LINGUISTIC AND DISCOURSE COMPETENCE OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: BASIS FOR REMEDIAL PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

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Abstract	*This study on the levels of linguistic and discourse competence has aimed at constructing a proposed remedial program in English. Employing quantitativeresearch design, the researcher-made essay test and extemporaneous speech questions were administered among 248 senior high school students who were randomly chosen as respondents. To analyze and interpret data, mean, standard deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance were utilized. Major findings reveal that the respondents were competent in both written and oral communication with mean scores of 44.07 and 47.03, respectively.When grouped according to sex, female students performed better than their male counterparts. Whereas, when grouped according to strand, the mean scores of the respondents vary from 'Moderate' to 'Good' in both areas. Further, when grouped according to sex, the data indicate a significant difference in terms of linguistic and discourse competence. On the contrary, no significant difference is noted when the respondents grouped according to strand for both areas. Overall, the communication skills of senior high school students could still be improved. For this reason, a remedial program to aid the difficulties of students in English language learning was proposed.*
Keywords	guistic competence, discourse competence, English language learning

INTRODUCTION

Language is the foundation of all human relationships. All human relationships are established on the ability of people to communicate effectively with each other. This process allows students to understand better the world in which they live and contributes to the development of their personal perspectives of the global community (Department of Education, 2016). In the same way, proficiency in a language enables students to access, process, and keep abreast of information, to engage with the wider and more diverse communities, and to learn about the role of language in their lives, and in their own and other cultures.

With the implementation of K to 12 basic education curriculum in the Philippines in 2013, the ultimate goal of the English language teaching is to produce graduates who apply the language conventions, principles, strategies and skills in interacting with others, understanding and learning other content areas, and fending themselves in their chosen endeavor (Department of Education, 2016). Further, the outcome-based curriculum targets communicative competence and multiliteracies as its two expected outcomes for 21st century learners.

Canale and Swain (1980, as cited in Saleh, 2013) claimed that communicative competence is a synthesis of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and how knowledge of utterances and communicative functions can be combined to according to the principles of discourse. In other words, communicative competence is the learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully. However, Roslaniec (2018) suggested that communication is the skill many students find challenging to acquire especially in a second language. Even if the Philippines is doing fine in terms of English competency, the country still needs to step up its efforts in improving the English language teaching and learning, developing it as a vital skill of the workforce (Cabigon, 2015).

The researcher observed that both written and oral communication in English was a challenge

among senior high school students. In his workplace, when tasked to write an article, a lot of grammatical errors, lack of coherence, and poor vocabulary were remarked from the student's output. In addition, when students were asked to recite in class, the majority failed to express their ideas fully in English language. Exposed to vary learning circumstances of his students repeatedly and compelled by his sense of commitment to augment teaching outputs, the researcher ventured into finding effective solutions to students' difficulties in English language learning.Anchored on the seminal works of Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1972), and Canale and Swain (1980) on the concept of communicative competence, the researcher particularly focused on the levels of linguistic and discourse competence as reflected in the students' written and oral communication skills. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2018) asserted that linguistic competence is concerned with correct usage of language whereas discourse competence concerns with thematic development, coherence and cohesion, as well as, in interaction, cooperative principles and turn-taking.

Rrecognizing the merits of the previous findings on communicative competence by Lasala (2014), Tuan (2017), Magcamit (2018)and Calopez (2019), the researcher deemed it significant to identify and to recognize student's difficulties in English language learning most especially in the Senior High School level which was only implemented in 2016. Albeit these related studies aimed to deepen understanding about communicative competence, only a few directed on proposing a program to answer students' language learning needs. Hence, the researcher was motivated to pursue this study in the hope to assist teachers and administrators in developing a remedial program to help students become effective 21st century communicators.

This present study primarily aimed to determine the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of senior high school students in a private institution in Bacolod City, Philippines. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of linguistic competence of senior high school students when grouped according to: a) sex; b) strand; and c) as a whole?
2. What is the level of discourse competence of senior high school students when grouped according to: a) sex; b) strand; and c) as a whole?
3. Is there a significant difference between the levels of linguistic competence of senior high school students when grouped according to the aforementioned variables?
4. Is there a significant difference between the levels of discourse competence of senior high school students when grouped according to the aforementioned variables?
5. What appropriate remedial program should be proposed to improve the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of senior high school students?

METHODS

This study employed quantitative research design in order to determine the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of 248 senior high school students who were selected as respondents using simple random sampling. Babbie (2010) pointed out that quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical analysis of data collected through questionnaires, surveys and tests. Moreover, the researcher conducted the data gathering and analyses in a private institution in Bacolod City, Philippines.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Essay test and extemporaneous speech were utilized to gather data. For validity, the researcher-made essay test and extemporaneous questions along with the rubrics were subjected to content validation by the panel of experts who are experienced English language teachers. On the other hand, for reliability, a pilot testing among sixty (30) senior high school students was carried out. Before its finalization, necessary revisions were done.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The researcher had undergone several ethical procedures in conducting the data collection. Firstly, a letter of request was sent to the school administrator asking permission to conduct the study. After the request was granted, the essay test and extemporaneous speech was administered with the respondents' consenting fixed schedules. Moreover, through the help of English language teachers handling English for Academic and Professional Purposes, and Oral Communication subjects, the respondents' output and performance were scored using rubrics as part of their overall performance tasks. Finally, using statistical tools, the researcher presented, analyzed and interpreted the gathered data. Guided by the theories of communicative competence and the major findings of related studies, the implications of this study served as the bases for modules and activities included in the proposed remedial program in English.

DATA ANALYSES

To determine the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of the senior high school students when grouped according to sex, strand, and as a whole, mean and standard deviation were used. In addition, for the level of linguistic competence, Table 1 served as the interpretation guide showing the scale, verbal interpretation and the corresponding descriptors.

Table 1: Interpretation Guide for the Level of Linguistic Competence

SCALE	VERBAL INTERPRETATION	DESCRIPTION
48.01–60.00	Good	knows beyond basic grammar and uses them with very few and negligible errors
36.01-48.00	Competent	knows basic grammar rules and use them correctly with occasional errors
24.01–36.00	Moderate	knows basic grammar but with considerable errors
12.01–24.00	Limited	knows very little of basic grammar and has many errors
0.00-12.00	Intermittent	barely has knowledge of grammar

Likewise, the interpretation guide for the level of discourse competence was shown in Table 2 below. Verbal interpretations and descriptors were adapted from Pillar's Framework for Testing Communicative Competence (2011).

SCALE	VERBAL INTERPRETATION	DESCRIPTPRS
48.01 – 60.00	Good	can speak clearly and comprehensively with cohesion and coherence, and can convey meaning with little difficulty
36.01 – 48.00	Competent	can speak clearly and comprehensively with minimal difficulty
24.01 – 36.00	Moderate	can speak clearly but not comprehensively with minimal difficulty
12.01 – 24.00	Limited	can speak with some clarity but with some difficulty
0.00 - 12.00	Intermittent	can hardly speak at all

On the other hand, to test for significant difference on both levels of linguistic and discourse competence of the senior high school students when grouped according to sex and strand, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Linguistic and Discourse Competence of Senior High School Students

Table 3 shows the mean of the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of senior high school students when grouped according to sex and as a whole. Male students garnered the mean of 38.07 with a standard deviation (SD) of 12.94 which is interpreted as 'Competent' in terms of the level of linguistic competence. In comparison, female students have the mean of 50.07 with an SD of 9.31, thus interpreted as 'Good'. Such finding contradicts the study of Tuan (2017) who claimed that regardless of sex, students have the same level of competence in English grammar. In the field of language learning, Fisher (1984, cited in Nouar, 2013) claimed

thatlinguistic competence is the students' knowledge of the language structures and their ability to produce and comprehend well-formed sentences. The result implies that male students knows basic grammar rules and use them correctly with occasional errors, while female students has knowledge beyond basic grammar and uses them with very few and negligible errors.

Table 3: Levels of Linguistic and Discourse Competence of Senior High School Students When Grouped According to Sex and As a Whole

Area of Competence	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Linguistic Competence			
Male	38.07	12.94	Competent
Female	50.07	9.31	Good
As a whole	44.07	12.65	Competent
Discourse Competence			
Male	43.33	10.11	Competent
Female	50.73	6.33	Good
As a whole	47.03	9.1	Competent

On the level of discourse competence, male students also got a lower mean of 43.33 with an SD of 10.11, interpreted as 'Competent' as compared to female students who acquired a higher mean of 50.73 with an SD of 6.33 which interpreted as 'Good'.Wahyuni, Ihsan&Hayati(2015) observed a strong connection between linguistic competence and the respondents' speaking ability. For this reason, in order to help students enhance their speaking skills, the teacher must also help them improve their grammar, enrich their vocabulary, and manage interactions (Magcamit, 2018). The data suggests that in terms of sex, the level of discourse competence vary wherein female students can speak clearly and comprehensively with cohesion and coherence, while male students encounter minimal difficulty.

Major findings of the study conducted by Lasala (2013) revealed that the level of communicative competence of students in writing and oral skills were both acceptable, yet differ in numerical values. As a whole, the level of linguistic competence of the respondents has the mean of 44.07 with an SD of 12.65 which is interpreted as 'Competent'. Whereas, for the level of discourse competence, the mean is higher at 47.03 with an SD of 9.1, yet also interpreted as 'Competent'. Moreover, the result affirms the study of Tuan (2017) which pointed out that in terms of linguistic competence and discourse competence, the students' level of communicative competence was interpreted as 'High'. Hence, the researcher infers that senior high school students as a whole know and use basic grammar rules with occasional errors, and at the same time can speak clearly and comprehensively with minimal difficulty.

On the other hand, Table 4 presents the levels of linguistic and discourse of senior high school students when grouped according to strand. As noted, Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students got the highest mean (50.5) with a standard deviation of 6.66 on the level of linguistic competence which is interpreted as 'Good'. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students fell behind at 49 with an SD of 8.72 (Good); followed by Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM) students with a mean of 48.5 and an SD of 8.64 (Good). In contrast, a mean of 37.17 and an SD of 14.65 was acquired by Home Economics (HE) students which is interpreted as 'Competent'. Lastly, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) students got the lowest mean of 35.17 and SD of 16.23 which is interpreted as 'Moderate'. According to Dudley-Evans (2001, cited in Magcamit, 2018), students are required to produce specific writing genres such as essays, summaries and reports in the academic context. The result indicates that HUMSS, STEM and ABM students were highly competent in grammar and mechanics, whereas HE students used basic grammar correctly with very few and negligible errors. However, ICT students used basic grammar with considerable errors. If students master

writing skills, as Adams & Keene (2000, cited in Magcamit, 2018) believed, they can deal successfully with their academic demands and can perform effectively in their fields.

On the level of discourse competence of the respondents when grouped according to strand, HUMSS students also got the highest mean of 52.5 with a standard deviation of 4.41 which is interpreted as 'Good'. Next were STEM students with a mean of 48.17 and an SD of 7.9 (Good); third were HE students with a mean of 47.17 and an SD of 10.22 (Competent). Following behind with a mean of 44.17 (Competent) and an SD of 9.73 (Competent) were the ABM students. Again, ICT students garnered the lowest mean of 42.67 and an SD of 11.5, yet still interpreted as 'Competent'. According to Ella (2018, cited in Calopez, 2019), it is common for ICT students to get low proficiency skills in oral proficiency while HUMSS students demonstrates superior performance. Further, low discourse competence suggests that the respondent have low knowledge and ability and skill in linking utterances (Tuan, 2017). The result proves that both HUMSS and STEM students performed well in terms of oral discourse while HE, ABM and ICT students have fairly satisfactory speaking ability.

Table 4:Levels of Linguistic and Discourse Competence of Senior High School Students When Grouped According to Strand

Strand	Linguistic Competence		Discourse Competence	
	M (SD)	Verbal Interpretation	M (SD)	Verbal Interpretation
ABM	48.5 (8.64)	Good	44.67 (9.73)	Competent
HE	37.17 (14.65)	Competent	47.17 (10.23)	Competent
HUMSS	50.5 (6.66)	Good	52.5 (7.91)	Good
ICT	35.17 (16.23)	Moderate	42.67 (11.50)	Competent
STEM	49 (8.72)	Good	48.17 (7.91)	Competent

TEST OF DIFFERENCE ON THE LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC AND DISCOURSE COMPETENCE

Using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at significance level of 0.02, Table 5 indicates the test of significant difference on the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of senior high school students when grouped according to sex and strand. As shown by the results, p-value is equal to 0.00692 which is less than the significance level of 0.02. Thus, when grouped according to sex, there is a significant difference in the level of linguistic competence of the respondents. In contrast, when grouped according to strand, the level of linguistic competence signifies no significant difference with a p-value of 0.08023. This finding refutes the study on the levels of communicative competence among high school students conducted by Tuan (2017) which pointed out that linguistic competence has significant difference when the respondents are grouped according to specialization. For clarity, the linguistic competence of senior high school students may vary in terms of sex; nonetheless, it is not associated with their strands as based on the results.

In the same way, the level of discourse competence of the respondents when grouped according to sex is lower than the significance level with a p-value of 0.01936 indicating a significant difference. In comparison, grouped according to strand, the level of discourse competence of the respondents has a p-value of 0.41964. Accordingly, there is no significant difference in the levels of discourse competence of senior high school students; regardless of their strands, the respondents may have the same level of competence in oral discourse.

Table 5: Test of Difference on the Levels of Linguistic and Discourse Competenceof Senior High School Students

Area of Competence	p-value	Statistical Decision
Linguistic Competence		
Sex	0.00692	Significant
Strand	0.08023	Not Significant
Discourse Competence		
Sex	0.01936	Significant
Strand	0.41964	Not Significant

PROPOSED REMEDIAL PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

The purpose of the teacher does not simply arming the learners with tacit knowledge of language structures, but also teaching ways that enable them to use language in real life situations (Remache, 2016). A language teacher must also allot time beyond instruction in honing students' English language learning skills. In support, Calopez (2019) further suggested that teachers should continually

Update themselves with new strategies, methods and approaches in teaching, and should also promote English language to develop student's communication skills.

According to Al Alami (2014), using literature could be an effective way to improve the communicative competence, whereas Campo (2016) recommended task-based learning approach.

Similarly, Gomez-Palacio(2010) study suggested independent reading, storytelling, roleplaying, information gap activities and peer tutoring as effective strategies to improve students'communicative competence.

As noted in the results, the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of senior high school students as a whole were interpreted as 'Competent' with means of 44.07 and 47.03, respectively. Despite of this, Maguddayao (2017) believed that the need to address the respondents' actual writing skills specifically on the aspects of writing, grammar and structure, as well as speaking skills must be taken into account. While the data showed that the respondents' written and oral communication skills were competent, apparently, these could still be enhanced. The foregoing finding supports the claim of Schiffrin (1996, cited in Tuan, 2017) who stressed that there is a need to increase the students' level of linguistic and discourse competence. Hence, a remedial program in English focusing on grammar and oral communication should be proposed to improve the students' linguistic and discourse competence in actual setting.

The proposed remedial program targets to provide additional instruction to ensure that the students meet their grade level expectations concerning English language learning and communication skills. Specifically, at the end of the program, the students must have improved their written and oral communication skills by engaging in different learning activities; developed their mastery and proficiency in English language through series of modular exercises; collaborated with peers in accomplishing specific tasks; demonstrated critical thinking and creativity by delivering spoken group performances; and established self-confidence in using English as a language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be disclosed that female students perform better in both written and oral communication when compared to male students. On a different note, when grouped according to strand, the means of students' level of linguistic competence vary wherein HUMSS and STEM students were more knowledgeable in grammar and mechanics than ABM, HE and ICT students. Moreover, HUMSS and STEM students orally expressed themselves better than ABM, HE and ICT students. As a whole, the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of the respondents were interpreted as 'Competent' with means of 44.07 and 47.03, respectively.

Furthermore, the results revealed that there is a significant difference in the levels of linguistic and discourse competence of the respondents when grouped according to sex. On the contrary, there is no significant difference in both levels of linguistic and discourse competence when the respondents are grouped according to strand. Finally, based on the major findings, a remedial program in English focusing on written and oral communication in actual setting was proposed to improve the communicative competence of the senior high school students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the major findings of this study, the following are recommended:The teachers mayimprove the quality of instruction given to the senior high school students to enhancetheir communication skills by continually updating themselves with new strategies and methods in English language teaching, and allotting time for remedial instruction.At the same time, senior high school students should realize the importance of learning English and effective communication in their future careers.The school administrators should support student's personal development and welfare by bringing to them programs and activities that would enhance their 21st century skills. For this purpose, the proposed remedial program may be implemented to meet students' language learning needs. By taking into considerations the results of this study, the Department of Education mayemphasize essential language learning competencies to be included in the instruction.

Finally, other researchers in the fields of education, language and communication are highly encouraged to conduct further studies on other areas of communicative competence. Further, they may investigate factors affecting the level of communicative competence such as socio-economic factors, learning environment, language learning styles and strategies.

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