

Communicative Competence And Career Preparedness: Strengthening English Skills Among Criminology Interns Through Remedial Intervention

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between oral communication proficiency and internship readiness among fourth-year criminology students. Anchored in Communication Competence Theory and Social Learning Theory, a mixed-methods research design was employed to assess students' linguistic proficiency and preparedness for real-world professional environments. Findings reveal that while students recognize speaking proficiency as a critical determinant of internship performance, there remains a distinct "knowing-doing" gap between their self-perceived skill levels and the high-stakes communication demands of the criminal justice profession. Statistical analysis indicates a weak positive correlation between speaking proficiency and internship readiness, suggesting that professional preparedness is a multifaceted construct influenced by social, psychological, and institutional factors. Participants expressed a need for structured, experiential learning opportunities, specifically mock assessments and targeted coaching, to mitigate anxiety and improve articulation. Consequently, this study proposes a comprehensive remedial English program. By integrating andragogical teaching practices, peer-mentoring, and technology-enhanced instruction, the program aims to strengthen interns' workplace communication competence, ensuring they possess the precision and empathy necessary to maintain public trust and professional authority within the field of criminology.

Keywords: *Criminology education, Oral communication proficiency, Internship readiness, Remedial instruction, Communicative competence*

Introduction

Despite the critical need for effective interpersonal interactions to build public trust, there remains a substantial gap in the oral communication proficiency of incoming criminology professionals, which significantly impedes their internship readiness and overall career preparedness (Capending et al., 2026; Hanapi et al., 2014). The field of criminology focuses extensively on the study of crime, criminal behavior, and the administration of justice, environments that possess a non-negotiable demand for precise and effective communication skills. As criminology interns enter the dynamic settings of law enforcement and criminal investigation, their responsibilities extend far beyond mere observation and data gathering. They are expected to communicate critical information accurately, prepare professional reports, conduct rigorous interviews, and establish positive, empathetic relationships with diverse community members. In this context, communicative competence becomes an essential professional attribute that enables interns to navigate complex situations and perform their duties with confidence and ethical responsibility.

However, current educational and social realities present significant hurdles in achieving this required level of workplace proficiency. Recent assessments of police-community relations highlight that inadequate communication can directly diminish public trust and institutional satisfaction, underscoring the high stakes of deploying interns with poor language preparedness (Capending et al., 2026). Furthermore, the conversational language practices of Generation Z in everyday English contexts

frequently diverge from the formal, professional communication standards required in the criminal justice system (Chavez et al., 2026). Compounding this issue is a noted reluctance and withdrawal among learners when engaging with extended literary works, a disengagement that restricts vocabulary expansion and subsequently stifles oral fluency and speaking confidence (Adalia et al., 2026; Chavez et al., 2026). Within the Philippine context, these localized linguistic habits mirror broader national concerns regarding the declining state of English proficiency among college students, indicating a pressing need to address communication deficiencies before these students enter their professional internships (Cabigon, 2015; Valerio, 2015).

The development of oral communicative competence is often hindered by various psychological and pedagogical barriers. Foreign language speaking anxiety and inherent difficulties in second-language speaking significantly impede the fluency of English learners, often causing them to struggle with articulation and the production of appropriate phonemes in connected speech (Al Nakhalah, 2016; Batiha et al., 2018; Gan, 2012; Pontillas & Cayabyab, 2022). To overcome these barriers and adequately prepare criminology interns, educational institutions must shift from generic language instruction to targeted, interactive methodologies. Deliberate linguistic exposure, interactive engagement, and active supervisory guidance are foundational to maximizing the practicum readiness of future professionals (Candilas, 2016; Dimzon, 2026). Furthermore, the application of effective andragogical teaching practices tailored for adult learners in higher education, combined with unguided conversation practice, has been shown to substantially boost both oral fluency and speaking confidence (Baldwin et al., 2022; Daga, 2026).

While communication skills have emerged as one of the critical qualities that criminology interns must master, they are frequently underemphasized in the standard Bachelor of Science in Criminology curriculum, which traditionally prioritizes procedural and theoretical content. This omission is detrimental, as the ability to adapt to diverse social contexts, assess language dynamically, and demonstrate efficacy in real-world scenarios requires continuous practice and structural guidance (Aleksandrak, 2011; Argudo Serrano et al., 2021; Chi, 2011; Fulcher, 2015). Modern instructional interventions offer promising avenues for remedial support; for instance, technology-enhanced peer learning programs and the strategic integration of artificial intelligence can heavily motivate learner inventiveness and collaborative skill-building (Carvalho et al., 2022; Dela Calzada et al., 2026; Dulin, 2014).

By examining the interplay of linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors, this study delves into the essential competencies that shape the experiences of criminology interns. The inquiry is anchored in the synergy between Communication Competence Theory and Social Learning Theory, which together map the developmental trajectory from baseline linguistic assessment to professional readiness. Through this lens, the research evaluates students' oral communication proficiency alongside their self-perceived preparedness for internship placements. By statistically examining the relationship between these variables, the study identifies critical proficiency gaps that necessitate targeted instructional support. Ultimately, these empirical insights provide the foundational basis for a tailored English remedial program, designed to bridge the distance between current student capabilities and the high-stakes communication demands of the criminology profession, thereby enhancing the interns' ability to communicate with precision, empathy, and professional authority.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the relationship between speaking proficiency and internship readiness among fourth-year criminology students. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following problems:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Sex
 - 1.2 Age
 - 1.3 Ethnicity

2. What is the level of internship readiness among fourth-year criminology students in terms of speaking proficiency?
3. How does the oral communication proficiency of the criminology students affect their preparedness for internship within the field?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the speaking proficiency and internship readiness of criminology students?
5. Based on the results of the study, what remedial program can be proposed to address the identified language learning needs?

Methods

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were 198 graduating students enrolled in the College of Criminal Justice Education at North Eastern Mindanao State University, Cantilan Campus, during the Academic Year 2023-2024. These students were selected using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that the participants had sufficient exposure to professional communication contexts relevant to the objectives of this study.

Research Instruments

The researchers utilized a modified version of the questionnaire from the Cambridge English: Proficiency Handbook for Teachers (2016), which was adapted to ensure its suitability for the criminology context and to directly address the study's specific problem. The survey is structured into three distinct sections. The first segment captures demographic information to provide necessary context for the study population. The second section evaluates the students' speaking proficiency and its perceived correlation with their readiness for internship placements in the field. Finally, the third segment employs a Likert scale to assess students' internship readiness, capturing nuanced levels of preparedness from the participants' own perspectives.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process began with the documentation of students' performance in oral communication activities to pinpoint specific verbal communication difficulties. Following this, the researchers distributed the structured survey to the identified respondents. Once collected, the data were analyzed using statistical methods to determine the relationship between speaking proficiency levels and internship readiness. The findings derived from this process served as the empirical basis for the development of the proposed remedial English program.

Results

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	122	61.62%
Female	76	38.38%
Total	198	100%

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-23	173	87.37%
24-27	25	12.63%
Total	198	100%
Ethnic Group		
Indigenous People	28	14.14%
None	170	85.86%
Total	198	100%

Data on the sex, age, and ethnicity of the 198 respondents are shown in Table 1. The majority of the participants are male (61.62%), while 38.38% are female. In terms of age, the largest segment of the population falls between 21 and 23 years old (87.37%), with a smaller portion aged 24 to 27 years (12.63%). Regarding ethnicity, 14.14% of the respondents identified as Indigenous People, while the majority (85.86%) identified as "None."

Table 2. Oral Communication Proficiency of Criminology Students

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
To what extent do you think that criminology students' speaking proficiency impact their readiness for real-world situations encountered during internships?	3.86	0.80	Significant Impact
Do you think speaking proficiency can contribute to your performance during a criminology internship?	4.32	0.69	Strongly Agree
Speaking Proficiency Assessment: How would you rate your own verbal communication skills?	3.39	0.86	Average
Do you believe that enhancing speaking proficiency should be a priority for criminology students to excel in their internship placements?	3.91	0.79	Agree
Do you think criminology students with strong speaking proficiency are better equipped to handle real world situations encountered during internships?	4.01	0.78	Agree
Over all Mean	3.90	0.46	Significant Effect

Table 2 displays the students' perceptions of their oral communication proficiency. Respondents reported that speaking skills significantly impact readiness for real-world situations (mean = 3.86) and

strongly agreed that these skills contribute to internship performance (mean = 4.32). However, when self-assessing their own verbal communication skills, respondents provided an average rating (mean = 3.39). Students also agreed that speaking proficiency should be prioritized for internship success (mean = 3.91) and that higher proficiency levels assist in handling real-world situations (mean = 4.01), resulting in an overall mean of 3.90.

Table 3. Level of Internship Readiness among Fourth-Year Criminology Students

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Have you completed any courses or workshops specifically focused on improving communication in speaking proficiency in a professional setting?	3.19	0.92	To a Moderate Extent
Rate your perception of preparedness for a criminology internship regarding speaking proficiency.	3.54	0.80	Very Prepared
How confident are you in your ability to communicate with others during internship?	3.70	0.80	Confident
To what extent fourth year criminology students received training or guidance in public speaking and communication proficiency to prepare them for internships in the field?	3.65	0.82	Significant
Have you ever participated in mock interviews or oral assessments to assess their readiness for internship placements requiring strong speaking proficiency?	3.25	1.01	Some
Over all Mean	3.46	0.57	Prepared

Table 3 outlines the students' self-reported levels of internship readiness. The respondents indicated a moderate extent of completion regarding specific communication courses or workshops (mean = 3.19). Despite this, they reported feeling very prepared (mean = 3.54) and confident in their communication abilities (mean = 3.70). Students acknowledged receiving significant training or guidance in public speaking (mean = 3.65), though their participation in mock interviews or oral assessments was reported to a lesser extent (mean = 3.25), resulting in an overall mean readiness score of 3.46.

Table 4. Relationship between Speaking Proficiency and Internship Readiness

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Speaking Competence and Internship Readiness	.330**	.000	198

Table 4 illustrates the correlation between speaking competence and internship readiness. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of .330 with a p-value of .000. This indicates a weak, statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables at the 0.01 level.

Discussion

The demographic findings regarding the male-dominated respondent pool and limited ethnic diversity necessitate a review of inclusive communication strategies, as demographic correlates often influence student outcomes (Gimena, 2022; Rahayu, 2016). Understanding these disparities is essential for developing effective pedagogical approaches, particularly as language background affects speaking ability (Pontillas & Cayabyab, 2022). Ensuring equitable representation is vital for the professional preparation of all student groups (Hanapi et al., 2014).

The findings regarding oral communication proficiency highlight a significant "knowing-doing" gap, where students' self-perceived proficiency lags behind the communicative demands of their internships. This struggle with verbal expression is well-documented; learners frequently encounter problems with speaking and articulation that hinder their ability to function effectively in English-speaking environments (Al Nakhalah, 2016; Gan, 2012; Batiha et al., 2018). This gap is often widened by students' reluctance to engage with complex, extended literary materials, which limits the vocabulary expansion necessary for professional fluency (Adalia et al., 2026; Chavez et al., 2026). Furthermore, the informal conversational practices common among Generation Z learners often clash with the formal standards required for professional workplace discourse (Chavez et al., 2026). Even when students possess the foundational capacity for language, their performance is heavily influenced by the predictive role of conceptually scored vocabulary and literacy skills (Hwang et al., 2020; Candilas, 2016).

Achieving internship readiness requires moving beyond traditional instruction toward more robust pedagogical approaches. Although students often report feeling confident, their limited participation in practical assessments, such as mock interviews, suggests a need for more immersive, experiential training (Baldwin et al., 2022). The pedagogical characteristics of professional development, particularly when funded or structured to focus on advanced technology, can serve as a model for how higher education can better support students (Dulin, 2014). Active, intentional linguistic exposure and supervisory guidance are foundational to maximizing practicum readiness (Dimzon, 2026). Educators can also motivate the inventiveness of learners in technical and professional areas by strategically integrating AI tools (Dela Calzada et al., 2026). Peer-assisted and technology-enhanced learning programs, which focus on developing metacognitive skills, offer a viable path to bridge current gaps in competency (Carvalho et al., 2022). Effective guidance for improving speaking skills should be grounded in structured discourse, moving from simple interaction to complex language proficiency interviews (Chi, 2011; He et al., 1998; Fulcher, 2015). Ultimately, shifting to targeted andragogical practices is essential, as unguided practice is often insufficient for achieving advanced fluency (Daga, 2026; Aleksandrak, 2011).

Finally, the relationship between speaking proficiency and internship readiness must be viewed through a holistic lens that considers the broader professional ecosystem (Argudo Serrano et al., 2021). Communication proficiency directly impacts public trust and institutional satisfaction, which are paramount in police-community relations (Capending et al., 2026). In the Philippine context, the state of English is a pressing concern (Cabigon, 2015) that requires a balanced approach to managing code-switching attitudes and academic performance (Valerio, 2015). Because success is linked to a combination of individual attributes, lecturer competency, and the overall quality of education, addressing communication deficiencies is a structural necessity (Hanapi et al., 2014). By implementing a remedial program that addresses these diverse linguistic and professional needs, the institution can better bridge the distance between current trainee capabilities and the high-stakes demands of the criminology profession.

Conclusion

The study concludes that oral communication proficiency is a cornerstone of internship readiness for fourth-year criminology students; however, the weak positive correlation between these variables indicates that while speaking skills are vital, they operate alongside other critical professional competencies. Although students recognize the significance of these skills, their self-assessed

proficiency reveals a critical gap between perceived needs and actual capability, often complicated by speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, and a reluctance to engage with complex texts. To address this, it is recommended that criminology students actively engage in comprehensive remedial programs that utilize interactive scenarios and structured mock interviews to bridge the distance between theoretical knowledge and professional practice. Faculty must foster an inclusive learning environment by consistently integrating English-speaking activities into the curriculum, which supports the diverse needs of all students and mitigates linguistic disparities. Furthermore, the College of Criminal Justice Education should institutionalize targeted communication training, incorporating AI-driven instruction, peer-mentoring, and advanced andragogical techniques, to better equip students for the high-stakes environment of the criminal justice system. By prioritizing these efforts, academic programs can ensure that graduates are not only linguistically proficient but are also capable of maintaining public trust, institutional satisfaction, and professional authority through effective, empathetic communication.

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