

Communicative Competence and English Language Exposure as Predictors of Writing Skills of Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study employing descriptive correlational design aimed to investigate the communicative competence and English language as predictors of writing skills of senior high school students in Tagum City Division. The 307 respondents were purposively chosen through stratified random sampling. Sets of survey questionnaires were adapted for communicative, English language exposure and writing skills. A modified rubric was used to rate the writing proficiency of the respondents. Data were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson *r*, and Linear Regression Analysis. The result revealed that communicative competence and English language exposure of the learners has a moderate level, while low for the level of the writing skills. Furthermore, the findings of the study showed a significant and positive correlation between the communicative competence and writing skills of the senior high school students and English language exposure and writing skills of the senior high school students.

Keywords: English, education, communicative competence, English language exposure, quantitative research, correlational design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is an intelligent instrument for grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in language components and language skills (Khazrouni, 2019). Further, it is a complex and multidimensional skill that requires the assimilation of various cognitive, linguistic, and social processes (McNamara & Allen, 2019). Thus, it serves an essential part in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for the reason that it is vital to guarantee the academic achievement of the learners (Aliyu, 2020). However, in the Philippines setting the findings of Pablo and Lasaten (2018) in the context of the Senior High Schools' writing skills, divulged the prevalent difficulty they encountered which are in the content and the absence of a variety of ideas, as well as the connectives for the organization of thoughts.

Meanwhile, the study of Sarwat et al., (2021) in Pakistan found that from 155 students, majority of them were unable to write grammatically with precise English paragraph construction, this is due to students' lack of proficiency in English grammar, syntax, tenses, as well as their limited vocabulary, including creative and originality of ideas, weak organizational structure, writing anxiety and the dependence on first language; because of these factors students' writing skills is poor.

Even in the study conducted by Saavedra and Barredo (2020) in one of the Divisions in Zamboanga Peninsula revealed that students' poor writing skills were attributed to these factors such as, due to inadequate vocabulary in the intended language, difficulties in organizing and expressing thoughts, students' belief that writing is a challenging task, a lack of passion and enthusiasm towards writing, spelling difficulty, sentence construction, and correct grammar composition.

Similarly, in the local setting of Kapalong, Davao del Norte, a study by Erellana (2021) found that students struggle in their writing performance. Students scored low in expression in word choice and basic sentence structure with a mean of 2.35 and standard deviation of 0.64. Furthermore, the study also significantly revealed low score in language conventions, showing students' difficulty in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation described with the mean of 2.32 and standard deviation of 0.80.

It is important to note that writing skills should be enhanced in order to acquire the ability needed for an effective and concise writing. The role of communicative competence and English language exposure in writing development cannot be underscored by the academe in general and English language pedagogy and research in particular. Therefore, students' writing issues are a big challenge for teachers to address especially because this skill is remarkably difficult to acquire as well as to develop.

Meanwhile, communicative competence, defined as the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in various social contexts, has been identified as a crucial factor in second language writing development (Canale & Swain, 2019). According to Canale and Swain, communicative competence comprises four interrelated components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Montero, et al., 2019). The literature indicates that several studies have examined the relationship between communicative competence and writing skills among second language (L2) learners. For instance, Hadiani & Permata (2019) investigated that communicative competence plays a vital role in the development of the writing skills of the students.

Moreover, communicative competence and English language exposure (ELE) has also been identified as a crucial factor in second language writing development. English language exposure refers to the extent to which learners are exposed to English language input and output in various contexts, such as school, home, and community. A number of studies have investigated the role of ELE in L2 writing development. For instance, Shamsudin et al., (2020) examined the impact of ELE on the writing skills of Malaysian EFL learners and found that learners who had higher levels of ELE performed better in writing tasks than those with lower levels of exposure.

To address these challenges, the researcher posited that it was crucial to investigate the role of communicative competence and English language exposure as predictors of writing skills among senior high school students in the local setting, upholding the reality of the problem in writing skills of second language learners on global and national scales. This research was conducted with the aim to contribute to the understanding of the complex factors that shape second language writing skills and provide insights for educators, policymakers, and practitioners on how to improve the writing skills of senior high school students.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research design to address the research problem. The quantitative approach was deemed the most appropriate method to utilize and consider, given the nature of the research problem. In particular, this study used descriptive and correlational methods to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data and identify patterns and trends, while correlational analysis was used to examine the relationships between variables.

In addition, descriptive and correlational research methods were used by the researcher in a non-experimental quantitative study in which the researcher evaluated three variables and determined their correlation. Neuman (2014) defined descriptive research as a type of research that involves collecting and analyzing data to describe and summarize a phenomenon, without making any causal

inferences or predictions. Further, descriptive research contains the gathering of data to test the null hypothesis and to establish correlations between two or more variables in the same population (Asgari, 2010). Therefore, this design was fit to be used in this study since it aimed to determine if there was a relationship between communicative competence, English language exposure, and the writing skills of senior high school students.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines. Three schools in this locality were chosen and assigned with the initials A, B, and C for confidentiality purposes.

Research Respondents

The respondents for this study were 307 senior high school students-enrolled for the academic year 2022–2023 at public schools in the Division of Tagum City which were identified through stratified sampling.

In general, there were 1200 students from school A, 96 students from school B, and 225 students from school C. The sample was identified using the Raosoft online sample size calculator, with a 95% degree of confidence and a 5% margin of error. Hence, it was determined that this study had to have 241 learners from school A, 20 from school B, and 46 from school C, with a total number of 307 respondents.

The aforementioned schools were selected as the study's locale due to their unique status within the Division of Tagum City. The two schools known for its huge population and the other one has the least population in the entire secondary public school in Tagum City. The researcher's objective was to assess the Communicative Competence and English Language Exposure as Predictors of Writing Skills of Senior High School Students.

Participants included in the study were Grade 11 Senior High School students who were able to take up English subjects during the previous and current semester; and were bona fide students from the three secondary schools of Tagum City Division. Subjects included must also use English as a language medium during the conduct of the survey. The researcher, moreover, was only able to collect data with surveys in English. Subjects who failed to meet the inclusion criteria were not included in the study to maintain the accuracy and relevance of the results.

Statistical Tools

The quantitative investigation results were subject to review, analysis, and interpretation in accordance with the following statistical tools.

Mean. This statistical tool was applied to measure and determine the level of communicative competence, the level of English language exposure, and the writing performance of senior high school students. Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 were answered by the outcomes of this statistical instrument.

Standard Deviation. A data set's dispersion in relation to its meaning was measured by a standard deviation. This statistical tool was utilized to establish if the scores were evenly distributed or close to the mean. To answer the Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, this tool has been utilized.

Pearson r. This statistical tool was utilized to assess the significant relationship between communicative competence and writing performance and English language exposure and writing performance. This statistical tool was specifically addressing Research Topics 4.1 and 4.2.

Linear Regression Analysis. This was utilized to ascertain the significance of communicative competence and English language exposure on the relationship writing performance of senior high school students. This specifically aimed to respond to Research Question 5.

Data Gathering Procedure

In this descriptive-correlational study, the quantitative data were gathered through series of adapted questionnaires. After completing the preliminary stages of the research, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study. The proposed research manuscript was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for careful consideration and examination, and the researcher obtained an endorsement letter from the Dean of the Graduate School Program of the University of the Immaculate Conception. Once this process was completed, the researcher sent a letter to the Division of Tagum City, addressed to the superintendent, requesting approval to carry out the study. The principal or head of each school chosen to participate in the study received a copy of the authorization from the researcher. After approval, the principal of each school was provided with a copy of the signed letter, granting access to the respondents. This process ensures that the study was conducted ethically and with the necessary permissions and approvals.

Upon obtaining the permission needed for the conduct of the study, the researcher coordinated with the respondents' class advisers, who will act as the study's gatekeepers to perform the research study. To ensure privacy and security, the researcher and adviser obtained a confidentiality agreement guaranteeing that all data and personal information were kept private. The respondents were requested for their informed consent or informed assent before the data-gathering process begins. Moreover, a virtual or face-to-face orientation to the researcher's study was promptly conducted. During orientation, the researcher set a schedule that everyone will be able to adhere to ensure that students' classes and parents' work schedules has not been disrupted as much as possible. Meanwhile, for those participants who were not able attend virtually or face-to-face due to extenuating circumstances still, they were able to receive a message through email containing an attachment of the goals and purpose of the study for fair dissemination of information of the research study. As proof of evidence that participants will join voluntarily, all forms will be signed either by scanning or some other kind of method.

During the conduct of the study, the questionnaires were distributed and handled by the researcher directly. The allotted time was less than one hour or sixty minutes single session to administer the research question of administration. In the acknowledgement/informed consent, this was noted, and it was reflected in the informed consent/assent. Meanwhile, upon obtaining the informed assent and consent and the approval of the request, the researcher conducted the study using the adapted questionnaires. To acquire the respondents' data, the researcher asked for the assistance of the assigned gatekeepers of every school. To protect the identity of the respondents, the gatekeepers were requested to sign a confidentiality agreement as part of the protocol. Perhaps, prior to the administering of the survey questionnaires, the researcher notified the gatekeepers for the gathering of the respondents' ethical data. Discrete coding was utilized to administer the questionnaires in a way to ensure proper and complete anonymity and the highest level of confidentiality for the respondents' data or information.

The secrecy of the information of the respondents were given more emphasis which was why no specific name or identity will be shown in the research study whether in reports, presentations, or the future publication. All study data or information for electronic copies were kept in a password-protected folder or locked files for electronic copies. Additionally, only the researcher will have access to the files. Furthermore, to avoid illegal access, use, or disclosure to anyone else or the public, the data collected after the research project was kept on file for three (3) years before being securely erased, unless otherwise mandated by law. Finally, in data retrieval, all possible raw scores were checked,

tallied, and compiled in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. After that, the spreadsheet data was then submitted to the graduate school statistician to analyze the retrieved data and find solutions to the problem that arises and as indicated in the first chapter of the research study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Level of Communicative Competence of Senior High School Students

Table 1 reveals the level of communicative competence of senior high school students. Four indicators of CC were presented on the table with corresponding mean; these indicators include grammatical (linguistic) competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Results show that the overall mean is 47.00 with moderate descriptive value. This implies that the communicative competence of the senior high school students is sometimes manifested. Furthermore, the four indicators' mean range from 35.97 to 55.88 in which it is also describe as moderate.

The study of Terogo, et al. (2018) found that the overall mean of the communicative competence of the respondents is moderate. The results indicated that the students are moderately competent in communicative competence.

Table 1
Level of Communicative Competence of Senior High School Students

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Grammatical Competence	55.88	Moderate
Discourse Competence	41.26	Moderate
Sociolinguistic Competence	35.97	Low
Strategic Competence	49.58	Moderate
OVERALL	47.00	Moderate

It means that the main idea or topic sentence is either, not in the right place and there is no reference to topic in the last sentence or unclear. The penmanship of the student is generally neat, but is difficult to read, with some erasures or smudges. Less than three grammatical mistakes and less than three mistakes in capitalization, punctuation, and end marks can be found in each sentence.

Among the four indicators of communicative competence, grammatical (linguistic) competence obtained the highest mean of 5.88 with moderate descriptive value. This implies that the communicative competence of the senior high school students is sometimes manifested.

The results coincide in the study conducted by Maguundayao (2017), that among the four components of the communicative competence, grammatical (linguistic) competence obtained the highest mean with moderate descriptive value. This implies that majority of the mistakes made by the participants were deletions, distortions, and phonological and lexical problems. Some mistakes that were made involved intrusions.

Contrary to grammatical competence, among the four indicators of communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence has the lowest mean which is 35.97 with low descriptive value. This implies that the communicative competence of the senior high school students is rarely manifested.

This finding lends support to the study conducted by Atay et al., (2009) and Sen, (2020) that sociolinguistic competence obtained the lowest mean among the four components of the communicative competence. Which revealed that respondents are aware of their limited understanding of intercultural communication, use of appropriateness of language with respect to, topic, setting and the relationship among interlocutors. Thus, it also requires understanding of the one's attitude especially in expressing their emotions, beliefs, and knowledge in a social and cultural appropriateness and acceptability of linguistic behavior. Similarly, Terogo, et al. (2018) found sociolinguistic competence being the lowest among the other communicative competence indicators, it indicates that this competence is not often practiced language skill amongst the students.

The Level of English Language Exposure of Senior High school Students

Table 2 reveals the level of English language exposure of the senior high school students. Four indicators of ELE are presented on the table with corresponding mean and standard deviation; these indicators include exposure at home, with friends, in school, and on media. Results show that the overall mean is 2.99 which described as moderate. This implies that the English language exposure of senior high school students is sometimes manifested. Furthermore, the four indicators' SD range from 2.20 to 3.67 in which it is also describe as moderate.

This finding concurred in the study of Domingo (2020) in which it reveals that the respondents are moderately exposed to the English language. This implies that learners were exposed mostly to English language learning when they are at school or when utilizing different media compared to when they are at home or communicating with friends or peers.

Notably, among the four indicators of English language exposure, exposure in *school* obtained the highest category mean of 3.67 with SD of 0.91, with high descriptive value which means that the English language exposure of senior high school students is often manifested. Therefore, school is the linguistic environment of the students where they are extensively exposed to.

Table 2
Level of English Language Exposure of Senior High School Students per Indicator

Indicators/Statements	Mean	Sd	Description
2.1 Home	2.20	0.74	Low
2.2 Friends	2.49	0.82	Low
2.3 School	3.67	0.91	High
2.4 Media	3.58	0.70	High
Overall Mean	2.99	0.55	Moderate

Meanwhile, a study conducted by Domingo (2020), found that the items in the category *school* provide students high exposure to the English language. This implies that students are heavily exposed to the English language, particularly at school, mainly because English is employed as the medium of instruction and students are required to use English in conversation.

According to Domingo (2020) in his study, English language exposure is important for second language learning and proficiency. School obtained the highest mean always because this environment

of language exposure, teachers often speaks English and students’ activities in school are often conducted in English. Therefore, high exposure to the language gives greater chances for the learners to speak and be proficient in the target language.

In contrast, the category that obtained the lowest mean of 2.20 and having a standard deviation of 0.74 is at *home* with descriptive low value. This means that the English language exposure of senior high school students is rarely manifested. For this reason, the students can be considered passive in English language learning when at home, if English language in the family is not prevalent then the exposure is low.

This finding also confirmed the result of the study of Tuan (2017) which revealed that students rarely encountered or heard English in their home. Similarly, a study by Domingo in 2020 discovered that out of the four indicators of ELE, the home indicator had the lowest average.

Thus, it can be said that talking in English, engaging in activities where English is used and conversing with family in English can help the learner achieve high proficiency in acquiring and developing the target language to be applied anywhere especially in the academe.

The Level of Writing Skills of Senior High School Students

Presented in table 3 is the findings of the level of writing skills of senior high school students. Five indicators of writing skills are presented on the table with corresponding mean and standard deviation; these indicators include content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The overall mean of the level of writing skills of senior high school students is 1.88 with SD of 1.01 that signifies very low, which means that the writing skills of senior high school students is very poor. Furthermore, the five indicators’ SD range from 1.05 to 1.15 in which it is also describe as low. This implies that the writing skills of senior high school students is poor.

This finding lends support to the study conducted by Tutto and Ramos (2021), it reveals that students’ academic skills in reading and writing were poor. Moreover, the result of the study also agrees with the findings cited by Sarwat, et al. (2021), that the core problems of students’ English writing are due to poor command over English grammar, syntax and tenses, and insufficient vocabulary as well as the lack of creativity in writing ideas, having writing anxiety, weak in structural organization and dependence on L1 that results to learners’ poor writing skill in English. Hence, the five indicators of writing skills are factors that can affect the skills of the students in terms of writing composition.

Table 3
Level of Writing Skill of Senior High School Students

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Content	1.15	2.03	Low
Organization	1.05	1.87	Low
Vocabulary	1.08	1.88	Low
Grammar	1.09	1.84	Low
Mechanics	1.07	1.78	Very Low
OVERALL	1.01	1.88	Low

Correlation between Variables

Presented in table 4 is the significant relationship of communicative competence and English language exposure to the writing skills of the senior high school students. Tested at the alpha level of significance of correlation, it is interpreted that CC has significant relationship with the p-value of 0.004 and ELE p-value of 0.003 to writing skills among the Senior High School students.

The results of this study harmonized to the study of Salvador (2023), reveals that there is a significant relationship of the students' level of communicative competence in their writing and oral skills. On the same manner, Hadiani and Permata (2019) affirm that developing students' communicative competence in terms of writing skill requires several supports that can aid the students' need to enhance their language ability in all the competence areas.

In this study, it further implies that the higher the extent of exposure of the Senior High School respondents to English language at home, with friends, in school, and media, the greater chances that proficiency of writing in English in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar were developed. However, according to Domingo (2020), if the learner is exposed only to classroom activities, dialogue and drills, thus they may acquire extensive mastery of communication skills in the classroom only, however, learners may still remain at a loss in other areas particularly in social discourse. Moreover, the result of this study aligned to the findings of (Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021) that the augmented exposure to FLs through audiovisual, internet, and social media allows for the possibility of extensive learning languages, specifically English language, and outside the classroom context.

Table 4
Correlation of Variables

Variables paired with Writing Skill of Senior High School Students	r	p-value	Remarks
Communicative Competence	0.164	0.004	Significant
English Language Exposure	0.167	0.003	Significant

**Significant at 0.05*

Generally, the findings of this study coincide with the theory of Krashen (1981) who espoused that the language environment a person is exposed to are contributory factors to acquisition. Furthermore, as this research proved the connection between these independent variables, it also argued the relationship of these variables to writing skill. Anchondo (2018) states that the development of learners' communicative competence can be enhanced through proper language exposure. Magno et.al, (2016) asserts that this was also correlated in their investigation that extensive exposure to the language promotes language learning.

Influencers of Writing Skill of Senior High School Students

The result of the regression analysis is shown in Table 5. The data revealed that the two independent variables, communicative competence, and English language exposure, could significantly influence the writing skill of senior high school students ($p < 0.05$). This means that both

communicative competence and English language exposure have a causal relationship with the writing skill of senior high school students.

Given this causal relationship along with the descriptive results, which show moderate levels of communicative competence and English language exposure and low level of writing skill, the data implies that the decreased change in the level of communicative competence and English language exposure is directly causing a decrease change in the level of writing skills of senior high school students. Moreover, the beta standardized coefficient value of 0.147 with p-value of 0.010, suggests that between the two independent variables, English language exposure is considered the best predictor of the writing skill of senior high school students. With the aid of thorough English language exposure, the learner can acquire advancement to the second language (Al-Zoubi, 2018) and therefore every learner learns language by communicating and interacting in the authentic language environment. More evidently, the overall p-value (< 0.05) with an F value of 7.683, as shown in the holistic model, implies that the writing skill of senior high school students is significantly predicted by the combined independent variables (communicative competence and English language exposure). However, the R^2 value of 0.048 signifies that only 4.80% of the variance of writing skill of senior high school students is influenced by the combined independent variables (communicative competence and English language exposure). This accounts for a small effect size, for that matter. Thus, it infers that other combined factors equivalent to 95.20% could significantly influence the writing skill of senior high school students not covered in this study.

Table 5
Influencers of Writing Skill of Senior High School Students

Individual Predictors	Standard Coefficient Beta	t	p-value	Remarks
Communicative Competence	0.143	2.532	0.012	Significant
English Language Exposure	0.147	2.601	0.010	Significant
Holistic Model				
Predictors Combined	R^2	F	p-value	Remarks
	0.048	7.683	0.000	Significant

*Significant at 0.05

Somehow, some of the 95.20% significant influence that does not cover in this study supported in the stipulated findings of Anyindah (2017) that another challenges that cause a great factor on the writing skills of the learners is the lack of their interest. Since, writing skills development is always challenging it is also always an interesting task engagement for the learners., When students are interested, they are well motivated. According to Gbollie & Keamu (2017), motivation is crucial to enhance students' learning outcomes. However, some of them zone out and feel lack of interest because they have to elaborate and apply proper grammar, correct punctuations, appropriate

vocabulary, correct spelling, and proper sentence construction to come up with a good piece of writing in which they are insufficient with for this reason they feel less motivated, this may cause hinder of learning process as they are not interested in proceeding with their task.

CONCLUSIONS

The level of communicative competence of senior high school students is moderate. Further, the result indicates that students' communicative competence is sometimes manifested which further implies that the students have an average ability in terms of grammatical, discourse, and strategic in the use of English. However, there is a need to develop upon the ability of students in sociolinguistic competence.

The level of English language exposure of senior high school students is moderate. Further, the result indicates that students' English language exposure is sometimes manifested which further implies that students are exposed to an environment where they can learn English with friends, in school, and on media as sources of language inputs. Nevertheless, there is a need to improve the experience of students in learning English at home.

The level of writing skills is low. This result simply indicates that when senior high school students are writing in English, they display poor level of writing skills considering the five indicators: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. This projects that they cannot carry out writing activities in English proficiently.

Communicative competence has a significant relationship to writing skills among senior high school students. It can be concluded that students have a greater chance to develop their writing skills when there is an adequate learning under grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. On the other hand, English language exposure has a significant relationship to writing skills among senior high school students which implies that when students are well expose at home, with friends, in school, and on media, the more likely they will have a greater chance they can write proficiently.

Communicative competence and English language exposure have combined influence on writing skills of senior high school students. English language exposure is considered the best predictor of the writing skills of senior high school students.

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