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Research Article

Students' Mastery of English Grammar towards Effective Writing and Speaking Competence

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ABSTRACT

English language proficiency is one of the most pressing issues, particularly in the field of education. Speaking and writing are two of the most important macroskills to master, especially in today's increasingly connected world. The current study seeks to ascertain students' comprehension and mastery of English grammar and explores whether grammar explains the students' proficiency in speaking and writing in Grade 10 Junior High School. The respondents were chosen for the study using a simple random sampling design. Additionally, the researcher's questionnaire, with three qualified validators tested for validity and a pilot tested for reliability, produced a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha result and served as the basis for gathering the study's data. Findings show that students' competence in English grammar, writing, and speaking is satisfactory. The outcome demonstrates that mastery of English grammar accounts for developing an acceptable level of speaking and writing abilities. The study concluded that students' command of English grammar explains their writing and speaking abilities.

Keywords: *English grammar mastery, Macro skills, Speaking proficiency, Writing proficiency*

Introduction

Speaking and writing competencies are one of the macro skills in English that have to be strengthened and developed among students. These macroskills are essential components of the communication process in oral and written forms. In the 21st century, these skills are of great importance in various fields, especially for students in their academic endeavors and employment opportunities in the future.

Students must hone their potential and skills to prepare for the global industry.

Moreover, writing and grammar are part of a language. The elements and skills that language students should develop in Grammar are guidelines and mechanisms that control composition (Wati et al., 2018). In this manner, all language students must understand, internalize, and develop mastery of the grammar rules, especially the rules of Subject-Verb agreement, to develop strong communication competence.

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Students need to understand the underlying benefits of developing a strong mastery of these rules for future use. Grammar rules are introduced at all levels, particularly at the Junior High School level, to ensure mastery, familiarity, and even retention of the basic rules in sentence construction. These are done through the teacher's creative and innovative instruction with enough appropriate learning strategies to understand the discussed subject matter. Grammar proficiency can be picked up in various ways, such as through school learning programs where students learn grammar using a puzzle, word guessing, or role-playing (Jakarta, 2017).

Jakarta (2017) further emphasized the creative means of a teacher in teaching the students the basic skills and rules of grammar. The majority of teachers also carry out these tasks because they use a variety of learning activities, such as board work activities, sentence construction exercises, paragraph composition exercises, verbal response exercises, and many others, to ensure skill retention and application.

The Spiral Progression Principle is used in the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum for teaching English. The spiral curriculum design repeats essential ideas throughout the course while introducing deeper degrees of complexity. As a result, English language proficiency is taught at ever more challenging and sophisticated levels. As a result, the students can advance from the basic level to more advanced language usage. As a result, the performance of English language learners is a crucial part of their language development because it greatly impacts how they are graded in the subsequent grade levels, especially in writing, which emphasizes subject-verb agreement (De Vera & Sioco, 2018).

In addition, languages contain crucial grammar components. Understanding a language's grammar will impact its mastery. So, grammar is a subject that should be thoroughly examined when learning a language in a formal setting. Thus, it is important to provide the students with enough grammar instruction so that they have strong linguistic abilities (Effindi et al. 2017). However, there are various challenges and factors in developing students' mastery of

grammar. The challenges of learning grammar are divided into three categories: those related to linguistic variables, those related to environmental elements of language, and those related to psychological challenges. How frequently the environment's input is received is one factor in the linguistic environment. Language's grammar is referred to as a linguistic factor, and learning capacity is referred to as a psychological element. These are the common factors or problems in learning grammar.

According to Effindi's (2017) study, it is evident that students have challenges learning grammar. It is also emphasized that even if the students have already completed the academic courses pertaining to grammar instruction, there is still an amount of difficulty present and experienced among them.

Furthermore, language and grammar mastery also provide bigger opportunities to develop strong verbal competence. According to Hidayatulla (2018), grammar is another factor that affects speech. It is impossible to learn English separately from grammatical instruction. Language relies on grammar to function. Without language, grammar does not exist. The set of logical and structural rules known as grammar controls how sentences, phrases, and words are put together in any particular natural language. Grammar is the study of linguistic conventions, a type of regularity in language. Grammar is such a sound structure that no one could learn a language without it.

Grammar is usually used when teaching language acquisition. It was crucial to the development of the four language skills. When students performed or practiced their talents, it helped them. It implies that by knowing grammar, students can construct a variety of sentences with ease, whether written or spoken. If the learners' grammar is bad, they cannot execute their English well. If they were due to their inadequate knowledge of grammar, they may have trouble understanding or comprehending language (Hidayatulla, 2018), where comprehension is important in everyday communication. According to the PISA 2018 results, reading performance among Filipino students lagged behind the OECD average. Only 16% of the students in the Philippines attained Level 2 proficiency, and there were no

top performers in reading (OECD, 2019). It shows that if the students are well-informed and proficient in grammar, it could positively affect their PISA results since English Language skills are interrelated with one another. Consequently, the result presented is one of the stimulants in the conduct and exploration of this study. Thus, grammar proficiency must take precedence in the teaching and learning of English. It would be challenging for learners to grasp the other language abilities without first knowing grammar.

Clearly, this study emphasizes the importance of grammar mastery for an individual to acquire and execute eloquence and mastery in verbal responses and communication, which is an important tool of communication in today's global society. One must know how to speak with ease, fluency, order, and meaningful exchange of thoughts orally with the help of grammar lessons. In other words, grammar is always accompanied and taught simultaneously with speaking skills, and it serves as a fundamental skill to master, tantamount to effective speaking skills.

Grammar is a crucial communication component; without a firm grasp of it, it is impossible to convey ideas effectively. According to Maxim, thousands of different languages are spoken worldwide, each with its grammatical structure. This implies that students are likely to make mistakes when they attempt to string words together to form an English phrase. This indicates that grammar is a crucial component of language (Hidayatulla, 2018).

However, some factors and problems hinder students' mastery of grammar and ability to improve verbal competence. The students' issues with the daily English language program include fear of making mistakes, poor pronunciation, ignorance of grammatical rules, limited vocabulary acquisition, few opportunities, a lack of student enthusiasm, usage of their mother tongue, infrequent practice, and a lack of discipline (Rahayu, 2015). Alova (2023) also noted that the Philippines' most recent ranking in the Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) was seven spots lower than its previous position. The study found that students are progressing toward grammatical mastery and that there is no significant correlation between

grammatical proficiency and academic writing proficiency.

It demonstrates that one of the problems in English language programs is the lack of discipline and enthusiasm among students. This means that students developed an unsatisfactory engagement in learning English grammar. This problem must be resolved to ensure that students develop a love for learning, especially grammar rules, particularly using Subject-Verb Agreement. Students need to realize the benefits of developing mastery of grammar for their oral communication competence.

On this note, realizing the trends and conditions of students in the Philippine context, especially in languages, the study aims to identify and determine students' mastery of English grammar to their oral and written communication competence.

Research Questions:

Problem 1: What is the level of students' mastery in English Grammar?

Problem 2: What is the level of students' writing competence?

Problem 3: What is the level of students' speaking competence?

Problem 4: Does mastery of English grammar explain students' writing and speaking competence?

Methods

A descriptive-correlational research design was used in the study to determine students' understanding and mastery of English grammar and to investigate whether grammar explains students' proficiency in speaking and writing in Grade 10 Junior High School. In order to select respondents, the study used a simple random sampling design. Simple random sampling is a popular sampling technique in quantitative studies using survey instruments. This method ensures that the population's probability is unbiased, representative, and equal (Golzar, 2022). The study's respondents were 63 Grade 10 Junior High School students currently enrolled in English 10 for the School Year 2022-2023.

To gather the data needed to answer the research questions, the researcher used a three-part survey questionnaire. The first part of the

questionnaire consists of grammar tests or exercises of the different parts of speech necessary to develop English grammar mastery. The second part focused on students' writing competence through sentence construction and paragraph making, and the last part of the research questionnaire focused on the students' verbal communication competence. Before conducting a pilot test, three research experts or evaluators put the instruments to a validity test. The School Principal's approval and permission to conduct the study were requested and obtained prior to distributing the survey questionnaire to the respondents. After receiving the approval, the researcher informed the respondents of the study's purpose, nature, components, and scope. The respondents were also informed that their answers

would be kept private. Moreover, the pertinent questionnaire used in this study was piloted and subjected to a reliability test using SPSS 20. The questionnaire was sent to the 30 Grade 9 students who were not included in the sample upon approval and permission of the School Principal. This step ensured that the questionnaires utilized in the study were trustworthy. Before the research questionnaire was delivered to the study's respondents, a Cronbach's Alpha Test was used to see if they were reliable. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to establish the internal consistency and reliability of the items on the scales (= .70). According to Cronbach (1951), an alpha coefficient of .70 and higher is considered acceptable.

Below is the tabular report of the test of internal consistency:

Table 1. Test of Internal Consistency

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
English Grammar	.850	60

To answer the problems in the study, the researcher used frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to determine the level of students' mastery of English Grammar, Writing Competence, and Speaking Competence, respectively.

Moreover, the researcher used simple linear regression analysis to determine the impact of students' mastery of English to effective writing and speaking competence. Furthermore, the respondents' responses were computed and tabulated based on the following scoring procedure.

A. Grammar Exercises

Point Value	Range	Mastery Level
5	54-60	Outstanding
4	51-53	Very Satisfactory
3	48-52	Satisfactory
2	45-49	Fairly Satisfactory
1	44- Below	Did Not Meet Expectation

B. Writing and Speaking Competence

Range	Mastery Level
3.26-4.00	Good
2.51-3.25	Satisfactory
1.76-2.50	Needs Improvement
1.00-1.75	Unsatisfactory

Results and Discussion

This section presents the research results, interpretation, and analysis of data with reference to the objectives and research questions of the study.

Problem 1: What is the level of students' mastery in English Grammar?

The table below presents the frequency, percentage, standard deviation, and mean distribution of students' mastery in English Grammar.

Table 2. Frequency, Percentage, Standard Deviation and Mean Distribution of Students' Mastery in English Grammar (n=63)

Range	Mastery Level	Frequency	Percentage
54-60	Outstanding	12	19.0
51-53	Very Satisfactory	4	6.3
48-52	Satisfactory	17	27.0
45-49	Fairly Satisfactory	15	23.8
44- Below	Did Not Meet Expectation	15	23.8
TOTAL		63	100

Mean Score: 47.87 SD: 7.467

Mastery Level: Satisfactory

It shows that students' mastery in English Grammar has a mean score of 47.87 and a standard deviation of 7.467 which is a qualitative description of satisfactory. Furthermore, it shows that 15 or 23.8% of the respondents are fairly satisfactory and did not meet expectations in terms of their mastery of English grammar. It also shows that 17 or 27% of the respondents are at a satisfactory level of English grammar competence, 4 or 6.3% of the respondents belong to very satisfactory level, and 12 or 19% of the respondents are outstanding in English grammar mastery. Moreover, based on the above findings, satisfactory levels of students' mastery of English grammar received the highest percentage of 27%, which means that the students are good enough in terms of English grammar, which is one of the most essential skills that a student should develop, especially in the 21st century.

The ability of the students to construct effective sentences using English grammatical rules can be used to gauge their grammar proficiency (Rismasari, 2019). It is equally important that the students be skilled in terms of grammar since it affects the quality of the statements for a speaker to be understood by his audience. Comprehension plays a crucial role in communication, so students should improve their command of grammar conventions. Additionally, a variety of methods and elements can

be used to ensure that students have a satisfactory level of English grammar mastery. Çetinkaya and Tilfarlioğlu (2020) studied three factors affecting language learning which include Grammar Learning Strategies, self-efficacy, and learners autonomy. Grammar instruction enables students to utilize the language effectively and accurately. When learning a language, students employ a few different strategies. These methods are often known as grammar learning strategies, which improve the organization and accuracy of the learning process (Abri, 2017). Second factor is self-efficacy, which refers to the person's belief in his or her capabilities for performing the task. Allowing the students to realize their full potential and strengths in the task is a significant factor in achieving language excellence. In the same manner, learner autonomy is considered one of the factors affecting students' language competence. Çetinkaya and Tilfarlioğlu (2020) define learner's autonomy as the ability of a learner to manage their own educational duties. Students must have the motivation, skills, and independence to assume personal responsibility. Giving students' enough level of trust and confidence can boost their drive and motivation to perform. The students' performed not because they wanted to achieve high marks but because of their willingness to learn and see the benefits of what is being taught.

Problem 2: What is the level of students' writing competence?

The table below presents the frequency, percentage, standard deviation, and mean distribution of students' writing competence.

Table 3. Frequency, Percentage, Standard Deviation and Mean Distribution of Students' Writing Competence (n=63)

Range	Mastery Level	Frequency	Percentage
3.26-4.00	Good	17	27.0
2.51-3.25	Satisfactory	38	60.3
1.76-2.50	Needs Improvement	2	3.2
1.00-1.75	Unsatisfactory	6	9.5
TOTAL		63	100

Mean Score : 3.05 SD: .831

Mastery Level: Satisfactory

Based on the data above, it shows that 17 or 27% of the respondents are good in terms of their writing competence, 38 or 60.3% are at the satisfactory level, 2 or 3.2% need improvement, and 6 or 9.5% are at the unsatisfactory level in terms of their writing competence. Furthermore, the table also indicated that, in general, it has a mean score of 3.05 and a standard deviation of .831, which has a qualitative description of satisfactory. This means that the students are performing well, especially regarding their writing competence. Students achieved a satisfactory level of writing competence because of their constant exposure to the English language since the school implemented a general policy that all subjects use their medium of instruction, such as English and Filipino. Moreover, writing competence can

also be enhanced through various writing activities for the students to perform. Additionally, Al-Zoubi (2018) concluded in his study that exposure to the language positively impacts the development of the four language skills.

Writing is one of the four fundamental language abilities in the study of English and a crucial tool for idea exchange in social interactions (Zeng, 2018).

Problem 3: What is the level of students' speaking competence?

Table 4 presents the frequency, percentage, standard deviation, and mean distribution of students' speaking competence.

Table 4. Frequency, Percentage, Standard Deviation and Mean Distribution of Students' Speaking Competence (n=63)

Range	Mastery Level	Frequency	Percentage
3.26-4.00	Good	10	15.9
2.51-3.25	Satisfactory	48	76.2
1.76-2.50	Needs Improvement	5	7.9
1.00-1.75	Unsatisfactory	0	0
TOTAL		63	100

Mean Score: 3.08 SD: .485

Mastery Level: Satisfactory

The table shows that 10 or 15.9% of the respondents are good in terms of their speaking competence, 48 or 76.2% are at a satisfactory level, and 5 or 7.9% need improvement,

especially in the students' speaking competence. Furthermore, this result shows that the students' speaking competence has a mean score of 3.08 and a standard deviation of .485,

which is a qualitatively satisfactory description. The result implies that the students are satisfactory in speaking English. The students must master fluency and mastery of speaking as one of the four macroskills in English. Surakarta (2010) added that English is a language that needs to be studied since it is spoken worldwide, or in other words, it is a language utilized internationally.

Furthermore, this satisfactory result in students' speaking competence was achieved because of various speaking class activities implemented by the teacher, such as oral recitation and speech class activities. In this manner, students were given opportunities to use English in communication. Thus, the students are well exposed in using the English language. On the other hand, it is said that the school is not the only place where students can develop their speaking competence but also in their homes where English is part of their everyday conversation. Repeatedly, it is believed that exposure to the English Language can boost students' mastery of developing good speaking competence. Based on the study by Candilas (2016), students' oral English proficiency can be measured by several factors, including grammar.

The study also added that school and home environments were also considered factors that should go together to achieve and facilitate students' speaking skills.

Problem 4: Does mastery of English Grammar explain students' writing and speaking competence?

Table 5 and 6 present the simple linear regression analysis between the independent variable which is English Grammar and students' writing and speaking competence. Another purpose of this study is to determine whether English Grammar impacts the students' writing and speaking competence, respectively.

As shown in Table 5, the R2 value indicates that the regression model taking the variable English Grammar as a predictor positively explains the variation in students' writing competence. The model is statistically significant given the P-Value (.018). This means that for every unit increase in English Grammar, students' writing competence also increases by about 8.8%. The model is summarized with this equation: $WC = 1.464 + .297EG$.

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Analysis between the Independent Variable and Writing Competence

Independent Variable	Regression Coefficients	T	P-Value
English Grammar	.297	2.431	.018

Constant: 1.464 R2: .088 F-value: 5.908 Sig. Level: .018b

Based on the result and data above, it simply means that mastery of English grammar explains students' writing competence. The students must master the basics of English grammar to arrive at a satisfactory level of writing sentences. The current findings affirm the study of Mushin (2019), which explains a significant correlation between students' grammar ability and effective writing skills in the English language.

Moreover, writing competence can be achieved and developed through well-organized grammar lesson activities and exercises implemented by teachers and the teacher's ability to discuss grammar lessons.

When research-based writing education methodologies, such as grammar instruction, students may make sufficient progress toward improving their writing skills (Robinson & Feng, 2016). On this note, grammar instruction and learning activities contribute to students' total development, especially in writing. Teachers facilitate these grammar learning activities since teaching strategies significantly impact students' learning. To confirm this, the study of Puspitaloka (2017) revealed a strong interaction between teaching techniques employed by the facilitators of learning in teaching writing skills.

The same research findings also revealed a high influence when a student is proficient in

English grammar, especially in writing descriptive written composition (Mariyanah, 2016). In this manner, grammar is of great importance, especially in developing one's writing skills using the English language. However, the findings of this current study are in contrast to those of Nadeak et al. (2021), where there is no strong correlation between students' mastery of English grammar and writing competence. Mastery of English grammar contributes less to students' writing skills. Additionally, since a variety of internal and external factors, such as motivation and the learning environment, affect learning, mastery of writing does not depend on students' English grammar proficiency. Finally, this result indicates that constant monitoring of the student's progress must be done through constant evaluation, which would hone the students' knowledge and skills in grammar and composition. If the students have

good grammar competence, it would positively affect their comprehension level, and they will perform satisfactorily in exams and interviews. Since PISA determines the students' performance relative to the indicators or proficiency level, especially in reading, thus it is equally important that students adhere to the grammar standards for better comprehension and analysis.

As shown in Table 6, the R2 value indicates that the regression model taking the variable English Grammar as predictor positively explains the variation of students' speaking competence. The model is statistically significant given the P-Value (.002). This means that for every unit increase in English Grammar, students' speaking competence also increases by about 13.8%. The model is summarized with this equation: $SC = 1.866 + .390EG$.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Analysis between the Independent Variable and Speaking Competence

Independent Variable	Regression Coefficients	T	P-Value
English Grammar	.390	3.308	.002
Constant: 1.866 R2: .138 F-value: 10.945			
Sig. Level: .002b			

Based on the above data, it is clear that mastery of English grammar explains students' speaking competence using the English language as a medium of communication. The result proves the study of (Zam Zam et al., 2021) which explains that mastery of English grammar contributes to good speaking ability. As a result, taking grammar lessons seriously has significant advantages for enhancing and honing good speaking ability.

These grammar lessons provide learning opportunities for the students to achieve speaking competence. Repeatedly, constant encounters and use of the English language provide essential benefits to the students since exposure to the English language affects a person's speaking ability.

Moreover, the speaking ability may be enhanced and facilitated through differentiated and varied grammar lessons and instructions that would help the students improve their performance and motivation to learn where they

could apply these structures in their everyday interactions (Kontogeorgou & Zafiri, 2016). Hence, grammar exercises that were given to students, especially in English class, provide opportunities for the students to foster learning and mastery in speaking. Additionally, Amelia (2018) concluded that the correlation between students' grammar mastery and speaking ability revealed a positive and significant correlation between the two variables. It demonstrates that one is sufficiently skilled in English grammar in order to develop and possess a degree of speaking ability that is satisfactory.

Consequently, a satisfactory level of speaking ability has essential benefits for the person, especially in boosting confidence or self-esteem. Conversely, a person's strong self-confidence can also contribute positively to a good speaking performance. These two combine meaningfully to achieve success in speaking skills. Considering the importance and weight

of these skills, one has to develop excellence and the ability to master it. Tiana (2020) added that both English grammar mastery and self-esteem significantly affect students' speaking competence.

Conclusion

Grammar mastery is beneficial and necessary for students to achieve satisfactory writing and speaking competence levels. Due to various internal and external factors, every learner must successfully acquire these skills. Students should practice and improve their basic English grammar skills to express themselves in written and oral modes of communication. The study results were satisfactory, indicating that the students are proficient in grammar, writing, and speaking. However, some students require reinforcement, an immediate response, and attention to learning. As a result, in order to progress more quickly, learners require some basic grammar assistance. This assistance could take various forms, such as teacher initiatives through supplemental activities and diverse learning resources in school or at home as a form of intervention. Understanding and internalizing the fundamentals of English grammar equates to effective writing and speaking abilities. Finally, the student's exposure to the language allowed them to achieve a satisfactory level of competence and skill in writing and speaking.

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