

Grammatical and Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students in Tanque National High School

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Abstract

This study assessed the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School during the 2022–2023 school year. Anchored on the Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism, and Socio-cultural theories of language learning, the study examined learners' competency levels and determined whether a significant difference existed between grammatical and lexical competence. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed involving 160 Grade 9 students as respondents. Data were collected using a validated researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 40 items, with 20 items each assessing grammatical and lexical competence. The gathered data were analyzed using percentage, weighted mean, and an independent sample t-test. The findings revealed a mean percentage score of 58.6% in lexical competence and 64.8% in grammatical competence, both of which were below the Department of Education's 75% proficiency benchmark. Statistical analysis further showed no significant difference between grammatical and lexical competence, indicating that the respondents demonstrated comparable proficiency levels in both language domains. The findings suggest that although the students possess basic English language skills, their grammatical and lexical competence remain at a developing level and require improvement. The study recommends integrating grammar and vocabulary instruction through contextualized learning, implementing a remedial English program for learners who fall below the proficiency benchmark, strengthening the explicit teaching of academic vocabulary in the English curriculum, and conducting further studies using qualitative approaches to explore factors affecting learners' language competence. The study supports Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – Quality Education by providing evidence to improve English language instruction and learner achievement. It also aligns with SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth by promoting language competence as a foundation for lifelong learning and future employability. The findings contribute to educational and institutional sustainability by informing instructional improvement, curriculum enhancement, and evidence-based language education practices.

Keywords: Academic Vocabulary, English Language Instruction, Grade 9 Students, Grammatical Competence, Lexical Competence, Quality Education, Tanque National High School, Vocabulary Development

1. Introduction

English remains a fundamental component of the Philippine educational system despite curriculum reforms, including the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. Estanislao (2013) further emphasized that English serves as an essential medium for education, international communication, business, and access to global knowledge. As the primary medium of instruction for subjects such as Mathematics and Science, English proficiency is essential for academic success and global competitiveness. The increasing demand for effective communication in a technology-driven and interconnected world further underscores the importance of strengthening English language instruction. Despite the Philippines' recognition as one of the largest English-speaking countries, declining English proficiency among Filipino learners has raised concerns regarding workforce readiness and educational quality (Cabigon, 2015). Reports also indicate a gradual decline in English proficiency, particularly in grammar and writing, highlighting the need for improved instructional approaches (UK Essays, 2013). Among the core components of English proficiency, grammatical and lexical competence play vital roles in effective communication. Grammar enables learners to produce meaningful and accurate language, while lexical competence supports comprehension and expression through appropriate vocabulary use. However, persistent difficulties in grammar, particularly subject-verb agreement, continue to affect learners across educational levels, despite repeated exposure through the K to 12 spiral curriculum (Tafida & Okunade, 2016; Nayan, 2009). These challenges emphasize the need to assess learners' grammatical and lexical competence to provide appropriate instructional interventions. This study therefore examines the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School during School Year 2022–2023. By determining learners' competency levels and examining the relationship between grammatical and lexical competence, the study seeks to provide evidence that may guide teachers, school administrators, and educational planners in improving English language instruction.

1.1 Background of the Grammatical and Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students in Tanque National High School

English has consistently been an integral part of the Philippine curriculum and continues to serve as a primary language of instruction under the K to 12 educational system. Its role extends beyond classroom instruction as it functions as the international lingua franca for communication, education, business, and technology. Consequently, developing learners' English proficiency remains a national educational priority. English proficiency also contributes to workforce competitiveness and economic productivity because effective communication skills are increasingly required in employment and professional advancement (Cepeda, 2016). Although the Philippines continues to be recognized as one of the largest English-speaking nations, concerns regarding the declining proficiency of Filipino learners have prompted government, academic, and private stakeholders to strengthen English language teaching and learning (Cabigon, 2015). Reports further indicate that Filipino learners have experienced a gradual decline in English proficiency over the years, particularly in the macro skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (UK Essays, 2013). Similar concerns were reported by Cabansag (2013), Crisostomo (2007), and As-il (2003), whose studies documented deficiencies in learners' written and oral English proficiency in Philippine secondary schools. Grammar serves as one of the fundamental components of language competence because it enables learners to communicate accurately and produce meaningful written and spoken discourse (Bradshaw, 2013). Among the various grammatical competencies, subject-verb agreement remains one of the most persistent learning difficulties among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Studies have shown that errors in subject-verb agreement are prevalent not only among students but also among professionals, suggesting inadequate application of grammatical rules despite formal instruction (Tafida & Okunade, 2016). Likewise, Nayan (2009) observed that although grammatical rules are introduced during the early years of schooling, many ESL learners continue to experience difficulty applying these rules in authentic communication. Studies conducted in the Philippines further demonstrated that learners continue to encounter grammatical difficulties despite years of English instruction. Barraquio (2015) reported that college students still exhibited weaknesses in grammar proficiency, while Balili (2012) emphasized the importance of mastering subject-verb agreement through explicit instruction. Similarly, Mabuan (2015) found that Filipino learners frequently committed grammatical errors in written English, suggesting the need for strengthened grammar instruction across educational levels. The K to 12 English curriculum adopts the Spiral Progression Principle, which expects learners to master fundamental grammar and vocabulary before progressing to more complex language competencies. Since grammatical and lexical competencies are progressively developed across grade levels, deficiencies in these areas may hinder learners' overall language development and academic performance. As an English teacher at Tanque National High School, the researcher observed recurring difficulties among Grade 9 learners in grammar and vocabulary use, prompting the conduct of this study to determine their grammatical and lexical competence and generate evidence that may improve English language instruction.

1.2 Themes and Insights on Grammatical and Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students from Related Literature

The reviewed literature consistently emphasizes that grammar provides the structural foundation of language by governing how words and ideas are organized to produce meaningful communication (Chung and Pullum, 2015; Burns, 2009; Allen, 2013; Mellish and Ritchie, 2008; Algeo and Pyles, 2010; Kirkham, 2010; Richards, 2016). Grammatical competence is described as learners' knowledge of grammatical forms, meanings, and rules that enable accurate language production and comprehension (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011; Eisenmann and Summer, 2012; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Ur, 2009; Chomsky, 1965; Hymes, 1972; Ellis, 2007). Subject-verb agreement is identified as a fundamental grammatical feature necessary for sentence accuracy and effective communication (Sullivan, 2012; McLean, 2013; Mudrak, 2014; Huda, 2014; Rodriguez, 2015; Tafida & Okunade, 2016; Vaurula, 2012). Literature also highlights that carefully designed instructional materials and coherent curriculum planning contribute significantly to improving learners' grammar competence (Patel, 2017; Kellough, 2005; Kohli, 2014; Tomlinson, 2016). Studies on lexical competence emphasize vocabulary knowledge, lexical meaning, collocations, and vocabulary development as essential components of language proficiency and communicative competence (Marconi's, 1997; Bates & Goodman, 1997; V. Marchman, Carmen Martínez-Sussmann, P. Dale, 2020; Ghezelseflou & Seyedrezaei, 2015; Richard and Renandya, 2002; Hill, 2000; Webb & Kagimoto, 2011). Research likewise indicates that grammar and vocabulary develop interdependently and collectively support learners' communicative competence, confidence, and language fluency (Steve J. Collins, Kimberly L. Bissell in 2004; Elviza, 2012; V. Marchman, Carmen Martínez-Sussmann, P. Dale in 2004; Vu Van Tuan, 2004; N. Walker, P. Monaghan, et al., 2020). Previous Philippine studies also reported that students' oral communication skills remain below expected proficiency levels. Cadiz (2004) found that many college students demonstrated weaknesses in oral communication, emphasizing the importance of strengthening foundational grammar and vocabulary skills to improve communicative competence. These findings support the view that grammatical and lexical competence are essential components of effective spoken and written communication. Local literature further identifies learner motivation, parental involvement, learning environment, teaching strategies, socioeconomic status, and instructional support as significant factors influencing English language proficiency among Filipino learners (M. Ulla, 2018; Annie L. Santos et al., 2021; Alizadeh, 2016; Pangket, 2019; Castro, 2018; Alaga, 2016; Gaerlan, 2016; Obansa, 2021; Sharon Wolf, 2021; Bartolome, Mamat, Masnan, 2017; Magno, 2009; Leander and Fabella, 2020; Fontanilla, 2016). Motivation also plays a critical role in developing communicative competence and English language proficiency. Alnatheer (2013) found that the use of motivational strategies enhances students' willingness to

communicate, increases classroom participation, and contributes to improved language learning outcomes. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating motivating instructional practices to strengthen learners' grammatical and lexical competence. The literature also emphasizes the importance of supportive learning environments, appropriate instructional strategies, comprehensible language input, and adequate educational resources in improving English language learning outcomes (Movchan, 2018; Magno, 2009; IEA, 2004; DO 52, s. 1987; Kameradi, 2011; Pangket, 2019; Mojares, 2013; Krashen, 1981; EPI, 2020; McGeown, 2012; Tupas & Salonga, 2016; Yeh, 2019; Suarez, 2020; Yuet, 2008; Hol & Yavuz, 2017; Shamim, 2011; Lenneberg, 1967). Similarly, Educause (2015) emphasized that well-designed learning environments integrating physical, social, and technological resources promote student engagement and improve learning outcomes. A supportive learning environment remains essential for language development. Classroom interaction, instructional resources, and access to learning technologies contribute significantly to English achievement (Movchan, 2018; Educause, 2015; Amin et al., 2016). The reviewed studies collectively suggest that grammatical and lexical competence are influenced by multiple learner, instructional, and contextual factors, reinforcing the need to assess these competencies among Grade 9 learners in Tanque National High School.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Grammatical and Lexical Competence among Grade 9 Students

Globally, English functions as the primary language for international communication, education, business, science, and technology, making proficiency in the language essential for academic and professional success. Despite the Philippines being recognized as one of the world's largest English-speaking nations, evidence indicates a gradual decline in English proficiency among Filipino learners, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and communicative competence (Cabigon, 2015); M. L. S. Bautista, Kingsley Bolton et al. (2008). Although Filipino teachers remain competitive in international English language instruction, challenges such as learners' limited interest in English, inadequate exposure to English-speaking environments, curriculum concerns, and insufficient professional development continue to affect language education (M. Ulla, 2018). Nationally, several studies attribute the declining English proficiency of Filipino learners to multiple interacting factors, including learner motivation, parental involvement, learning environment, instructional strategies, socioeconomic status, age, and access to educational resources (Annie L. Santos et al., 2021; Alizadeh, 2016; Pangket, 2019; Castro, 2018; Alaga, 2016; Gaerlan, 2016; Obansa, 2021; Sharon Wolf, 2021; Bartolome, Mamat, & Masnan, 2017; Magno, 2009; Leander & Fabella, 2020; Fontanilla, 2016). Socioeconomic status likewise influences educational achievement because learners from higher-income families generally receive greater educational support and learning opportunities (Chevalier et al., 2013; Hol & Yavuz, 2017). Similar findings were reported by Batalla (2016) and Cabansag (2013), who observed persistent writing and language difficulties among Filipino students, reinforcing the need for interventions that strengthen grammatical and lexical competence. The implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) through Department of Education Order No. 16, s. 2012 and other bilingual education policies reflects the country's continuing efforts to improve language learning while responding to learners' linguistic diversity. These policies recognize learners' first language as an important foundation for developing literacy and English language proficiency. Furthermore, Department of Education Order No. 16, s. 2012, on maximizing National Achievement Test (NAT) results, encourages schools to utilize assessment data in designing interventions that improve learners' academic performance, including English language achievement. However, national reports continue to reveal limited access to books, digital technologies, and quality instructional resources, particularly among learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds, which adversely affects English language acquisition (IEA 2004; Yuet, 2008; Hol, Yavuz, 2017; Shamim, 2011). Locally, Tanque National High School serves learners in Pio V. Corpuz, Masbate, where English language instruction follows the K to 12 curriculum. The municipality is situated in Masbate Province within the Bicol Region, and the school provides secondary education to learners who require continuous development of grammatical and lexical competencies. The researcher observed recurring difficulties among Grade 9 students in grammar, particularly subject-verb agreement, and vocabulary use, indicating the need to assess these competencies and provide appropriate instructional interventions. The study therefore focuses on determining the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School to generate evidence that may strengthen English language teaching and learning within the local context.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Basis of Grammatical and Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students

This study is anchored on theories that explain language acquisition, grammar instruction, and learner development. Richards and Rodgers (2014) explain that grammar instruction commonly employs structure-based approaches such as deductive teaching, including the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods, while inductive approaches encourage learners to discover grammatical rules through communicative language use. Blyth (1996) further noted that traditional grammar instruction has long been influenced by behaviorism, structural linguistics, and audiolingual principles. The Behaviorism Theory views language learning as the development of habits through stimulus-response, imitation, reinforcement, and repeated practice. Watson, Skinner, Bloomfield, Mowrer, and Staats contributed to this perspective, while McLeod (2008), Rivers (1968), Wijayanti (2012), Blyth (1997), Budiman (2017), Patten (1996), Demirezen (1988), and Alissa (2003) emphasized that grammar instruction under this theory relies heavily on explicit teaching, drills, imitation, reinforcement, and teacher-centered learning. Although behaviorism facilitates the acquisition of basic grammatical structures, particularly among beginning learners, it may limit learners' creativity and spontaneous language

production. The Cognitivism Theory emerged as a response to the limitations of behaviorism by emphasizing the internal mental processes involved in language learning. Rather than focusing solely on observable behavior, cognitivism explains that learners actively process, organize, and internalize linguistic knowledge, allowing them to understand grammatical rules and apply them meaningfully during communication. Muñoz (2006) explained that age influences the rate of foreign language learning, although successful language acquisition also depends on instructional quality, learner motivation, and opportunities for meaningful language use. The Constructivism Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and interaction. Grammar learning becomes more meaningful when learners engage in authentic communication, solve language problems, and connect new knowledge with prior experiences, enabling them to develop deeper grammatical and lexical competence. The Socio-cultural Theory emphasizes that language acquisition develops through social interaction and collaboration. Learning occurs as learners engage with teachers, peers, and their environment, making communication, guided instruction, and meaningful interaction essential components of English language development. Collectively, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding grammatical and lexical competence by integrating habit formation, cognitive processing, active knowledge construction, and social interaction. They support the present study in examining the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School and in identifying instructional implications for improving English language learning.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Assessing the Grammatical and Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students in Tanque National High School

The reviewed literature provides extensive discussions on the concepts of grammar, grammatical competence, lexical competence, subject-verb agreement, vocabulary development, instructional materials, language learning theories, and factors affecting English proficiency. Foreign studies primarily examine grammatical competence, lexical competence, vocabulary acquisition, collocation, and communicative language teaching (Marconi's, 1997; Bates & Goodman, 1997; V. Marchman, Carmen Martínez-Sussmann, P. Dale, 2020; Steve J. Collins, Kimberly L. Bissell, 2004). Local studies, on the other hand, emphasize learner motivation, parental involvement, learning environment, teaching strategies, socioeconomic status, and other factors influencing English language proficiency among Filipino learners (Annie L. Santos et al., 2021; Pangket, 2019; Castro, 2018; Gaerlan, 2016; Magno, 2009; Leander and Fabella, 2020; Fontanilla, 2016). Although previous studies have identified numerous determinants of English language proficiency, limited attention has been given to examining the relationship between grammatical competence and lexical competence among Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School. Existing literature generally discusses grammar and vocabulary either independently or within broader language proficiency contexts. Consequently, there remains a need to determine the levels of grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 learners and examine the significant relationship between these competencies within the local educational setting. The present study addresses this gap by assessing the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School during School Year 2022–2023. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence that may guide teachers, school administrators, and the Department of Education in strengthening English language instruction, improving teaching strategies, and developing appropriate interventions to enhance learners' language competence.

1.6 Alignment of the Study on Grammatical and Lexical Competence with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education by supporting efforts to improve English language teaching and learning through the assessment of learners' grammatical and lexical competence. Determining students' language proficiency provides evidence that can inform instructional improvement, curriculum implementation, and learner support, thereby contributing to equitable and quality education. The study also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as the reviewed literature emphasizes that English proficiency is an important workforce competency and contributes to the country's educational and economic competitiveness (Cabigon, 2015). Enhancing learners' grammatical and lexical competence strengthens their communication skills, which are essential for higher education, employability, and lifelong learning. Furthermore, the study indirectly contributes to SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure by providing evidence that may encourage the development of more effective instructional strategies and learning materials for English language education. These improvements can strengthen educational innovation and support continuous enhancement of language instruction.

1.7 Importance of the Study on Grammatical and Lexical Competence to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This study contributes primarily to educational sustainability by generating evidence on the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 learners that may assist teachers in selecting effective instructional strategies and developing interventions responsive to learners' needs. The findings may also support school administrators and the Department of Education in designing programs that strengthen English language instruction and improve educational quality. The study likewise contributes to socio-economic sustainability by promoting English language competence, which the literature recognizes as a valuable skill for workforce readiness, communication, and national competitiveness. Improved language proficiency may enhance learners' future academic and employment opportunities. In addition, the study supports institutional sustainability by providing empirical information that schools and educational policymakers may use in

curriculum implementation, instructional planning, teacher development, and continuous school improvement. The findings may also serve as a reference for future researchers conducting related studies on grammar, vocabulary, and English language learning, thereby contributing to the continuing development of knowledge in language education.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed the descriptive-correlational research design, a method appropriate for describing variables and examining relationships without manipulating them (Church, 2010). A structured questionnaire served as the primary data-gathering instrument. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items, with 20 questions assessing grammatical competence and another 20 assessing lexical competence.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Tanque National High School located in the Municipality of Pio V. Corpuz, Masbate. The school served as the research setting where the assessment of the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 learners was carried out.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were 160 Grade 9 learners enrolled at Tanque National High School. They served as the participants from whom data on grammatical and lexical competence were obtained.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved 160 Grade 9 learners of Tanque National High School as the respondents. These learners constituted the sample used to assess grammatical and lexical competence through the administration of the research questionnaire.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in the study was a researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 40 items divided into two sections. Each section contained 20 questions, with one section measuring grammatical competence and the other assessing lexical competence. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent validation by two groups of four jurors who evaluated its content and provided recommendations for improvement. Their suggestions were incorporated during the revision process before the instrument was approved by the thesis committee and administered to the respondents.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study commenced with a review of related literature and observations that guided the formulation of the research problem and finalization of the study title. After approval by the Officer-in-Charge of the Graduate School Research Unit and successful title defense before the thesis committee, the researcher developed the questionnaire and submitted it to the adviser for evaluation. The instrument was revised based on the recommendations of the adviser and validators before final approval. Following approval, the questionnaire was administered to the Grade 9 learners of Tanque National High School. After retrieval, the responses were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using the appropriate statistical techniques. The results served as the basis for the conclusions and recommendations. The completed manuscript underwent pre-oral defense, after which the panel's recommendations were incorporated into the final manuscript for the oral examination.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent-samples t-test. The choice of statistical procedures follows established recommendations for behavioral and educational research (Cohen, 1988). Percentage was used to describe the respondents' profile and summarize the data. Weighted mean was computed to determine the respondents' levels of grammatical and lexical competence. Interpretation of learners' performance was based on the proficiency standards prescribed in the Department of Education Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program (DO No. 8, s. 2015).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Grammatical and Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students

3.1.1 Lexical Competence of Grade 9 Students

The lexical competence assessment showed that the Grade 9 students obtained a Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of 58.6%, which is below the Department of Education's 75% passing standard by 16.4%. The highest accuracy rates were recorded in Items 2 (91.1%) and 1 (84.4%), while the lowest were observed in Items 13 (29.4%), 16 (36.9%), and 9 (37.5%). Overall, the findings indicate that the respondents demonstrated a moderate level of lexical competence but did not attain the expected proficiency standard. The results suggest that students possess adequate knowledge of commonly used vocabulary but experience difficulty with more specialized and academic lexical items. This finding supports Nation (2013)¹, who

emphasized that learners generally acquire high-frequency vocabulary before more complex words. Likewise, Schmitt (2010)² explained that lexical competence extends beyond word meaning to include collocation, register, and contextual use. The overall performance also supports Laufer (1997)³, who argued that limited vocabulary knowledge hinders learners' reading comprehension, writing ability, and overall second-language proficiency.

3.1.2 Grammatical Competence of Grade 9 Students

The grammatical competence assessment yielded a Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of 64.8%, which is 10.2% below the Department of Education's proficiency benchmark. Students performed best in Items 2 (95.6%), 7 (79.4%), and 20 (78.1%), while Item 17 recorded the lowest accuracy at 13.1%. Although grammatical competence was higher than lexical competence, the overall score remained below the expected mastery level. The findings indicate that the respondents have acquired basic grammatical structures but continue to struggle with more complex grammatical rules. This observation is consistent with Krashen (1982)⁴, whose Natural Order Hypothesis explains that certain grammatical structures are acquired earlier than others. Ellis (2006)⁵ likewise noted that learners experience greater difficulty when grammatical forms are less transparent or less frequently encountered in communication. The findings further support Celce-Murcia (2001)⁶, who described grammatical competence as a multidimensional construct in which learners may demonstrate proficiency in some grammatical components while remaining weak in others.

3.2 Comparison Between Grammatical and Lexical Competence

The comparison of the two competencies revealed that the mean score for grammatical competence (103.75) was slightly higher than that of lexical competence (93.75). However, the computed t-value of -1.06 was lower than the critical t-value of 2.09 at the 0.05 level of significance with 19 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating no significant difference between the grammatical and lexical competence of Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School. The absence of a significant difference indicates that students experience comparable levels of difficulty in both grammar and vocabulary. Although grammatical competence showed a slightly higher numerical score, the statistical analysis demonstrates that both competencies remain similarly underdeveloped. This finding supports Meara (1996)⁷, who explained that grammatical and lexical development do not always progress at the same rate. It also aligns with Lewis (1993)⁸, who emphasized the central role of vocabulary in language learning, and Ur (2012)⁹, who noted that learner proficiency often varies within heterogeneous language classrooms. Furthermore, Rivers (1981)¹⁰ and Widdowson (1990)¹¹ argued that grammar and vocabulary are interdependent components of language proficiency that should be developed simultaneously through comprehensive language instruction. The findings therefore suggest that improving English proficiency among Grade 9 students requires balanced instructional interventions targeting both grammatical and lexical competence.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study assessed the grammatical and lexical competence of 160 Grade 9 students in Tanque National High School using a descriptive-correlational research design. The findings revealed that the students obtained a mean percentage score of 58.6% in lexical competence and 64.8% in grammatical competence, both of which were below the Department of Education's 75% proficiency standard. Statistical analysis further showed no significant difference between grammatical and lexical competence, indicating that the students demonstrated comparable levels of proficiency in both language domains. Overall, the results suggest that while the students possess basic English language skills, their grammatical and lexical competence remain at a developing level and require further improvement to meet the expected academic standard.

Based on the findings, English teachers should integrate grammar and vocabulary instruction by emphasizing collocations and formulaic language in meaningful contexts. The school should implement a remedial English program for Grade 9 students who did not meet the national proficiency benchmark, focusing on areas where learners demonstrated the greatest difficulty. The English 9 learning modules should also be reviewed to strengthen the explicit teaching of academic vocabulary throughout the curriculum. Furthermore, future studies should incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews or writing samples, to further explore the factors influencing students' grammatical and lexical competence.

The study was limited to the assessment of the grammatical and lexical competence of 160 Grade 9 students enrolled at Tanque National High School during the 2022–2023 school year using a 20-item assessment for each competency. The findings were based solely on the respondents' test performance and statistical analysis; therefore, the results may not be generalized beyond the study population. In addition, the study did not investigate qualitative factors that may have influenced students' performance, such as first-language interference, availability of reading materials, or other contextual factors.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study was conducted in accordance with the approved research procedures of the Graduate School. The research instrument underwent content validation and revision based on the recommendations of the adviser, validators, and thesis committee before its administration. Data were collected from the respondents through a structured questionnaire following the approved research process, and the information gathered was analyzed to address the objectives of the study.

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