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Grammatical Competence of Grade 11 Learners

ARIEL C. ROSALES
rosalesariel266@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0210-9029

MA EUGENIA M. ILAGAN
memilagan@universityofbohol.edu.ph
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5366-5434

ABSTRACT

In the K-12 Curriculum, the Senior High School Curricula tend to neglect purely grammar disciplines as it focuses on the English literature. The study intended to identify the grammatical competence of the Grade 11 learners of Ubay National Science High School of the academic year 2018-2019. The study was quantitative research using purposive random sampling design employing the modified questionnaire based on the English for Linguistics Project (Malicsi, 2017). The tool was pre-tested and underwent item analysis for reliability and validity of the test questions. The subjects were 139 grade 11 learners enrolled from the four strands offered by the school. The data were collected, tallied, and treated. Results revealed that morphology was the area where the learners are highly competent, and they are moderately competent in both semantics and syntax. Generally, the grammatical competence among the grade 11 learners is "moderately competent." There is a significant degree of variance in the three areas of grammar. The variance lies in the area of morphology containing the word inflections and compounding in which learners got most of the high scores.

Keywords: Grammatical competence, grammar proficiency, areas of grammar, variance of grammar, strands, descriptive, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Grammar, as one of the divisions of English, seems to be the most significant. One of the general goals of English as a second language is to enable students to speak, write, and to make presentations with the accepted English that is grammatical, fluent, and appropriate for the purpose, audience, context, and culture. In the article of Thomas Bloor (2013), "What do language students know about grammar?" he claimed that there is usually a discrepancy between academic debate and that which goes on in the classroom.

Learning to speak and write in English, in this age of globalization, is necessary to compete in this knowledge-based world. Such training can best be done in a classroom, but the process may affect learning and development. Though English is the medium used in the teaching-learning environment, UNESCO considers that "providing education in a child's mother tongue is indeed a crucial issue" (UNESCO, 2003). In the Philippine educational system, the learner's mother tongue is the primary means of communication until he reaches grade III and on the following years, from grades IV to XII, English is used as the medium of instruction.

Learners nowadays are afraid to speak in front of an audience. One common factor of their fear is their uncertainty on the grammatical features of the sentences they use to convey ideas.

A study in the teaching of grammar showed that grammar instruction is often neglected. Nevertheless, the learners' frequent grammatical errors resulted in incorrect utterances. (Bentsen, 2017).

Research findings on English teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and their reported employment of grammar theories in language teaching indicated that more than one approach is required in grammar teaching. The study suggested that the use of different grammatical theories can prepare teachers for adequate language teaching (Petraki and Hill, 2010).

Grammatical Competence is considered as the mastery of the codes of linguistics. It is the ability to comprehend the morphological, and syntactical features of a language and use these effectively to interpret, encode, and decode words and sentences. In the formation of words and their agreement in the sentence requires correct grammatical features.

There are several theories on grammar teaching and learning. These include the Generative Grammar Theory of Chomsky (1956) which regards grammar as a system of rules that generate precisely the combinations of

words that form sentences in a given language. He further stated in his Information Processing Theory (1986) that for knowledge to be retained, the previous knowledge must be present to associate the new information. Pienemann (1998) agreed with Chomsky in his Processability Theory when he stated that the process of grammar has access to temporary memory storage that can hold grammatical information.

Semantics is one of the three areas of grammar, where learners should be able to acknowledge the definition of words and what it stands as expressed by Lewis (1970) that the description of a possible form of grammar as an abstract semantic system whereby symbols are joined with world aspect. Mill (1843) also proposes that the meaning of a word or expression lies in what it points out in the world.

Atta, Doe, Tekpetey, and Boham (2014) in their study on "Students' Performance in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations over the years" emphasized that there is a continuous challenge about the students' weakness in grammar areas of language, which in return, affects their general performance in other subject areas. It became very necessary to assess the effectiveness of teaching English grammar in Senior High School. Without the knowledge of grammar, one will find difficulty applying the correct usage of the language.

In determining the grammatical Competence of the learners in this study, it made use of the parameter, "Highly competent" wherein learners can appropriately apply the morphological, semantical, and syntactical rules of English grammar in which learners got the 75-100 percent percentage; "Moderately competent" the learners could averagely apply the rules governing the three areas of grammar and garnering a percentage of 50-74 percent; "Less competent" in which learners' grammatical knowledge on the three areas is limited with a percentage score of 25-49 percent; and "Not competent" wherein the learners have little knowledge and rarely observe and apply the correct grammatical rules and get a percentage score from 0-24.

Barraqiou (2007) found out students' difficulties in the correct usage of grammar. Students from the Arts and Sciences are the poorest in the area of morphology compared to the other departments. Furthermore, female students are found to be better than male students in terms of grammatical competency. With these, the researcher recommended to the curriculum crafters a careful analysis in the inclusion of grammatical contents and

other related issues.

Congruent to Barraqiou's findings are the conclusions of Leyaley (2016) stating that the English language proficiency of Teacher Education freshmen is described as "Early Intermediate" that even the honors they have received did not matter.

As English teachers, the researchers aimed to assess the grammatical Competence of the grade 11 learners, specifically in the three areas, namely: morphology, semantics, and syntax. Further, the researchers also aimed to determine if there is a significant degree of variance in the three areas of grammar.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a quantitative method employing purposive sampling technique in choosing the respondents. The locale of the study was in Ubay National Science High School located at Fatima, Ubay, Bohol. The school is the only science school of the DepEd Division of Bohol and one of the two science schools in the Province. A total of 139 Senior High School enrollees for the school year 2018-2019 composed the number of respondents. There were 44 males and 95 females from different strands, namely Science and Technology Engineering and Mathematics, Humanities and Social Sciences, Accountancy and Business Management, and Information and Communication Technology.

The modified questionnaire was based on the English Linguistics Project Manual (Malicsi, 2017). The items for the grammatical competency test were taken from the downloadable grammar-related books and few printed books. The test items used were presented to the adviser for corrections, suggestions, and comments. Then, it was pre-tested to ten Grade 12 students of Ubay National Science High School. Ten respondents were chosen for pilot testing. The result underwent an item analysis to ensure validity and reliability. The very easy and very difficult questions were excluded in the final items of the test.

Before the data gathering, the study was submitted to the University Ethics Board for review and comments. The signing of the letter of consent and assent was also done to ensure that the rights of the respondents are not violated. It was after then that the survey questionnaires were distributed. Retrieval of the said questionnaire was done right after.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Grammatical Competence of the Respondents

Table 1 showed the responses to the different items based on the parameters mentioned on the level of the grammatical competence of the respondents.

Table 1. Grammatical Competence of the Respondents
(N = 139)

	Morphology (HPS – 30)			Semantics (HPS – 30)			Syntax (HPS – 30)			Over-all (HPS – 90)		
	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank
Highly Competent (HC)	99	71.22	1	11	7.91	2	1	0.72	3.5	2	1.44	3
Moderately Competent (MC)	35	25.18	2	106	76.26	1	105	75.54	1	128	92.09	1
Less Competent (LC)	5	3.60	3	22	15.83	3	32	23.02	2	9	6.47	2
Not Competent (NC)	0	0	4	0	0	4	1	0.72	3.5	0	0.00	4
Total	139	100.00		139	100.00		139	100.00		139	100.00	
Mean	24.14 – Highly Competent			18.39 – Moderately Competent			17.39 – Moderately Competent			59.92 - Moderately Competent		
Above Mean	81	58.27	1	68	48.92	2	68	48.92	2	84	60.43	1
Below Mean	58	41.73	2	71	51.08	1	71	51.08	1	55	39.57	2

Parameter	HPS- 30	HPS -90 Equivalent (%)		
HC	Highly Competent	24- 30	72 – 90	75-100%
MC	Moderately Competent	16- 23	48 – 71	50-74%
LC	Less Competent	8 - 15	24 – 47	25-49%
NC	Not Competent	below 8	below 24	0-24%

Level of grammatical competence of the respondents in terms of morphology, semantics, and syntax.

Morphology. Out of 139 grade 11 respondents, ninety-nine or 71.22 percent were found to be highly competent; thirty-five or 25.18 percent were moderately competent; five or 3.60 percent were less competent,

and none was found to be not competent. These findings were interpreted and ranked accordingly.

Semantics. One hundred six or 76.26 percent were at moderately competent level; eleven or 7.91 percent of the respondents were at the highly competent level; twenty-two or 15.83 percent were less competent; and none was on the not competent level on the said grammatical area. It showed that the highest in rank among the level of competence of the learners in the area of semantics was “moderately competent” and the lowest in rank is “not competent.”

Syntax. The result revealed that one hundred five or 75.54 percent of the respondents were found to be moderately competent; this is followed by thirty-two or 23.02 percent were on the less competent level. The highly competent and not competent levels got the same percentage and rank.

In the overall result, the table displayed that one hundred twenty-eight or 92.09 percent were moderately competent. This level ranked first. Nine or 6.47 percent of the learners were less competent which ranked second highest; two or 1.44 percent found to be highly competent, and none was found to be not competent which was the lowest in rank.

This implied that the grade 11 senior high learners of Ubay National Science High School were moderately competent in the three areas of grammar. The results further explained that the respondents are highly competent in morphology but less competent in syntax. This result agreed with the study of Atta, Doe, Tekpetey, and Boham, (2014) on Assessing Teaching Effectiveness of the English Grammar Teacher in Public Senior High Schools that without the knowledge of how the units and basic components of language are combined, one will find it difficult applying the correct usage. It further suggests that the grammatical competence of the respondents still needs enhancement.

Table 2 presented the variance of the three areas of grammar - morphology, semantics, and syntax.

Table 2. Variance of the Three Areas of Grammar

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
A. MORPHOLOGY	139	3356	24.14	9.60
B. SEMANTICS	139	2556	18.39	9.36
C. SYNTAX	139	2417	17.39	9.63

ANOVA							
Source of Variation	SS	*df*	*MS*	*P-value*	*F*	*Remarks*	*F crit*
Between Groups	3695.54	2	1847.77	0.0000	193.9026	>	3.0175
Within Groups	3945.17	414	9.53				
Total	7640.71	416					
Result: Significant Ho: Rejected							

Table 3 present the Multiple Comparisons of the three areas of grammar to identify where the variance lies.

Table 3. Multiple Comparisons Using Scheffe's Test

	F'	(F @ 0.05)(k-1)	Interpretation
A vs B	241.570	6.035	Significant
A vs C	332.808	6.035	Significant
B vs C	7.2928	6.035	Insignificant

Significant degree of variance on the three areas of grammar

To ascertain the degree of variance on the Grammatical Competence of Grade in the Three Areas of Grammar, (One-Way) ANOVA was used. The computation manifested that morphology got an average of 24.14 with a variance of 9.60; semantics yielded an average of 18.39 with a variance of 9.36 while syntax got an average of 17.39 and a variance of 9.63. Using the ANOVA, the source of variation between groups manifest an SS of 3695.54 and a df of 2, MS 1847.77, a P value 0.0000 and an F of 193.9026 having an F of 3.0175. The source of variation within groups

has an SS of 3945.17, a df of 414 and MS 9.53. This totaled 7640.71 SS and a df of 416.

To determine where the variance lies, the Scheffe's test was used. In the dimensions A (Morphology) versus B (Semantics), it indicated an F' of 241.570 and F at 0.05 (k-1) of 6.035 which resulted to be significant; A (Morphology) versus C (Syntax) has an F' of 332.808 and F at 0.05 of 6.035 showed to be significant; and B (Semantics) versus C (Syntax) has an F' of 7.2928, a F at 0.05 (k-1) of 6.035 which meant insignificant.

It implied that there is difference on the competence of the respondents between the areas of morphology and semantics as well as on the areas morphology and syntax, but it showed no difference on the areas of semantics and syntax. The result showed that the variance lies on the area of morphology. The result suggested that there is a need of grammar teaching especially to the senior high school learners which deemed necessary. It was then the same to the recommendation from the study of Bentsen, "To teach or not to teach grammar? Teachers' Approaches to Grammar Teaching", that an integration of grammar instruction in any other disciplines should be implemented, acknowledging the learners' strengths and needs in mind to further enhance their grammatical competence (Bentsen, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of this research led to the following conclusions:

1. that among the three areas of grammar, respondents are found to be highly competent in morphology and moderately competent in both semantics and syntax.
2. that in the mean overall result, the respondents got only 59.92, and it is interpreted as "moderately competent."
3. that there is a significant degree of variance on the three areas of grammar. The respondents' scores on morphology versus semantics, morphology versus syntax resulted to be significant. On semantics versus syntax, the result was insignificant. Therefore, the variance lies in the area of morphology which the respondents got the highest average among the three areas of grammar.

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