

Original Article

Generational Language Gap Between Teachers and Students: Analysis of Students' Perception of Effective Communication and Learning

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Abstract

This study examined the generational language gap between teachers and students and its relationship to classroom communication and learning in a tertiary institution in Cabuyao, Laguna. Using an explanatory mixed-methods design grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Sociocultural Theory, the study surveyed 200 College of Education students majoring in Filipino. It was followed by interviews for qualitative validation. Quantitative findings showed that teachers generally used formal language, engaged in frequent code-switching, and used limited digital slang. Linguistic match was rated very high in clarity and vocabulary/style alignment, while understanding of the message was high. Classroom communication was very high in participation and ease of communication, and students reported high to very high learning in understanding, motivation, and perceived academic performance. Correlation results showed a strong positive relationship between teachers' language use and linguistic match, and a moderate positive relationship between linguistic match and classroom communication. Regression analysis further indicated that teachers' language use did not directly predict student learning, whereas linguistic match and classroom communication were significant predictors. Qualitative data explained these results: students described teacher language as balanced and adaptive when it used

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code-switching, simple explanations, and relatable examples, but they also noted barriers such as overly complex vocabulary, one-way communication, and English-Filipino mismatches. The findings suggest that effective learning in multilingual classrooms depends less on formal language alone than on communicative alignment, clarity, and student participation. Strengthening linguistic adaptability and interactive communication may help reduce generational language barriers and support more inclusive teaching practices across diverse Philippine classroom contexts and generations.

Keywords: classroom communication, code-switching, generational language gap, linguistic match, student learning

1. Introduction

Language is a primary tool for effective teaching and learning. In the modern era, the generational language gap between teachers and students continues to widen because of rapid changes in society, technology, and communication practices. Teachers from Generation X and the Millennial generation often use more formal and conventional language. In contrast, many college students today are part of Generation Z and are more accustomed to digital communication, online expressions, and rapidly evolving linguistic trends. These generational differences in language use may create challenges in classroom comprehension, interaction, and participation when teachers' communication styles do not align with students' linguistic experiences.

In this study, the term "generational language gap" does not refer to chronological age or to generational membership itself. Rather, it refers to perceived differences in language use, communication style, vocabulary, code-switching practices, and digital expressions commonly associated with different generations and experienced by students during classroom interactions. Thus, the study focuses on students' perceptions of teachers' language use and how these perceived linguistic differences influence linguistic match, classroom communication, and learning.

Studies have shown that a lack of linguistic connection between educators and students can lead to misunderstandings and cultural and academic gaps, especially when teachers are unfamiliar with the different forms of language used by their students (Mallinson, 2023; Pereda, 2025). This issue becomes more critical in the context of the digitalization of education, where new forms of communication and technology-associated language skills are rapidly evolving, further deepening the potential gap between generations of teachers and students (Lotherington & Bradley,

2024). Another study suggests that learning is more effective when teachers use language closer to students' language, as this improves students' understanding of the lesson's context and meaning and increases their willingness to engage (Huang and Li, 2024). However, there remains a lack of research examining the effect of teachers' generational background and language use on students' learning within the Philippine context.

This study is anchored on three complementary theoretical perspectives that explain how language influences teaching and learning. First, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) views language as a social resource through which individuals construct meaning according to the context and purpose of communication. From this perspective, effective classroom discourse depends not only on grammatical accuracy but also on the appropriate use of language to facilitate understanding and interaction. Second, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) explains that speakers modify their communication styles to achieve mutual understanding and reduce social distance. In educational settings, teachers who adjust their language, vocabulary, and communication strategies to match students' linguistic backgrounds are more likely to promote engagement and effective classroom interaction. Third, Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that learning is socially constructed through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals. Language serves as the primary mediating tool through which teachers guide students in developing knowledge, understanding, and higher-order thinking. Together, these theories provide the conceptual foundation for examining how teachers' language use influences linguistic match, classroom communication, and students' learning outcomes.

In the Philippine educational context, where Filipino and English are used as primary languages of instruction, generational differences in language use may become more evident because teachers and students often navigate multilingual and multicultural communication environments. Understanding how these linguistic differences influence classroom interaction is important for improving instructional effectiveness and student engagement. Guided by Systemic Functional Linguistics, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Sociocultural Theory, the study examines students' perceptions of teachers' language use as an indicator of the perceived generational language gap and investigates how these perceptions relate to linguistic match, classroom communication, and students' learning outcomes. The findings are intended to contribute to the development of pedagogical strategies that promote more inclusive, adaptive, and effective classroom communication.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, specifically an explanatory approach, to comprehensively understand the relationship among teachers' language use, the level of linguistic match, and the level of communication between teachers

and students in the classroom, and how these factors influence students' learning. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected separately, and the results from both phases were integrated to generate a deeper interpretation of the findings. According to Feng et al. (2025), this approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the topic, enabling exploration of both the breadth and depth of issues that are often not possible with a single method.

For the quantitative component, a descriptive-correlational design was utilized to describe the levels of the variables and determine whether there are significant relationships among the generational language gap, level of effective communication, and students' learning. This design is appropriate for identifying relationships among variables and describing their levels within a population (Mallinson, 2023). Data was gathered through a survey questionnaire and analyzed using appropriate statistical methods.

Meanwhile, the qualitative component employed a phenomenological design to describe and understand the lived experiences of teachers and students regarding the generational language gap and its effects on their communication and learning. According to Seeger and Sherman (2023), this design allows for an in-depth exploration of personal perspectives and experiences, which is essential in understanding the nuanced influence of generational differences in language. Interviews were conducted with selected respondents, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Overall, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components were integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem and to strengthen the validity and depth of the interpretation of the results.

2.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants in the quantitative phase comprised 200 undergraduate students enrolled in the College of Education at the selected tertiary institution in Cabuyao, Laguna. The respondents were majoring in Filipino and were selected through convenience sampling because they were readily accessible during data collection and met the study's objectives. Following the quantitative phase, 6 students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Although probability sampling was not employed, the selected respondents represented the target population of students who regularly interacted with teachers with varying communication styles.

2.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of a survey questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale to measure the study's three main variables. A 4-point scale was selected instead of a 5-point scale to eliminate the neutral response option and encourage respondents to express either agreement or disagreement with each statement. This forced-choice format was considered appropriate because the study sought to obtain

clearer perceptions of teachers' language use, linguistic match, classroom communication, and student learning, thereby reducing central tendency bias. Each section contained ten items developed from a review of related literature and contextualized for students in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Although the study is framed around the concept of the generational language gap, the questionnaire did not directly measure respondents' or teachers' generational categories. Instead, it assessed students' perceptions of teachers' language use, including formality, code-switching, and use of digital expressions, as observable indicators of language differences commonly associated with generational communication patterns.

To ensure the instrument's validity and reliability, several procedures were undertaken. The initial questionnaire underwent face and content validation by three experts with backgrounds in language education, educational research, and measurement and evaluation. They assessed the instrument in terms of clarity, relevance, content coverage, and contextual appropriateness. Based on their recommendations, several items were revised before pilot testing to improve wording, eliminate ambiguity, and strengthen alignment with the study constructs. Subsequently, a pilot test was conducted with 50 College of Education students from another institution who had characteristics similar to those of the target respondents. The pilot testing evaluated item clarity, questionnaire length, and respondent comprehension, and participant feedback led to minor revisions to the wording of selected items. Data obtained from the pilot test were then analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The results indicated acceptable to excellent reliability across the study variables. The Teachers' Language Use scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91, the Linguistic Match scale obtained 0.89, the Classroom Communication scale obtained 0.87, and the Students' Learning scale obtained 0.90. The overall questionnaire yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, indicating excellent internal consistency and confirming that the instrument was reliable for use in the study.

For the qualitative component, an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was developed to focus on the study's key themes. Follow-up probes were included to elicit deeper and more detailed responses. By combining survey and interview methods, the study collects both quantitative and qualitative data, which are analyzed within an explanatory mixed-methods design.

2.4 Data Collection

The researcher first prepared, validated, and pilot-tested the instruments. After obtaining institutional approval and participants' informed consent, the survey questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents during scheduled class periods. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness before statistical analysis. Following the quantitative analysis, participants who consented to further participation were invited for semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-

recorded with participants' permission, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy prior to thematic analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

Consistent with the explanatory mixed-method design, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first to identify patterns in teachers' language use, linguistic match, classroom communication, and student learning. The findings from this phase informed the qualitative interviews, which were conducted to explain, validate, and deepen understanding of the statistical results. The integration of the two datasets occurred during the interpretation stage through a metainference analysis comparing quantitative trends with emerging qualitative themes. Prior to the computation of descriptive statistics, negatively worded items were reverse-coded to ensure that all questionnaire items were scored in the same direction. Consequently, higher mean scores consistently indicated more positive perceptions of teacher's language use, linguistic match, classroom communication, and student learning.

3. Results

3.1 Quantitative Phase

Table 1. The ways teachers use language in the classroom.

Domain	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Formality	3.37	Strongly Agree
Code-Switching	3.32	Strongly Agree
Use of Digital Slang	2.85	Agree

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on how teachers use language in the classroom, as perceived by the student respondents. The table reports the mean scores for the three language-use domains—formality, code-switching, and use of digital slang, to describe the extent to which these communication practices are observed in classroom instruction. A separate category column is not included because these domains represent distinct dimensions of teachers' language use rather than different levels of a single construct. Consequently, each domain is interpreted individually through its corresponding verbal interpretation based on the established mean scale.

Table 2. Level of linguistic match between teachers and students.

Indicators	Mean	Category	Verbal Interpretation
Clarity of Teacher's Langage	3.19	Agree	High
Alignment of Vocabulary and Style	3.42	Strongly Agree	Very High
Understanding of the Message	3.25	Agree	High

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the level of linguistic match between teachers and students as perceived by the respondents. The table reports the mean

scores for the three indicators—clarity of teachers' language, alignment of vocabulary and style, and understanding of the message—to describe the extent to which teachers' language aligns with students' linguistic needs and promotes comprehension. A category column is included because each indicator is classified by its corresponding level (e.g., High or Very High), while the verbal interpretation reflects respondents' level of agreement based on the established mean scale.

Table 3. Level of communication between teachers and students in the classroom.

Indicators	Mean	Category	Verbal Interpretation
Participation in Discussions	3.01	Agree	High
Ease of Communication with the Teacher	3.28	Strongly Agree	Very High

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics on the level of communication between teachers and students in the classroom, as perceived by the respondents. The table reports the mean scores for indicators of participation in discussions and ease of communication with the teacher, which describe the quality of classroom interaction. A category column is included because each indicator is classified by its corresponding level (e.g., High or Very High), while the verbal interpretation reflects respondents' level of agreement based on the established mean scale.

Table 4. Level of students' learning in terms of understanding of the lesson.

Indicators	Mean	Category	Verbal Interpretation
Understanding of the Lesson	3.09	Agree	High
Motivation to Learn	3.39	Strongly Agree	Very High
Perception of Academic Performance	3.26	Strongly Agree	Very High

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics on students' learning levels, specifically their understanding of the lesson, as perceived by the respondents. The table reports the mean scores for indicators of understanding of the lesson, motivation to learn, and perception of academic performance, which describe students' perceived learning outcomes. A category column is included because each indicator is classified by its corresponding level (e.g., High or Very High), while the verbal interpretation reflects respondents' level of agreement based on the established mean scale.

Table 5. Significant relationship between teachers' language use and the level of linguistic match and classroom communication.

Variables	r	P-value	Decision	Interpretation
Language Use and Linguistic Match	0.71	<.001	Reject H_0	Strong positive significant correlation
Linguistic Match and Communication	0.78	<.001	Reject H_0	Strong positive significant correlation

Table 5 presents the significant relationships between teachers' language use, linguistic match, and classroom communication. The findings indicate that more

adaptive and effective teacher language is associated with greater linguistic alignment between teachers and students, which, in turn, is linked to more effective classroom communication. These results suggest that teachers' language practices play an important role in fostering meaningful interaction and reducing communication barriers in the classroom.

Table 6. Significant relationship among teachers' language use, linguistic match, and the level of effective communication to students' level of learning.

Variables	Std. Error	t	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Language Use	0.33	9.57	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀
Linguistic Match	0.27	4.69	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀
Level of Communication	0.26	6.60	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀

Table 6 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the influence of teachers' language use, linguistic match, and classroom communication on students' level of learning. The findings indicate that all three variables significantly predict students' learning, suggesting that adaptive teacher language, effective linguistic alignment, and positive classroom communication collectively contribute to improved learning outcomes. These results underscore the importance of fostering responsive and interactive communication practices to support students' understanding, motivation, and academic performance.

3.2 Qualitative Phase

Theme 1: Adaption of Teacher Language in Learning

The qualitative findings revealed that students perceived effective teacher language as adaptive and responsive to their learning needs. Rather than relying solely on formal academic language, participants described teachers as balancing professionalism with communication strategies that enhanced comprehension and engagement.

Balanced use of formal language and code-switching. Students shared that effective teacher maintained an academic tone while incorporating code-switching and occasional informal expressions to make lessons more understandable. They emphasized that this balance preserved professionalism while making classroom communication more relatable.

P1: "The teacher also uses code-switching and slang, but it remains formal. The formality is still there, so it is balanced."

Use of code-switching to facilitate understanding. Participants explained that teachers frequently shifted between Filipino and English when introducing unfamiliar

vocabulary or explaining difficult concepts. This strategy helped bridge language gaps and improved students' comprehension of lesson content.

P3: "Through code-switching, especially when there are unfamiliar words that students do not understand."

Simplifying complex terms. Students appreciated teachers who translated technical or difficult concepts into simpler language. They believed that simplifying explanations allowed them to grasp lessons more quickly without sacrificing the meaning of the content.

P5: "Some teachers provide the simplest meaning so that we can quickly understand."

Providing relatable examples. Another strategy identified by participants was the use of examples drawn from students' everyday experiences. Teachers who connected lesson content to situations familiar to the younger generation helped students understand abstract concepts more effectively.

P2: "They give examples of how language is used depending on the generation we belong to."

Use of digital slang and modern expressions. Participants also observed that some teachers occasionally incorporated digital slang or contemporary expressions during discussions. Although these expressions were used sparingly, students viewed them as making lessons more engaging while maintaining the academic nature of instruction.

P6: "The language used today is more dynamic and flexible, using both digital slang and code-switching."

Theme 2: Influence of Teacher Communication Style on Student Participation

The qualitative findings showed that teachers' communication style plays a significant role in encouraging student participation and fostering effective classroom communication. Students consistently emphasized that clear explanations, openness in communication, and respectful interactions increased their confidence to engage in classroom discussions. Conversely, the use of negative or demeaning language discouraged participation and reduced students' willingness to communicate.

Clear and organized explanations. Participants shared that teacher who explained lessons in a clear, logical, and organized manner made it easier for students to understand the content and encouraged them to participate actively in classroom discussions.

P2: "Through the teacher's clear and well-organized explanations, the students were able to understand better."

Open communication between teachers and students. Students highlighted that teacher who created an open and welcoming classroom environment made them feel more comfortable expressing their ideas and answering questions. Open communication strengthened students' confidence to participate in learning activities.

P4: "When a teacher communicates well and is open in communicating with students, more students are willing to answer."

Respectful and positive tone in communication. Participants emphasized that teachers who communicated respectfully, clearly, and enthusiastically created a supportive learning atmosphere where students felt comfortable asking questions and sharing their thoughts without fear of judgment.

P1: "If teachers speak clearly, respectfully, and enthusiastically, it makes students feel comfortable asking questions."

Negative language used by teachers. In contrast, students explained that harsh or insulting remarks from teachers diminished their confidence and discouraged classroom interaction. Such language created feelings of embarrassment and hesitation, making students less likely to participate in discussions.

P6: "Some teachers directly use words like 'bobo'... we feel embarrassed to communicate."

Theme 3: Student Strategies for Understanding Lessons

The qualitative findings revealed that students employed various strategies to overcome communication difficulties and improve their understanding of classroom lessons. When they encountered unfamiliar concepts or language, participants demonstrated active learning behaviors by seeking clarification from teachers, collaborating with classmates, and exerting personal effort to understand the lesson. These strategies indicate that students play an active role in supporting their own learning despite communication challenges.

Asking questions for clarification. Participants explained that they addressed confusion by directly asking their teachers for clarification whenever they encountered concepts or explanations they did not understand. They viewed asking questions as an effective way to resolve misunderstandings and gain a clearer understanding of the lesson.

P2: "In these situations, I ask questions."

Discussing lessons with classmates. Students also reported that collaborating with classmates helped them better understand lesson content. Through discussion and the exchange of ideas, they clarified difficult concepts and reinforced their learning.

P4: "I discuss with classmates to understand better."

Personal effort in learning. Beyond seeking assistance from teachers and peers, participants emphasized the importance of taking personal responsibility for their own learning. They described exerting additional effort to study and understand lessons even when communication barriers or unfamiliar language made learning more challenging.

P6: "I also push myself to learn despite that."

Theme 4: Communication Barriers Between Teachers and Students

The qualitative findings revealed that although students generally perceived classroom communication positively, they also identified several barriers that hindered effective interaction and learning. Participants described difficulties stemming from complex vocabulary, generational differences in language use, limited classroom interaction, and mismatches between teachers' language and students' preferred language. These challenges sometimes affected students' comprehension and willingness to participate in classroom discussions.

Use of deep or complex vocabulary. Participants reported that some teachers used highly technical or unfamiliar words during discussions, making it difficult for students to understand the lesson fully. While they recognized that teachers explained concepts well, the language's complexity sometimes posed a barrier to comprehension.

P2: "Some teachers explain well, but the words they use are too deep or complex."

Generational differences in language use. Students also perceived those differences in language use between teachers and students occasionally created misunderstandings. Participants explained that certain words or expressions carried different meanings across generations, contributing to communication gaps during classroom interactions.

P4: "The meaning of words changes across generations."

Lack of classroom interaction. Another challenge identified by participants was the limited opportunity for interaction during lessons. Students noted that when teachers dominated classroom discussions without encouraging dialogue or participation, they found it more difficult to understand the lesson and remain engaged.

P1: “When the teacher keeps talking without interaction, students struggle more.”

Language barriers between English and Filipino. Participants explained that communication became more challenging when teachers predominantly used English while students were more comfortable expressing themselves in Filipino. This mismatch sometimes reduced comprehension and made it more difficult for students to participate actively in discussions.

P5: “When the teacher uses English while the students are more comfortable with Filipino.”

Unfamiliar words or terminology. Students further reported that unfamiliar words and specialized terminology occasionally hindered their understanding of classroom discussions. They emphasized the importance of teachers explaining unfamiliar vocabulary to improve comprehension.

P3: “There are words that students do not understand.”

Table 7. Summary of themes.

Main Theme	Subtheme
Adaptation of Teacher Language in Learning	Balanced use of formal language and code-switching
	Use of code-switching to facilitate understanding
	Simplifying complex terms
	Providing relatable examples
	Use of digital slang
Influence of Teacher Communication Style on Student Participation	Clear and organized explanations
	Open communication between teacher and students
	Respectful and positive tone in communication
	Negative language used by teachers
Student Strategies for Understanding Lessons	Asking questions for clarification
	Discussing with classmates
	Personal effort in learning
Communication Barriers Between Teachers and Students	Use of Deep or complex vocabulary
	Generational differences in language use
	Lack of classroom interaction
	Language Barrier (English vs Filipino)
	Unfamiliar words or terminology

3.3 Integration of Results

Table 8. Integration of results.

Quantitative finding	Qualitative finding	Metainference	Implication
Teachers used formal language at a high level ($M = 3.37$) and code-switching frequently ($M = 3.32$), while digital slang was used only moderately ($M = 2.85$).	Students described teacher language as balanced, combining formal speech with code-switching and occasional slang without losing academic tone.	Teacher language is best understood as adaptive rather than purely formal: teachers preserve academic credibility while adjusting language for student accessibility.	Flexible language use can bridge generational differences without reducing instructional professionalism.
Linguistic match was high in clarity ($M = 3.19$) and vocabulary/style alignment ($M = 3.42$), with understanding of the message rated high ($M = 3.25$).	Students said teachers make lessons easier by simplifying, using examples, and code-switching for unfamiliar words.	Students understand teacher language better when teachers translate difficult ideas into familiar forms, showing that linguistic match is created through instructional adjustment.	Clarity is not only about correct language; it is about matching the learner's level of understanding.
Classroom communication was characterized by high participation ($M = 3.01$) and very high ease of communication ($M = 3.28$).	Students reported that clear, respectful, open communication encouraged them to ask questions, answer questions, and participate; negative language reduced their confidence.	Communication becomes effective when teacher language creates psychological safety, not just information transfer.	Teacher tone and openness matter because they shape whether students participate or withdraw.
Students' learning was high to very high in understanding ($M = 3.09$), motivation ($M = 3.39$), and perceived academic performance ($M = 3.26$).	Students said they understand lessons better when explanations are clarified, peer discussion is encouraged, and they make a self-directed effort when lessons are difficult.	Learning is strengthened when teacher language supports both comprehension and student agency; students remain active learners even when they need clarification.	Effective teaching should support not only delivery of content but also students' own learning strategies.
Correlation showed a strong relationship between teacher language use and linguistic match ($r = 0.71$), and linguistic match and communication ($r = 0.78$).	Students' narratives showed that when teachers adapt language, interaction becomes easier and understanding improves.	The findings indicate a chain of influence: teacher language shapes linguistic match, and linguistic match improves classroom communication.	To improve communication, teachers should focus first on language adaptation.
Regression showed teacher language use ($t = 9.57, p < .001$), linguistic match ($t = 0.27, p < .001$) and	Students emphasized that understanding grows when teachers use language that is clear, relatable, and	Teacher language contributes directly to student learning while also strengthening linguistic match and	The study supports a complementary relationship between language use $\rightarrow$ linguistic

communication ($t = 0.26, p < .001$) were all significant predictors of students' learning.	interactive; barriers remain when words are too deep, one-way, or mismatched with Filipino/English comfort.	classroom communication, indicating that adaptive language practices support learning through both direct and complementary pathways.	match $\rightarrow$ communication $\rightarrow$ learning.
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4. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that students' perceptions of language differences commonly associated with generational communication influence linguistic match, classroom communication, and learning. Rather than being determined solely by differences in vocabulary or language formality, the perceived generational language gap is shaped by teachers' ability to adapt their language to students' linguistic needs and learning contexts. The results revealed that teachers' language use significantly contributes to linguistic match and classroom communication, and the multiple linear regression analysis further demonstrated that teachers' language use, linguistic match, and classroom communication were all significant predictors of students' learning. These findings suggest that adaptive teacher language contributes to learning both directly and by strengthening linguistic alignment and effective classroom interaction. Consequently, the effectiveness of teacher language depends not only on the words used but also on how successfully those words connect with students' linguistic experiences and facilitate meaningful participation in classroom learning. This interpretation supports the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Communication Accommodation Theory, and Sociocultural Theory, which emphasize that language functions as a social resource through which meaning is constructed, communication is negotiated, and learning develops through interaction.

The findings regarding teachers' language use show that teachers maintain a balance between academic formality and accessibility. Students perceived their teachers as using formal language, providing clear explanations, and maintaining professional communication styles, while also using code-switching and contemporary expressions when necessary. This suggests that teachers do not simply preserve traditional academic language but strategically modify their communication to address students' needs. Such findings are consistent with Mallinson (2023), who emphasized that effective communication requires teachers to adjust language based on learners' linguistic backgrounds and comprehension levels. Similarly, Farrow et al. (2025) highlighted that accessible and well-structured teacher language improves students' ability to process academic concepts. The qualitative findings further support this interpretation, as students described teacher language as balanced, where formal expressions were combined with code-switching and simplified explanations to improve understanding.

The use of code-switching as an instructional strategy also emerged as an important finding. Rather than serving as a replacement for academic language, code-switching functioned as a bridge between complex concepts and students' existing knowledge. Students explained that teachers often shifted between Filipino and English when unfamiliar terms appeared or when concepts needed further clarification. This supports previous discussions on multilingual classroom practices, where flexible language use can strengthen comprehension and participation (Alrayes, 2024). The findings also align with Seeger and Sherman (2023), who emphasized that effective classroom communication depends on teachers' ability to respond to students' needs through adaptable communication strategies.

The results on linguistic match reveal that teachers were highly successful in aligning their language with students' level of understanding. Students rated teacher clarity, vocabulary alignment, and communication style at high levels, indicating that teachers were generally able to deliver lessons in ways that students could understand. The qualitative findings indicate that this alignment was achieved through the simplification of difficult concepts, the use of relatable examples, and the adjustment of language to students' experiences. These findings support Aich et al. (2024), who argued that simplifying explanations and providing accessible representations of complex ideas improve comprehension. Furthermore, Schmidt (2020) emphasized that communication becomes more effective when teachers consider students' existing linguistic experiences and communication patterns.

However, despite the generally high level of linguistic match, the findings also reveal that some students still experienced moments of confusion, particularly when encountering unfamiliar academic terms or language mismatches. This suggests that linguistic alignment is an ongoing process rather than a fixed condition. Teachers may communicate successfully most of the time, but differences in language familiarity, academic background, and individual learning preferences may still affect comprehension. This supports Farrow et al. (2024), who argued that continuous adjustment of instructional language is necessary to address diverse learner needs.

The findings on classroom communication indicate that students experienced a supportive, interactive learning environment. High levels of participation and ease of communication suggest that students felt comfortable engaging with teachers through questions, responses, and discussions. The qualitative findings emphasize that respectful and approachable communication encouraged participation, while negative or dismissive language discouraged students from expressing themselves. This supports Seeger and Sherman (2023), who explained that effective communication involves not only message delivery but also the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Similarly, Huang and Li (2024) emphasized that meaningful interaction strengthens engagement and contributes to deeper learning.

The results regarding students' learning further demonstrate that effective communication contributes to positive educational outcomes. Students showed high levels of understanding, motivation, and perceived academic performance. These findings suggest that when teachers communicate clearly and students experience

alignment between instructional language and classroom expectations, learning becomes more meaningful. This is consistent with research showing that motivation, engagement, and comprehension are strengthened when students experience supportive instructional environments (Ishida & Sekiyama, 2024). Furthermore, Magno et al. (2024) noted that effective teaching strategies and meaningful classroom interaction contribute to increased student motivation.

The regression findings provide an important contribution to understanding the role of teacher language in learning. The multiple linear regression analysis revealed that teachers' language use, linguistic match, and classroom communication were all significant predictors of students' learning. This finding indicates that teacher language contributes directly to learning while also strengthening the linguistic and communicative conditions that support effective instruction. Although linguistic match and classroom communication remain important pathways through which teacher language enhances learning, the significant direct effect of teachers' language use demonstrates that clear, adaptive, and contextually appropriate communication itself facilitates students' understanding, motivation, and perceived academic performance. These findings support Bailey (2022), who explained that instructional factors influence learning through both direct instructional practices and mediating processes such as interaction and learner engagement. Likewise, the qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation, as students consistently described that clear explanations, appropriate code-switching, relatable examples, and responsive communication made lessons easier to understand and encouraged active classroom participation. Together, these findings suggest that adaptive teacher language functions both as an instructional resource and as a communicative bridge that promotes meaningful learning experiences.

The findings also contribute to practical implications for classroom practice. Teachers should not view the perceived generational language gap as a barrier that requires abandoning academic language; instead, it should be addressed through purposeful adaptation of communication strategies. The study suggests that teachers can reduce communication gaps by maintaining academic rigor while using strategies such as code-switching, contextual examples, simplified explanations, and interactive communication. More importantly, the significant direct contribution of teachers' language use to students' learning indicates that deliberate language choices should be considered an essential pedagogical practice rather than merely a communication strategy. These practices align with the principles of Communication Accommodation Theory, in which successful communication occurs when speakers adjust their language to achieve mutual understanding while maintaining instructional effectiveness.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. The research was conducted at a single tertiary institution in Cabuyao, Laguna, and involved students from a specific academic program; therefore, the findings may not generalize to all college students or other educational contexts. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the participating institution and should not be

generalized to all higher education institutions or Philippine classrooms without further investigation. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling and self-reported data may introduce limitations related to representativeness and personal perception. Future studies may consider broader populations, include teachers as participants, examine actual classroom interactions, and explore additional factors such as teaching experience, digital literacy, and institutional context.

Future research should continue examining how perceived generational differences in language interact with technology, multilingual practices, and changing communication patterns among learners. Studies using classroom observation, longitudinal approaches, and comparative designs may provide a deeper understanding of how language adaptation develops over time. Overall, this study demonstrates that the effectiveness of classroom communication depends not only on teachers' ability to adapt language to students' communicative needs but also on the direct contribution of adaptive teacher language to students' learning. Language, therefore, serves not merely as a medium for delivering instruction but as a fundamental pedagogical resource that strengthens understanding, participation, motivation, and meaningful learning in multilingual and generationally diverse classrooms.

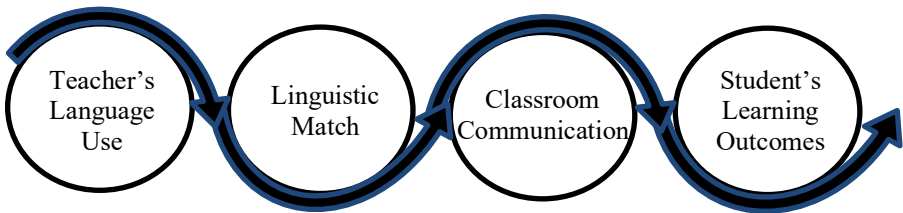


Figure 1. Conceptual Relationship Among the Study Variables.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the perceived generational language gap between teachers and students and its relationship with classroom communication and student learning in a tertiary institution in Cabuyao, Laguna. Using an explanatory mixed-method design, the study found that teachers generally balanced formal academic language with code-switching and adaptive communication strategies. Students reported very high levels of linguistic match and classroom communication, while the quantitative

findings further revealed that teachers' language use, linguistic match, and classroom communication were all significant predictors of students' learning. The qualitative findings complemented these results by showing that students learned more effectively when teachers explained concepts clearly, adapted their language to students' level of understanding, used contextual examples, and encouraged meaningful classroom interaction. Together, these findings demonstrate that adaptive teacher language supports learning both directly and by strengthening linguistic alignment and classroom communication.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on classroom communication by demonstrating that the perceived generational language gap is not simply a matter of age or generational identity, but of how teachers adapt their communication to students' linguistic backgrounds and learning needs. Effective teaching therefore depends not only on the accurate delivery of academic content but also on teachers' ability to transform language into an instructional resource that promotes understanding, participation, motivation, and meaningful learning. These findings reinforce the importance of student-centered and linguistically responsive communication in multilingual and generationally diverse classrooms and provide practical implications for teacher education, instructional planning, and classroom practice.

Based on the findings, teachers are encouraged to adopt linguistically adaptive communication strategies by intentionally combining clear academic language with appropriate code-switching, simplified explanations, contextual examples, and interactive classroom dialogue. For example, when introducing complex concepts, teachers may first present the formal academic terminology, explain it using familiar Filipino expressions or relevant real-life situations, and then encourage students to ask questions, discuss ideas, or share examples from their own experiences. This strategy can immediately strengthen linguistic alignment, increase classroom participation, and improve students' understanding while maintaining academic rigor.

Despite these contributions, the findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. The research was conducted at a single tertiary institution and focused on students from a single academic program; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other educational settings. Future research may examine the perceived generational language gap across different educational levels, institutions, and regions, while incorporating teachers' perspectives, classroom observations, and additional variables such as teaching experience, digital literacy, language attitudes, and institutional context. Comparative and longitudinal studies may also provide deeper insights into how adaptive teacher language influences classroom communication and student learning over time.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this article. The study was conducted objectively and independently, and no financial, personal, or institutional relationships influenced the design, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of the findings.

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