

Linguistic competence in second language learning predicts the students' academic performance in English

Solina, Marynom E. ✉

Silay Institute, Incorporated, Philippines (marynom.solina@yahoo.com)

Received: 20 February 2022

Available Online: 15 April 2022

Revised: 25 March 2022

DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2022.835

Accepted: 11 April 2022

ISSN: 2243-7703

Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS



Abstract

The significance of the English language in attaining academic success can never be underestimated. Since English has been recognized as the foundation of all academic knowledge in the educational system, the development of the learners' competence in the language has to be given importance. This study explored on the students' level of competence in linguistics and their relationship to their academic performance in English. There were 66 students selected as respondents using the stratified sampling method and there were three statistical tools used to treat the data: the mean and standard deviation, the t-test and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient or Pearson r. Findings revealed that the students' linguistic competence had significant relationship with their academic performance in English. Hence, the level of students' competence in linguistics is a predictor of the students' academic success in the subject.

Keywords: linguistic competence, academic performance, second language, English, Central Philippines

Linguistic competence in second language learning predicts the students' academic performance in English

1. Introduction

English has been the world's lingua franca (Arellado, 2016). To Rico (2016), English serves as the most significant venue of opportunities in the various phases of life, such as business, economy, technology, and academics. The significance of the English language in attaining academic success can never be underestimated (Saquing-Guingab, 2015). Indeed, it has been recognized as the foundation of all theoretical knowledge in the educational system of most countries in the world (Gemora, 2016). English prepares students for meaningful instruction and enables them to perform well in all academic subjects taught in English in school (Kong, Powers, Starr, & Williams, 2012; Leyaley, 2016; Millie, Racca, & Lasaten, 2016; Muthmainnah et al., 2021; Arellado, 2016; Siok & Hoon, 2015).

Relative to the above claims, the Philippine Educational System has implemented the K-12 curriculum to develop globally proficient and competent learners, especially communication (Rico, 2016). To achieve competence in the English language means knowing its structure, component, grammar, vocabulary, and appropriate use for a real purpose. This knowledge of language involves understanding all its aspects, which is termed linguistic competence. Linguistic competence refers to the unconscious knowledge of grammar that allows the speaker to use and understand a language (Nordquist, 2017). Awal and Bahar (2013) consider it as the ability to implement the rules to form a correct sentence and the ability to use it in proper discourse. In short, linguistic competence involves knowing both the grammatical rules and their implementation.

Grammar plays an essential function in language learning, both in native language learning and foreign language learning. It provides the necessary structure that organizes one's thoughts to ensure precise and accurate understanding (Hu, 2012). Foppoli (2016) defines grammar as the backbone of language (Norris, 2016). It is a device that makes constructing and producing sentences and analysis and understanding of the utterances possible (Debata, 2013), (Nosratinia, Mania & Roustayi, 2014). According to Scheffler, Paweł, and Marcin Cinciała (2011), there will be no way one can rightfully express his thoughts and ideas to others in a meaningful way but through grammar.

Knowledge of language structure is essential for academic success (Frederick, 2015). Studies by foreign and local scholars have affirmed that the student's knowledge of the second language structures or language competence is the most significant reason for the student's success and decline in academic performance (Harb, 2014, Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Hinkel (2013) claims that advanced language proficiency or competence is needed to become effective in second language academic speaking and writing. On the other hand, Domingo (2016) views that the language limitations of the students made them perform poorly in the content areas. Suleiman (1983) even confirmed that lack of language skills or incompetence in linguistics is a barrier to students' demonstration of content-area knowledge. Thus, it leads to their getting poor results in academics. This proves that the person's language performance results from their level of competence or proficiency in the English language (Martirosyan, Hwang, & Wanjohi, 2015; Hamerka, 2009; Whayuni et al., n.d.). Indeed, Ghenghesh, 2015).

Beckham, (2015). Learning in academics is delivered through oral and written instructions. Therefore, it cannot deny that language ability and school achievement have a relationship (Ghenghesh, 2015; Baltazar, 2015; Kumar, 2014; Green, 2014; Aina et al., 2013; Roche & Harrington, 2013; and Omari, 2006). Gender or Sex also affects the student's performance in English (Aperocho, 2016). Chastain (1988) and Argamon et al. (2006) confirmed in the result of their studies that a person's gender was a determinant of academic success. However, Trick LR (2015) argued that some studies showed no differences in learners' performance regarding gender or

sex, but in others, significant differences were evident, especially in developed countries. Carr and Pauwels's (2016) findings showed that girls do not differ in learning English. Okafor CA and Egbon O (2015) confirmed that researching learners' performance based on their sex/ gender is comparable to building a wall since no single study can give one complete result, only one of the bricks.

In the Philippine context, most claim that the poor performance of students in academics is a result of their incompetence or poor performance in the second language. Philippine educationalists and linguists found that most Filipino learners' deficiencies in English have affected their ability to learn the language and their verbal and written communication skills. Educationalists and specialists in English complained about the learners' weakness in English as often reflected in the students' results in the exams, national tests, or achievement tests.

Based on the experiences of many English teachers, including the researcher herself and other teachers teaching subjects whose medium is English, the students generally have difficulty in understanding concepts, stories, and instructions in English as well, as they can hardly articulate their ideas in English may it be in written or in verbal forms. When asked what hinders them from getting good results in language-related activities, exams, and national tests, they often blame their poor language structure. No matter how competent their teachers are in teaching the subject and how much effort their teachers would exert in teaching, they still can hardly attain competence in linguistics. These observations and experiences have prompted the researcher to investigate the students' linguistic competence and its relevance to their academic performance in English.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This investigation aimed to specifically answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of linguistic competence of the Grade 10 students when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex?
2. What is the students' level of academic performance in English when taken as a whole and when grouped according to sex?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of linguistic competence of the students when grouped as a whole and when grouped according to sex?
4. Is there a significant difference in the students' level of academic performance in English when grouped as a whole and grouped according to sex?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the students' linguistic competence and their academic performance in English?

2. Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive correlation method to determine whether and as to what degree the relationship between linguistic competence and academic performance in English of the students exist. Moreover, researcher would identify the essence of linguistic competence in second language learning based on the students' result in the English Proficiency Test which measures the students' competence in language and the academic performance. The respondents of the study were the sixty-six (66) Grade 10 students of the private school under study. The total number of respondents was determined using the Slovin's formula. The 28 males and 38 females of the total number were identified employing the stratified method.

The researcher sought approval from the School Director of the school for the conduct of the research and the administration of a survey test to determine the respondents' level of linguistic competence and the use of the Second Quarter Grades of the respondents as the basis of their academic performance in English. With the School Director's approval, the researcher started to reproduce sufficient copies of questionnaires for the target

respondents. The researcher then convened the determined respondents in a conducive learning classroom and explained the purpose of the study and the conduct of the test for them to be motivated to answer thoughtfully. After the students had finished answering the test, the materials were gathered and checked. One point was given for each correct answer. To determine the level of linguistic competence, the results were statistically computed.

2.1 Statistical Tools

The researcher used mean and standard deviation, t-test, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient or Pearson (r) to interpret the following problems. For Problem 1, which sought to determine the level of linguistic competence of the Grade 10 students when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex, the mean and standard deviation were used. Under is the table of interpretation and descriptors used to determine the level of linguistic competence.

Table 1

Interpretation Guide to Determine Level of Linguistic Competence

Scale	Interpretation	Descriptors
40.00 - 32.01	Excellent	knows beyond basic grammar and vocabulary and has very good reading comprehension skills, and uses them with very few and negligible errors has a wide range of grammar and vocabulary knowledge; very minimal misunderstandings
32.00 - 24.01	Very Satisfactory	knows basic grammar rules and vocabulary, and has good comprehension skills and use them correctly with occasional errors.
24.00 - 16.01	Satisfactory	knows basic grammar, vocabulary and has satisfactory comprehension skills but with considerable errors and have some misunderstandings and errors which may cause some difficulty
16.00 - 8.01	Fair	knows very little basic grammar, vocabulary and has fairly satisfactory comprehension skills, and has many errors
8.00 - 0.00	Poor	very minimal knowledge and use of the expression barely knows grammar, vocabulary and has poor comprehension skills

For Problem 2, which sought to determine the level of academic performance in English of the Grade 10 students when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex, the mean and standard deviation was used. The mean measures the central tendency that represents the general level of performance. Further, it is represented by the total values divided by the total number of population or values (Vizcarra & Lubina, 2012).

Table 2

Interpretation Guide to Determine the Academic Performance of the Students

Scaling Interpretation	Descriptors
90 – 100	Outstanding
85 – 89	Very Satisfactory
80 – 84	Satisfactory
75 – 79	Fairly Satisfactory
Below 75	Did not Meet Expectation

Based on the Deped Grading System Scales and Descriptors. The T-test was used for Problem 3, which sought to determine the significant difference in the students' linguistic competence level when taken as a whole and when grouped according to sex. Interpretations and Descriptors for the level of academic performance in English were taken from DepED Scaling Grades. The T-test was used for Problem 4, which sought to determine the significant difference in the level of performance in English of the Grade 10 students when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex. For Problem 5, which sought to determine whether a significant relationship exists between the student's competence in linguistics and their performance in English, Pearson-Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used.

3. Results and Discussion

This presents the data collected from the respondents, the results, and a discussion of interpretation per table.

The following data were computed using appropriate statistical tools. The results were interpreted and shown according to the sequence of specific questions that appeared in the problem statement.

Table 3

Grade 10 Students' Level of Linguistic Competence

Grouping Variable	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	SD
A. Entire Group	22.17	Satisfactory	6.43
B. Sex			
Male	20.75	Satisfactory	7.06
Female	23.21	Satisfactory	5.80

Table 3 shows that the level of linguistic competence of the students as a whole is satisfactory, with $M = 22.17$ and $SD = 6.43$. When classified according to sex, the male group was satisfactory, and the female group was also satisfactory. Comparing the mean scores and the standard deviation of the two groups, the results reveal heterogeneity in the level of linguistic competence. The male students' M is 20.75, the SD is 7.06; the females' M is 23.21, and the SD is 5.80. The wide dispersion of the grades in the result means that there is no significant difference in the level of linguistic competence between the male and the female. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this study states that there is no significant difference in the level of linguistic competence of the students when grouped according to sex is accepted.

Table 4

Grade 10 Students' Level of Academic Performance

Grouping Variable	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	SD
A. Entire Group	81.36	Satisfactory	8.31
B. Sex			
Male	79.18	Fairly Satisfactory	7.53
Female	82.97	Satisfactory	8.59

Table 4 shows the students' academic performance in English for the 2nd Quarter. It reveals that the students belong to the satisfactory level, with the $M = 81.36$ and $SD = 8.31$. Notably, when students were grouped according to sex, the male group result was satisfactory with the $M = 79.18$ and $SD = 7.53$, while the female group was satisfactory with the $M = 82.97$ and SD of 8.59. This further illustrates that the respondents grouped into sex M ranged from 79.18 to 82.97. The SD also ranged from 7.53 to 8.59, showing a wide dispersion of the grades from the mean, indicating that the female group has a higher level of academic performance when compared to the male.

Table 5

Comparative Statistics in the Students' Level of Linguistic Competence Classified according to Sex

Compared Group	Mean	SD	DF	t-ratio	p	Interpretation
Male	20.75	7.53	64	-1.55	0.125	Not Significant
Female	23.21	5.80				

Table 5 reveals the comparative statistics of the students' level of linguistic competence classified according to sex. The t-test results to $t(64) = -1.55$ and $p = 0.125$ which is higher than 0.05 alpha level. This means that both males and females have the same linguistic competence level. Hence, the hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the level of linguistic competence when the students are grouped as a whole, is accepted.

Table 6 shows comparative statistics of the student's level of academic performance when grouped according to sex. The computed t-test signifies that the student's level of academic performance, when classified according to sex, does not vary significantly with the $t(64) = -1.87$, $p = 0.066$, which is higher than the 0.05

alpha level. This implies that male and female students have the same level of academic performance. Therefore, the hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the level of academic performance in English of the students when grouped as a whole and grouped according to sex is accepted.

Table 6

Comparative Statistics in Students' Level of Academic Performance in English Grouped according to Sex

Compared Group	Mean	SD	DF	t-ratio	p	Interpretation
Male	79.18	7.53	64	-1.87	0.066	Not Significant
Female	82.97	5.80				

Table 7

Relationship between Linguistic Competence and Academic Performance in English of the Students

Compared Groups	F-ratio	P	Interpretation
Linguistic Competence and Academic Performance	0.786	0.000	Significant

Table 7 shows the relationship between linguistic competence and academic performance in English for the second quarter. The computed p-value is 0.00 level. This finding illustrates a direct relationship between these two variables, implying that linguistic competence is a determinant of academic success for students of the Silay Institute. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the students' linguistic competence and academic performance is rejected.

4. Conclusions

Based on the results, this study concludes that the linguistic competence of the Grade 10 students is satisfactory for both males and females and that sex is not a determining factor in their language skills. The learners' competence in language is found to be equal among males and females. Likewise, the academic performance in English of the learners is not affected by their sex. Both male and female students perform equally in English. Therefore, females can never be stereotyped as better in linguistics and academics compared to males, nor are males better than females. In addition, the study concludes that the better the students are in the language, the better they are in their English subject. The positive relationship between linguistic competence and academic performance in English only means that learners' academic performance in English results from their language competence. Thus, the study concludes that linguistic competence in the second language is a predictor of success in English. Hence, there is a need to enhance the students' skills in language structures and use them through a remediation program, especially for those found weak in the language.

5. References

- Addow, A. M., Abubakar, A. H., & Said Abukar, M. (2013). English language proficiency and academic achievement for undergraduate students in Somalia. *Educational Research International*, 2(2), 2307–3713.
- Aina, J. K., Ogundele, A. G., & Olanipekun, S. S. (2013). Students' proficiency in English language relationship with academic performance in science and technical education. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-1-9-2>
- Aperocho, M. D. B. (2016). Lexical and syntactic features of the male and female students' argumentative essays. *Univ. of Min. Intl. Mult. Res. Jour*, 1, 213–226.
- Arellado, M. A. F. (2016). College freshmen's attitude towards learning the English language: Its relation to their English speaking competency. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education*, 5, 78–86.
- Astha & Sharma, A. (2014). Proficiency in linguistic skills: A case study of Delhi government schools. *An International Refereed E-Journal of Literary Explorations*.

- Awal, E., & Bahar, H. B. (2013). Significance of linguistic competence over communicative competence enlightened through the devices of discourse analysis. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7, 75–80.
- Beckham, S. (2015). *Effects of linguistic modification accommodation on high school English language learners' academic performance*. Unpublished dissertation.
- Carr, J., & Pauwels, A. (2016). *Boys and foreign language learning: Real boys don't do languages*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chen, X.-T., & Sun, C.-C. (n.d.). *Language proficiency and academic performance*.
- Debata, P. K. (2013). The importance of grammar in English language teaching-a reassessment. *Language in India*, 13(5), 286–482.
- Domingo, D. R. (2016). Content area effectiveness: English vs Filipino medium of instruction. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1514–1529.
- Fligelstone, S., Rayson, P., & Smith, N. (n.d.). *Bridging the gap between grammar and the lexicon*.
- Frederick, N. (2015). The professional importance of grammar and how it should be taught. *PIT Journal*.
- Gasva, D., & Moyo, W. (2014). The influence of sex and gender on English language and mathematics performance: The case of grade 6 pupils at selected primary schools in Hwange District in Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe. *Greener Journal of Social Science*, 4, 123–129.
- Gemora, R. B. (2016). Performance and students' attitude towards English subjects: Basis for a language skills program. *International Journal of Current Research*, 7(11), 23397-23402.
- Ghenghesh, P. (2015). The relationship between English language proficiency and academic performance of university students – Should academic institutions really be concerned? *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v4n.2p.91>
- Hinkel, E. (2013). Research findings on teaching grammar for academic writing. *English Teaching*, 68(4), 3–21.
- Hu, R. (2012). Should grammar be taught? *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(3), 596–604. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tp1s.2.3.596-604>
- Jurkovič, V. (2010). Language learner strategies and linguistic competence as factors affecting achievement test scores in English for specific purposes. *TESOL Journal*, 1(4), 449–469. <https://doi.org/10.5054/tj.2010.234765>
- K to 12 Curriculum Guide. (2013), (December), 1–154.
- Kong, J., Powers, S., Starr, L., & Williams, N. (2012). *Connecting English language learning and academic performance: A prediction study*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association
- Kumar, P. (2014). Effect of proficiency in English language on academic performance of post graduate management students of Marathwada Region (Maharashtra), Indian. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 16(5), 10–16.
- Leyaley, R. V. G. (2016). *The English language proficiency of freshmen students in the institute of teacher education*. Kalingaapayao State College.
- Marsad, P., Buniyamin, N., & Manan, J. A. (2014). Students' English language proficiency and its impact on the overall student's academic performance: An analysis and prediction using neural network model. *WSEAS Transactions on Advances in Engineering Education*, 11, 44-53.
- Martirosyan, N. M., Hwang, E., & Wanjohi, R. (2015). Impact of English proficiency on academic performance of international students. *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), 60–71.
- Millie, R., Racca, A. B., & Lasaten, R. C. S. (2016). English language proficiency and academic performance of Philippine. *Science High School Students*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.18178/ijlll.2016.2.2.65>
- Mushtaq, I., & Khan, S. N. (2012). Factors affecting students' academic performance. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 12(9), 17–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.3660200906>
- Muthmainnah, A., N., Galal, M., Varghese, K., Del Castillo, F., & Ghofur, A. (2021). The students' needs in developing EFL Materials ICT Based. *Okara Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastar*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v15i2.4679>
- Nahida, P., & Majeed, T. (n.d.). *An assessment of the linguistic competence of intermediate school teachers of*

English as a Foreign Language.

Nordquist, R. (2017). *Linguistic Performance*.

Nosratinia, M., & Roustayi, S. (2014). Effect of grammar consciousness-raising tasks on EFL learners' performance. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(3), 203.

Oyekan, S. O. (2015). Teachers' perception of correlates of students' language competence and achievement in biology. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 2(1), 93–99.

Rico, F. M. (2016). Linguistic competence analysis and the development of speaking instructional material. *International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences*, 10(10), 3523–3526.

Saquin-Guingab, R. (2015). Correlating English language usage with academic achievement: A study of communication students in a state university in the Philippines. *International Refereed Research Journal*, 6.

Scheffler, P., & Marcin Cinciała, M. (2011). Explicit grammar rules and L2 acquisition. *ELT Journal*, 65.

Retrieved from

<https://www.scribd.com/document/216555228/Explicit-Grammar-Rules-and-1-2-Performance>

Shkullaku, R. (2013). The relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance in the context of gender among Albanian Students. *European Academic Research*, 1(4), 467–478.

Siok, A., & Hoon, B. (2015). Relationship between grammar accuracy, reading and writing performance among Malaysian ESL Learners, 10–19.

Stangor, C. (2011). *Research methods for the behavioral sciences* (4th ed.). Cengage.

Trick, LR. (2015). A comparison of academic performance of female and male optometry students at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. *J.Am Optom Assoc*, 59, 89-92.

Wornyo, A. A. (2016). Attending to the grammatical errors of students using constructive teaching and learning activities. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(7), 23–32.

World Health Organization. (2002). *Gender: Definitions*. Retrieved from

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions>