

# Reading Comprehension and Writing Competence Among Grade 10 Students

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## Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between reading comprehension and writing competence among grade 10 students. The study employed a quantitative research design, with a sample of 100 language teachers from five selected schools in a district. The study used simple random sampling and distributed to the identified Grade 10 English teachers with more than three years of teaching experience within the district through google forms. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between reading comprehension and writing competence. Students with stronger reading comprehension skills tend to demonstrate higher writing competence, and vice versa. The study provides insights into the interdependence of these two crucial academic skills, and underscores the importance of fostering both reading and writing proficiency among secondary school students.

**Keywords:** *Reading comprehension, writing competence, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical fluency, writing habits, students' independence in writing*

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## 1. Main text

### Introduction

The acquisition of reading skills is crucial for students as it forms the foundation for further intellectual growth. It serves as a gateway to acquiring more advanced knowledge and skills. Additionally, a strong grasp of reading comprehension equips students with the necessary tool to engage in effective written communication. Developing competent writing abilities is of great significance as it enhances students' capacity for critical thinking. Consequently, many students in the present era struggle with both reading comprehension and writing skills. This is evident in their work, which often exhibits deficiencies such as incorrect usage of punctuation marks, improper capitalization, and spelling errors.

Based on assessments of literacy skills conducted both nationally and internationally, including the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP), it has been observed that students in the United States struggle with basic literacy tasks. These tasks include finding pertinent information to identify the main idea of a text or drawing simple conclusions from it (Kastberg, Chan, & Murray, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Based on the latest PISA report, American teenagers are placed 15th in terms of their literacy skills. The findings revealed that 19% of the 15-year-old participants scored below Level 2 (out of 6), indicating their challenges in tasks like identifying explicitly stated information, understanding main ideas, and making basic inferences in familiar subjects. Conversely, only 10% of U.S. students attained Level 5, demonstrating their ability to organize complex information, engage in critical thinking, and interpret unfamiliar topics. In the Philippines, there are policies in place that emphasize the importance of developing reading skills in children. An illustration of this is the No Read, No Pass Policy outlined in the National Capital Region (NCR) DepEd memorandum order number 67, series of 2014. This strict guideline recognizes that reading serves as a crucial educational tool for students. It acknowledges that if students are unable to read at their grade level, it can have negative consequences on their academic progress rather than being beneficial. Before advancing to grade 2, grade 1 students undergo an evaluation of their reading abilities. If students perform inadequately and fail to meet the required proficiency level, they are held back in their current grade. Nonetheless, there is criticism that despite this policy, a significant number of students in high school still lack basic reading skills or face difficulties in reading. Additionally, the statistics paint a concerning picture of the literacy landscape in the country. Data indicates that upon completing elementary school and transitioning to high school, approximately one-third of children are classified as "frustrated readers," while another one-third are labeled as "instructional readers." Both of these groups fall below the expected reading level for their grade and age. Furthermore, a report from 2003 revealed that Metro Manila had the highest literacy rate, while the Autonomous Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) region had the lowest rate at 68.9%, representing a decline from the 1994 rate of 73.5%. Over a span of ten years, nine out of fifteen regions experienced a decrease in literacy rates, including two regions in the Visayan area (VI and VII) and all regions in Mindanao. This concerning trend continued in 2014, when the DepEd Literacy Council reported that, based on their "literacy mapping," nine out of the ten most illiterate barangays (neighborhoods) were located in Mindanao.

At Matanos National High School, reading is incorporated into the daily routine to foster reading comprehension skills. Students engage in various activities such as reading passages, answering guide questions, practicing spelling, constructing sentences using challenging words and their meanings, and participating in role-playing exercises to enhance their communication abilities. These activities are part of the school's Enhance Comprehension Through Innovative Reading Activities (EnCoTInRA) program, which aligns with the DepEd's reading program called Drop Everything and Read, also known as DEAR time. Additionally, this study aims to investigate the impact of reading comprehension on students' writing skills.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The objective of this study is to identify the relationship between reading comprehension and writing proficiency in Grade 10 students. Its specific goals include addressing the following inquiries:

1. What is the level of reading comprehension of Grade 10 students when analyzed in terms of:
  - 1.1 Decoding
  - 1.2 Fluency
  - 1.3 Vocabulary skills
2. What is the level of writing competence of Grade 10 students when analyzed in terms of:
  - 2.1 Grammatical fluency

- 2.2 Writing Habits
- 2.3 Student's Independence in writing
- 3. Is there a significant relationship between reading comprehension and writing competence of Grade 10 students?

### **Hypothesis**

This study will be tested at .05 level of significance.

HO1. There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and writing competence of Grade 10 students.

HO2. None of the indicators of the reading comprehension significantly affect the writing competence of Grade 10 students.

### **Review of Related Literature**

To view some literature and studies related to reading comprehension and writing competence, here are relevant articles to further heighten its content.

#### **Reading Comprehension.**

Understanding and comprehending written text is of utmost importance, as it serves as a critical foundation for a child's educational journey. Mastery of reading opens doors to intricate learning experiences. Additionally, it is widely recognized that reading comprehension is a challenging yet indispensable skill that students must develop to secure their academic achievements in the future. (Allen, et. al. 2014). Juriati, Ariyanti, and Fitriana (2018) further emphasized that reading encompasses a multitude of intricate abilities that must harmonize for the reader to achieve success. Furthermore, according to Ho and Lau (2018), female students demonstrate greater levels of engagement in reading and engage in online reading more frequently compared to male students, indicating a possible correlation between gender and reading behaviors.

**Decoding.** At the initial stage of reading, the fundamental skill involves recognizing letters and their corresponding sounds, which enables the translation of printed symbols (letters) into speech. Decoding, the process of deciphering written language, is recognized as a significant obstacle that contributes to difficulties in comprehension. (Adams, 1990; Lyon, 1995; Metsala & Ehri, 1998). According to Perfetti and Kucan, (2010), decoding leads to the understanding of individual word meanings but does not extend to comprehension beyond the immediate word context.

**Fluency.** Reading fluency involves the automatic activation of both print-to-sound translation and perceptual abilities, making it a more complex process than a simple decoding assessment. In the study of Hsu, et.al (2023): Reading fluency as the Bridge between Decoding and Reading Comprehension states that reading fluency plays a crucial role as an intermediary factor connecting decoding, linguistic comprehension, and overall reading comprehension as quoted from Silverman et. al (2013).

*Vocabulary Skills.* The ability to comprehend written text is closely tied to the vocabulary knowledge of both adults and children. It is evident that a proper understanding of individual words is essential for accurate interpretation of a text (Cain & Oakhill, 2014 as cited from Carroll, 1993). Based on their study, word definitions have been incorporated as a means to assess both the breadth (Tannenbaum et al., 2006) and depth (Ouellette, 2006). Previous research investigating the correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension has commonly utilized word definitions as a measure of vocabulary breadth. Because it addresses "how well the meanings are known" (Ouellette, 2006) and "the richness of knowledge that the individual possesses about the words that are known" (Tannenbaum et al., 2006, p. 383), they felt that the capacity to define a word is a component of vocabulary depth. Furthermore, the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension is well-established. A rich vocabulary allows for direct understanding of the text, as readers are less likely to need to stop reading to look up words. This contributes to a smoother and more enjoyable reading experience (Wagner & Meros, 2010).

#### *Students' Writing Competence.*

Writing is defined as the process of producing written words, connecting concepts, developing information, and making arguments for a specific reader or readers in general (Hedge, 2005 as cited from Atayeva, et. al 2019). It is where your thoughts and ideas can be put into words. The writer must take in and process as much information as they can before beginning to write. This presumption is consistent with Kellogg's theories, which hold that writing presents a significant cognitive challenge since it simultaneously assesses one's capacity for memory, language, and thought (Kellogg, 2018).

*Grammatical fluency.* The process by which a language manipulates and combines words to create longer units of meaning is known as grammar. Every language has a set of rules that specify how meaning components can be put together. A learner who understands grammar is considered to have mastered the language and is able to use these rules to communicate himself or herself in the linguistic forms' credibility (Chung and Pullum, 2015 as cited from Sioco & De Vera, 2018). Furthermore, according to Burns (2009), the systems and patterns people use to choose and combine words are fundamental to grammar. By learning grammar, people acquire the vocabulary to discuss the linguistic system and learn to appreciate the structure and regularity that form the basis of language.

Likewise, Mellish and Ritchie (2008) state that creating a grammar requires creating appropriate collection of grammatical categories to group words and other possible constituents. It is crucial to realize that the mnemonic names assigned to these categories are essentially arbitrary because the labels' meaning is determined by how they are used in the lexicon and rules.

*Writing habits.* Writing is an intricate and challenging skill that necessitates the mastery of several knowledge domains (Flower & Hayes, 1981 as cited by Sulak, 2018). Although it's a challenging skill, that writing has some advantages. Individuals' success in both their social and academic lives is positively impacted by knowing what and how to write (Bruning & Horn, 2000 as cited by Sulak, 2018). For most people nowadays, being able to write is an essential skill. Those who lack sufficient writing skills may encounter difficulties and have fewer options for further education and work, as writing is an important tool for self-expression, communication, and learning (Graham et al., 2012).

Writing habits refer to the ways in which individuals approach writing, including their strategies,

preferences, and practices (Beard et al., 2009; Durrant et al., 2021; Gere, 2018 as cited by Vrika, 2023). According to Fahmi (2018), Those who write regularly will develop strong writing abilities. Their writing potential, fluency, and confidence in expressing themselves in writing can all be enhanced by developing writing habits. Additionally, if someone has a strong writing habit and is interested in becoming an author, writing can be a career.

*Students' Independence in Writing.* The act of creating a text for a reader through writing is called creativity. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987, p. 12) as cited by Nosratinia, (2014), it's a process where the writer engages in "a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text". Since writing entails "originating and creating a unique verbal product that is graphically recorded" (p. 8) and calls for deliberate effort and practice, Emig (1997) contends that writing is the most difficult and complex skill. creating, refining, and evaluating concepts.

It is important to carefully consider effective strategies and tools in order to develop learners' writing abilities (Oxford, 1990; Celce-Murcia, 2001). Students can enhance their writing skills by utilizing specific actions, behaviors, or techniques known as strategies, which they often employ on purpose Nosratinia, (2014).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the theory of the Cognitive Domain (Bloom's Taxonomy) by Benjamin Bloom (1956) which comprises the hierarchy of learning -remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. The lowest stage is remembering, and the highest is creating. Teachers apply this theory in the teaching-learning process, particularly when planning lessons and implementing them in the classroom. Furthermore, in the reading comprehension, students need to decode the words first before they can understand its meaning. A robust lexicon is imperative for understanding (Khalilova, K. 2023). Memory is given a lot of weight in cognitive theories. According to theories of information processing, learning is equivalent to encoding, or meaningfully and orderly storing knowledge in memory (Snow, et. al. 2021). Complementary models exist to explain the reading comprehension task once children have attained accuracy and fluency in decoding. Moreover, reading is an interaction between the linguistic features of a text and the reader's abilities and cognitive processes.

Another theory to be anchored on this study is the Operant Conditioning of Skinner's Behaviorist Theory. This is based on Thorndike's "Law of Effect" (1898) which suggests that actions that elicit positive reactions are likely to be repeated while actions that elicit negative reactions are unlikely to be repeated. This theory is closely related to students' behavior towards learning something. Their behavior matters most in bringing up their skills and development especially in reading and writing. Writing as Hojbjerg and Hindhede, 2023 mentioned from their article entitled Academic Writing Strategies Among Danish Students with a Professional Background that in higher education, academic writing by students has always been central to teaching and learning; however, academic writing is frequently an unnoticed aspect of the curriculum.

### **Methods**

The research employed a quantitative methodology and a correlation research design. Correlational studies, as described by Fraenkel et al. (2011), aim to investigate the possible connection between two variables, although they often explore more than two variables as well. In this particular study, two variables

were examined: reading comprehension and writing competence among Grade 10 students.

To gather the data, the researcher used two-part survey questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire was about the level of comprehension of the students and was divided into three indicators - decoding, fluency and vocabulary. While the second part was about the level of the writing competence of the students and was also divided into 3 indicators -grammatical fluency, writing habits, and students' independence in writing. The questionnaire is a researcher-made and passed in validation and reliability testing. The researcher used simple random sampling and distributed to the identified Grade 10 English teachers with more than three years of teaching experience within the district through google forms. Out of 150 respondents, 100 of them participated equating to a valid sample size 70 percent. The data collected was analyzed using the statistical tools: weighted mean, and Pearson product moment correlation of coefficient through SPSS.

The Likert Scale below were used to give description of the data.

Likert Scale for Interpreting Reading Comprehension

<b>Range of Means</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
3.26 - 4.00	Very High	Students have a very high level of reading comprehension.
2.56 - 3.25	High	Students have a high level of reading comprehension.
1.76 – 2.55	Low	Students have a low level of reading comprehension.
1.00 - 1.75	Very Low	Students have a very low reading comprehension.

Likert Scale for Interpreting Writing Competence

<b>Range of Means</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
3.26 - 4.00	Very High	Students have a very high level of writing competence.
2.56 - 3.25	High	Students have a high level of writing competence.
1.76 – 2.55	Low	Students have a low level of writing competence.
1.00 – 1.75	Very Low	Students have a very low writing competence.

*Here is the sample of validated researcher-made questionnaire:*

Directions: Kindly tick each sentence with the corresponding level that best describes your students' reading comprehension and writing competence using the Likert scale;

4- Strongly Agree, 3- Agree, 2- Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree.

Please answer very honestly.

Part 1. Below are the statements that somehow describes your students' capacity in the reading comprehension. It is divided into three groups -decoding, fluency, and vocabulary.

#### Reading Comprehension

A. Decoding	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. My students can read simple words.				
2. My students can figure out simple sentences.				
3. My students can understand complex sentences.				
4. My students can interpret complex sentences.				
5. My students can follow instructions.				
B. Fluency				
1. My students can speak English spontaneously.				
2. My students can speak English fluently.				
3. My students can answer questions using English language				
4. My students can participates classroom discussions using English Language				
5. My students have a high articulation in the English language.				
C. Vocabulary				
1. My students uses variety of words in expressing themselves.				
2. My students can use unfamiliar words in speaking or writing.				
3. My students can create sentences using uncommon terminologies				
4. My students can identify the synonym and antonym of a word.				
5. My students have a high lexicon of unfamiliar words.				

**PART II. Below are the statements that somehow describes your students' writing competence. It is divided into three groups -grammatical fluency, writing habits, and students' independence in writing.**

### Writing Competence

A. Grammatical fluency	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD
1. My students know when to use capital letters.				
2. My students know when to use punctuation marks.				
3. My students know when to use words in present tenses, past tenses and future tenses.				
4. My students know all the parts of speech.				
5. My students know the rules of subject-verb agreement.				
<b>B. Writing habits</b>				
1. My students love to write essays.				
2. My students always do journaling.				
3. My students love to jot down important information during our discussions				
4. My students love to write their experiences in a diary.				
5. My students love to writes articles				
<b>C. Students' Independence in Writing</b>				
1. My students can write on their own with less supervision.				
2. My students can create their own ideas and put it into writing.				
3. My students have the ability to write essays and articles.				
4. My students can create short stories.				
5. My students can identify errors in a sentence.				

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section provides the outcomes of the statistical analysis. A thorough discussion towards the presentations of the results to give accurate interpretation from the numerical data.

### *Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Students*

Table 1 provides the analysis on the level of reading comprehension. In general, their level of reading comprehension can be described as very high ( $M = 3.26$ ). This means that the Grade 10 students have a very high level of reading comprehension. This implies that the grade 10 students can comprehend



texts and are ready to face the next level of academic endeavours.

Table 1. Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Students

Indicators of Reading Comprehension	Mean	SD	Description
Decoding	3.06	0.44	High
Fluency	2.43	0.21	Low
Vocabulary Skills	2.07	0.09	Low
<b>Overall</b>	2.52	0.11	Low

As we look into the results above, it is clearly stated that the reading comprehension of the Grade 10 students is not so high in terms of decoding ( $M=3.06$ ). This means that the students have a moderately high level of capability to decode words which contributed to their level of understanding. According to Hoover and Gough (1990) as cited by Alfonso (et. al. 2021), it was emphasized that reading occurs when the skills of decoding written text and understanding spoken language interact in a multiplicative manner. This substantiates with the theory of Juriati, Ariyanti, and Fitriana (2018) that reading encompasses a multitude of intricate abilities that must harmonize for the reader to achieve success. Furthermore, a moderately high level of decoding can also enhance a reader's ability to make connections between different parts of the text, infer meaning from context, and engage in higher-level thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation, Linyang (2021).

On the other hand, the last two indicators of reading comprehension result are inconsistent in terms of fluency ( $M=2.43$ ) and vocabulary skills ( $M=2.07$ ) with the overall result of  $M=2.52$  which indicates moderately low level. This means that students' fluency and vocabulary are struggling and it signifies a much more attention in order to address this problem. Moreover, the connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension is widely recognized. Wagner and Meros (2010) emphasized that a robust vocabulary enables readers to comprehend the text directly, reducing the need to pause and search for unfamiliar words. Consequently, this enhances the flow of reading and contributes to a more pleasurable reading encounter. However, Struggling with reading fluency can significantly impact comprehension because fluency is directly tied to the reader's ability to understand and remember what they have read. Reading fluency plays a crucial role as an intermediary factor connecting decoding, linguistic comprehension, and overall reading comprehension as quoted from Silverman et. al (2013).

#### *Level of Writing Competence among Grade 10 Students*

Table 2 shows the analysis on the writing competence of Grade 10 students. In general, their writing competence can be described as low ( $M=2.41$ ). This means that they are struggling in grammatical fluency, writing habits, and independence in writing.

Table 2. Level of Writing Competence among Grade 10 Students

Indicators of Writing Competence	Mean	SD	Description
Grammatical fluency	2.53	0.19	Low
Writing habits	2.34	0.25	Low
Students' independence in writing	2.36	0.14	Low
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>Low</b>

As we look closely to the results above, it is clearly stated that all indicators rated low. Grammatical fluency ( $M=2.53$ ), Writing habits ( $M=2.34$ ), Independence in Writing ( $M=2.36$ ). The results are evident that students are struggling in writing. This implies that the students have lack of writing skills even on their level. According to Ratminingsih, et al (2018) as cited from Kellogg (2008) that writing is seen as an essential element for the students' academic success since it reinforces grammatical structure, vocabulary, and even improve other language skills such as reading, listening, and speaking. Therefore, students with low writing skills will affect the entire learning acquisitions from different aspects.

The result of the analysis on the level of writing competence among Grade 10 students align with the Operant Conditioning of Skinner's Behaviorist Theory in which students' ability to learn, how they prepare themselves to welcome new learning is the key to widen their capability in the field of writing. Students' behavior towards learning to write is very vital. Their preparedness and eagerness to learn will drive them to a successful learning outcome.

#### *Test of Difference on Levels of Reading Comprehension*

Table 3 presents the test of difference on reading comprehension among Grade 10 students. Based on the table, it is very evident that the level of students' comprehension marks low as a whole. It means there is really a significant difference in the level of comprehension when analyzed in decoding ( $p\text{-val}<0$ ), fluency ( $p\text{-val}<.000$ ), vocabulary skills ( $p\text{-val}<0.013$ ). This implies that these factors influenced the reading comprehension of the students.

Table 3. Test of difference when the level of reading comprehension analyzed by the following indicators.

Indicators of Writing Competence	p-values	Decision @ 0.05 Level	Interpretation
Decoding	0.00	Reject	Significant
Fluency	0.00	Reject	Significant
Vocabulary Skills	0.013	Reject	Significant

The result is in line with the findings of Gutierrez et al. (2021) that adept readers performed better than inadequate readers on informative/explanatory texts and objective metrics of text development. The reading comprehension affects the students' capacity in decoding, fluency, and vocabulary skills. It also

implies that reading comprehension affects the writing competence of the student.

Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that low level of comprehension will also have a low level of writing competence. Thorndike's "Law of Effect" (1898) which suggests that actions that elicit positive reactions are likely to be repeated while actions that elicit negative reactions are unlikely to be repeated. Therefore, when the student learns something, it will literally affect its performance towards something.

#### *Test of Difference on Levels of Writing Competence*

Table 4 presents the test of difference on writing competence among Grade 10 students. Based on the table, it is very evident that the level of students' writing competence marks low as a whole. It means there is really a significant difference in the level of writing competence when analyzed in grammatical fluency ( $p\text{-val} < 0.00$ ), writing habits ( $p\text{-val} < 0.697$ ), students' independence in writing ( $p\text{-val} < 0.000$ ). This implies that these factors influenced the reading comprehension of the students.

Table 4. Test of difference when the level of writing competence analyzed by the following indicators.

Indicators of Writing Competence	p-values	Decision @ 0.05 Level	Interpretation
Grammatical fluency	0.00	Reject	Significant
Writing habits	0.69	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Students' independence in writing	0.00	Reject	Significant

The findings of this study align with the Operant Conditioning of Skinner's Behaviorist Theory. This is based on Thorndike's "Law of Effect" (1898) which suggests that actions that elicit positive reactions are likely to be repeated while actions that elicit negative reactions are unlikely to be repeated. In conclusion, the findings presented in Table 4 paint a concerning picture of writing competence among Grade 10 students. The overall low scores, coupled with statistically significant differences related to grammatical fluency ( $p\text{-val} < 0.00$ ), writing habits ( $p\text{-val} < 0.697$ ), and student independence in writing ( $p\text{-val} < 0.000$ ), suggest that these factors significantly impact writing competence. This, in turn, can hinder reading comprehension, as proficient writing and reading skills are often intertwined (Writing development: what does a decade of NAPLAN data reveal? (2023). To improve students' overall literacy, targeted interventions should focus on enhancing these specific areas of writing competence.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reading comprehension relies on multiple interconnected skills: decoding, fluency, and vocabulary are all significant factors in reading comprehension. This suggests that a balanced approach addressing all these areas is crucial for developing strong reading comprehension. Furthermore, grammatical fluency and independence are key for writing competence its significance suggests that instruction should focus on both mastering grammatical rules and fostering students' ability to express themselves autonomously. On the other hand, writing habits might require a different approach, the lack of significance for writing habits could indicate that simply promoting frequent writing might not be enough. It might be more beneficial to focus on the quality and purpose of writing activities.

It is very necessary for the teachers to implement balanced literacy instruction: Integrate activities that develop decoding skills, reading fluency, and vocabulary acquisition to enhance reading comprehension. Moreover, provide explicit grammar instruction and opportunities for independent writing such as incorporate grammar lessons and encourage students to write independently on a variety of topics to foster writing competence. Also, focus on quality over quantity in writing practice like design engaging writing activities that encourage critical thinking, creativity, and purposefulness, rather than simply emphasizing the amount of writing produced. Lastly, investigate alternative approaches to fostering positive writing habits such as Explore strategies beyond simply increasing writing frequency, such as setting specific writing goals, providing authentic writing tasks, and fostering a positive writing community.

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