

Learners' Motivations and Attitudes towards English Language: The Case of Communication Students

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate which motivation plays a major role and what attitude these Communication students have towards English language. Moreover, the specific needs of these students towards enhancing their communication skills are also identified. The data are collected through questionnaire and interview. Results show that from the two types of motivation, instrumental reasons are considered as the primary source of the Communication students' motivation towards learning English language. Also, this study looks into the difference of means to determine whether the difference is significant. Thus T-test results reveal (Positive= 4.3621, Negative = 2.5603) which emphasize a highly significant result. Hence, this explains that students have positive attitudes towards English language. In addition, the students' response in saying yes highlights their willingness to attend English language training courses. Because of their enthusiasm to be trained in their chosen fields, students have suggested this: initiating seminars, workshops, and forums which could enrich their communication skills. The findings of this study should be taken into consideration by all teachers handling language courses and most importantly those teaching major courses in Communication. They should plan out what specific strategies that would help build Communication students' instrumental motivation and positive attitude towards learning English language. Lastly is the schools and universities' initiative to craft intensive training/workshops to fully prepare students in the real workforce.

Keywords: Motivations, Attitudes, English language, Communication students.

INTRODUCTION

Salleh *et al.* mentioned that "Employers nowadays demand that employees be equipped with relevant knowledge and skills for performance and productivity.[17]" There is no denial then that one of these skills which is very much in-demand at present is the communication skills. In fact, it is now becoming a trend that employers require their applicants to have an excellent, above-average or if not at least possess good communication skills. Similarly, a report from Jobstreet accentuated that "when it comes to abilities, companies eye to those who have excellent communication skills" [18]. In this case, it is referring to the English language.

Thus, communication skill has now become a basic requirement by most of the industries. This study originates from the findings of a recent research conducted by the researcher herself on the job advertisements hiring Communication graduates from 2011-2015 where one of the interesting results was that all of the industries were specifying communication skills. These industries have underscored in their job ads the terms such as excellent, above-average, outstanding, and very good communication skills in the English language [1].

Salleh *et al.* expressed that "higher learning institutions play a critical role in enhancing the capacity of their graduates" (p. 43)[17]. Each year, there will be several Communication students who will be hunting their first jobs. And so in grooming graduates to succeed, schools and universities offering a Communication program must make sure that ample preparations have been made. But before anything is done, characterizing who these students are is very crucial. It is for this reason that this study is conducted to determine the motivations and attitudes of Communication students towards English language. It is from the results of this study that schools and universities can start establishing on what training and workshops will be of great importance so these students may be equipped with these skills.

In a study done in 2013, it was asserted that institutions of higher learning are no longer considered as pro-active in providing the appropriate learning opportunities for students to develop the necessary skills and competencies [2]. Also, these heads in the industries have elucidated that it is them providing more training when in fact it is already assumed that these

graduates are already knowledgeable when they are working in the companies already [2].

Having this kind of judgment and observation coming from the industries, schools and universities should be seeking for ways with the intention to meet the demands of the industries. Hence doing a research such as this will certainly facilitate these Communication graduates to completely prepare themselves in their future workplaces. Ascertaining the students' kinds of motivations and attitudes towards English language will be a good step to know them better and from the results of this study, schools and universities can start commencing training and workshops germane to Communication students' needs and at the same time meeting the requisites of the industries.

Having so many researchers [3-10] who were interested in studying the kinds and motivations of the students have substantiated that before one can effectively determine the teaching strategies appropriate in classes, examining students' motivations and attitudes is supposedly done first. Given the importance of identifying learners' motivations and attitudes towards English language, this research is conducted to investigate Communication students' motivation and attitudes towards this said language.

Besides the significant role of students' motivation and attitudes in the learning process, the lack in the literature regarding studies on Communication students' motivation and attitudes in the Philippines has been another motive to conduct the present study.

This section presents the different studies done on motivations and attitudes of students in learning a language. These studies were carried out in schools and universities.

The first part enumerates studies focusing on the kinds of motivations their respondents possess.

Vaezi [3] examined the integrative and instrumental kinds of motivation towards learning English as a foreign language among the Iranian undergraduate students. She revealed that these kinds of students had a very high motivation, specifically showing the instrumental kind of motivation. Moreover, her study illustrated that students had positive attitude towards learning the English language.

Another study by Jefiza [4] determined students' motivation focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic kinds in learning the English language. Both questionnaires and interviews were used in getting data of the study. Results showed that the students were extrinsically motivated rather than being intrinsically motivated.

Furthermore, they had positive attitude towards learning the English language.

Also, Farooq and Javid [5] studied the Saudi undergraduates' motivational orientations for learning English as a foreign language. They made use of a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale questionnaire. Results proved that these students possessed higher levels of extrinsic motivational orientations as compared to intrinsic orientations.

The second part illustrates students' attitudes towards a specific language.

Abidin, Mohammadi, and Alzwari [6] examined 180 secondary students' attitudes towards learning English in Libya. They looked into the concept of attitude as one of the major affective factors for success in learning a foreign language. The participants answered questionnaires focusing on the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects. Findings indicated that participants had negative attitudes towards learning English.

In addition, Matsuda [7] investigated Japanese attitudes towards English language. Data were collected through questionnaire, interview, and observation at a private high school in Tokyo, Japan. Results revealed that these Japanese had positive attitudes towards English. They proved this by their use of American-English and American products in Japan.

Durano [8] surveyed 280 fourth-year high school students in Ormoc City, Philippines to determine their attitude towards English and towards code-switching between Filipino and English. A ten-item questionnaire was the main research technique employed in the study. One of the results disclosed was that these student-participants had positive attitudes towards English. They perceived English as generally important.

The third part presents researchers who did studies both on motivations and attitudes of their respondents.

Pineda [9] studied the relationship between the attitude and motivation towards the English language among the Mexican university students. Her findings exhibited that the students had positive motivation and attitude towards learning the said language.

Moreover, Tamimi and Shuib [10] were interested in identifying the specific kinds of motivation (instrumental, integrative, and personal) and attitudes towards learning the English language. They surveyed 81 engineering students and used questionnaires and interviews for data collection. Their findings revealed that students had high instrumental motivation and at the same time, majority of the students had positive attitudes towards the educational status of English.

One of the factors that can influence acquisition of English is motivation. Motivation is defined as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language [11]. Baker [12] classifies two types of motivation: Integrative and Instrumental Motivations. Integrative motivation refers to those students who are "motivated to identify with or join another language group that is integrate into the group" (p.46). This kind of motivation is likely to help students become proficient in the second language.

Moreover, Gardner [13] cited other reasons for learning a second language which refer to Integrative motivation.

- (a) I want to learn "the language" because it will help me to learn more about people who speak "the language".
- (b) I want to learn "the language" so that I can gain friends more easily with people who speak "the language".
- (c) I want to learn "the language" to meet and converse with more and different people.

On the other hand, Instrumental motivation refers to those who are "learning another language for practical reasons such as getting a job, enhancing their career possibilities, or passing an exam" (p.46). The researcher deems that through identifying the kinds of motivations these students have will help the teachers understand the second language learners of English.

Likewise, these are some of the reasons cited by learners in learning the second language which illustrate the Instrumental motivation.

- (a) I want to learn "the language" in order to get a good job.
- (b) I want to learn "the language" because it will be important for my future career.
- (c) I want to learn "the language" so that I will be better educated.

Gardner [14] believes that students with positive attitudes and high level of motivation will be more successful compared to those with negative attitudes and no motivation. In addition, both motivation and positive attitude need to coexist together in order to achieve a successful language learning experience. For instance, a student who has favourable attitudes towards language learning but is not motivated to learn will not succeed as a language learner. Neither will a student who only has the motivation to learn but thinks ill of doing so [15].

This study aimed to investigate the kinds of motivation and attitudes of Communication students at the University of San Carlos towards English language.

1. What kind of motivation do students have towards English language?

- a. integrative motivation
 - b. instrumental motivation
2. What attitudes do students have towards English language?
 - a. positive
 - b. negative
 3. What are the needs of Communication students to help them become better communicators?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed the descriptive method of research. The analysis focused on the Communication students' motivations and attitudes towards English language. Moreover, the qualitative method was used to determine which of the two types of motivation the main source of learning the said language is. While quantitative method was used to prove whether students have positive over a negative attitude towards English language.

Research Participants

The participants were the first-year and second-year students taking up AB Communication major in Media or Corporate Communication at the Department of Communications, Linguistics, and Literature of the University of San Carlos in the Second Semester of the Academic Year 2015-2016. A total of 87 Communication students participated in the study.

Research Instrument

This study was conducted through the use of a questionnaire. This consists of three parts where the first portion requests the profile of the respondents. The second section of the questionnaire involves open-ended questions which elicit answers on the kinds of motivation these students have towards learning the English language. The last part entail statements where students' positive and negative attitudes towards the said language were formed. In this section, students were given eight statements adapted from Jefiza [4] where the participants can choose from the four categories adopting the Likert scale such as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Each response has corresponding points. SA = 4 points, A = 3 points, D = 2 points, and SD = 1 point. Scores 4 and 3 would mean positive attitudes while scores 2 and 1 would indicate negative attitudes [16]. Lastly, the questionnaire was validated by a psychometrician.

To check the reliability of the attitudes of students towards English language, Cronbach's Alpha is used. For the negative attitude, its result is .495 which signifies that the items are moderately reliable.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.484	.495	4

On the other hand, the result of the Cronbach's Alpha focusing on the positive attitudes of students towards the English language is .530 which implies that the items are also moderately reliable.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.465	.530	4

Research Procedure

Gathering of Data. To ensure its validity, the questionnaire was piloted to 15 first year Communication students prior to carrying out the main study. Through the two Research Assistants, they distributed the questionnaires to the Communication students. When the questionnaires were retrieved, a specific respondent number was assigned to each student. All reasons specified by the participants of learning the English language were categorized as integrative and instrumental.

Indeed questionnaires allowed the researcher to reach many students, but distributing questionnaires alone do not allow participants to talk about what is not written there or to elaborate on their answers. Thus, students were asked to validate the results of the study.

Treatment of Data. Once all the Communication students have answered the questionnaires, answers for question number one in part II of the questionnaire were classified either they refer to integrative kind of motivation or the instrumental one. A table showing frequencies and percentages was presented. To answer the second sub-problem on the attitudes of the Communication students towards English language, the respondents were asked to put a check mark on the spaces where they can Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Each of these responses has corresponding points. The statistician then computed for the mean of each positive and negative statement. Since this study also looked into the difference of means to determine whether the difference of the positive and negative is significant and so T-test was done.

Lastly, this study included the specific needs of Communication students which they deem very important for them to become better communicators.

Given this, the researcher would be able to suggest specific workshops, seminars, and forums to schools and universities offering the Communication program that would help enhance students' communication skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kinds of Motivation

Table 1: Kinds of Motivation

Kinds of Motivation	f	%
Integrative Motivation	86	45.26%
Instrumental Motivation	104	54.74%
Total	190	-

From the two types of motivation namely, integrative and instrumental that have been one of the objectives of this present study, instrumental reasons were considered as the primary source of the Communication students' motivation towards learning English language. Thus, majority of the interviewees agreed on this. The following direct quotes from these students divulge these reasons

I agree that most Communication students have the instrumental motivation because I think of us as practical people (Respondent #67).

Communication majors, for me, are indeed learning the English language for practical purposes. I do agree that it is instrumental motivation because we want to use the language for our own advantage rather than pure colonial mentality (from Respondent #70).

I agree with the results because students nowadays mostly think of what is practical and what is applicable as of the moment (from Respondent #83).

I agree with the result because in the near future we can't hide the fact that organizations will take interest in those who know the English language well (from Respondent #36).

Having verified the results from the student-participants, there is now a clearer understanding as to how teachers can help facilitate their classes given the idea that students are learning the English language drawing on the instrumental type of motivation.

Likewise, Vaezi's [3] study evinced that Iranian students had also a higher degree of instrumental motivation towards learning English towards learning English than the integrative one. The results intensified that Iranian students put too much emphasis towards their future career.

Table 1a below brings the detailed reasons of Communication students featuring the instrumental type of motivation for learning the English language.

Table 1a: Students' Instrumental Motivation Towards Learning the English Language

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- ✓ Knowing English increases my chances of getting a good job in the future. (R#7; R#4; R#29; R#33; R#41; R#43; R#52; R#61; R62)
 - ✓ To be a teacher and teach English to universities and go abroad to Japan. (R#14)
 - ✓ To be well-equipped when I tackle the strenuous path of law school. My mother warned me that law school will require mastery of the oral and written aspects of English communication. (R#10)
 - ✓ Proficiency is a valuable bargaining chip that improves one's chances of finding success. (R#25; R#62)
 - ✓ It was needed at that time in order to pass. (R#41)
 - ✓ To enhance my writing skills in English (R#51)
 - ✓ To excel in all academic affairs (R#78; R#55; R#37)
-

Quite obvious in this table is the attention dispensed by Communication students towards their future careers. To recall "instrumental motivation is driven by the individual's need of the language for practical purposes" [13].

The interview results were consistent with the questionnaire outcomes in the study of Tamimi and Shuib [10] that "instrumental reasons were regarded as

the primary source of the students' motivation towards learning the English language" (p. 40).

Albeit the reasons which prove that these Communication students have the instrumental kind of motivation for learning the English language is they also hold with them reasons that can be sorted as integrative type of motivation. Table 1b depicts all these reasons.

Table 1b: Students' Integrative Motivation Towards Learning the English Language

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- ✓ I would like to communicate with different people around the world through this universal language. (R#5; R#2; R#12; R#15; R#21; R#23; R#24; R#28; R#10; R#36; R#37; R#52; R#62; R#65; R#71)
 - ✓ Because it's the universal language and everyone has to learn this language in order for us to understand even though we are in different cultures. (R#46)
 - ✓ I want to learn English because it is a language that is known to most of us and being enable to know it gives me the chance to talk to others. (R#74)
 - ✓ To interact not limited to locals (R#78)
-

Though majority of the Communication students impart that they are learning the English language using the instrumental kind of motivation, it is also worthy to regard that there is only a slight difference of around 10% which can be observed if these two kinds of motivation are differentiated. So, these varied reasons manifest that they themselves would like to socialize with other people who speak the said language. To recall "integrative motivation is characterized by the desire of an individual to integrate and belong to the English speaking population" [13].

Thus, it can be drawn from this study that the Communication students as well are interested in communicating with people while learning about the latter's language and culture

On the contrary, the results in the study of Tamimi and Shuib [10] provided evidence that "learning English as a part of the culture of its people had the least impact in students' English language motivation" (p. 29).

Attitudes Towards English Language

Table 2a: The Students' Results on their Attitudes Towards English Language

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. English is an important part of the Education program.	87	4.85	.518
2. I find some difficulties in learning the English language	87	2.64	1.000
3. I plan to learn the English language as much as possible	87	4.62	.615
4. I force myself to listen to the teacher during English classes	87	3.13	1.274
5. When there are English exercises, I finish answering them immediately	87	3.68	.934
6. During English classes, I easily get bored	87	2.39	1.038
7. I read English materials (such as newspapers, magazines, books, etc.) as often as I can	87	4.30	.891
8. I prefer to read materials which do not use the English language	87	2.08	1.213

A close examination of mean scores of the positive and negative statements expresses the explicit attitudes of the Communication students towards English language. First, the mean of statements 2 and 4 articulates that the students are neutral (either they agree or disagree). Statement 2 which mentions "I find some difficulties in learning the English language" asserts that some students perhaps can agree that there are difficulties that they have braved while other students may also disagree because for them it is simply easy while learning the said language. One student said

There are some people who might find English a very easy language to learn. But some people like me find it difficult. It depends on people (from Respondent #69).

An explanation that may ascend from statement 4 "I force myself to listen to the teacher during English classes" which resulted to a neutral attitude among Communication students is that their experiences vary on who the teacher is handling a particular English course. A participant expounded that

Sometimes the teacher is good at communicating with us and thus captures our attention and interest while other teachers are the exact opposites (from Respondent #62)

Second, the mean of statements 1 and 3 ascertains that students strongly agree on these. For statement 1 "English is an important part of the education program" distinctly tells that the Communication students have placed high value on the said language. A Communication student elucidated

Because we will be using English a lot in our future jobs (from Respondent # 86).

For statement 3 "I plan to learn the English language as much as possible" shows that students are in strong

agreement on this because they need to be more equipped for future advantage. One student clarified

Even though I don't like speaking in English, I have to learn it because most jobs today require knowledge in English (from Respondent #69).

Third, the result of the mean of statements 5 and 7 signals that students agree on these two situations. For statement 5 "When there are English exercises, I finish answering them immediately" this expounds that because of the several exercises they went through since elementary years and so they have more or less a good background of the English language already. One participant asserted

Because we are already used to the English activities (from Respondent #86).

For statement 7 "I read English materials (such as newspapers, magazines, books, etc.) as often as I can" depicts that most Communication students have interest in reading English materials. One observation has been made by a participant

I find my classmates reading English materials almost all the time (from Respondent #84).

Lastly, the mean of statements 6 and 8 provides a result where Communication students are in disagreement on these. For statement 6 "During English classes, I easily get bored" this presupposes that the English language is grasped as an enjoyable thing to learn. Respondents imparted that

*English is fun (from Respondent #92).
English is not boring. It's fun, you'll learn new things everyday (from Respondent #64).*

I think Comm students find English classes enticing since I think all of us or if not all, most love the English language (from Respondent #67).

For statement 8 "I prefer to read materials which do not use the English language" this propounds that there is

an easier comprehension for Communication students if the English language is used. They said

I like reading materials in English, in fact, I understand more (from Respondent #41).

Because we are able to understand more when the English language is used as a medium (from Respondent #67).

Most of us find English textbooks easy to understand (from Respondent #90).

I can comprehend information better when the language used is English (from Respondent #78).

The next presentation reveals the disposition of the Communication students towards English language. The paired sample statistics is shown below as to distinguish what specific attitude they have for the said language.

Paired Sample Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 PEAv	4.3621	87	.45283	.04565
NEAv	2.5603	87	.71219	.07635

This study looked into the difference of means to determine whether the difference is significant. T-test results revealed (Positive= 4.3621, Negative = 2.5603)

Table 3a: Results of the Students Regarding Willingness to Attend Language Training Courses

If the department will initiate training and workshops, will you be willing to attend English language training courses which will help improve your proficiency of the said language?	f	%
YES	79	90.80%
NO	1	1.15%
CAN'T DECIDE	7	8.05%

Table 3a substantiates that these Communication students are very much willing to attend English language training courses so as to increase their proficiency of the said language. Respondents emphasized that

Most students would like to attend since this is a step towards the end goal which is getting a job in the future (from Respondent #91).

Majority of the Comm students would attend trainings because trainings can help in developing interpersonal communication in the workplace in the future (from Respondent #42).

which indicates a highly significant result. Thus, this explains that students have positive attitudes towards English language. This confirms that Communication students are placing high value of the English language where they are in strong agreement that indeed it is an important part of their education program. They expressed

I agree with the result that Communication students have a positive attitude towards the English language because it is one of the most basic tools in communicating – especially in our country. Our education system tends to prioritize the English and makes it the default medium of communication (from Respondent # 8).

I believe that Communications majors do have a positive perspective on the English language because it is in line with the course they chose for themselves. Based on my personal observation, they do appear to give their best effort when attempting to communicate in it – albeit insufficient at times (from Respondent # 50).

Also, Matsuda [7] and Durano [8] shared the same finding with the present study where their respondents also possess a positive attitude towards English language. Specifically, student-participants in Durano’s [8] study perceive English as generally important.

This next table exposes the interest of the student-participants to join language training courses in the future initiated by the department.

Majority would attend the seminar because it is for our own good and for our future jobs (from Respondent #35).

Majority of Communication students are expected to be receptive to workshops and training because both offer opportunities to improve their craft (from Respondent #25).

I agree about the department initiating training and workshops for the English language because there are still a lot of things, we Communication students need to enhance, develop, and learn (from Respondent #55).

In the recent research of Malimas [1], it clearly mentioned that “Different employers are very keen

towards the communication skills possessed by the Communication graduates. These firms speak of their written or oral communication skills. Given that most of the industries are very conscientious on this, they have intensified in their job advertisements the terms such as excellent, above-average, skilled, knowledgeable, proficient, outstanding, and very good.” A probable explanation on this might be that these students do not yet consider their communication skills as very good. Hence, this reason is backed-up by the results in the questionnaire which majority of them think that they have not yet considered their communication skills as above-average. Gardner [13] explained that “having great desires for learning the language is considered to

be one of the main components of language learning motivation” (p.45).

This finding is in line with the results of Tamimi and Shuib’s [10] study that majority of the respondents being engineering students also agree to attend more language training courses to improve their English proficiency.

The succeeding table points out the different suggestions addressed to schools and universities offering the Communication program which are deemed important by the Communication students while they are finishing their four-year program.

Table 3b: Needs of Communication Students Towards Enhancing their Communication Skills

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- ✓ News reporting (R#8)
 - ✓ Socializing/speaking with foreign people (R#2)
 - ✓ Exposure to communication labs (talking simulation) (R#5)
 - ✓ Have monthly regulated talks (R#16)
 - ✓ Better wifi connection for easy research (R#18)
 - ✓ Free movie every week (R#18)
 - ✓ More training and workshops within and outside school (R#23)
 - ✓ Brushing again on the basics of English grammar (R#25)
 - ✓ Opportunities for everyone, not just a chosen few (R#27)
 - ✓ Imposing an activity once or twice a month which everyone can participate in (R#32)
 - ✓ Hands-on activities and interaction activities (R#37)
 - ✓ Organizing fun yet interesting and educational activities (R#38)
 - ✓ Team buildings to help our social skills with our members and others (R#45)
 - ✓ Opening an organization of public speaking program (R#51)
 - ✓ Seminar-workshop on stage fright (R#56)
 - ✓ More activities in communicating (role play, report) (R#68)
 - ✓ Implementing English clubs, writing clubs, special classes (R#71)
 - ✓ By providing exchange programs (R#83)
 - ✓ Have some activities that are related to media (R#87)
 - ✓ Bringing exchange students (R#90)
 - ✓ More public speaking activities (R#92)
-

The students’ responses through their detailed suggestions in table 3b infer their willingness to be trained in their chosen fields. Initiating seminars, workshops, and forums which could enrich their communication skills is one of the suggestions highly emphasized to schools and universities by these student-participants. The several suggestions are clear indications that Communication students have high desires to improve their communication skills. These suggestions are probably reflections from their needs to function effectively at their domains and more importantly to be qualified enough to join companies and industries in which one of the major qualifications is the communication skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was conducted to investigate which of the two kinds of motivation could be the primary source of the Communication students’ motivation towards learning the English language. The findings show that students demonstrated greater emphasis on instrumental

reasons for learning the English language. Thus it can be inferred that students are learning the English language for practical reasons. Moreover, students have a positive attitude towards English language. Hence they see great importance of the use of English in their education program and in their future careers. Lastly, it reveals that initiating seminars, workshops, and forums which could enrich students’ communication skills is one of the suggestions highly emphasized in this study. Thus, it can be said that students are very much aware that preparing themselves to possess excellent communication skills is one of the weapons to join companies and industries.

The findings of this study should be taken into consideration by all teachers handling language courses and most importantly those teaching the major courses. They should plan out what specific strategies that would help build Communication students’ instrumental motivation towards learning the English language.

The language teachers are also advised to share their language learning goals with the students and to incorporate some fun and pleasure in their classes so that the Communication students' instrumental and integrative motivations and their positive attitude towards English language will be kept high and at the same time, students would not lose interest in the learning process.

Of course, curriculum makers and designers should do constant re-evaluation if important issues such as activities, content, teaching practices, etc. are indeed aligned with the department's goals. Lastly, it is highly recommended that schools and universities initiate intensive training/workshops through the student development fund in order to maximize Communication students' time and to fully prepare them to the real world while they are finishing their four-year program.

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