



**Initial Examination of the Trends in  
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1976 to 2015**

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**Philippine Humanities Review**

Volume 21, Issue 2, 2019, pp. 1-33

ISSN-0031-7802

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## **Initial Examination of the Trends in Speech Communication Theses, 1976 to 2015\***

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This paper presents a preliminary analysis of speech communication theses submitted to the University of the Philippines Diliman Department of Speech Communication and Theatre (UPD DSCTA) Arts from 1976 to 2015. Findings revealed that those written between 1976 and 1985 mostly centered on the general components of human communication, whereas those completed from 1986 to 1995 were more particular to certain levels and areas of speech communication. The move from general to specific subjects of inquiry was maintained in the studies that were conducted from 1996 to 2005 and from 2006 to 2015. During these periods, most of the theses focused on more precise issues related to the different branches of speech communication. Results also showed interesting patterns of methods employed in the studies completed during the four decades covered in the analysis. From

\* This study was part of a bigger project funded by the University of the Philippines Diliman Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Development through one of its grants.

1976 to 1985, students were more inclined to use quantitative techniques to address their research objectives. However, from 1986 to 1995 and from 1996 to 2005, an increasing number of studies evidently favored qualitative designs and rhetorical analyses. Finally, from 2006 to 2015, there was a return to post-positivist methods. The implications of these findings on the UPD DSCTA's speech communication program structure and course offerings are discussed.

*Keywords:* speech communication, speech communication theses, UPD DSCTA

The importance of examining the prevailing themes in speech communication research in the country lies in the assumption that they can provide a good overview of the movements of the discipline over the years. Although these themes may not offer an exhaustive account of speech communication's expansion, they can certainly deliver insights about how it evolves. By understanding the issues that have been investigated by scholars who subscribe to various paradigms and take different epistemological and ontological stances, I contend that a better appreciation of the developments in speech communication as a field of study may be achieved. This appreciation, in turn, may allow academic departments to revisit their speech communication (or other communication-related) programs and consider restructuring their existing curricula to respond to the changes in the discipline. For researchers, it could give them relevant information about the areas or levels of speech communication that require more in-depth investigations. For teachers, it may further inform their pedagogical bases and give them ideas about how they can more effectively teach the core functions of speech communication in different contexts of human interaction.

Finally, for practitioners, it may aid them in comprehending the practical applications of speech communication concepts and theories in real-world settings.

There are a number of ways to trace and outline the subjects of speech communication research — from gathering locally published articles focusing on various speech communication areas (e.g., interpersonal communication, rhetoric, public communication, persuasion) to collecting pieces (that are relevant and specific to the Philippine context) from top communication journals in the region and in the world. For this paper, however, only the theses produced by undergraduate and graduate (master's) students of the University of the Philippines Diliman Department of Speech Communication and Theatre Arts (UPD DSCTA) were examined as there has been no systematic investigation of the research inclinations of speech communication students. That is, although there were a few attempts to evaluate the Department's program structure to identify the courses and topics that graduates found useful for their future careers, there has been a limited effort to understand their research interests. Apart from this, because the UPD DSCTA is one of the very few institutions in the country that offer speech communication as a degree program, it makes sense to scrutinize the kinds of culminating research projects its students completed as these could be reflective of its curricular designs. Moreover, they could also be suggestive of the nature of speech communication as an academic program in the Philippines in general and at the UPD DSCTA in particular.

The data set was composed of 514 theses written from 1976 to 2015. It was divided into four to make the data more manageable and enable meaningful comparisons. Each cluster, then, was defined by a 10-year period (i.e., the first group covered those theses submitted from 1976 to 1985; the second,

from 1986 to 1995; the third, from 1996 to 2005; and the fourth, from 2006 to 2015). The rationales for analyzing only the theses completed during these years were the following: (1) the oldest speech communication theses recorded in the university libraries were accepted in 1976; and (2) it was in 2015 when the UPD DSCTA started to explore and implement significant curricular revisions. Therefore, it was crucial to observe the trends in speech communication theses from 1976 to 2015 as they could be indicative of minor curricular modifications, faculty training and research leanings, industries' needs, and sociopolitical events. I should underscore though that the major goal of this paper is to present a preliminary analysis which could set the platform for more extensive research. In other words, I recognize that the conclusions presented in the subsequent sections have limitations, and thus can be further expanded to advance stronger arguments.

All the theses were analyzed through their titles based on the assumption that they could give concise yet specific descriptions of the subject matters, general objectives, and other features of the students' research projects. I implemented an additional layer of analysis (i.e., inclusion of thesis abstracts) for those that were submitted from 2006 to 2015 because of the undergraduate curricular revisions that took place in 2002 (which possibly had its effects in 2006 as the bachelor's program is designed to be completed in four years) and the initiated program restructuring that began in 2015. In short, the purpose of examining these studies more deeply was to see the likely impact of the curricular changes that occurred in 2002 before another series of course modifications was introduced in 2015. It should be noted, however, that the abstracts were analyzed simply to supplement the paper's general findings.

Although it seems that reviewing mere titles cannot yield much information, a number of studies in different fields stressed the relevance and importance of examining research article titles (e.g., Cheng et al.; Haggan; Jacques and Sebire; Nagano). Even though Jacques and Sebire did not focus on communication or other very closely related disciplines, they forwarded pertinent findings. They found that title structures have significant influence on citation rates (2–3). In another study, Haggan claimed that article titles play a vital role in encouraging interested parties to continue reading (293). Upon analyzing hundreds of articles published in journals associated with different disciplines — sciences, literature, and linguistics (294–295) — she found patterns specific to each of them (312–313). For example, literature titles are often creative, whereas science titles are more explicit and precise (313). Although she made a thorough discussion of how title constructions vary depending on the field of study, she mentioned that it is challenging to pinpoint the reasons behind these dissimilarities as they could be a product of fundamental differences among the disciplines or an outcome of authors' common practices (313). From the findings and conclusions of these studies, I argue that despite its limitations, scrutinizing thesis titles may nevertheless offer valuable information especially about the communication issues and phenomena that appeal to students of speech communication.

I analyzed the thesis titles through the following: (1) research focal point, (2) speech communication level and/or area, and (3) methodological approach. The bases for the inclusion of the first and third categories were largely derived from related research that utilized thematic meta-analysis as a means of treating the collected data (e.g., Kamhawi and Weaver 11–12; Kim and Weaver 522–525). The second one was added

due to speech communication's broadness. That is, because it encompasses a wide range of communication contexts, it was essential to identify its branches that received much attention from students. Research focal point was operationalized as the thesis' central topic or idea. Speech communication level and/ or area was the study's context in relation to a specific field of speech communication. Methodological approach was defined as the primary method used in gathering the needed data. Considering that I evaluated thesis titles, the third point of analysis was limited to the general classifications of methods in communication research (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, rhetorical, mixed methods). Additionally, I employed Schutt's four major social research types — descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, and evaluative (12–15) — in organizing the data.

Because the examination of the theses completed from 2006 to 2015 involved their abstracts, I deemed it necessary to assess the theories used in framing these studies to determine the student researchers' justifications for their conceptual and operational claims. Apart from this, I also accommodated the notion that reviewing these theoretical frameworks could be helpful not just in tracing the conceptual developments in the discipline but even in realizing whether the most dominant communication theories (which usually have western origins) are really applicable to local communication problems. In connection with this, it could manifest how these theories are possibly expanded to address various communication concerns experienced in the Philippine context. Although I do not claim that the current paper extends to all the preceding points considering its scope and main goal (focusing on the trends in speech communication theses at the UPD DSCTA in general), I argue that the findings detailed in the next sections can be used to probe the influences of outside (or foreign) perspectives

on teaching, researching, and practicing speech communication in the Philippines. They can also be utilized to accentuate how the country's academic institutions that offer communication programs respond to the challenge of contextualizing these viewpoints or how they attempt to veer away from them by cultivating concepts and constructing theories that account for the distinct features of Filipino communication interactions.

Unlike other similar studies on curriculum (e.g., Bertelsen and Goodboy 266) and research (e.g., Tomasello et al. 537–538) trends in communication which employed quantitative techniques (e.g., frequencies, percentages) to make sense of the categories that emerged from the data, I opted to use a more qualitative approach in evaluating the speech communication theses. The rationale for this was the fact that only those theses filed and catalogued in the university libraries were assessed. In other words, those that were not formally submitted or officially registered, regardless of the reason, were not covered in the present study. From this, I supposed that providing descriptions of the themes that surfaced from the data was more ideal as the current paper is simply concerned with providing initial analysis of speech communication theses at the UPD DSCTA. Moreover, the aforesaid method could generate relevant conclusions without the need for statistical validation. The following portions discuss the findings of the study.

### **From 1976 to 1985: Focusing on the General Components of Human Communication**

Going over the theses written from 1976 to 1985, I observed that their research problems ranged from communication patterns and styles in different interpersonal communication settings to communicative competence in relation to general areas of oral communication such as listening, voice and



diction, and message reception and retention. In terms of methodological approaches, it was evident that quantitative-explanatory techniques were dominantly used. That is, many of the theses produced during this period aimed to gather evidence of the relationships between and among certain communication variables through post-positivist methods (e.g., survey, quasi-experiment). Table 1 presents some examples of the thesis titles from 1976 to 1985.

### **Table 1**

*Examples of Speech Communication Theses Submitted from 1976 to 1985*

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A study on the correlation between speaking ability and selected home variables</li> <li>2. Hiligaynon speech communication behavior: The relationship between messages and communication situations</li> <li>3. A study on the communication practices of mid-management personnel in a mining company</li> <li>4. The group problem-solving patterns of Filipino students in informal group discussion situations and their relationships with group productivity and cohesiveness</li> <li>5. Effects of selected factors on listening comprehension of students at the UP College Manila</li> </ol> |
|---|

*Note.* These thesis titles were derived from the lists provided by the university libraries.

It is interesting to note that the focal points of the studies during these years centered mostly on communication behaviors in various environments. Based on this, I advance the presupposition that the brand of speech communication

facilitated by the UPD DSCTA from 1976 to 1985, at least as reflected in the students' theses, involved a great emphasis on basic communication skills in face-to-face interactions. Although most of these studies problematized elements of interpersonal communication, it would be too simplistic to presume that they were exclusive to said communication level as the boundaries that separate the branches of speech communication are not clear-cut. For instance, the study on the communicative styles of middle managers in a company (see Table 1) could be classified under both interpersonal communication and organizational communication. Another example is the thesis on Hiligaynon communication behaviors (refer to Table 1) which demonstrated the intersection between dyadic communication and intercultural (or cross-cultural) communication. Additionally, I noticed that the theses' central issues within this time frame were concerned more with the fundamental principles of human communication that function at any of its levels than with specific constructs that are defined by a particular communication field (e.g., ethos as a concept mostly associated with public communication and persuasion, group cohesion as a variable often investigated in relation to small group communication, ethnocentrism as a topic of inquiry in intercultural communication). From these elucidations, I contend that the research projects conducted during this period mainly subscribed to the "general view" of communication. By this, I mean that they examined the applications of basic skills (e.g., message creation, speaking ability, listening) that are often taught in speech communication programs. In sum, the point I attempt to make here is that the theses completed from 1976 to 1985 displayed the students' interests to acquire more knowledge about the broad concepts of speech communication. Although it is difficult to assume that their desire to problematize these fundamental issues was brought about by institutional influences

alone as their personal experiences might have also encouraged them to study said communication problems, there is reason to believe that the training they received from the UPD DSCTA through its course offerings had a role in how they chose the subjects of their theses.

As regards the theses' methodological approaches, I suppose that the prevalent use of quantitative techniques to answer the students' scholarly inquiries was, in part, a manifestation of speech communication's post-positivist roots and the UPD DSCTA's leanings on this tradition. Aside from this, it could also be indicative of the faculty members' training and methodological inclinations. The fact that most of the studies relied on quantitative methods shows that the instructors and professors were highly capable of directing research that involved statistical procedures. To a certain extent, it could also be interpreted as a means of testing the applicability of early models and theories of human communication (to local communication interactions) via methods that can produce empirical evidence (e.g., survey, quasi-experiment).

### **From 1986 to 1995: Moving toward Specialization**

If the theses submitted between 1976 and 1985 aimed to scrutinize the fundamental elements in the communication process, the studies done from 1986 to 1995 somewhat deviated from the basics. Although there were still quite a number of studies on communication styles and patterns, communicative competence, listening, and other related topics, most of the students' culminating research projects during this period attended to communication phenomena that are uniquely associated with the established areas of the discipline (e.g., public speaking, nonverbal communication, persuasion). Table 2 provides some examples of the theses written from 1986 to 1995.

## Table 2

*Examples of Speech Communication Theses Submitted from 1986 to 1995*

1. A study on the effect of the use of one-dimensional visual aids and puppetry on children's comprehension and appreciation of literature
2. The use of drama in evangelism, edification, and worship: The case of a local fundamentalist church
3. A study on the relationship between two modes of delivery and the speaker's ethos
4. An experimental study on the effects of three modes of presentation: Silent reading, chamber theatre, and aesthetic appreciation of narrative literature
5. The use of bodily actions by participants in a classroom panel discussion: A descriptive study
6. The rhetoric of 1986 snap presidential elections
7. The principal speeches on the RP-US military bases agreement: A case study in ethno-rhetoric
8. A rhetorical criticism of original Tagalog pop ballads during the periods covering the February 1986 EDSA revolution to October 1989
9. The influence of gender role expectations on the communicative behaviors of selected pre-school teachers: An exploratory study
10. Dr. Luis Pantoja and the growth series sermons: A rhetorical analysis of strategies to enhance ethos

*Note.* These thesis titles were derived from the lists provided by the university libraries.

There could be three likely reasons for the difference between the focal points of the studies completed from 1976 to 1985 and those of the theses submitted from 1986 to 1995. First, the shift to more specific communication issues might have been caused by the UPD DSCTA's gradual movement to specialization. Perhaps it was during this time when it started to highlight the different branches of speech communication (e.g., interpersonal communication, rhetoric, oral interpretation), which, in turn, encouraged students to explore topics that go beyond general communication processes. Second, even though I entertain the possibility that the change in the students' research interests was an outcome of the UPD DSCTA's goal to strengthen certain speech communication areas, I do not presume that it intended to narrow its program scope. In fact, I argue that the finding indicated its efforts to broaden the range of speech communication. In other words, the process of expanding its coverage paved the way for the development of fields that did not receive much scholarly attention in the past decade. Third and lastly, the happenings in the bigger social space might have also affected the kinds of research questions students endeavored to answer. By way of example, the theses on the rhetoric of the 1986 snap elections and Tagalog ballad songs during the EDSA revolution (see Table 2) could somewhat attest to the unignorable influence of sociopolitical events on the students' research projects. Although I recognize that this assumption necessitates more in-depth analysis as it may be argued that any research is actually a systematic problematization of an issue in the social system, the impact of the many significant occurrences in the realm of politics in the late 1980s on the themes of speech communication theses completed from 1986 to 1995 may not be easily dismissed.

It is worth mentioning that many of the undergraduate and master's theses within this time frame illustrated not only the greater emphases assigned to the specific branches of speech communication but even the emergence of interdisciplinary fields. For instance, the study on the use of drama in a church setting (refer to Table 2) underscored the applicability of the principles of oral interpretation (a branch of speech communication) in the context of religion. This, among other similar theses, affirmed the capacity of speech communication areas to intersect with other branches of knowledge to address more sophisticated scholarly inquiries that cross disciplinary boundaries.

About the methodological techniques employed in the students' theses from 1986 to 1995, I found that qualitative (interpretivist and social constructionist) and rhetorical methods were more dominant. This finding indicated that the change in the theses completed in this decade (compared with those done between 1976 and 1985) was not confined or restricted to their research problems as it was also observed in their methods. As briefly tackled above, the theses written during this time included those that explored the new zones and intersections (with other disciplines) of speech communication. Taking this into account, I view the more frequent use of qualitative and rhetorical analyses as a consistent manifestation of the students' desire to delve into unfamiliar territories of the discipline. This is not to say though that those methodological approaches are utilized merely for preliminary research. My point here is that those techniques may be more effective in understanding communication phenomena which were not thoroughly examined in the past.

## From 1996 to 2005: Defining Its Areas and Subareas

As discussed earlier, the main themes of the studies done from 1976 to 1985 revolved around the fundamental concepts of human communication. It somehow changed from 1986 to 1995 as the theses submitted during this decade focused more on the specific branches of speech communication. After evaluating the theses completed in the following decade, from 1996 to 2005, I found a parallel pattern. That is, those studies also engaged communication issues that are distinctively related (although not entirely exclusive) to particular levels or fields of speech communication. Table 3 offers examples of the students' theses from 1996 to 2005. Noticeably, more titles were indexed by the university libraries during this period presumably because of the significant increase in the number of students enrolled in the undergraduate and master's programs.

### Table 3

*Examples of Speech Communication Theses Submitted from 1996 to 2005*

1. A study on the relationship between gender and communication styles of middle managers in government and private organizations
2. A descriptive study of interpersonal communication styles of a selected group of Filipino college students
3. The relationship of gender with the use of relational maintenance behaviors among Filipino adolescent siblings
4. A description of interpersonal communication patterns among siblings in a Filipino family

5. Social relationships and gender in turn-taking cues during conversations
6. The relationship between opening approaches and self-disclosures
7. Communication strategies for conflict management used by a single mother and a single father on their children
8. A comparative study of selected communication skills between two children with different child care arrangements
9. Conflict resolution in friendships among high school students in Quezon City and Bukidnon
10. Cyberlove: A study on the development of internet-initiated relationships toward “real time” romances
11. A study on the relationship between gender and self-disclosure of couples in heterosexual romantic relationships
12. An exploratory-descriptive study on the relationship between self-concept and self-disclosure of selected Communication III students
13. Communication strategies for conflict management employed by selected college male and female students in heterosexual intimate relationships
14. The doctor is in: An exploratory study of doctor-patient communication in the Department of Family and Community Medicine, Philippine General Hospital



15. An exploratory study of communication styles of participants in a communication transaction as influenced by same-sex and mixed-sex environment
16. The effects of anonymity on self-disclosure and intimacy in online chat during initial interaction
17. Breaking the bad news: A study on communication strategies of doctors in revealing cancer diagnosis to patients
18. The relationship between intimidation and persuasion as caused by intelligence, physical attractiveness, and wealth in small group communication
19. The relationship between family communication patterns and personality development of children: An exploratory study
20. Breaking up is hard to do: An exploratory study on break-ups among college males and females involved in heterosexual romantic relationships
21. The correlation of male and female affective orientation with interpersonal nonverbal sensitivity in same-sex comforting situations
22. A description of messages and choice of language of male and female students from the UP College of Arts and Letters when disclosing sexual experiences

23. Communication strategies used by Filipino male gynecologist fellows of Philippine General Hospital with their female patients: An exploratory study
24. Patterns of ethos: A Filipino profile
25. Theory into practice: The classical rhetorical concepts of Aristotle applied to contemporary business presentation programs
26. The rhetorical discourse of Jaime Cardinal Sin related to the issue of separation of church and state in the Philippines: A historico-critical approach
27. The effects of two modes of persuasive communication on the attitudes of selected Communication III students
28. The analysis of two modes of persuasive communication in attitude and behavior change: An implementation of the zero waste campaign among elementary school students
29. A study on the relationship between the perception of ethos of a speaker in formal and informal clothes and the age of the audience
30. A rhetorical criticism of Carlos P. Romulo's speeches: A study on crisis rhetoric
31. A rhetorical criticism of the inaugural addresses of three presidents of the Philippines using Roderick Hart's role analysis
32. The rhetoric of student activists: A linkage between exordium and mobilization of UP students

33. The rhetoric of the worship service of Victory Christian Fellowship
34. A study on the effect of extrinsic and intrinsic motivational appeals in persuasive speeches
35. A content analysis of the use of forms of support and factors of interest in the oral presentations of selected marketing people
36. An analysis of selected speeches of Park Chung Hee on the Korean economy using Doris Graber's theory on political language
37. An analysis of Pauline epistles dealing with the issues of feminism
38. A study on the relationship between public speaking apprehension and public speaking performance of high school students
39. Subversion and reaffirmation of the Erap myth in the "Trial of the Century": A rhetorical inquiry
40. A survey of the status of listening instruction in selected elementary schools in Quezon City
41. A study on the relationship of communicator's self-perception with actual listening comprehension of Miriam freshman students before and after taking the E-12
42. A correlational study on listening comprehension and language of instruction
43. A survey of the status of teaching speech communication in colleges and universities in Dagupan City

44. A survey of the status of teaching speech communication in selected high schools: Towards a proposal for the inclusion of speech communication in the public high school curriculum
45. A comparative study of the effects of shadow play and conventional storytelling on the listening comprehension of selected UPIS kindergarten pupils
46. Role playing as an alternative teaching method for special education: Developing performance kits for children with special learning needs
47. Relationship between teacher nonverbal behaviors in the classroom and students' learning
48. A study on the development of a syllabus for an undergraduate course on listening for speech communication majors
49. The relationship between the frequency of student-teacher out-of-class communication and student class participation
50. Face to face: The relationship between receiver apprehension and social distance in a teacher-student dyadic interaction

*Note.* These thesis titles were derived from the lists provided by the university libraries.

Interpersonal communication was the most often examined level of speech communication in this decade. Following it was rhetoric, persuasion, and public communication clustered as one, then, instructional communication. These categories might have been reflective of the UPD DSCTA's areas of concentration. Although there was no formal institution of

said areas, the number of theses that probed their various aspects indicated that many of the courses facilitated during this period were designed to train students to appreciate the principles of effective oral communication in dyadic, public, and classroom settings. What is quite intriguing about this finding is that although there were course contents that were tangentially connected with communication education, there was no specialized series of courses that solely centered on teaching speech communication. It may be, then, that despite the lack of a set of courses on this particular field, the available ones incorporated concepts and theories very much related to instructional communication.

Many of the theses on interpersonal communication discussed elements of familial interaction, romantic partnership, friendship, and other interpersonal relational contexts. This suggests both the broadening of interpersonal communication's territory and the development of its more precise areas. The studies on Filipino siblings' communicative styles, gender and self-disclosure in heterosexual romantic relationships, and conflict management strategies in friendship (see Table 3) set examples of contexts where the dynamics of human interactions based on interpersonal relationship types were investigated. These contexts may be interpreted as subareas of speech communication under interpersonal communication. From this, I assume that one way to further strengthen interpersonal communication (as possibly one of the UPD DSCTA's speech communication areas of concentration) is by highlighting the conceptual differences among these interpersonal relational ties through institution of courses that specifically address issues unique to each of these settings. I should also mention that other interpersonal environments, like professional and

nonpersonal encounters, may also be included as they could more clearly illustrate the varying intimacy levels defined by the features of interpersonal relationship classifications.

Apart from interpersonal communication, rhetoric (together with persuasion and public communication) was also very appealing to students finishing their theses from 1996 to 2005. A survey of research topics belonging to this category showed the vital role of rhetorical communication in making sense of societal affairs. For instance, the examinations of speeches delivered by prominent figures in the national political arena stressed the importance of rhetorical theories in appreciating the role of speech communication in understanding and challenging the country's political culture. Moreover, the studies on persuasion and public communication that did not employ rhetorical analyses illuminated the different strands of rhetorical communication. By way of example, the theses on the impact of physical appearance and manner of dressing on ethos, the effects of motivational appeals on persuasiveness, and the influences of various persuasion modes on attitude change (see Table 3) provided reasons for the use of post-positivist methods in problematizing certain constructs mostly associated with rhetoric (e.g., ethos or source credibility, persuasive devices). In a way, they also established the UPD DSCTA's treatment of rhetoric as a field of speech communication and as one of its course offerings. Ultimately, the scholarly attention given to rhetoric may justify the need to institute it as one of the program's areas of specialization.

Another interesting finding about the students' theses from 1996 to 2005 was the rise of research problems connected with fields which were not very much explored in the past—gender communication, health communication, and religion and communication. From this, there is reason to believe that speech communication was continuously growing during this period as evidenced by its constant expansion to other areas of knowledge.

Furthermore, I contend that it was perhaps in this decade when the UPD DSCTA started to more strongly emphasize the need to build Filipino communication models to address local concerns more effectively. The studies on the structure of ethos in the Philippine setting, speeches of Filipino politicians, communication behaviors of Filipino students, interaction patterns of Filipino families, communication strategies of Filipino physicians, and other similar theses (refer to Table 3) would attest to how the Department endeavored to move from simply using foreign theories and concepts in investigating local communication issues to constructing models that would be more applicable to Filipino communication situations. In other words, it was during this period when the UPD DSCTA began to accentuate the unique features and functions of speech communication in the Philippine context.

Like in the case of the studies conducted from 1986 to 1995, those that were completed from 1996 to 2005 also mostly adopted qualitative and rhetorical methods. In addition, exploratory mode of analysis was recorded as the most frequently employed. One likely explanation for this could be found in the nature of the students' research projects within this time frame. That is, because many of the theses problematized the recently emphasized areas (and subareas) of speech communication or issues highly relevant and almost exclusive to Filipino communication interactions, students favored methodological approaches that could allow for more in-depth understanding of their research problems. Aside from this, I also view this finding as a marker of the program's aim to assign great value not only to testing the applications of western theories to local communication environments but more importantly, to develop theories and advance perspectives rooted in Filipino culture.

### **From 2006 to 2015: Strengthening Its Areas and Subareas**

Much like the studies tacked in the previous section, the theses completed from 2006 to 2015 also exhibited the same pattern in terms of discussing more precise topics (as opposed to delving into the basic elements of the communication process). The most frequently researched areas of speech communication in this decade were interpersonal communication, rhetoric (grouped with public communication and persuasion), and intrapersonal communication. Table 4 provides examples of the theses completed during this time.

#### **Table 4**

*Examples of Speech Communication Theses Submitted from 2006 to 2015*

1. A study on the relationship between female adolescents' perceived father nurturance and attitudes toward males in future romantic relationships
2. A study on the relationship between parenting styles and early adolescence autonomy
3. A study on the relationship between assertiveness and the outcome of initial interactions among college students
4. The sibling game: A study on the relationship between birth order and the choice of conflict management style
5. Daddy's girl . . . no more? A descriptive study on affectionate communication of Filipino teenage mothers toward their fathers based on their perceptions of paternal acceptance or rejection



6. Conflict management techniques used by college students in romantic involvements
7. Comforting communication in sibling relationship: A study on comforting behaviors and relationship satisfaction of Filipino young adult siblings
8. As a mother speaks: A descriptive study on self-perceived communication styles of introvert and extrovert mothers
9. Beyond I do: A study on the role of communication competence, religiosity, and compliance in the member couples' marital quality as taught in Couples for Christ
10. Sharing with the competition: A study on the relationship between self-disclosure and sibling rivalry among Filipino young adults
11. A study on the communication apprehension behaviors of selected UP students in a dyadic communication context
12. A study on the relationship between deception and relational satisfaction with prospective heterosexual partners
13. A study on the relationship among birth order, argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, and communication competence of selected college students from three-child families
14. The effect of communication technologies on female college dormers' levels of willingness to disclose sexuality and reproductive health topics to their mothers

15. Nonverbal cues of young adults in heterosexual first date setting, and the positive and negative perceptions of these cues toward male and female confederates
16. The relationship between self-concept and self-disclosure of cancer patients when communicating with their closest family members
17. Lions and gazelles: A study on how heterosexual males and females experience internal conflicts in romantic relationships
18. Disengagement strategies used in heterosexual romantic relationships between Filipinos and foreigners
19. Diversi-friends: A study on the correlation between communication styles of gay men and willingness of their heterosexual women friends to disclose romantic relationship issues
20. The use of compliance-gaining strategies in campus peer-to-peer evangelism
21. A study on credibility-related factors of AM and FM radio announcers as perceived by selected UP students
22. Effects of language choice on speaker credibility as perceived by high school students
23. Politicians in the public eye: A study on the relationship between the source credibility and parasociability of selected politician endorsers and the publics' voting behavior during the May 2010 national elections
24. Aristotle on Twitter: Classical rhetoric in the tweets of WikiLeaks

25. Thou shall listen: A study on the relationship between and among the audience's willingness to listen, general attitude toward the Roman Catholic mass, the priests' use of logos as perceived by the audience, and the overall speech effectiveness of the homily
26. The effects of message equivocation on speaker's credibility as perceived by audiences with varying attitude intensity
27. A rhetorical criticism of two selected cases in the regional trial court (RTC) Quezon City using Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad
28. A study on the relationship between nonverbal behaviors and persuasion in public speaking
29. The effect of sarcasm on source credibility
30. Rhetoric of Pope Francis as perceived by bishops of the Catholic church in the Philippines
31. The relationship between self-concept and functional task-oriented group roles of selected high school students: A correlational study
32. A study on the relationship between self-perceived trait affection and trait verbal aggressiveness
33. A study on the nature of self-disclosure of sons to their mothers and their concepts of an ideal marriage
34. Understanding men: Self-disclosure of males on difficult topics and the communication strategies applied by women

35. A study on the relationship between self-concept and communication apprehension of selected 4th year high school students from St. Mary's College, Quezon City
36. Breaking barriers: The breadth and depth of self-disclosure by UP exchange students in an intercultural setting
37. The influence of ballet classes on the development of positive self-esteem among selected 9 to 15 year-old female ballet students in five ballet schools in Metro Manila
38. The relationship between cyber bullying and self-disclosure of selected Filipino college students to their parents
39. The relationship among self-concept, communication apprehension, and attitudes of Ateneo High School first year students toward communicating with girls in soirees
40. Ad-girl-tisement: A descriptive study on women representation in selected TV commercials and its influence on the self-concept of Filipino adolescents

*Note.* These thesis titles were derived from the lists provided by the university libraries.

As may be noticed, most of the theses submitted from 2006 to 2015, like the ones completed in the previous decade, also centered on communication concerns related to interpersonal communication and rhetoric. Taking this into account, I suppose that the UPD DSCTA's program structure had been partial to these branches of speech communication at least as reflected in the students' culminating research projects.

The point I wish to make here is that the strong interests in these research areas might have been a product of the courses offered by the Department or the faculty members' scholarly leanings. The finding on intrapersonal communication being one of the three most often problematized fields was probably brought about by speech communication theories that were borrowed from other related disciplines (e.g., psychology). This suggests that even if there were no formally designed courses centering on intrapersonal communication, the ones offered by the UPD DSCTA incorporated discussions on the role and performance of the self in different communication environments. For example, the theses on the relationships of self-concept and self-disclosure with variables (e.g., communication apprehension, sibling rivalry; see Table 4) that operate at various levels of speech communication (e.g., public speaking, interpersonal communication) would signal both the growth of intrapersonal communication as a distinct level of speech communication and its intersections with the more established areas of the discipline. From this, the UPD DSCTA should consider developing courses on intrapersonal communication to further stress its relevance to other areas of human communication.

Another major difference between the papers submitted from 1996 to 2005 and those completed from 2006 to 2015 was anchored in the methodological techniques employed. Majority of the studies in the earlier decade were either qualitative or rhetorical, whereas most of the studies in the following decade were quantitative. I also observed that many of these quantitative studies used both descriptive (e.g., frequencies and percentages) and inferential (e.g., tests of correlation and/ or difference) statistics in answering research questions and testing hypotheses. The veering

away from interpretivist, social constructionist, and critical paradigms could partly suggest the students' shifting research interests or objectives — from exploring unfamiliar speech communication territories and carrying out intensive analyses on more established communication constructs to testing the functions, operations, and applications (through post-positivist methods) of theories' key tenets and propositions in local communication interactions.

As briefly stated earlier, I used an additional layer of analysis (i.e., identifying and categorizing the studies' theoretical frameworks) for the theses completed from 2006 to 2015 because of the curricular modifications that took place in 2002. Many of the studies used middle-range theories to address their research objectives. According to Baran and Davis, a middle-range theory is “a theory composed of empirical generalizations based on empirical fact” (142). To some degree, this was consistent with the finding on the most frequently utilized methods within this time frame being quantitative approaches. My point here is that the students' use of post-positivist methods in their research projects was parallel with their utilization of middle-range theories to answer their inquiries. Lastly, the prevalence of these theories also indicated that many of the students' theses were applied in nature (i.e., subscribing to the principles of applied communication). In other words, it may be that the major goal of these studies was to identify the communication problems encountered in everyday transactions and subsequently make recommendations on how to handle or resolve these concerns.

## Mapping the Future Directions

Because theses generally serve as students' culminating research projects, and hence maybe reflective of how the UPD DSCTA teaches speech communication based on its epistemological and ontological stances, the findings discussed in the preceding segments have three vital implications on the Department's course offerings and curricular designs. First, they accentuate the levels and areas of speech communication that are strongly emphasized by the Department (e.g., interpersonal communication, rhetoric). Second, the students' interests to investigate issues connected with other branches of speech communication (e.g., instructional communication, intrapersonal communication) should prompt the Department to institute new courses that particularly focus on these fields. Third, the Department should also pay attention to the subareas that surfaced from the data (e.g., family communication and health communication under interpersonal communication) as these could offer valuable insights about the courses that should be clustered to form areas of concentration.

As reiterated previously, I intend to provide only an initial examination of the theses produced by the UPD DSCTA speech communication students from 1976 to 2015. I should outline the limitations of this paper as they could serve as good starting points for future research. First, I analyzed thesis titles and abstracts. Other researchers might want to launch a more thorough investigation by scrutinizing more important thesis sections (e.g., theoretical framework, findings, literature review). Second, I narrowed the scope of the paper to include only the UPD DSCTA's undergraduate and master's theses, interested scholars should consider analyzing published journal articles especially if they aim to trace the movement of the

discipline in the country. Third, researchers may also attempt to make comparisons of theses based on specific communication programs (e.g., comparing speech communication theses with communication arts theses) to comprehend both their common features and their distinct structures. Finally, employing a quantitative method (e.g., quantitative content analysis) may generate findings which can be useful in forwarding conclusions based on empirical observations.

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