- I'm sorry boss but I have many tings to do in our house.
- No tanks, but I have a stomachache.
- Sorry my friend, I can't go to you party because we have three exams to take next Monday.
- No, I'm tired! Fuck you!

Judging from the formulaic sequences used by the students, it could be concluded also that a certain number of students were able to apply the functional expressions of refusal to corresponding situations although some responses such as "no" appeared to be impolite in declining both an offer or an invitation in the Philippine context. It can be noted that responses of students did not follow the components of refusal. Students responded shorter utterances and responses manifested two (2) separate speech acts, namely: an expression of regret "I'm sorry" followed by an excuse "I have many tings (things) to do in our house". Further, students stated a straightforward utterance to turn down an invitation "No tanks (thanks)!" followed by an excuse "I have a stomachache". It was observed that in this case, a student did not offer an alternative to save the face of someone who did the invitation. Eventually, this kind of refusal threatened the face of the one who invited. The modal "could" was used in the utterance to emphasize respect to a person higher in rank. This is a polite expression used by Filipinos instead of using "sir or ma'am" to extend their courtesy to a person they are speaking to during interaction. Moreover, "friend" was used in the utterance as an endearment addressed to a person close to the reactant.

Speech acts of refusal try to abide by the Politeness Principle as politeness plays a core role in interpersonal communications in the traditional Filipino culture which impacts Filipino language learners' learning a target language. Chen cited in Yuan (2012) indicated that in the case of refusal, one may properly produce three separate speech acts, an expression of regret "I'm sorry", followed by a direct refusal "I cannot come to your birthday party", followed by an excuse "I will be on business in the US". Tanck as discussed by Yuan takes a similar view when he stated the three components of refusal such as an expression of regret, an excuse and an offer of alternative in invitation situations.

Sociolinguistic manifests were derived based on the frequency of single lexical items and basic formulaic sequences that were applied by the students to express refusal and were discussed comprehensively in the proceeding table. Generally speaking, single lexical items and basic formulaic sequences that were provided by the participants to express refusal included the following: sorry, I'm sorry, no thank you, no thanks, and I am sorry, but… followed by the reason of refusal. In this study, speech act of refusal that did not exemplify politeness markers such as spoken bluntly lexicon "no" and phrase "no way" without any explanation why and without offering an alternative to console the threatened face were against the norm and therefore, categorized to be one of the speaking challenges. Unfortunately, one offensive remark was used. The rude remark "fuck you" was marked and identified "0".

In the study of Yuan (2012), he explained that speech act of refusal tries to abide the politeness principle. He quoted that in the case of refusal, one may properly produce an expression of regret followed by a direct refusal and lastly, an excuse. Another author's study which he quoted stated that the

three components of refusing include an expression of regret followed by an excuse and finally an offer of alternative in case of declining an invitation. In this study, seven (7) refusal situations were included. Sociolinguistic context along cultural norms revealed that more than half of the population was described as not challenging meaning provisions under cultural norms were not observable. This was evident when the study revealed that 130 students or 76.92% out of 100% still conformed to their cultural norms. Normally, Filipinos are polite speakers. They do not fail to exercise the appropriate and proper form of declining an offer, suggestion, invitation, request, etc. to express their speech act of refusal so as not appear rude and may lead to misunderstanding and offense. At this point, the result was not alarming as nobody was found to belong above challenging. Although there were four (4) who were identified challenging, still majority of the participants belonged to less challenging down to not. Considering these perspectives, it is safe to say that students applied functional expressions of refusal to situations. Inevitably, there were a few who were impolite in some ways.

This finding means that despite millennial change, Filipino students still exhibit quite a disposition when it comes to their cultural norms. They never forget that refusing to every invitation in a nice way is a good quality among Filipinos. Majority of the student participants provided alternative excuses to the threatened face. They favorably avoided refusing directly by employing a direct refusal "no" or "no way" which was the norm of the Philippines. Researches revealed that Filipinos, struggle to refuse and struggle to say "no", that is why instead of saying "no" directly, Filipinos may say "I'll try…".

Based on the data from the oral discourse completion tasks, personal addresses, nicknames and endearments were used. Moreover, titles according to roles like "teacher", "professor", "boss" and "classmate"; and titles referring to a person higher in rank such as "ma'am" and "sir" were noticeably used by the students. Judging from the result of this study, students in the Junior High School Department sometimes failed to address people around them with proper titles based on their social status. More than half of the total number of students violated the social practices of the Filipinos as reflected in the table. They failed to address correctly the person they were speaking to. Based on the observation, the participants were just interacting with their peers and hence, they were less particular along personal addresses and titles and to them, social distance were not that important after all during interaction. Unarguably, oral discourse completion tasks data were regarded as stimulating more authentic situations, however, the result is limited since students may not behave appropriately on the situation because of the domains they are in. They satisfactorily performed the role assigned for them to act although some were not able to perform well because they were conscious and shy in expressing themselves. In general, data derived from the study reflected the kind of learners in the Junior High School Department.

Table 8. Sociolinguistic Manifests in Prompter 1 along Cultural Norms and Social Practices

Level of Observability	Cultural Norms		Social Practices	
	F	P	F	P
75.01 – 100%	0	0.00	4	2.37
50.01 – 75%	0	0.00	0	0.00
25.1 – 50%	4	2.37	23	13.61
.01 – 25%	35	20.71	97	57.40
0.00%	130	76.92	45	26.63
Total	169	100	169	100

Ranges	Verbal Description
75.01-100%	Very Much Observable
50.01-75%	Much Observable
25.1-50%	Observable
.01-25%	Less Observable
0.00%	Not Observable

Prompter 2

Shown in Table 10 is the level of observable manifests among Junior High School students in the sociolinguistic context along Prompter 2. Like Prompter 1, situations under Prompter 2 were conglomerates of the speech acts of refusal (Category 1). There were seven (7) description situations in which student participants were directed to respond requiring them to refuse invitations and to decline requests and offers. Situations belonging to this group included those situations mentioned in Prompter 1.

To elucidate the responses of the students to the situations under this category, some of the students provided a variety of ensuing explanations to their refusals when junior high school students were asked to refuse invitations or decline offers. For example, students provided responses to a situation such as declining a subordinate's request for a salary increase by saying, "No, I'm sorry, I can't increase your salary". Each situation is written as it was presented to the students in the study. In Prompter 2, some replies from the students are listed as follows:

- I would love to have a dinner with you but I think I have someting to do maybe in some ader times.
- No tanks. I already have one.
- I'd love to but I'm really busy at dis time.
- I'm sorry I can't. Der is an exam tomorrow. We should study both.
- I'm sorry but we also have my other problem here especially we are just still renting dis place.

The above data indicates how students gave refusals in various situations. As can be seen, when provided with an opportunity to extend ideas, students in the study were able to provide appropriate responses. However, some students misused the personal pronoun "we" to refer to the subject "I" talking about "problem". Pronoun "we" in the utterance "… we are just still renting dis (this) place" could mean the speaker did not own the place as his but the business also belonged to his employees. This could mean the employer shared the same level of ownership to his / her subordinate. This is common among Filipinos, instead of saying "this is my place", a Filipino citizen would say "this is our place" which signifies unity and camaraderie. It was shown further in the student responses that they difficulty in emphasizing the digraph "th" in this, thanks, something, other, there, etc. however, students were able to apply the correct sentence structure. Mispronounced "th" sound did not really compromise the meaning of the utterance but it should not be overlooked.

Moving on, judging from the formulaic sequences used by the students, it could be concluded also that a certain number of students were able to apply the functional expressions of refusal to corresponding situations although some responses such as "no" appeared to be impolite in declining both an offer or an invitation in the Philippine context. It can be noted that responses of students followed the components of refusal as stated by Chen and Tanck cited in Yuan (2012). Most of the students responded three (3) separate speech acts, namely: an expression of regret "I'm sorry I can't" followed by an excuse "there is an exam tomorrow" and an alternative "we should study both". Here, the face of the classmate who

borrowed a notebook from another classmate was threatened because his/her expectations were not met and contradicted, but was consoled when the owner of the notebook offered an alternative to the requestor.

Further, students stated a straightforward utterance to turn down an invitation "No tanks (thanks)!" followed by an excuse "I already have one". It was observed that in this case, a student did not offer an alternative to save the face of the inviter. Eventually, this kind of refusal threatened the face of the one who invited. The response "I would love to have a dinner with you but I think I have something (something) to do maybe in some ader (other) times" followed the three components of speech acts of refusal by Chen and Tanck. An expression of regret "I would love to have a dinner" although not directly stated could mean turning down an invitation, followed by "but I think I have someting (something) to do", and ending with an offer of alternative "maybe in some ader (other) times" was a manifestation of said components. An expression of regret "I would love to have a dinner but" was an indirect way of saying "I am sorry, I can't". This response was considerably done by the one who was invited not to appear harsh to the inviter and put less harm to the face of the person who invited.

Filipinos really struggle to turn down invitations especially if the inviter is one of their closest friends. That is why instead of saying their refusals directly, they may say the more gentle way of casting it. They seem to explain more through indirect strategies to let the inviter understand the situation so as not misinterpreted badly. It was observed that students along refusing usually respond simply like "I am sorry" to turn down an invitation. The phrase is an automatic decline expression to politely refuse a request, an invitation or a request followed by an excuse or an honest alibi which would not appear distressing to the interactant. Hence, this kind of utterance does not offend at all to the one being refused.

It was also noted that in order not to appear harsh to the person they were refusing to, students stated their refusal indirectly and even offer an alternative to emphasize courtesy to the threatened face. On the other hand, Tanck cited in Yuan (2012) found out that direct refusal "No" was not a common strategy for any of the subjects in her study, regardless of their language background. Direct refusal "no" is an impolite way of turning down an invitation.

Table 9. Sociolinguistic Manifests in Prompter 2 along Cultural Norms and Social Practices

Level of Observability	Cultural Norms		Social Practices	
	F	P	F	P
75.01 – 100%	5	2.96	2	1.18
50.01 – 75%	0	0.00	2	1.18
25.1 – 50%	11	6.51	12	7.10
.01 – 25%	72	42.60	109	6.45
0.00%	81	47.93	44	26.04
Total	169	100	169	100

Ranges	Verbal Description
75.01-100%	Very Much Observable
50.01-75%	Much Observable
25.1-50%	Observable
.01-25%	Less Observable

0.00%   Not Observable

Prompter 3

Table 11 shows the level of observable manifests among Junior High School students in the sociolinguistic context for Prompter 3. This is the conglomerates of the speech acts of compliment response (Category 2) and written description situations belonging to this group required compliment responses. As a speech act under expressives, compliment response is said to be ubiquitous among Filipinos. Compliment responses in this study were the formulaic "thank you". Included were the following situations: responding to a friend's compliment to the new haircut, to a friend's compliment to a new watch, a classmate's compliment to the best presentation, friend's compliment to a new sweater, a teacher's response to a student's food compliment, a student's response to a teacher's compliment being the good performer in class and a new manager's response to an employee's remark on the new manager's eyes.

Compliment response is another important speech act that was examined in this study to examine junior high school students' practical use of the target language in which according to Cheng (2011) a multifaceted speech act that reflects sociocultural values and politeness differences of the speakers. Compliments are easily heard in people's daily conversations. Responding to compliments is a usual feature of discoursal activities. Speakers do not have time to plan the utterance in advance and they are forced to react promptly to the utterance. They may feel uneasy, defensive, or even suspicious regarding the compliments they receive as compliments could be threatening to the addressee's face and accordingly it may be hard for them to appropriately respond to such compliments. Jucker (2009) classified compliments into personal compliments, ceremonious compliments, season compliments and free gift compliments. According to Holmes cited in Zhang (2013), a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some good possession, characteristic, skill, etc. which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer. Here, single lexical items and basic formulaic sequences that were applied by the students to express compliment responses were analyzed. Mostly, responses stated extended utterances in addition to the brief ones. Responses provided by the students were presented as follows:

- Thank you! This was given by my mom.
- Really? I can also cook again the next time you'll came back here. Teynk you.
- Really? Tenk you so much. I'm like you now, younger and handsome.
- Tenk you sir. I just mana it from my father.
- Thank you friend, my sister suggested this style and I'm very glad that it looked good to me.

As one of the three speech acts examined in this study, compliment responses provided by the students can help to understand their practice of language learning strategies. The data indicated that junior high school students applied cognitive strategies when completing the speech act of compliment response in the situations provided. Here, students pose linguistic rule violation. In the utterance "I can also cook again the next time you came back here …", the lexical item "came" instead of "come" in "come back" was misused. It violated tenses agreement. One student did not notice the correct form of the verb "came" because of his lengthy response. When the response is shorter, a little tendency of being faulty may be assured. Still the problem with the digraph sound "th" stayed to be one of the constant speaking challenges among participants. Although it was understood that "tenyk you" and "tenk you" meant the same thing and could mean one thing when produced, this should not be left out. Students also applied

code-switching strategies so they can express themselves. Example "mana" was uttered in place of "inherited" or "inherit" when a student was praised of his beautiful eyes. This scenario justified the conclusion that students shifted to the first language (L1) if they cannot express themselves in the target language. Students usually shortened words like "mom" instead of "mother".

In everyday transactions of Filipinos, it was observed that they paid attention and gave compliments to what one had and what one possessed. In return, these compliments were responded with "thank you …". In the compliment response "Thank you! This was given by my mom", the respondent accepted the compliment and stated an extended response by saying "… this was given by my mom" which was a reassignment or shift credit. Here, the credit was transferred to his mom. In the response, "Really? Tenk (thank) you so much I'm like you now, younger and handsome", the complimentee stated a reassurance to the compliment given by saying "really?" to confirm from the complimenter whether the compliment was directed to him, followed by an acceptance of compliment "thank you" and extended a return response to the complimenter by saying "I'm like you now, younger and handsome". From the formulaic sequences used by the students, it was found that most junior high school students had a realization of the importance of showing politeness when giving compliment responses and they could apply the expressions of replying to compliments in the corresponding situations. Students further employed politeness markers of personal addresses.

Holmes cited in Yuan (2011) established a taxonomy of compliment responses such as, accept which includes appreciation/agreement token, agreeing utterance, downgrading/qualifying utterance and return compliment; reject which includes disagreeing utterance, question accuracy, challenge sincerity; and deflect/evade which includes shift credit, informative comment, ignore, legitimate evasion, content needed to illustrate, request reassurance/repetition.

Looking into the frequency of lexical items provided in compliment response, the formulaic language "thank you" always occurred in the utterances of the participants. As observed, participants often formed an extended response in addition to the formulaic "thank you". Participants observed the use of title conventions to address people are observed to socially higher than them.

Situations in Prompter 3 considered speech acts of compliment response. Cheng (2011) stated that speech acts of compliment responses is a complex speech act reflecting sociocultural values and politeness differences of the speakers. The acceptance of the compliments and the utterance of return compliments by the participants is a sign of politeness as observed in the Philippine context. Conversely, in the Chinese context as discussed in the study of Schauer (2009), there were a few students who disagreed to compliments by saying "no", a Chinese traditional face-saving act to show politeness in giving compliment responses.

Wu (2011) explained that a few students provided deflective responses by giving informative comments. This is also true as it applies to the study. Responses of the students did not end with a single "thank you" only. Majority of these students conducted extended responses and delivered informative comments such as "I bought this at Lee Plaza". Obviously, these students provided appreciation token "thank you" first before uttering their informative comments.

Further, to avoid to be accused showing off, they utilized downgrading remarks like "Do I look good with it?". Students also provided return compliments as "You look good too". Such were signs of politeness. Due to extended responses, students committed linguistic offenses while naturally, these students failed to pronounce words correctly because of the influence of their mother tongue. This performance does not considerably affect the overall speaking performance of the students in terms of

production. Still, these students did not fail to address the person they are talking to in a polite way and based on the linguistic markers of politeness.

Hence, these students although some failed to address their interactant according to the roles given by the researcher did not really forget to take into considerations the personal titles to be used during the conduct of the closed role play. They remarkably provided expressions like "sir" and "ma'am" the most as a sign of courtesy to their partner having the role of a person higher in rank. The provision of these politeness markers of social distance was frequently observed among utterances of the Junior High School student participants. In general, it is safe to say that the students regardless of grade levels, age, gender, ethnic affiliation, language spoken at home, religion and educational attainment of parents contributed to a positive behavior toward sociolinguistic aspect of the language.

Moreover, these students more or less acquired schemata on language use as seen in the study. They were confident enough in the use of the language in the social setting. As observed, they did not fail to extend their return compliment upon receiving a certain compliment during social interaction. Along this line, linguistic markers of social relations and politeness conventions as evidence for sociolinguistic competence were observable as lexical elements.

Table 10. Sociolinguistic Manifests in Prompter 3 along Cultural Norms and Social Practices

Level of observable manifests	Cultural Norms		Social Practices	
	F	P	F	P
75.01 – 100%	3	1.78	4	2.37
50.01 – 75%	0	0.00	0	0.00
25.1 – 50%	10	5.92	24	14.20
.01 – 25%	56	33.14	116	68.64
0.00%	100	59.17	25	14.79
Total	169	100	169	100

Ranges	Verbal Description
75.01-100%	Very Much Observable
50.01-75%	Much Observable
25.1-50%	Observable
.01-25%	Less Observable
0.00%	Not Observable

Prompter 4

Table 12 shows the level of observable manifests among Junior High School students in the sociolinguistic context along Prompter 4. These were conglomerates of the situations in Category 2. Situations requiring speech acts of compliment responses were also focused in this study. Compliments are easily heard in people's daily conversations. Responding to compliments is a usual feature of discoursal activities constrained by two conditions: agree with the speaker and avoid self-praise. As a result, the compliment recipient is faced with a dilemma as she is expected to agree with the complimenter and accept the compliment. On the other hand, there is strong pressure on how the recipient can accept the compliment without seeming to praise oneself. Nonetheless, precise proportion

of each type of response is considered the prerequisite to understand how social factors are played out in the speech act of compliment.

Holmes cited in Zhang (2013) used an ethnographic method to explore the compliment response strategies in New Zealand English and she developed a model to classify compliment response strategies on the basis of Pomerantz's pioneering work. The model includes three categories of strategies, namely, accept, reject and deflect/evade. Each can be further divided into sub-types of strategies. Accept is divided into appreciation or agreement token, agreeing utterance, downgrading or qualifying utterance and return compliment; reject is divided into disagreeing utterance, question accuracy, and challenge complimenter's sincerity; deflect/evade is divided into shift credit, informative comment, ignore, legitimate evasion and request reassurance/repetition. Here, single lexical items and basic formulaic sequences that were applied by the students to respond to compliments were analyzed. Responses of the students were presented as follows:

- Thank you sir, I have always been interested in computers and I really want to be just like you so I always pay attention to your discussions.
- This is my favorite course of all ma'am, of course I will do my best. Thank you.
- Teynk you friend. You could buy like this to Dipolog.
- Oh, thank you. Do you like to learn how?
- OMG, teynk you miss ….. You hab beautiful eyes as well. Can I ask you? ……. Can …………….. I ask you on a ……… date?

As shown, the students accepted the compliments given by saying "thank you" because compliments were noticed by them and they felt that whenever they received one, a compliment should be addressed by thanking. It might be the case that the Philippine English learners were able to learn the rule of thumb in responding to compliments, that is, to accept it when receiving one. In one of the responses, "Teynk (thank) you friend you could buy like this to Dipolog", it could be noticed that the preposition "to" was wrongly used. This did not follow the correct word use. Details like these were not a big deal to some students because they did not know how these would affect the utterance. Students also committed mispronunciation of the digraph "th" in "thank you" and usually interchangeably used "b" with "v" in "hab" for "have". They were also fond of initials like "OMG" for "Oh My God". In the compliment response "Thank you sir, I have always been interested in computers and I really want to be just like you so I always pay attention to your discussions" the complimentee accepted the compliment by saying "thank you" and extended the response with an informative comment "I have always been interested in computers" and shifted credit by saying "I really want to be just like you" and upgraded the response by saying "I always pay attention to your discussions". The utterance "This is my favorite course of all ma'am, of course I will do my best. Thank you" was delivered in different order. The complimentee started the compliment response with an explanation "This is my favorite course of all" followed by "of course I will do my best" which was said to upgrade the utterance and finally, it was followed by an acceptance token "thank you". In the expression, "Teynk (thank) you friend. You could buy like this to Dipolog", the complimentee thanked the complimenter and gave a request interpretation as the complimentee interpreted the compliment received as a request. So the complimentee offered an idea where to buy the rolex watch by saying "you could buy like this to Dipolog". On the other hand, responses revealed expressions "oh, thank you" in which the complimentee expressed surprise to a given compliment. Moreover, the complimentee again offered something to the complimenter by saying "do you like to learn how" which was a type of a request interpretation. Issue on linguistic rules also was

implicitly manifested in the utterance "OMG, teynk you miss ….. You hab beautiful eyes as well. Can I ask you? ……. Can …………….. I ask you on a ……… date?". Here, the complimentee who was the newly appointed sales manager extended his acceptance token in response to the compliment given by an employee of the store, however, found it awkward to say "Can I ask you? ……. Can …………….. I ask you on a ……… date?". Gaps in the utterance or long pauses could mean either the complimentee struggled to directly state his intent or he was out of words to say. Generally, personal addresses as politeness marker conventions in the compliment responses were often observed. Thanking to a compliment was found to be a natural occurrence.

When frequencies of lexical items to address politeness were considered, remarkable results were found. As shown, a significant number of students were found out to not exhibit sociolinguistic manifests along cultural norms. A total number of 110 students or 65.09% which exceeded 50% belonged to the range between .01-25% justified their less observable behavior along social practices. Below half of the student participants were classified to have exhibited less observable behaviors. Only in the aspect social practices the participants were inferior while they significantly excelled in cultural norms. This means student participants rarely use personal addresses when talking with their classmate whose roles were higher in rank compared to theirs.

Pomerantz cited in Zhang (2013) cited that compliment response is constrained by two general conditions: agree with the speaker and avoid self-praise. As a result, the compliment recipient is faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, the recipient of a compliment is expected to agree with the complimenter and thus accept the compliment. On the other hand, there is strong pressure on how the recipient can accept the compliment without appearing to praise oneself.

The result of the study of Zhang (2013) entitled "Compliments and Compliment Responses in Philippine English" corroborated the result of the present study when she found out that the most common strategy used by Philippine English speakers to respond to compliments is "acceptance token", which accounts for nearly half of raw tokens of compliment response. Return and explanation are the second and third most frequently used strategies by Philippine English speakers. Since strategies such as "acceptance token", "return", "upgrade" are acceptances of some kind, the total percentage of acceptance of compliments in Philippine English is 60%. Downgrade and disagreement strategies account only for less than a quarter of compliment response strategies.

This is refuted by Mojica's study cited in Zhang (2013) which observed that Filipino college students used more non-acceptance and non-agreement strategies in response to compliments and that the Filipino students are more likely to be constrained by modesty maxim. However, the target language in Mojica's study is Filipino, the native language in the Philippines. It might be the case that the Philippine English learners were able to learn the rule of thumb in responding to compliments, that is, to accept it when receiving one.

Mojica's study collected 270 compliments ethnographically with the help of some student assistants. The research examined how Philippine college students gave and responded to compliments using Filipino language. Mojica found that Filipino compliments were formulaic in nature in that a limited set of syntactic patterns and some positively-valued adjectives were frequently employed to give compliments. Compliment is a speech act that frequently occurs in everyday conversations. It is often used to start a conversation or to lubricate the conversational interaction by reinforcing the rapport between the interlocutors.

Table 11. Sociolinguistic Manifests in Prompter 4 along Cultural Norms and Social Practices

Level of observable manifests	Cultural Norms		Social Practices	
	F	P	F	P
75.01 – 100%	0	0.00	4	2.37
50.01 – 75%	0	0.00	4	2.37
25.1 – 50%	4	2.37	9	5.32
.01 – 25%	33	19.53	110	65.09
0.00%	132	78.11	42	24.85
Total	169	100	169	100

Ranges	Verbal Description
75.01-100%	Very Much Observable
50.01-75%	Much Observable
25.1-50%	Observable
.01-25%	Less Observable
0.00%	Not Observable

Prompter 5

Table 13 shows the level of observable manifests among Junior High School students in sociolinguistic context for Prompter 5. Speech acts of apology were the main focus of the prompters. This kind of speech act is categorized by Searle (1977) under expressives as cited in Yuan (2012). Situations included a friend who ripped a bestfriend's magazine page, a teacher who mistook a student's examination paper, a classmate who showed up late for a trip, a student who accidentally interrupted a teacher, a co-worker who failed to pass the message to a co-worker and accusing a classmate wrongly for borrowing the money. Taking into consideration the responses of the student participants, the researcher found out that their markers for apologizing were the lexicon "sorry" and the phrase "I am sorry" plus reason for being sorry. It is the norm that when one committed mistakes, he/she always apologized to the one who he/she offended. An apology is a remedial action which is used to re-establish social harmony after a real or virtual offense which is common in the society. In discourse completion tasks (DCTs), there were six situations designed to examine how students made apologies. Data were as follows:

- I'm so sorry sir I interrupted you sir. Forgive me.
- I'm really really sorry I thought it was you.
- I'm sorry for that Tom I'm busy at my work that's why I forgot to pass at you.
- My apology por my mistake I promise to pix my mess.
- I'm sorry friend I ripped your magazine but I didn't mean to do it, I'll just buy a new one for you.

The data indicated that the five most frequent lexical items and basic formulaic sequences used by the students to offer apologies were I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm really, really sorry, my apology and I didn't mean to do it. The results highlighted that most students were able to offer appropriate expressions to show their regret in the corresponding situations. Junior High School students tried to show politeness and considered face-saving theory when giving apologies. Yet, there were still a small group of students who could not use proper expressions to give a satisfactory apology. In the apology "I'm sorry for that Tom I'm busy at my work that's why I forgot to pass at you", the statement was vague. The utterance "I forgot to pass at you" exhibited ambiguity and seemed hanging, the meaning was satisfactorily conveyed

and the message was incomplete. The expression "I forgot to pass at you" could mean different thing when someone apologized for failure of passing the message to a friend. This could mean, someone forgotten to pass by a friend and not forgetting to have passed the message. To make it more clear and accurate, the statement should go with "the message" delete the preposition "at". Hence, it should be "I forgot to pass you the message. Moreover, the statement "My apology por (for) my mistake I promise to pix (fix) my mess" exhibited production error which misled the hearer, "f" sound was shifted to "p" sound in "por (for) and "pix (fix). This had been the prevalent problem to small groups of students. There were no serious problems at all aside from linguistic rules and production as the responses demonstrated that junior high school students were able to recognize the apology situation and applied proper expressions of apology. Students provided an apology together with an indication of taking a responsibility as well as promise to rectify the situation, explanation on the situation, acknowledgment of the responsibility and offering a remedy just like in the utterance "I'm sorry friend I ripped your magazine but I didn't mean to do it, I'll just buy a new one for you" where "I ripped your magazine" was the speaker's statement of responsibility followed by an expression of remedy by saying "I'll just buy a new one for you". These were polite strategies to save the recipient's face which reiterated that culture affected language learning. A remedy was offered to make up for the mistake. To take the blame of the committed mistake to the extreme, the statement was intensified with the use of an adverb "really" like the utterance "I'm really really sorry …" and "so" in the statement "I'm so sorry sir…". Some students employed words to ask forgiveness like "… Forgive me". Conversely, shorter responses without extended information threatened the face of the recipient.

The study of Kabir (2014) refutes to the result of the present study. According to him, it is axiomatic that to most of the students taking an attempt to speak English is like facing the ghost in the dark. They have a tendency to think it as an impossible attempt to achieve the English speaking proficiency. Moreover, most of the students think English as a subject to pass rather a language to speak which is one of the obvious reasons behind the inefficiency in this oracy skill.

Accordingly, it was revealed that none among the students who were revealed to have exhibited a much observable behavior along cultural norms and social practices. Student participants employ politeness very much observably and still uphold the cultural norms and social practices as Filipinos regardless of the grade levels they belong. Observably, students even inside the classroom although stated colloquially "ayh, joke" mean to say "sorry". However, because of the formal conduct of the prompters, students' utterances were limited to the formulaic "sorry" only. This means that students are responsible enough with the way they interact with people around them. They know when to behave formally and when to behave informally.

This implies further that they know how to deal with other people as they regarded titles in addressing other people in a social context. The trend actually for students to offer a remedy after saying "sorry" and mostly utter promises not to do the same thing again. They also uttered "I am sorry…, (reason), I promise" to rectify the situation thus, avoiding the same occurrence. Speechlessly, others would only say "I'm sorry" and nothing followed after that. Along this aspect, the linguistic rules were being compromised, they may cut short of words to say to provide additional or extended information, hence, vocabulary terms are some challenging issues. Although majority of the students were socially competent, one could not avoid the fact that there were a few who were identified to be very much challenging. Such were small groups of students who fail to use correct lexical items in their utterances and casted wrongly pronounced lexicon.

Generally, students of the Junior High School exhibited politeness when interacting with other people. Participants showed a significant exemplary behavior along indicators as they were aware how to behave and considered the identity and the social roles of the speaker in a given situation. This means they know how a well-educated person behaves in certain situations, like for example the case of a teacher who encountered a student who wrongly entered the office and disturbed him/her unintentionally. During social interactions, students should know the appropriate utterance to convey their ideas. However, this is hampered by factors like being hesitant to speak English with their classmates outside the classroom, their teachers lack encouragement on the second language use and being fond of using their mother tongue among others.

This is corroborated by Kabir (2014) when he revealed in his study based on his conducted Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that participants did not use English outside the classroom and only speak the language inside the classroom. Other participants said that they never expressed themselves and discontinue a discussion because they were shy of having a very limited basic English skills like vocabulary and they have fear of losing face infront of others.

Table 12. Sociolinguistic Manifests in Prompter 5 along Cultural Norms and Social Practices

Level of Observability	Cultural Norms		Social Practices	
	F	P	F	P
75.01 – 100%	0	0.00	3	1.78
50.01 – 75%	0	0.00	0	0.00
25.1 – 50%	2	1.18	21	12.43
.01 – 25%	51	30.18	115	68.05
0.00%	116	68.64	30	17.75
Total	169	100	169	100

Ranges	Verbal Description
75.01-100%	Very Much Observable
50.01-75%	Much Observable
25.1-50%	Observable
.01-25%	Less Observable
0.00%	Not Observable

Sociolinguistic Indicators and Variables

Teachers to be effective should produce students who exhibit excellent skills in the English language of art of talk in terms of all the indicators in determining sociolinguistic competence. It could not be argued that although students were required to have short expressions to refuse, to respond to compliment and to apologize, still they committed errors along linguistic rules. Noticeably, students did not respond to the prompters with formulaic languages only but instead they made extended utterances. They often applied code-switching to express their ideas. This alone is attributed to production. One respondent when given a compliment about his beautiful eyes, he remarked "Thank you, I just mana it from my father", where "mana" was coded as an infraction in production.

During the conduct of the closed role play, the use of fillers was observable. Students never failed to say "ahhhmmm", "so" during their turns and when they committed mistakes, they would say "ayyyy joke".

Accordingly, it could be inferred that fillers and the utterance "ayyyy joke" are part of their language system nowadays. Mostly, their responses were limited to "sorry" and "thank you" only. Seldom, were those students who expressed their thanking supplemented with extended utterances. It could be assumed that they ran out of words to say to their communicatee or they were just more direct in stating their responses as part of their culture.

Gan (2012) reported that inadequate vocabulary was also a prevalent concern. One of his participants thought that there was a gap between her vocabulary range along writing and speaking. When she is writing, she has enough time to figure out the most appropriate words and phrases. But when it comes to speaking, some words and phrases may never come to mind, so the expression may not deliver the intended meaning precisely. While one student reported that in some social occasions they used highly colloquial language, but faced by a shortage of vocabulary it hampers her to express accurately what she wants to say. Almost all the students agreed with the view that this vocabulary problem was the major reason why they sometimes could not express themselves clearly and appropriately. They also believed that this contributed directly to a lack of fluency in their speech. During the interviews, they all emphasized a need to further expand their vocabulary.

In a random unstructured interview conducted to high school students, it was found out that they only used English language during their English class provided their teacher would require them to do so and not so doing shall have an equivalent sanctions. Others claimed that when their teachers speak in the foreign language, they could not understand the lesson. They further stated that a fast-speaking teacher could only be understood if there is a shift from English to Binisaya/ Visayan/Cebuano. Further, they hesitated to speak in second language (L2) because they were conscious of their grammar. They sometimes interacted using the second language (L2) with their friends but often not. They often posted shout outs in social media using the second language (L2) and landed with criticisms. Hence, it is believed that if a learner utilized the foreign language during interaction, there is a big chance of increasing his/her English speaking proficiency. In the event of interacting with others, students who constantly use the second language to socially converse tend to have developed proficiency in the language and facilitate quality conversation using appropriate words to apply in the different domains and social situations. Furthermore, it would be culturally acceptable if these students apply correct usage of the language in the different social interaction which is a natural occurrence in the daily lives of the Filipino students, people who are familiar with each other for instance who share the same personal or educational domain exchanged personal information in informal conversations about topics arising in their daily lives as well.

Table 13. Summary Across Prompters

Level of Observability	Cultural Norms		Social Practices	
	F	P	F	P
75.01 – 100%	0	0.00	4	2.37
50.01 – 75%	0	0.00	0	0.00
25.1 – 50%	3	1.78	13	7.69
.01 – 25%	133	78.70	148	87.57
0.00%	33	19.53	4	2.37
Total	169	100	169	100

Ranges	Verbal Description
75.01-100%	Very Much Observable
50.01-75%	Much Observable
25.1-50%	Observable
.01-25%	Less Observable
0.00%	Not Observable

Speakers who may be considered fluent in a second language due to their mastery of grammar and vocabulary may still lack sociolinguistic competence. In other words, they may struggle to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate. This study suggests that students, regardless of their grade levels, did not exhibit significant variations in language use. The performance of Grade 7 students was practically similar to that of Grades 8, 9, and 10, although students in higher levels demonstrated more appropriate utterances, particularly when describing things, complaining about behavior, making polite requests, or entertaining with jokes. However, some Grade 9 students performed better than Grade 10 students, possibly due to differences in individual proficiency. While some students were well-versed in grammar and vocabulary, others struggled with accuracy in their utterances.

The study by Mullick (2016) supports these findings, highlighting that grammar, like vocabulary, can be a significant obstacle in speaking English. Students sometimes struggle with subject-verb agreement, particularly when speaking quickly, causing them to misuse verb forms. Additionally, difficulties in switching between past and present tense were observed, as students often had to think about grammar rules before speaking. This challenge was also evident among high school students in the university, though less pronounced in this study due to the one-turn response method, which limited the occurrence of errors. Despite the influence of the mother tongue, it did not significantly affect students' linguistic performance in school. While some students reported thinking about grammar for accuracy, they often relied on intuition when speaking, leading to grammatical errors. Furthermore, the educational attainment of parents, particularly mothers, did not significantly impact students' speaking challenges. Many parents, especially working mothers, were unable to assist their children with language learning at home, making the classroom the primary environment for developing English proficiency.

Like their mothers' educational attainment, fathers' education does not significantly impact students' linguistic performance. Regardless of parents' education levels, students primarily develop their speaking skills in school. Fathers, as heads of families, are often occupied with work and rarely engage in teaching their children at home. Instead, they entrust this responsibility to teachers, making the school the primary environment for language learning. Teachers, as facilitators, should employ diverse language strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. Younger students, particularly those in Grades 7 and 8, tend to rely more on their teachers, while older students in Grades 9 and 10 gradually become more independent in their learning.

The students' grade levels also do not significantly affect their speaking performance. Whether in Grade 7, 8, 9, or 10, they exhibited similar challenges and strengths in production. Some students mentioned having to speak carefully to ensure accurate pronunciation, particularly with uncommon words and sound clusters. Others reported struggling with specific vowels and consonants, which they attributed to limited exposure to native-like English environments in earlier learning stages. The Education Bureau (2011) suggested organizing extracurricular activities, such as English dramas or performances, to help students enhance their communicative skills and recognize the broader benefits of fluency in English.

Furthermore, the study found that students' mother tongues—whether Filipino, English, or Cebuano/Binisaya—did not significantly influence their pronunciation inconsistencies. While family members naturally communicate in their shared language at home, students' pronunciation development was largely shaped by school instruction rather than their home environment. Additionally, students' tendency to code-switch during role-play activities reflected an improvisational strategy rather than direct parental influence, serving as a means to bridge communication gaps in real-time interactions.

In school, these students were taught to utter what they believe would be situationally appropriate responses toward making communication meaningful. In this study, students were given prompters in which they should respond and interact in an imaginary setting to a given situation. As for speech acts, refusal, compliment response and apology were believed to be few excellent ways to test how a society's culture affect rules in speaking. To refuse an invitation or decline an offer means to use strategic styles of utterances and linguistic forms so as not offend the one receiving the refusal. This study found out that "no" is a direct utterance to turn down an invitation which brought threat to the face of the one receiving it. This is against the norms of Filipinos since as observed, Filipinos really struggle with the word "no". This response coming from a certain student would mean rude but if analyzed as to directness, this could mean a direct way to turn down an invitation. One committed such utterance maybe because of the lack of words to say and instead of being speechless, he just said "no" which obviously exemplified a direct answer to a request, invitation or an offer. This attitude simply does not blend with the Philippine culture as Filipinos find it very difficult to say "no". Students sometimes offered extended utterances making their answers longer, in case like this, students tend to commit language shift from the second language (L2) to the first language (L1). This is because learners were confident when it comes to using their mother tongue.

In the study conducted about the Philippine English in compliment responses wherein discourse completion tasks were used to elicit data, it was found that in Philippine English, the most commonly used compliment strategy is explicit semantic formula, and the most frequently used compliment response strategy is to accept it. It was confirmed that Philippine English is highly formulaic at semantic and syntactic levels. It was pointed out early that the high frequency of non-compliments among the participants can be attributed to the fact that they were not able to distinguish the speech act of gratitude from that of compliment giving. Many aspects of speech acts are predetermined in discourse completion tasks methods, including the demographics of the interactants, the object of compliment, and the occasion of compliment. In other words, the researcher specifies in advance who compliments whom, where and when (Jucker, 2009).

The study suggested that to gain a full picture of complimenting speech events in Philippine English and to find out the common objects of compliment, other data collection should be used. Ethnographic method seems to fit the task best. Likewise, compliments and compliment responses in Philippine English elicited by discourse completion tasks method can also be triangulated by a corpus method. International Corpus of English (ICE)-Philippines provides such an avenue. Based on this exploratory study of Philippine English on the compliment giving and taking among the educated Philippine English speakers, we could infer that Filipinos always extend their thanks to whatever favors they received from the other person.

When cultural norms as an indicator of sociolinguistic context was investigated in terms of grade level of student participants, it was shown that this was not compromised since their performance did not significantly differ or vary when analyzed by the grade levels they belong even if they shared the same

behavior. This could mean that the speaking challenges of Grade 7 students did not differ or vary with the kind of speaking challenges Grades 8, 9 and 10 high school students exhibit. That is, regardless of the grade levels they were in, this did not matter at all.

Banks and Banks (2005) noted that every student conies to the classroom with a set of behaviors and characteristics that makes him or her unique and that will affect his or her academic achievement. He added further that behavior is shaped by group norms ... the group equips individuals with the behavior patterns they need in order to adapt. Furthermore, students identify with certain groups to experience a feeling of belonging. Students of all ages have a strong need to belong to groups, because groups provide a source of motivation. To enhance academic success, teachers can use information about cultural identity to create learning environments that recognize the cultural contributions of students.

Ideally, mothers correct shortcomings of their children as children were mostly emotionally attached to their mothers. At this point of the study, educational attainment of the mothers of the participants does not have bearing to their sociolinguistic challenges in terms of cultural norms. It is the duty often of the mother to rectify wrong acts of their children such as misbehavior along interacting with people and unused of ideal terminologies to people.

Researches revealed that to reach the superior level of speaking ability, one must be able to speak about abstract topics and speak appropriately in a wide variety of settings with very few errors. However, even after studying another language for many years, learners often still never achieve this level of proficiency and have great difficulty in expressing themselves in that language to a native speaker. Reasons for this continued difficulty in communicating in the second language can include problems with pronunciation, lack of knowledge on actual speech use of idiomatic expressions and slang, and learner differences in the ability to acquire language and in motivation to produce native-like speech.

Another important contributing factor for incompetence in the language is that the speaker does not know which utterances are appropriate in the social situation in which he or she is speaking. This ability to adjust one's speech to fit the situation in which it is said is called sociolinguistic competence, and without this ability, even the most perfectly grammatical utterances can convey a meaning entirely different from that which the speaker intended. At this point, the mothers of these participants should see to it that their children used politeness and courtesy in extending themselves to other people in the social context.

As language use matters when it comes to refusing, responding to compliments and apologizing, the mother should put in mind to address and reinforce utterances of their children not to harm faces of other people initiating the utterance. It cannot be argued that mothers are still the molders of good values, good manners and right conduct of their school children and the ones who should reinforce such values to make it ideal.

No matter what the educational attainment of their father, still it could not affect the performance of the students in terms of cultural norms as they share the same norm talking about their culture at home and in school. Looking at the result, this means further that education attained by the father does not play a significant part in the analysis of the speaking challenges in the sociolinguistic context in terms of cultural norms. It could be inferred that strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented and their appropriate particular strategic and linguistic choices were not contributable and has no effect in terms of the finished degree of the parent. The speaking challenges of junior high school students whose fathers finished post-graduate studies, tertiary education, secondary education or elementary education are the same and do not significantly differ or vary.

This could mean that regardless of their grade levels, students shared the same performance along social practices. That is, if a student coming from grade 7 uses "sir" to address a person higher in rank or older than him, students from grade 10 do the same thing. However, one student uttered "boss" which is more informal compared to "sir". This is attributable to the place where he resided. In the vicinity, rampant are teenagers who are "bystanders". Often than never, students of the university interacted with these "tambay" and hence, being influenced by them in terms of utterance.

On the other hand, most of the students who were interviewed remarked that they did not fail to address people they merely know with "sir" and people who were in the markets "auntie" or the vernacular "ate" or "kol" for English "uncle". One respondent said that he used to address his close friend "bai" which could mean an endearment. Considering the term "bai", it could be pointed out that these students usually address people with the consideration of their social distance and relationship. Based on the above notion, it is safe to say that students in high school know how to address people in general and they acquired such competence primarily in the school where they entrusted themselves to acquire quality education for future use.

Regardless of their languages spoken at home, participants claimed that these did not directly affect their social practices. Whether they speak in Filipino or English and Cebuano/Binisaya, still their politeness used to address people who are above them was not compromised. "Sir" when used in the different domains still means "sir" to them whether they speak various languages at home. Although there were some who addressed their teachers an endearment addressed to a friend "part" (bisaya-like endearment meaning friend usually used by male students), this was reasonable enough because of its minimal occurrence. These students take their teachers as their bestfriend and confidante in school regardless their social distance, the reason why, they leave no space for linguistic markers of social distances and address their teachers the way they addressed their close friends. The language shifts committed did not affect their speaking challenges in terms of social practices.

Politeness markers "sir", "Mr.", "ma'am" are used to show distance or respect towards someone the speaker does not know well, and they are often used by a person of low social status to show respect to a person of higher social status. This should be reinforced by the mothers. However, based on the result of the study, regardless of the mother's educational attainment, students still managed to use appropriate politeness marker to address people. Sometimes, some mothers would neglect wrong use of titles but this could be somehow addressed in school. Example, instead of saying "ma'am" to people the children met for the first time, children would say the contracted vernacular "'te" which means both auntie or ate in the Philippines context. If not addressed properly, children would keep on addressing "'te" to females they just met. Still, as they grow and personally and professionally develop, these students would learn more on the social practices. However, it should not be neglected that education starts usually at home.

The educational attainment of their father does not affect their speaking challenges in the sociolinguistic context in terms of social practices. The way they address people were not contributable to their father's educational attainment and hence, the degree attained by their fathers did not significantly dictate the way the participants behave along. Informal addresses uttered by the participants to the one they were communicating did not come from their fathers' influences but they acquired them by themselves. The level of formality and the length of the responses of the students also were not directly inclined to the level of education of the parent. Based on the result of the oral discourse completion tasks, it was observed that most students tend to address their classmates formally during interaction considering the position of the roles in the prompters given. In situations where they were interacting with a classmate,

they made use of endearment and even names of their classmates. Hence, in the conversation made between a classmate based on the prompters provided, they casually communicated with them and they utilized informal varieties of language in the social event.

This was refuted by the result of the investigation of Eslami et al. (2014) in which it showed a tendency towards more formal (written variety) use of language on written discourse completion tasks compared to oral discourse completion tasks. However, participants seem to be more confused as to which variety to use in written discourse completion tasks than in oral discourse completion tasks. In written discourse completion tasks, there are more examples of mixing formal (written) variety with informal (spoken) variety.

This could be due to the fact that participants were asked to act out situations that were unrealistic since the study was conducted inside the four walls of the classroom. They were advised to address different personalities through written prompters which were far from the reality. They were asked to perform different roles and to assume roles and address their classmates considering these roles. Generally, students reacted both formally and informally and considered the titles given to signify politeness. This means further that the speaking challenges in terms of social practices of the students whose father's educational attainment is high school level, tertiary level or graduate studies do not significantly differ or vary. Hence, the level of their education attained does not contribute much in the result.

The English language's art of talk influences sociolinguistic aspects of teaching and learning

Language serves as a vital means of communication, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas, yet achieving proficiency, particularly in foreign language speaking within the classroom, remains a challenge. This difficulty stems from individual abilities and limited speaking opportunities, as traditional rote learning no longer meets the increasing demands of students who must actively analyze, interpret, and navigate the complexities of the modern world. Recognizing this, the University aims to holistically develop students into globally competitive individuals by equipping teachers with the capacity to employ interactive teaching methods despite practical constraints such as class size and limited time. Teachers strategically integrate grammar and vocabulary instruction, ensuring that students grasp, understand, and apply these skills in social contexts, reinforcing that learning should involve active student participation rather than passive listening. By fostering an environment where students engage in communication and negotiation of meaning with peers, teachers play a crucial role in shaping their ability to function effectively in society. As Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) highlight, factors such as innovative teaching methodologies, smaller classes, increased exposure to English, and enhanced access to resources contribute significantly to language learning success. English teachers, therefore, focus on developing learners' linguistic competence by emphasizing vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and speech act knowledge, supported by instructional materials and regular speaking practice. Ultimately, the shift toward learner-centered instruction empowers students to engage proactively, while teachers continually refine their approaches to meet evolving educational needs.

Thornbury (2007) explained that the stages of mental processing in speaking—conceptualizing, formulating, articulating, self-monitoring, and negotiating—are similar in both native and target languages; however, speaking skills do not automatically transfer from one's first language to a second, making continuous language performance essential for skill development. To address this, teachers strictly enforce the use of English during instruction, motivating students and ensuring they do not feel disadvantaged in using the language, which ultimately enhances their comprehension and real-world

application. Since learners are often vulnerable to criticism and negative evaluation, mistakes in speaking are inevitable, but regular practice helps bridge gaps in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, leading to improved oral fluency. Hilton (2007) emphasized that lexical knowledge gaps can severely hinder spoken fluency, as a saturated working memory prevents learners from engaging in higher-level communication. Similarly, Tavocoli (2008) pointed out that an underdeveloped interlanguage forces learners to prioritize aspects of performance, such as grammatical accuracy over fluency, which affects overall language acquisition and performance. Given these challenges, high school instructors must possess language expertise and proficiency to effectively engage students, provide accurate explanations, and facilitate meaningful communication activities. As the saying goes, nemo dat quod non habet—one cannot give what one does not have—meaning a teacher lacking speaking skills cannot produce fluent speakers. Ultimately, when guided by competent teachers, students gain the confidence and proficiency needed to communicate effectively in English.

Jones (2005) emphasized the importance of urging students to use grammatically correct forms and understand their appropriate contexts, while Oxford University Press English Language Teaching (2014) recommended encouraging students to participate in small group activities to construct ideas collaboratively. Since communication involves pronunciation, this study highlights the necessity of consistent instruction in correct pronunciation, avoiding lexical omissions, and enforcing a strict "no code-switching" policy in interactive English activities. Students demonstrated correct pronunciation, recognizing that mispronounced words can alter meanings, thereby increasing their chances of English language proficiency. Effective communication skills, including pronunciation and fluency, serve as essential tools for global competence. However, linguistic mastery alone is insufficient, as sociolinguistic misunderstandings can lead to miscommunication or offense. High school teachers at the university address these challenges by identifying cultural complexities and reinforcing sociolinguistic awareness, ensuring students grasp the norms that influence communication. Given the university's diverse student population, educators integrate sociolinguistic analysis into lessons to help learners interpret spoken language accurately and interact appropriately. This responsibility extends beyond the classroom, as teachers provide constructive feedback even during student consultations. Consistent motivation from teachers enables students to internalize appropriate language use, fostering awareness of social conventions and appropriate responses in various contexts. Ultimately, teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' future professional competence by prioritizing language proficiency and confidence-building. Beyond linguistic accuracy and fluency, learners must also internalize sociolinguistic rules to make appropriate utterance choices. The curriculum underscores cultural instruction, encouraging high-level conversations and fostering awareness of sociolinguistic complexities. Classroom discussions on cultural differences refine students' perceptions and receptiveness, while activities analyzing factors like status and gender in speech further enhance sociolinguistic awareness.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, participants are gregarious young ladies and 'great talkers' in Cebuano dialect. Grade 7 students rank one in terms of the population mostly Roman Catholic advocates and Cebuano/Bisaya-speaking whose parents have undertaken tertiary education. Participants are knowledgeable on language specific rules such as grammar, word order and internal sentence structure of the language and are competent to apply the basics of English language use in everyday interaction.

They possess sociolinguistic competencies in responding to various communication situations with appropriate linguistic choices. Moreover, the selected sociolinguistic variables do not vary on the observable behaviors among junior high school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are drawn:

1. Junior High School teachers may not only sustain but continuously exert more efforts in the delivery of lessons with relevant instructional materials to produce quality students with excellent communication.

2. Junior High School teachers may enhance and update themselves on the latest trends in language teaching by attending in-service training, seminars and symposia.

3. Periodic language testing among Junior High School students may be conducted to monitor the progress of these students in their language proficiency.

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