Long Paper

Grammatical and Academic Writing Competence of Special Science Class Students

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Abstract

The recent results of the Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) showed that the country placed seven spots lower compared to the past ranking. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of competence of students in grammar and academic writing and to find out if a significant relationship existed between the variables. This research paper utilized the Descriptive-Correlational research design to determine the level of grammatical and academic writing competence and to determine possible associations between them. The ninety (90) respondents were from the Grade 10 students enrolled in Special Science Class selected using a stratified sampling technique. The researcher-made questionnaire was given to the students through an online platform that has gone through validity and reliability testing. The statistical tools used were the mean and standard deviation to determine the levels of competence, and the Spearman Rank Order coefficient ρ was used to determine the relationship between grammar and academic writing competence. The results in the grammar (M=28.29, SD=3.92) and academic writing tests (M=20.37, SD=3.25) revealed that the students are moving towards mastery, likewise, it showed that there is no significant relationship between the grammatical competence and the students' academic writing competence (p-value = 0.3121). Several variables are also measured to determine the influence of these factors, such as sex and parents' educational attainment. This study revealed that the students' sex has no significant difference in the students' level of competence in grammar and

academic writing, while the students' parents' highest educational attainment has a significant difference with the students' academic writing competence, especially with parents' that has a post-graduate degree. It can be concluded that the proficiency of the students in grammar does not correlate with their academic writing skills of the students.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is the most difficult of the four language talents since it takes both ideas and abilities to make written ideas readable (Widya & Wahyuni, 2018). Grammar, on the other hand, is important in writing because it helps you comprehend how the language functions. As a result, mastering grammar contributes significantly to writing. Similarly, the greater one's grammatical expertise, the better and higher one's expectations for academic writing achievements (Sukesi et al., 2019).

Developing writing skills will enable students to learn how to compose ideas, organize their thoughts and arguments, support critical points, and share information (Domantay & Ramos, 2018). Moreover, in honing the skill of writing, the essence of grammar teaching is to prepare the students for academic studies and professional activities, which is directly relevant to producing written and academic text (Atashian & Al-Bahri, 2018) attested that.

Concentrating and expanding the syntactic and lexical range of the students is of the essence, most especially for academic-bounded students (Hinkel, 2018) for the students' problem in grammar correlates to the student's writing ability (Handayani & Johan, 2018). The study of Muhsin (2016) also showed that the mastery of compound sentences supports the students to produce a grammatically correct paragraph and Hudyato (2017) also supported that the grammar competence of the students and their writing skill affect each other. Meanwhile, for Febrianti (2017), the grammar mastery does not correlate to the writing ability of the students in line with the finding of Septiani (2014) that claims, "Students who have a minimum level of grammar, it does not mean that the students also get poor achievement in writing." Thus, the knowledge of grammar rules does not automatically result in proficiency in writing (Oandasan, 2016).

English is considered the second language, and it has a crucial component of the Philippine educational system (DO No. 60, 2008); due to its country's growing usage of English, the English proficiency for Filipinos became one of the identified strengths which help the country to escalate its economy (Jugo, 2020). However, despite the quality of the country's English proficiency, there is also anxiety about the declining competence of both learners and teachers (EF EPI-c, 2016). In this result of the Education First English

Proficiency Index (2019), the organization itself stated that academic and industrial growth transitions require better English. The gaps that this current study filled in is the significant relationship between a homogeneous set of students' Grammatical Competence and Academic Writing Competence under the Science curriculum. Advanced science concepts, scientific skills, and scientific attitudes and values are among the positive consequences learned by students in this subject (Roy Montebon, 2014). Similarly, in the Science curriculum, the higher the pupils' linguistic proficiency level, the better their academic success in English, Science, and Math (Suarez, et al., 2016).

Despite the students' experience in research due to its curriculum, this research assessed the competence of the Special Science students in grammar according to their socio-demographic profiles and preferences, which significantly related to the students' grammatical competence (Sioco & De Vera, 2015). In the same way, this study will find the result of the student's writing ability, which will also be related to the same factors (Domantay & Ramos, 2018), based on the required competencies in English, which is focused on academic writing (DepEd MELC, 2020).

Moreover, this study assessed the students' grammatical competence as Widianingsih (2016) claimed, most second language learners, especially those studying English at different levels, usually make more mistakes in specific grammatical rules. As evident in the study of Suarez, et al. (2016), the students' grammar proficiency is low and is affected by the transfer skills of their language to the English language.

The gaps of numerous studies on the relationship between grammar and writing shall be filled with the results that will focus on the academic writing of the Grade 10 students in Special Science Class in preparation for their research writing by the end of the last quarter. Moreover, this study will also prove the factors related to the students' competence as grouped homogeneously in a research-inclined curriculum. Furthermore, the utilization of findings will devise a program for grammar instruction as an intervention program for the Grade 10 students to strengthen their Grammar Competence in preparation for higher educational level. This study also foresees that the results shall be the basis for a paradigm shift, specifically the inclusion of grammar instruction in daily lessons, that will hone the students' skills in writing as an application of syntactic and lexical development. Hence this research also hopes for an activity that will gauge teachers to a Teacher Training Program about grammar and grammar instruction (Castro, 2015) to enhance students' language skills and stimulate students' creativity (Sukesi et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the grammatical competence and academic writing competence of Grade 10 students during the last two quarters of the School Year 2020-2021. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of academic writing and grammatical competence of grade 10 students when grouped according to sex, parents' educational attainment, and when taken as a whole?
2. Is there a significant difference in the academic writing competence of grade 10 students when grouped according to:
    2.1 Sex
    2.2 Parents' educational attainment
3. Is there a significant difference in the grammatical competence of grade 10 students when grouped according to:
    3.1 Sex
    3.2 Parents' educational attainment
4. Is there a significant relationship between the academic writing competence and grammatical competence of grade 10 students?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the academic writing competence of Grade 10 students when they are grouped according to:
    1.1 Sex
    1.2 Parents' educational attainment.
2. There is no significant difference in the grammatical competence of Grade 10 students when they are grouped according to:
    2.1 Sex
    2.2 Parents' educational attainment.
3. There is no significant relationship between the grammatical competence and academic writing competence of the grade 10 students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study has adopted a descriptive-correlational design, which involves identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible associations among two or more phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). In this study, the level of grammatical and academic writing competence was explored and described. The descriptive-correlational study examines the range in which differences in one characteristic or variable are associated with differences in one or more other characteristics or variables (Apuke, 2017). This study also determines to what degree a relationship exists between two or more variables in a population. Therefore, this present study attempted to find out if there is a significant relationship between the grammatical competence and the academic writing competence of the students in Special Science Class which fits the descriptive-correlational research design.

Respondents

This study will delve into junior high school, specifically in the Special Science class program. In this study, the respondents were in the Grade 10 Special Science Class in one of the public high schools of the Division of La Carlota City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. The program was established homogenously and is divided into three sections. The researcher used the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator to determine the number of samples. The population size is 116 students under this curriculum. The results after the analysis using Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, the sample size is 90. The sample size of respondents was grouped according to the section and the distribution is shown in Table 1. To carefully choose the respondents for the sample, the researcher utilized the stratified random sampling method to divide the respondents into homogenous groups or strata, wherein the first section, Einstein, has all the students with the highest general weighted average from Grade 9. The second section, Faraday, has all the students with the second-highest general weighted average from Grade 9. And the third section, Pascal, has all the students with the third-highest general weighted average from Grade 9.

Table 1. Respondents of the study

Section	N	n
Einstein	39	30
Faraday	40	31
Pascal	37	29
TOTAL	116	90

Instruments

The study utilized the researcher-made survey questionnaires for grammatical competence and academic writing competence. The grammar test included the topic of tenses, modals, clauses, and prepositions since these areas are being discussed and are included in the most essential competencies in Grade 10. The mode of assessment was multiple choice and the items were shuffled and presented through Google Form.

On the other hand, the academic writing test was given to the students before the grammar test, so that the students will not be lumped with all the tests. The writing test was based on the Department of Education's Learning Activity Sheets in the third quarter which the students should be able to accomplish a critique paper. The instruction of the activity was to evaluate the story of Les Misérables by Victor Hugo. After reading Les Misérables, the students themselves chose their literary criticism approach to critique the story in an essay form. This literary piece is included in Grade 10 English book. The writing test was presented through Google Forms and the submission was through uploading the file in the Google Classroom.

To interpret the level of the grammatical competence of the students, this study utilized the Mean Percentage Scores (MPS) adopted from the Department of Education;

furthermore, the descriptive equivalent of the results shall be utilized for intervention, remedial instruction, and other programs (D.O. no. 160 s. 2012). Specified in the scale below are the mastery levels (Table 2):

Table 2. Scale for Mastery Level

Mean Percentage Scores (MPS)	Descriptive Equivalents
96-100 %	Mastered
86-95 %	Closely Approximating Mastery
66-85 %	Moving Towards Mastery
35-65 %	Average
15-34 %	Low
5-14 %	Very Low
0-4%	Absolutely No Mastery

Meanwhile, the writing instrument that the researcher used was limited to writing a critique paper. The students' writing performance was subjected to the checking of the experts in writing. The scores were given by and agreed upon by the two (2) checkers who are qualified experts in writing assessment and are assigned to different grade levels and schools to establish objectivity upon checking. The rubric used requisites both grammar and well-written test and is adapted and modified from the Department of Educations' Learning Activity Sheets for the 3rd Quarter.

Validity and Reliability

The content validity was used to ensure the validity of the researcher-made instrument. The test for grammar competence is composed of 50 items and deduced into 40 items due to the result of the experts validated the test where 10 items were deemed not necessary which resulted to omit the items. These 40 items are considered acceptable and reliable. These 40 items are considered valid using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) (Lawshe, 1975). The final evaluation to retain the item based on the CVR depended on the number of panels (Taherdoost, 2016). All items are valid or significant with the p=0.90 which implies that all of the items in the test were retained as validated by the experts in English.

To ensure the reliability of the researcher-made instrument, it was pilot-tested on the thirty (30) students not included in the study and who were not the respondents of the study. Moreover, it was subjected to Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR20) using SPSS and the result, which is $KR_{20}=0.79$, implies that the test items are acceptable and consistent. Hence, the 40 questions have acceptable reliability for Kuder-Richardson 20, thus the forty (40) test items were reliable and administered to the students.

Table 3. Rubrics for Academic Writing Competence

ELEMENT	EXCELLENT 4	SATISFACTORY 3	DEVELOPING 2	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 1
Clear Claim with Reasons	The claim is clearly stated, and strong reasons are provided.	The claim and reasons are stated.	The claim is evident, but the reasons are ambiguous, absent, or incomplete.	The claim is ambiguous, and no clear reasons are given.
Evidence	Supports the central claim and reasons with strong facts, thorough details, and accurate citations.	Supports the central claim and reasons with facts, necessary details, and citations.	Attempts to support the central claim and reasons with facts, but the information is unclear, inaccurate, or lacks citations.	The central claim is not supported and there is no evidence provided.
Explanation	Explains and analyzes the presented information, concisely, and thoroughly.	Explains and analyzes most of the information presented.	Attempts to explain and analyze the information, but the explanation is unclear and inaccurate.	Contains little to no explanation or analysis of the information presented.
Conclusion	Ends with a strong or compelling concluding statement that relates to the central claim.	Ends with a concluding statement about the central claim.	Ends with a concluding statement that does not relate to the central claim.	Ends with an abrupt or absent ending with no concluding statements.
Formal Tone and Style	Maintains a formal and objective tone throughout the text.	Attempts to maintain a formal and objective tone.	Contains some informal elements (e.g., contractions)	Informal language is presented throughout the text.
Organization and Transition	Presents strong organization and uses the transition language skillfully.	Logically organizes ideas and uses transitional language.	Attempts to organize ideas, but transitional language is needed.	Disordered presentation of ideas and little to no use of transitional language.
Writing Mechanics (Spelling and Grammar)	Mechanics reflect careful editing.	A few errors are present, but they do not distract.	Mechanical errors distract at times.	Distracting mechanical errors throughout the text.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study was conducted in School Year 2020-2021 with grade 10 special science students in one of the junior high schools in the Division of La Carlota City. The permission to conduct the study and the approval of the school principal and school division superintendent was asked for and secured. Upon approval, the researcher oriented the respondents on the purpose, nature, and scope of the study, the questionnaire's parts, and their willingness to participate through online meetings using the learning management system (LMS) Google Meet and Google Classroom. In compliance with the IATF pandemic health and safety protocols, the researcher made use of the Google forms

to conduct the test synchronously online since the respondents were also under the online modality class. The respondents were given ample time to answer the test. The writing test was conducted after the grammar test on a different schedule. The students were instructed to submit in PDF format through the same LMS platform. After the data were collected, they were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

Statistical Treatment

The data were subjected to descriptive analysis using the several statistical tools, the Mean and the Standard Deviation to determine the level of grammatical competence and the level of academic writing competence when the Grade 10 Special Science students are grouped according to sex, parents' educational attainment, and when taken as a whole. The descriptive-comparative analysis was employed in analyzing the data using the Independent Samples T-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine if there is a significant difference in the respondents' grammatical competence and academic writing competence when they are grouped according to sex and parent's educational attainment, respectively. Moreover, the data went through a descriptive-correlational analysis to determine if there is a significant relationship between the grammatical competence and academic writing competence, and of Grade 10 Special Science students, using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient R.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretations of the results of the data. Using different statistical tools, the findings of the data were arranged comprehensively to answer the statement of the problems. This study aimed to determine the correlation between the Grammatical Competence and the Academic Writing Competence of the Grade 10 Students in Special Science Class.

Table 4. Level of Academic Writing Competence of Grade 10 Students

Categories	n	Mean	SD	Interpretation
TOTAL	90	20.37	3.25	Moving Towards Mastery
Sex				
Male	30	20.57	3.36	Moving Towards Mastery
Female	60	20.27	3.36	Moving Towards Mastery
Parents' HEA				
High School Graduate	17	18.88	3.50	Moving Towards Mastery
Bachelor's Degree	59	20.12	3.03	Moving Towards Mastery
Post-Graduate Degree	14	23.21	2.12	Moving Towards Mastery

Note: *HEA – Highest Educational Attainment*

The table above shows that the male has a higher mean score than the female, as shown in Table 4, which implies that both have the same mastery level. Likewise, though

the parent's highest educational attainment categories differ from the mean score; they show similar mastery levels of their academic writing competence.

The result of this study affirms the previous research, which claimed that results indicated a moderate relationship between the parent's educational attainment and results of the academic achievement of the students (Li, Xu, & Xia, 2020; Liu, Peng, & Luo, 2020; Sirin, 2005). Recent studies showed a negation to the previous research of White et al. (1993), which resulted in a highly positive correlation between the Parent's Educational Attainment and the student's performance. Moreover, in this study, it is concluded results may vary across socio-economic settings and cultural differences (Liu et al., 2020).

Table 5. Level of Grammatical Competence of Grade 10 Students

Categories	n	Mean	SD	Interpretation
TOTAL	90	28.29	3.92	Moving Towards Mastery
Sex				
Male	30	29.13	4.91	Moving Towards Mastery
Female	60	27.87	3.29	Moving Towards Mastery
Parents' HEA				
High School Graduate	17	26.77	4.22	Moving Towards Mastery
Bachelor's Degree	59	28.63	3.67	Moving Towards Mastery
Post-Graduate Degree	14	28.71	4.43	Moving Towards Mastery

Note: HEA – Highest Educational Attainment

Table 5 reveals that the mean score of males and females in Grammar are both interpreted as Moving Towards Mastery. Hence, the level of the Grammatical Competence of the Grade 10 students in terms of their Parent's Highest Educational Attainment are all interpreted as Moving Towards Mastery Level. Wherefore, it implies that there is the same level of interpretation in each category despite the difference in the mean score. This conforms to Sioco & De Vera's (2015) study that the significant variable such as sex does not affect students' Grammatical Competence level. Likewise, to the study by Quijano & Legaspi (2020), the females are higher than males in grammar proficiency, yet both sexes have the same level of proficiency in grammar. Conjointly, the same average results are presented with the Parent's Highest Educational Attainment of the students (Sioco & De Vera, 2015), which is contrary to the study of Petchprasert (2014), which claims that the parent's background including the education influences the students' English lexical development.

Table 6. The Difference in the Level of Academic Writing Competence when Grouped According to Sex

Categories	n	Mean	SD	p-value	Significance at α=0.05	Decision
Sex						
Male	30	20.57	3.36	0.6823	Not significant	Do not Reject H_o
Female	60	20.27	3.36			

Note: *p-value≤0.05

Table 6 reveals that there is no significant difference in the Academic Writing Competence of the students when they are grouped according to sex at a 0.05 level of significance using the Independent Samples T-test with a p-value = 0.6823 which is greater than 0.05, thus we do not reject the null hypothesis. Hence it signifies that sex does not affect the competence of the students in academic writing, relatively related to the study of Javed et al. (2013), which also claims that there is no significant difference between the performance of the male and female students in writing. However, Adani & Cepanec (2019) have attested that the female brain gives women an advantage in language acquisition and communication over men.

Table 7. Difference in Level of Academic Writing Competence when Grouped According to Parents' HEA

Categories	n	Mean	SD	p-value	Significance at α=0.05	Decision
Sex						
High School Graduate	17	18.88	3.50	0.0004*	Significant	Reject H_o
Bachelor's Degree	59	20.12	3.03			
Post-Graduate Degree	14	23.21	2.12			

Note: *p-value≤0.05

Table 7 signifies that there exists a significant difference in the Academic Writing Competence when grouped according to Parent's Highest Attainment at 0.05 level of significance using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with p-value = 0.0004 which is less than 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the Parent's Education does influence the writing performance of the students in English. In this result, there is a need to perform a Post-Hoc test, specifically using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test, to determine where the significant difference lies.

Table 8. Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Test for Academic Writing Competence when
Grouped According to Parents' HEA

Categories	High School Graduate	Bachelor's Degree	Post-Graduate Degree
High School Graduate	–	0.2988	0.0004*
Bachelor's Degree	–	–	0.0024*
Post-Graduate Degree	–	–	–

Note: *p-value≤0.05

Numerous studies testified that there is a positive relationship between the parent's educational attainment and the student's performance at school (Gooding, 2001; Shoukat, Ilyas, Azam, & Ch, 2015). Likewise, the study by Axelsson, Lundqvist, & Sandberg (2020) attested that the parents could be a valuable source of knowledge. Hence, it is also confirmed that the genes strongly influence mental abilities in the previous study by Johnson et al. (2007). In contrast, this result disagrees with the findings of Vellymalay's (2010) study, which states no significant difference between parents' education and students' education.

Table 9. Difference in the Level of Grammatical Competence when
Grouped According to Sex

Categories	n	Mean	SD	p-value	Significance at α=0.05	Decision
Sex						
Male	30	29.13	4.91	0.2086	Not significant	Do not Reject H_o
Female	60	27.87	3.29			

Note: *p-value≤0.05

Since the p-value is 0.2086 which is greater than 0.05 using the Independent Samples T-test, it implies rejecting the hypothesis and the result implies that there is no significant difference between the Grammatical Competence of the students and their sex at a 0.05 level of significance. This is in line with the study of Garavand, et al. (2021), which also resulted that there is no significant difference between Grammatical Competence and the Sex of the students, where the implication is that the sex of a student does not significantly affect the competence of students in grammar (Quijano & Legaspi, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Lange et al. (2016), there is a positive correlation between sex and the language proficiency of the students.

Table 10. Difference in Level of Grammatical Competence when
Grouped According to Parents' HEA

Categories	n	Mean	SD	p-value	Significance at α=0.05	Decision
Sex						
High School Graduate	17	26.77	4.22			Do not Reject H_0
Bachelor's Degree	59	28.63	3.67	0.2062	Not significant	
Post-Graduate Degree	14	28.71	4.43			

Note: *p-value≤0.05

Table 10 shows that there is no significant difference in the Grammatical Competence of the students when grouped according to Parents' Highest Educational Attainment at a 0.05 level of significance using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with a p-value = 0.2062 which is greater than 0.05, thus we do not reject the null hypothesis. This result contradicts the study of Abbasian et al. (2020), the association between the Parent's Education and the student's language learning is statistically meaningful; thus, it is a powerful predictor of receptive skills' comprehension. Also, studies have shown that the lower socio-economic backgrounds, in which parents' education is included, improbably achieve higher levels of academic and English Language Proficiency (Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, & Chien, 2012).

Table 11. Spearman Correlation between the Levels of Academic
Writing and Grammatical Competence

Categories	Grammar	Academic Writing
Grammar	–	0.3121
Academic Writing	–	–

Note: *p-value≤0.05

Table 11 also shows that the p-value is 0.3121, which is greater than 0.05 and implies no significant relationship between the students' grammatical competence and academic writing competence. The result conforms to the study of Septiani, et al. (2014), which affirms that there is no significant correlation between the students' mastery of grammar and their writing ability. Therefore, grammar mastery contributes less to the students' ability in writing (Etfita, 2019). In contrast to the numerous studies of grammar and writing, it is noted that the strength of the relationship between the mastery of grammar and writing ability is high; hence it also reveals that the better the students master tenses, the better the students achieve in writing composition (Handayani & Johan, 2018; Muhsin, 2016; Putri, Silvianti, & Achmad, 2016; Tri Mulyaningsih, A. Dahlan Rais, 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings above, the data gathered attunes to the study of Hikmah, Akmal, and Buffe (2019), which states that the students are good at writing content but have difficulties in mechanics of subject-verb agreement, proper punctuation,

capitalization, and organization. Since the respondents are enrolled in Special Science Class, it is expected that they are research-inclined. However, the result shows there is a very low correlation between the two variables, which implies that the students' grammatical competence does not equate to their academic writing competence in English. It is concluded that despite their average skills in grammar they may be able to write well because of the research training that they underwent which could be a big influence on the writing skills of the students. Moreover, various variables such as sex and parent's educational attainment do not bear any effect on the grammatical competence and academic competence of the Grade 10-students in Special Science class; thus, it implies that sex is not an indicator of the student's performance, as well as the competence of the students in academic writing. It is also concluded that parents' educational attainment influences the proficiency of the students in academic writing, specifically, when you compare students with parents with Post-graduate accomplishments. Wherefore, it is concluded that the students are trained in answering the grammar test in which the training they might have undergone at home, yet when it comes to the application of the skill through writing, the parents' influence shows no bearing on their performance.

Grammar influences the writing ability of the students. It is demonstrated that the students' results in the grammar test are moving towards mastery, implying an average level of mastery in grammar. Wherefore, this research recommends that the teachers focus on structures and mechanics in writing. This study also recommends adopting a model to scaffold the direct students in terms of expressing their thoughts through writing, specifically to organize their ideas for academic writing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recent result of the EF English Proficiency Index shows that Filipinos ranked 27th worldwide (EF Education First, 2019), whereas, in the prior result, the Philippines ranked 13th last 2016 (EF EPI-c, 2016). These results have directed this research to address the lowering proficiency of Filipino students. This study recommends that the students focus on English technicalities, especially the writing mechanics, which include the grammatical rules to communicate effectively. Despite numerous studies regarding the positive relationship between Grammar and Writing, this research can be an aid to the future researchers to fill the gaps of the previous results because of external factors such as the modality of learning, environmental factors such as this pandemic the world has facing, mental health, and many more. This study might be a tool for strengthening the students' grammar to achieve and perform better in the aspect of writing. Hence, this is also an indication that students' exposure to academic writing is average in that it needs further assistance to build a community of future researchers.

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