

Exploring the diction used on the written compositions of Grade 7 learners: Basis for an action plan

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Abstract: This study explored the diction used in the written composition of the grade 7 learners to determine which action plan is suited to enhance the learners' proficiency in writing. A mix-method approach was used to collect data from the students of grade 7 learners. The result showed that the range of vocabulary Type-Token Ratio indicated a relatively low lexical diversity, suggesting that the learners relied heavily on repetitive vocabulary. While as A Type-Token ratio (TTR) of indicated a high lexical indicated varying levels of lexical diversity among the learners in their written compositions. In extent of variety of specific word types used, it was found out that nouns, pronouns, and verbs were the most frequently used parts of speech in the written compositions of Grade 7 learners. Adjectives and adverbs were used less frequently. The results revealed that raw scores indicated a significant variation in readability of the written compositions. The corresponding grade levels suggested that some learners' writing is below grade level, while others are writing at or above grade level. Some learners are using more complex vocabulary than others. On types of common diction errors, the highest frequency is mechanical errors (punctuation and capitalization), followed by lexical (word choice and spelling errors), syntactical (wordiness), grammatical (tense and verb agreement), and semantic errors (ambiguity).

Keywords: Learners, Dictions, Written Composition, Error

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INTRODUCTION

Diction is defined as the choice and use of words in speech or writing. It was a fundamental aspect of effective communication. Furthermore, diction referred to the choice and use of words in speech or writing. It involved the selection of specific words, phrases, and language structures to convey meaning, tone, and style. Diction could be formal or informal, depending on the context, audience, and purpose of the communication. In the context of Grade 7 learners, the development of appropriate diction was crucial as students' transition from basic sentence construction to more complex written expressions.

In the Philippines, vocabulary is an essential part of the language competencies in elementary education, including Grade 7. In Elementary Education (Grades 1-6, the Department of Education's (DepEd) K-12 Curriculum Guide for English emphasized the development of language skills, including vocabulary. The competencies for elementary education include: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary. Furthermore, in Grade 7, the English curriculum focused on developing students' language skills, including vocabulary, to prepare them for more complex texts and communication tasks. The competencies for Grade 7 English include: Analyzing texts, using vocabulary, writing effectively, and communicating orally.

Vocabulary is an essential part of the language competencies in elementary education, including Grade 7 in the Philippines. The DepEd's K-12 Curriculum Guide for English outlines

specific vocabulary competencies for Grade 7, emphasizing the development of students' language skills to prepare them for more complex communication tasks.

Jennifer Tan de Ramos' study explored how Filipino-English bilingual children acquired and used vocabulary outside of school. The research focused on early bilinguals, specifically children aged three to five, to determine which language they predominantly use and the categories of words they prefer. The study revealed that early bilingual children prefer nouns over other English word categories, supporting the noun bias theory. The research aimed to identify which language, Filipino or English, is used predominantly among the children. Finally, the study explored the categories of words that are prevalent in the children's vocabulary, with a focus on nouns.

Middle school students exhibited a wide range of vocabulary knowledge, influenced by factors such as reading habits, verbal communication, and prior educational experiences. However, some students lacked the vocabulary skills necessary to comprehend grade-level content. All students benefitted from additional vocabulary instruction, which enhanced written and verbal communication skills, reading comprehension, and critical thinking (Edutopia, 2017).

Effective vocabulary instruction in middle school involves strategies that go beyond mere definitions. Engaging students in activities that promote in-depth learning of words could lead to better retention and application. For instance, using word walls, graphic organizers, and interactive exercises can make vocabulary learning more dynamic and effective (Teach Like Midgley, 2017).

The rise of digital communication has influenced students' language use, often leading to the incorporation of informal language and slang into their writing. This shift can negatively impact the formality and clarity expected in academic compositions. Educational resources advised against the use of casual language in scholarly writing and recommend the adoption of a more formal tone to maintain academic integrity (Grammarly, 2023).

Despite the importance of effective writing skills in academic and professional settings, there was a scarcity of research on the diction used in written compositions of grade 7 learners. Specifically, it had limited studies on diction on written composition. Most studies on writing skills had focused on broader aspects, such as writing quality, grammar, and syntax, while neglecting the specific aspect of diction. Another is the lack of research on Grade 7 learners. The majority of studies on writing skills had focused on higher grade levels or university students, leaving a gap in our understanding of writing development in early adolescence. Lastly, insufficient exploration of diction in the Philippine context. Research on writing skills in the Philippines had primarily focused on English language proficiency, without delving into the variation of diction used by Filipino learners.

The purpose of this study was to explore the diction used by Grade 7 learners in their written compositions. Understanding their current word choice patterns can serve as a basis for developing targeted action plans aimed at enhancing their writing proficiency. By focusing on improving diction, educators could help students express their ideas more clearly and effectively, thereby laying a strong foundation for their future academic success.

Problem statements

This study aimed to explore the diction used in the written compositions of Grade 7 learners and determine its implications for an action plan to enhance their writing proficiency.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the range of vocabulary used by grade 7 learners in their written composition?

2. What is the extent of variety of specific word types used by the learners?
3. What is the extent of difficulty of the words used by the learners?
4. What is the common type of diction errors committed by the learners?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981) posits that comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition. This theory suggested that learners acquired language when they receive input that was slightly beyond their current level of proficiency. In the context of the study, Krashen's Input Hypothesis could be applied to the development of diction in written compositions. The theory implied that in comprehensible input, learners needed to receive comprehensible input in the form of reading materials, teacher feedback, and peer interactions to develop their vocabulary and diction. Second, $i+1$, learners needed to be exposed to language that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency ($i+1$) to acquire new vocabulary and improve their diction. Lastly, focus on meaning: The primary focus should be on conveying meaning and ideas, rather than just memorizing vocabulary or grammatical rules.

This explained the needs of the grade 7 learners to be exposed to diction that is slightly more complex than what they currently use. This could help them develop their diction and writing skills. Through exposing students in written compositions, having the prior knowledge of diction, students could grasp and are more advance than before. By applying Krashen's Input Hypothesis to the development of diction in written compositions, educators could create a supportive learning environment that fosters language acquisition and improves learners' writing skills.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a mixed-methods research design, which integrated both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diction used in the written compositions of Grade 7 learners. Moreover, a quantitative method was used in measuring the range of vocabulary used, the extent of variety of specific word types, and the extent of difficulty of the words through instructions and getting the written compositions of the grade 7 learners. Finally, a qualitative was used in determining the common type of diction errors committed by the grade 7 learners in their written compositions with the use of Error Analysis Checklist.

Participants of the study

The researcher collected 20 written compositions from the grade 7 learners coming from different schools namely: Kalinga Academy (5), Saint Theresita's School Lubuagan (10), and lastly, the Lubuagan National High School Extension (5), through purposive sampling ensuring that they represent the target group whose diction and writing proficiency need to be examined.

Research instrument

In order to measure the range of vocabulary, the extent of variety of specific word types, and the extent of difficulty of the words used by the grade 7 learners, the researcher asked the learners to make at least 20 written compositions to explore the diction used by the grade 7 learners. Moreover, the researcher made sure that the instructions were clear and simple for they will be

writing a 3-4 paragraph about the title which is the,” The Person Who Inspires Me.” As of determining the common types of diction errors committed by the grade 7 learners, written compositions were gathered and the researcher used the Error Analysis Checklist (EAC) adapted from the study of (Brown, 2021).

Data gathering procedure

The written compositions of the grade 7 learners were gathered from the 3 schools namely: Saint Theresita’s Lubuagan, Kalinga Academy, and Lubuagan National High School Extension. Before the researcher gathered the written composition from the learners, permission was sought from the proper authorities like the registrar for the numbers of the grade 7 students enrolled in the school year 2024-2025, the Principals of the different schools, and the advisers that were covered by the administering of the written composition. Before administering the written composition, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the students and provided clear instructions for the written composition task. Students were encouraged to write freely without external assistance to ensure authentic diction usage. Students were given a specific amount of time to write a composition on the topic. After administering the written composition, the researcher retrieved personally their outputs.

Data analysis procedure

In the quantitative analysis of the study, several tools were employed to treat and analyze the data related to the diction used by Grade 7 learners in their written compositions. First, to measure the range of vocabulary used by the learners, the Type-Token Ratio (TTR) formula was applied. This method calculates the ratio between the number of unique words (types) and the total number of words (tokens) in a composition. A higher TTR indicates a wider range of vocabulary, suggesting more lexical diversity. Second, to examine the extent of variety in specific word types, the study utilized the Lexical Density (LD) formula. This involved determining the proportion of content words—such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—relative to the total number of words in a composition. A higher lexical density suggests greater use of meaningful, information-carrying words, which typically reflects more advanced writing skills. Third, to assess the extent of difficulty of the words used by the learners, the Dale-Chall Readability Test was used. This readability formula computes a raw score based on two variables: the Average Sentence Length (ASL), which is the number of words per sentence, and the Percentage of Difficult Words (PDW), defined as the proportion of words with three or more syllables not commonly understood by average readers.

For the qualitative analysis, the study focused on identifying the common types of diction errors made by the learners. Written compositions were collected and evaluated using the Error Analysis Checklist (EAC), which was adapted from Brown (2021). The EAC serves as a systematic tool for analyzing language errors. It allows teachers to provide more targeted feedback that addresses specific error patterns, thereby enhancing language instruction. Through the insights gathered from the EAC, teachers can better tailor their teaching strategies, address recurring linguistic issues, and promote learner autonomy by encouraging students to take responsibility for identifying and correcting their own errors. Overall, the EAC proves to be an essential tool in language education, enabling educators to diagnose and remedy language difficulties, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Range of vocabulary used by Grade 7 learners

The average word count (token words) per composition ranged between 35-231 words. On the other hand, the average unique words (type words) ranged from 19-139. Finally, the result showed that the learners' type-token ration in their written composition ranged from 42.60%-87.96%. The findings suggested a wide range of vocabulary use in the written compositions of grade 7 students. Token word range indicated varying lengths of compositions, with some students writing shorter texts and others writing longer ones. Moreover, type word range showed a range of unique words used, with some students using fewer distinct words and others using more. Type-token ratio range revealed varying levels of lexical diversity, with some students using a narrower range of vocabulary and others using a wider range.

Extent of variety of specific word types used

The written compositions of grade 7 learners exhibited a varied use of word types, with a clear ranking of parts of speech. Verb ranked 1st with a total of 247 occurrences, indicated that learners frequently used action words to convey meaning in their writing. It was followed by noun with a total of 230 occurrences, suggesting that learners relied heavily on nouns to identify and describe people, places, and things in their writing. Third is the Adjective with a total of 174 occurrences, indicating that learners used descriptive words to modify and qualify their writing. Meanwhile, pronoun with a total of 149 occurrences, suggesting that learners used pronouns to replace nouns and create cohesion in their writing. Lastly, adverb with a total of 47 occurrences, indicating that learners used adverbs less frequently to modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. The findings have implications for language instruction and learning. Firstly, on verb usage, the prominence of verbs suggested that learners were able to convey action and movement in their writing. Teachers could build on this strength by encouraging learners to use more complex verb forms and tenses. On the other hand, the use of noun, the frequent used of nouns indicated that learners were able to identify and describe people, places, and things. Teachers could reinforce this skill by teaching learners to use more precise and descriptive nouns. Finally, on adjective and adverb, the relatively lower frequency of adjectives and adverbs suggested that learners may benefit from instruction on using descriptive language to add depth and nuance to their writing.

Extent of difficulty of the words used

in the extent of difficulty of words used by the learners, the results revealed that Total words (35-231) indicated a wide range of writing lengths, suggesting varying levels of writing fluency or engagement. Also, total sentences (4-13) revealed a relatively narrow range of sentence counts, which might have indicated differences in writing organization or structure. Average sentence length (5.71-33.6) showed a wide range of sentence lengths, suggesting varying levels of writing complexity or syntactic maturity. While as PDW (0.86%-13.15%) suggested a wide range of percentages of difficult words, which might have signified differences in vocabulary use or writing sophistication. Raw score (1.06-5.65) revealed a wide range of scores, which might have showed varying levels of writing quality or effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The written compositions of grade 7 learners exhibited a wide range of vocabulary use, varying levels of lexical diversity, and differing writing characteristics. The learners tend to rely heavily on verbs and nouns, with relatively lower frequencies of adjectives and adverbs. The study also revealed that learners commit various errors in writing, particularly in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

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