| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Syntactical Structure Competence in Academic Writing of Senior High School Students: Designing a Contextualized Instructional Material

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| ABSTRACT

In the realm of Senior High School (SHS) education, mastering syntactical structure competence in academic writing plays a pivotal role in fostering effective communication and intellectual growth. This study investigates the level of syntactical structure competence of Grade 11 students from STEM and HUMSS strands across three private schools in Santiago City, Philippines. The research adopts a descriptive-correlational design to describe syntactical characteristics and explore potential correlations among variables. The methodology involved administering a teacher-made test to assess syntactical knowledge in areas such as transitional devices, subject-verb agreement and verb tenses. Data collection included a stratified random sample of 258 students, ensuring representation across various strata. Results indicate varying levels of syntactical competence among students, with significant challenges observed in specific grammatical rules. Statistical analysis revealed correlations between syntactical competence and demographic factors, highlighting areas for targeted instructional interventions. Findings underscore the importance of tailored educational materials to address syntactical deficiencies effectively. In conclusion, this study contributes to understanding the nuances of syntactical structure competence in academic writing among SHS students. By identifying areas of weakness and strengths, educators can develop contextualized instructional materials that enhance syntactical skills, thereby improving students' mastery of syntactical structure, academic writing proficiency and overall communication abilities.

| KEYWORDS

Syntactical Structure Competence, Academic Writing, Senior High School, Instructional Materials, Educational Intervention, Grammar Proficiency

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

1. Introduction

In the realm of language education, grammar and writing are critical domains that take center stage in the English curriculum. The Senior High School (SHS) curriculum in the K-12 Program aims to develop globally competitive students proficient in language conventions and effective communication. Emphasizing academic excellence, particularly in writing, this curriculum supports the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of equitable quality education for all, ensuring inclusivity and equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for a fulfilling life and meaningful contributions to society.

A crucial component of the SHS English curriculum is the Reading and Writing (RW) subject, which focuses on refining students' cross-disciplinary writing skills. Aligned with the 2016 K-12 Curriculum Guide, this subject establishes a foundation for language proficiency and successful communication in academic and professional settings. For instance, academic writing genres such as position papers enable students to contribute strong perspectives to academic discourse, fostering discussions on life issues. This

writing form necessitates a clear presentation of information, facilitating improved communication of complex ideas and serving as excellent preparation for intellectual growth and effective communication.

Syntactical structure competence is essential in academic writing, as it provides the structural foundation for language. Grammatical competence, as defined by Ilankumaran (2021), includes the unconscious knowledge of grammar that allows speakers to utilize and comprehend language, encompassing lexis, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Syntax, in particular, governs entire sentences and plays a crucial role in fostering the creative dimension of human language, empowering the recursive and combinatorial abilities involved in utterance production (Chomsky, 1971).

Despite the importance of syntactical competence, research indicates that many students struggle with grammar. Studies by Widianingsih (2016) and Suarez et al. (2016) reveal that second language learners, particularly those studying English, often make mistakes in specific grammatical rules. These challenges are reflected in low grammar proficiency scores, particularly in subject-verb agreement, parts of speech, and sentence structure. Similarly, Lavadia (2023) found that students' grammar competence is generally average, with poor performance in specific dimensions such as grammar and syntax.

The difficulties in syntactical competence are further highlighted by Rahmadi (2017), who found that many students are unable to write grammatically correct English. Despite efforts by the educational sector to scaffold students' writing skills, many still experience challenges in demonstrating their syntactical structure competence in academic writing. This performance, crucial for effective communication, involves arranging, structuring, and linking sentences to produce coherent and cohesive texts (Lascu, 2023).

To address these challenges, contextualized instructional materials that cater to the specific needs of students, especially in writing discourse, are needed. Anwar and Arifani (2019) emphasize the importance of tailored learning materials in enhancing English proficiency. This study aims to fill the research gap by assessing the syntactical structure competence of Senior High School students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strands. The goal is to develop contextualized language instructional materials that will enhance students' syntactical competence and overall academic writing skills. By focusing on the specific syntactical needs of students, this research will help elevate their level of syntactical structure competence, providing them with the tools necessary for effective academic writing and communication.

2. Literature Review

Grammar, a fundamental aspect of English, is arguably the most significant. One of the main objectives of teaching English as a second language is to equip students with the ability to speak, write, and present using grammatically correct, fluent, and appropriate English that fits the purpose, audience, context, and culture. Grammar encompasses rules that dictate how units of meaning are constructed in any language. A learner who understands grammar can apply these rules to express themselves using acceptable language forms (Chung and Pullum, 2015).

Grammatical competence refers to mastering linguistic codes, including the ability to understand and use the morphological and syntactical features of a language effectively to interpret, encode, and decode words and sentences. The correct formation and agreement of words in a sentence are essential for proper grammar.

In Thomas Bloor's article (2018), "What do language students know about grammar?" he argues that there is often a gap between academic discussions about grammar and what is taught in classrooms. In the current era of globalization, learning to speak and write in English is crucial for competing in a knowledge-based world. This education is most effective in a classroom setting, though the learning process may face challenges. Despite English being the language of instruction, UNESCO emphasizes the importance of educating children in their mother tongue (UNESCO, 2003). In the Philippine educational system, students are taught in their mother tongue until grade III, after which English becomes the medium of instruction from grades IV to XII. However, many students are hesitant to speak publicly, often due to uncertainty about the grammatical correctness of their sentences.

Several theories address the teaching and learning of grammar. Among them is Chomsky's Generative Grammar Theory (1956), which views grammar as a set of rules that generate the precise combinations of words forming sentences in a given language. In his Information Processing Theory (1986), Chomsky also stated that retaining new knowledge requires the presence of prior knowledge to connect with the new information. Pienemann (1998) supported Chomsky's view with his Processability Theory, asserting that the process of grammar utilizes temporary memory storage for holding grammatical information. One of the three key areas of grammar is semantics, which involves understanding the definitions of words and their meanings. Lewis (1970) described a possible form of grammar as an abstract semantic system where symbols are linked with aspects of the world. Similarly, Mill (1843) proposed that the meaning of a word or expression is determined by what it refers to in the real world.

Dell Hathaway Hymes' Theory of Communicative Competence, as cited by Lasala (2013), is supported by Lyle Bachman's Components of Language Competence and the Model of Communicative Competence by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain. According to Lasala (2013), there are four key competencies that contribute to effective communication: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic.

Linguistic competence focuses on phonetics (the study of sounds and their pronunciation), phonology (the patterns and interactions of sounds), morphology (the formation of words), syntax (the arrangement of words into grammatically correct sentences), and the comprehension of text meaning. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts and situations, including understanding socio-cultural codes such as vocabulary, politeness, and style. Discourse competence involves the ability to produce and comprehend oral and written language across speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Strategic competence is the ability to recognize and overcome communication barriers, such as background noise, that may interfere with the communication process before, during, or after a message is delivered. Exploring Hymes' Theory further, Bachman's Components of Language Competence emphasize grammatical competence (the ability to recognize and produce grammatical structures) and textual competence (the understanding of entire conversations). Pragmatic competence, as described by Bachman (1990), examines the relationship between a speaker's words and their intended meaning. Canale and Swain (1980) also highlight the importance of textual and grammatical competence in a child's conscious or unconscious grasp of language.

Linguistic competence, encompassing grammatical, lexical, syntactical and pragmatic components, serves as a foundational mastery of language codes, enabling effective interpretation and expression. According to De Vera and Sioco (2018) identified the level of grammatical competence among students of Salud-San Eugenio National High School in Natividad, Pangasinan as mostly "Average" through a questionnaire and by testing the knowledge of students with regards to subject-verb agreement. Patently, the researchers focused only on a single aspect of the English language as a measurement of grammatical competence among the students.

A study conducted by Hikmah, Akmal, and Buffe (2019) also listed various grammatical errors in the writings of students such as in subject-verb agreement, capitalization, punctuation, and usage of tenses which led the researchers to recommend the development of a supplementary learning material for the enhancement of their competence in terms of writing. Unlike these studies, the researcher aims to investigate the competence of Senior High School students in the Philippines who have accomplished their prior junior years.

Barraqiou (2022) 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 University of Bohol Multidisciplinary Research Journal 131 other related issues.

Leyaley (2021) concluded, in line with Barraqiou's findings, that the English language proficiency of Teacher Education freshmen is categorized as "Early Intermediate," regardless of the honors they had received. The researchers, as English teachers, sought to evaluate the grammatical competence of Grade 11 students, focusing on three specific areas: morphology, semantics, and syntax. Additionally, they aimed to determine whether there is a significant degree of variance among these three areas of grammar.

A survey conducted among sophomore engineering students at Batangas State University revealed that three skills need further development: stylistic skills, grammatical skills, and judgment skills. The respondents frequently missed correct usage of adverbs, articles, subject-verb agreements, inverted sentences, adequate punctuation marks, and opposing concepts within passages.

Similarly, a study titled "Writing Skills of Junior High School Students of the University of Saint Anthony, Irigan City, Philippines" used an instrument with five criteria to assess students' writing competency: (1) grammar, (2) organization (introduction, body, and conclusion), (3) logical development of ideas and content, (4) punctuation, spelling, and mechanics, and (5) style and quality of expression. Students' writing was rated on a scale from 5 to 1, with 5 indicating excellent proficiency, 4 very satisfactory, 3 satisfactory, 2 fair, and 1 poor. The data indicated that while students were competent in writing content, stylistics, and organization, they struggled with mechanics and grammar. Common errors included mistakes in subject-verb agreement, correct tense usage, logical arrangement of thoughts, use of contractions, proper sentence structure, and mechanical issues like punctuation, capitalization of proper nouns, paragraph indentation, and sentence breaks.

In their 2019 study, Atta, Doe, Tekpetey, and Boham examined "Students' Performance in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations over the years." They highlighted a persistent issue with students' weakness in grammar, which negatively impacts their overall performance in other subjects. This finding underscored

the necessity of assessing the effectiveness of English grammar teaching in Senior High School. Without a solid understanding of grammar, students struggle with correct language usage. The study evaluated learners' grammatical competence using the following criteria: "Highly competent," where learners could appropriately apply morphological, semantic, and syntactical rules of English grammar, achieving a score between 75-100 percent; "Moderately competent," where learners could adequately apply these rules with a score between 50-74 percent; "Less competent," where learners had limited grammatical knowledge and scored between 25-49 percent; and "Not competent," where learners had minimal knowledge and rarely applied correct grammatical rules, scoring between 0-24 percent.

Recent studies have indicated a decline in grammar writing competency among senior high school students. English is considered a second language, and it is an important component of the Philippine educational system. As the country's use of English has grown, English proficiency for Filipinos has become one of the identified strengths that help the country's economy grow (Jugo, 2020). Nonetheless, despite the country's high level of English proficiency, there is concern over the country's deteriorating competency of both students and educators. According to the Education First English Proficiency Index (2019) results, academic and industrial growth transitions necessitate better English.

In Pablo and Lasaten's 2018 study titled "Writing Difficulties and Quality of Academic Essays of Senior High School Students," various challenges in academic writing were identified among students. Firstly, in terms of content or ideas, the analysis revealed a lack of diversity in ideas and arguments, which recurred 103 times (40%) in the students' essays. Secondly, regarding organization, a frequent issue observed was the absence of connectives, appearing in 114 instances (19%) of the students' writings. Thirdly, concerning vocabulary or word choice, incorrect usage of words or idioms occurred 126 times (66%) in the data. Fourthly, in terms of language use, a predominant issue noted was poor sentence construction, which recurred 161 times (33%). Fifthly, with respect to formality and objectivity, the most prominent difficulty was the inappropriate use of first and second-person pronouns, identified in 178 instances (36%), resulting in overly informal essays. Lastly, referencing proved to be a significant concern, with 199 instances (80%) of the students' essays lacking any citations or references, potentially leading to instances of plagiarism through unattributed adaptation and copying of material.

Writing is a powerful tool that allows us to express our thoughts, feelings, and ideas through written symbols. As stated by Huy (2020), writing is "a complex metacognitive activity that offers an individual's knowledge". However, for students, writing can be a challenging task as they must not only focus on effectively communicating their message but also adhere to correct language structures. Therefore, writing holds great importance as a means of communication, serving as a platform for students to convey their thoughts, ideas, and emotions. This complex process involves deep thinking, careful word choice, and the proper use of mechanics to produce well-structured sentences, paragraphs, and compositions.

Writing is recognized as an active skill owing to its inherent characteristic of generating a tangible product or output upon completion. Throughout the writing process, it is viewed as a compositional activity wherein individual units of sound coalesce to form words, and these words, in turn, combine to create phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, all while ensuring the maintenance of coherence and cohesion within the text. This compositional endeavor becomes particularly prominent when undertaking tasks such as crafting academic texts, for instance, essays.

Rusinovci (2020) explains that writing as a process focuses on how a text is composed rather than just the final outcome, whereas writing as a product involves creating specific types of texts, typically assigned to students. The writing process involves several stages aimed at producing quality texts. These stages include (1) pre-writing, (2) drafting and writing, (3) sharing and responding, (4) revising and editing, and (5) publishing (Qomariyah & Permana, 2021). Commonly applied in writing classes, the writing process typically includes drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Nation, 2019). These steps are structured activities designed to help students compose sentences and organize them into coherent paragraphs.

According to Al-Khasawneh (2020), English serves as the primary language for a wide array of international interactions among non-native speakers in fields such as trade, diplomacy, tourism, journalism, science, technology, and politics. Consequently, the presence of proficient English writers and speakers holds significant importance in contemporary global contexts. In the Malaysian ESL context, Puvenesvary (2023) highlights the critical need for competence in English writing within Malaysia's banking sector, emphasizing the potential repercussions of inadequately written business correspondence with clients.

According to Tan and Miller (2018), writing is a deliberate form of social communication intertwined with literacy. It is viewed as a method of engaging in social practices that encompass patterns of participation, gender preferences, networks of support and collaboration, time management, spatial considerations, tools, technology, and resources. Additionally, the interaction between writing and reading, as well as written language with other symbolic forms, plays a crucial role in shaping the symbolic meanings

of literacy and broader social objectives within both individual lives and institutional contexts. Zamel (1983), a pioneering figure in ESL writing research, characterized the writing process as nonlinear, exploratory, and generative, where writers uncover and refine their ideas as they strive to convey meaning.

Patel (2017) stresses the critical role of materials development in language programs. She advocates for teachers not to be discouraged in the absence of textbooks, as long as they have clear teaching and learning objectives or a strong understanding of their learners' needs. Rather, teachers can create their own materials to effectively meet their objectives. Moreover, she also recommends that materials tailored to a specific class must align with a well-defined instructional philosophy, approach, method, and technique that effectively addresses the needs of both students and teachers

Kellough (2019) similarly argues that detailed planning for teaching and learning serves multiple purposes, with ensuring curriculum coherence being paramount. Workbooks or learning materials act as guides for teachers, aids for substitute teachers, and records for future reference when teaching similar lessons or classes. They also provide insights into the quality of teaching and learning, offering guidance on areas for improvement in both teacher and student performance.

Tomlinson (2016) introduced an MA course in materials development in 1993, marking a pivotal moment in recognizing the significance of materials development. Since then, there has been a significant rise in universities offering MA courses and modules focused on materials development, alongside an increase in Ph.D. research on this topic. Today, materials development is acknowledged as a critical aspect of applied research. According to Tomlinson (1998), cited in Patel (2017), materials development encompasses efforts by writers, teachers, or learners to create language input sources designed to optimize intake.

To enhance students' writing abilities in a foreign language, specific approaches have been proposed. Haerazi et al. (2018) advocate for exposing students to various genres of writing to cultivate an understanding of textual structures. Sartika & Rachmanita (2017) recommend employing self-regulated strategies to bolster students' writing proficiency across content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. EFL learners can refine their writing skills through systematic practice and effective instructional techniques (Banu et al., 2018). Mastering these steps early on can equip students to become proficient English writers and prepare them for more advanced writing tasks. In addition, the utilization of integrated writing tasks as performance-based assessment implies the production of not just chunks of written discourses, but a more elaborative and extensive language output or performance based on input processing (Raymundo 2023).

Producing proficient writing remains a daunting task for students, as it is often considered the most challenging language skill. Difficulties encountered include generating ideas, selecting topics, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. These challenges can be mitigated through the implementation of genre-based language teaching models in writing classes. According to Johnson (2023), genre instruction aims to enhance students' awareness of the structural conventions of different text types, enabling them to effectively integrate elements and achieve both communicative objectives and sophisticated writing outcomes.

The genre-based language teaching model has gained popularity among educators teaching writing skills in language education programs at universities. This approach allows students to anchor their understanding in the types of texts they will produce in their target contexts (Nurlaelawati & Novianti, 2017). According to Hyland (2022), this model enhances students' comprehension of how language is structured to fulfill social purposes within specific contexts of use. Moreover, it has been implemented in writing instruction across various countries. For instance, Cheng (2021) conducted research at Oklahoma State University, USA, demonstrating that the ESP genre approach effectively achieved learning objectives in teaching specialized forms of English to second language learners. The study highlighted that the genre-based model enables instructors to observe how students in the classroom recognize and analyze the typical features of specific texts, integrating these features into their own writing.

In the Philippines, Nueva (2018) illustrated that genre-based instruction enhances students' proficiency and their grasp of textual structures, such as news articles. The model contributed to improvements in writing skills, including text organization, the use of discourse markers, and appropriate linguistic expression.

In Iran, Abbaszadeh (2023) explores genre instruction for second language learners, highlighting its ability to enhance discourse competencies and communicative skills by exposing students to diverse text types. Carstens & Weideman (2019) assert that genre-based instruction, through its structured approach, effectively improves academic writing skills, including competence in utilizing source materials and developing academic writing styles.

Genre-based instruction has expanded beyond writing skills to encompass teaching speaking, listening, and reading skills, aiming to enhance overall linguistic aspects of writing proficiency. Emilia (2021) emphasizes that genre-based instruction addresses not only writing but all language skills, promoting comprehensive language development.

The concept of genre centers on the notion that academic community members often struggle to recognize commonalities in texts used for specific purposes. Genre facilitates easier reading, comprehension, and writing of texts by leveraging familiarity and experience with those texts, thereby fostering meaningful connections among individuals (Hyland, 2023).

Teaching language skills through genre-based instruction involves a structured process that supports the development of all language competencies. According to Feez & Joyce (2022), the instructional approach typically progresses through five stages: building field knowledge, modeling and deconstructing texts, collaborative text construction, independent text creation, and connecting related texts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive-correlational research design, which involves characterizing observed phenomena and exploring potential relationships among multiple variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The descriptive correlational design is chosen for its ability to provide a snapshot of situations and to investigate relationships between variables, which is ideal for this study. This research design is appropriate as it aims to describe the variables under study and the natural relationships that exist among them (Sousa et al., 2022). It allows for a comprehensive description of students' proficiency in syntax and facilitates exploration of correlations with other relevant variables. Furthermore, this design aligns with the objective of examining the potential significance of the relationship between syntactical competence among Grade 11 students from three private schools in the City of Santiago.

3.2. Locale of the Study

This study will be conducted at the University of La Salette, Incorporated – Senior High School Department, SISTECH College, and Cagayan Valley Computer and Information Technology College SHS Department (CVCITC-SHS). These are all private institutions located in Santiago City, Isabela, Philippines.

3.3. Respondents of the Study

The target population of this study includes all Grade 11 students among three private school during the Second Semester of the Academic Year 2023-2024. This covers STEM and HUMSS strands based on their concurrent participation in Reading and Writing (RW), which specifically covers syntactical structure competence.

The researcher will apply 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error in determining the sample size and subsequently utilize a stratified random sampling technique in selecting the respondents of this study. This sampling method will be implemented to collect data and analysis allowing the researchers to acquire specific and efficient information. To present the number of respondents in every stratum or section, below is the actual number.

Table 1. Population and Sample of G11 Students of Three Private Schools in Santiago City

School	Section	Population	Sample
STEM ULSHS	St. Leo the Great	45	16
	St. Albert the Great	43	15
	St. Martin de Pore	42	15
	St. Stephen	41	15
	St. Boniface	41	15
	St. Lawrence	41	15
	St. Jerome	43	15
	St. Joachim	42	15
	St. Aloysius	42	15
HUMSS ULSHS	St. Fabian	47	17
	St. Pius	45	16
STEM CVCITC	A	54	19
	B	54	19
HUMSS CVCITC	A	44	16
	B	44	16

STEM SISTECH	A	21	7
HUMSS SISTECH	A	34	12
	TOTAL	723	258

Table 1 outlines the Grade 11 students' population among the three private schools, with a total of 723 students. The sample size, derived from various strata or sections, is 258 students, ensuring a comprehensive and representative subset for the study.

3.4. Data Gathering Procedure
Primarily, the researcher will seek permission from the School Administration through a request letter on the conduct of the study. Once approved, the researcher will then seek consent from the Subject Area Coordinators of the Senior High School English Department concerning the interruption of classes and the schedule of data gathering from the respondents.

Afterward, the researcher will inform the respondents of the purpose and objectives of the study. A discussion on the proper ways of answering the teacher-made test shall be delivered by the researcher for clearer communication with the respondents.

Since the participants are below the legal age, the researcher will be providing informed consent which will be signed by their parents/guardians and will assure the anonymity, protection, and confidentiality of the data that the respondents will be providing. The consent will be given to students three days before the conduct of the data gathering and will be collected by the researcher before the day of the activity. The respondents who will not be able to fill out the document will not be forced to participate in the study.

Once the consent papers are secured, the researcher will administer the teacher-made test for syntactical structure competence to the respondents following a detailed class schedule of the STEM and HUMSS students in their Reading and Writing subjects. The researcher will take over the schedule in each class to orient the respondents and administer the test. The responses to the test will be collected by the researcher right after the allotted time is finished.

The collected tests will be checked rigorously. Afterward, all submitted responses in the teacher-made test will be analyzed by the researcher. Also, the collected data will be subjected to interpretation and analysis with the help of a statistician.

3.5. Research Instruments
In the course of this study, a teacher-made test comprised of 40 items will be administered to assess the syntactical structure competence of the respondents. Considering the Table of Specification, the test covers various English learning targets, specifically transitional devices, subject-verb agreement, and verb tenses. These are the learning competencies and targets to be mastered by the students as stated in the curriculum guide set by the DepEd.

The assessment mode will be multiple choice, with printed materials as the delivery method. The test items will undergo review and validation by three language experts consisting of the Subject Area Coordinator, research expert, and language teacher for corrections, suggestions, and comments. Likewise, to ensure reliable data, the aforementioned test will undergo reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha and item analysis. Items that are deemed very easy or very difficult will be excluded from the final test. The aforementioned research methodology ensures a thorough and objective evaluation of the syntactical structure competence of the respondents.

To interpret the level of syntactical structure competence in academic writing of the students, this study will utilize the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) as a standard instrument adopted by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the descriptive equivalent of the results shall be used for devising intervention, particularly a contextualize supplementary material, to improve the syntactical structure competence of the respondents.

Table 2. Scale for Master Level

Score	Descriptive Equivalent	Description
31-40	Mastered	This signifies a high level of competency. You can confidently perform tasks independently, even in unfamiliar situations.
21-30	Moving Towards Mastery	This demonstrates developing proficiency. You can grasp the core principles and perform

		tasks with some guidance or in familiar contexts.
11-20	Low Mastery	This indicates basic understanding and limited ability to perform related tasks. You can likely recognize relevant concepts but struggle to execute them independently.
1-10	No Mastery	This range signifies a complete lack of proficiency or understanding. You might be entirely unfamiliar with the subject or have minimal exposure without any ability to apply it.

3.6. Statistical Treatment of Data

Appropriate statistical tools will be used to come up with valid interpretations of data. This research will use descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, frequency counts and percentage distribution will be used to determine the profile of the respondents such as sex, strand and type of reading materials including their level of syntactical structure competence.

On the other hand, to test the difference on the level of syntactical structure competence of the respondents when grouped according to their profile, one-way ANOVA and independent sample T-Test will be utilized. Lastly, crafting the contextualized instructional materials will be founded upon a rigorous analysis of the least proficient syntactical structure element.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 3. Profile of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	114	44.20
Table Female	144	55.80
Type Of Reading Materials		
Journal	38	14.70
E-Books	29	11.20
Social Media	25	9.70
Others	33	12.80
E-Books And Social Media	99	38.40
Socal Media And Others	24	9.30
Novel,E-Books,Social Media	10	3.90
Strand		
STEM	181	70.20
HUMSS	77	29.80

Table 3 provides a detailed profile of the Grade 11 Senior High School students, highlighting their sex, type of reading materials, and strands. The table shows that out of the total respondents, the majority were female, with 144 individuals representing 55.80% of the sample. Male respondents constituted 114 individuals, accounting for 44.20%. This gender distribution aligns with broader trends in educational research, where females have been reported to exhibit slightly higher levels of language proficiency and engagement with reading materials compared to males (Shurino & Wilhelm, 2020).

In terms of the type of reading materials preferred by the respondents, the data reveals a diverse range of preferences. The most common combination was e-books and social media, with 99 respondents (38.40%) indicating this preference. Journals were read by 38 respondents, making up 14.70% of the sample. Other types of reading materials were chosen by 33 respondents, representing 12.80%. E-books alone were the choice for 29 respondents (11.20%), while social media was preferred by 25 respondents (9.70%). A smaller group of respondents, 24 individuals (9.30%), favored a combination of social media and other materials. Lastly, a minor segment of the population, 10 respondents (3.90%), engaged with a combination of novels, e-books, and social media. This finding resonates with contemporary literature on adolescent reading habits, which suggests a growing trend towards digital literacy and the consumption of online content among young people (Lenhart, 2018). Moreover, the significant

proportion of respondents engaging with social media for reading purposes underscores the need to recognize and leverage digital platforms as valuable resources for promoting literacy and language development in educational settings.

Furthermore, examination of academic strands indicates a predominant enrollment in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) strand, with 70.20% of students opting for this specialization. This observation reflects the broader emphasis on STEM education and career pathways in contemporary educational discourse, driven by the growing demand for skilled professionals in science and technology fields (National Science Board, 2020). However, the substantial representation of students in the HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) strand, comprising 29.80% of the sample, highlights the continued relevance and importance of humanistic disciplines in shaping students' educational trajectories and career aspirations (Savery, 2018).

This demographic profile of the respondents provides a comprehensive understanding of the student population involved in the study, highlighting the distribution of sex, reading material preferences, and academic strands. Such detailed profiling is essential for contextualizing the subsequent analysis of syntactical structure competence.

Table 4. Level of Syntactical Structure Competence

Syntactical Structure Competence	Frequency	Percentage
No mastery	10	3.90
Low mastery	99	38.40
Moving towards mastery	124	48.10
Mastered	25	9.70

Table 4 provides a detailed analysis of the syntactical structure competence among the respondents. The data reveals a spectrum of proficiency levels, with the majority of students being in the intermediate stages of mastering syntactical structures. Specifically, 124 students, accounting for 48.10% of the respondents, are classified as "moving towards mastery." This indicates that nearly half of the students have a solid grasp of the core principles of syntactical structures, although they may still require guidance in unfamiliar contexts. This finding aligns with the study by Ruwane (2021), which found that high school students often reach a stage where they understand basic syntactical rules but need further practice to apply these rules independently in varied writing tasks.

A significant portion of the students, 99 individuals, or 38.40%, fall into the "low mastery" category. This suggests that a substantial number of students have only a basic understanding of syntactical elements and struggle to perform related tasks independently. This group likely recognizes relevant concepts but cannot execute them effectively. This result is supported by a study conducted by Juss and Doe (2022), which reported that students with low syntactical mastery often face challenges in writing tasks that require the application of more complex grammatical structures, underscoring the need for targeted instructional interventions to enhance their proficiency.

A smaller group, consisting of 25 students, or 9.70%, have "mastered" the syntactical structures. This group demonstrates a high level of competence, able to confidently and consistently use complex syntactical structures correctly in their writing, even in unfamiliar situations. This finding is corroborated by research from Brown (2020), which highlights that a minority of students typically achieve high syntactical competence through consistent practice and advanced language instruction, enabling them to perform tasks independently and accurately (Brown, 2020).

Lastly, a very small fraction of the respondents, 10 students, or 3.90%, fall into the "no mastery" category. These students exhibit a minimal understanding and use of correct syntactical structures, indicating a critical need for foundational support in their language learning. According to a study by Nguyen (2023), students in this category often have had minimal exposure to structured language learning environments, which significantly hampers their ability to grasp basic grammatical concepts (Nguyen, 2023).

This finding aligns with recent research highlighting the challenges students face in developing syntactical competence within academic contexts. For instance, a study by Dieyy (2017) conducted with a similar cohort of high school students found that the majority of participants demonstrated intermediate levels of syntactical proficiency, indicating ongoing developmental processes in syntactic acquisition. Furthermore, Dieyy (2017) observed that students who exhibited low mastery of syntactical structures often struggled with basic syntactic elements, such as subject-verb agreement and verb tense consistency, echoing the findings of the present study.

Moreover, the identification of a minority of students who have achieved mastery of syntactical structures highlights the potential for advanced linguistic development within the high school population. This finding is consistent with recent research by Garcia et al. (2022), which explored the factors contributing to syntactical mastery among high school students. Garcia et al. (2022) found that students who engaged in extensive reading and writing activities outside of the classroom demonstrated higher levels of syntactical proficiency, suggesting the importance of promoting independent literacy practices in supporting advanced syntactic development.

Furthermore, the identification of a small fraction of students with no mastery of syntactical structures highlights the urgent need for foundational support in language learning. Recent studies have highlighted the critical role of early intervention in addressing syntactical difficulties and preventing long-term language learning deficits (Makeena, 2023). This emphasizes the importance of providing explicit instruction on fundamental syntactical concepts and strategies for scaffolding students' syntactical development from the early stages of language acquisition. By implementing evidence-based instructional practices that target students' specific syntactical needs, educators can ensure that all students receive the support necessary to succeed in academic writing tasks.

Table 5. Difference on the level of Syntactical Structure Competence of the Respondents When They Are Grouped According to Their Sex

Syntactical Structure Competence	Group Means		T-value	P-value
	Male	Female		
	2.54	2.72	-2.04	0.22

Table 5 presents the difference in the level of syntactical structure competence of the respondents when grouped according to their sex. The analysis reveals a non-significant difference in syntactical structure competence between male and female respondents, indicated by a p-value greater than 0.05. Consequently, despite slight variations in mean scores, the observed difference is likely due to random variation rather than genuine differences in competence levels. Therefore, the results suggest that both male and female students perform comparably in terms of syntactical structure competence.

This finding aligns with recent research indicating no significant disparity in syntactical structure competence based on gender. For instance, Rouse (2021) found no significant gender-based variation in syntactical structure competence among high school students. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis supporting these results, demonstrating that gender does not significantly predict syntactical proficiency among adolescent learners. Despite minor differences in mean scores, both studies concluded that male and female students perform similarly in syntactical structure competence.

Table 6. Difference on the level of Syntactical Structure Competence of The Respondents When They Are Grouped According To Their Types of Materials Read

Syntactical Structure Competence	Group Means							T-value	P-value
	JRNL (a)	E-B (b)	S M (c)	OTHR (d)	E-B &SM (e)	SM&OT HR (f)	N,E-B,SM (g)		
	2.61[cg]	2.76[eg]	3.08[adef]	2.61[cg]	2.47[bcg]	2.50[cg]	3.30[abdef]	4.60	0.00

Table 6 presents the differences in the level of syntactical structure competence among respondents when grouped according to their types of reading materials. The syntactical structure competence scores were categorized based on the types of reading materials the respondents engaged with: Journals (JRNL), E-Books (E-B), Social Media (SM), Other materials (OTHR), a combination of E-Books and Social Media (E-B & SM), a combination of Social Media and Other materials (SM & OTHR), and a combination of Newspapers, E-Books, and Social Media (N, E-B, SM).

Thus, the types of reading materials students prefer to read and provided and used by teachers for them causes a difference in their syntactical structure competence. Students will have a varying level of syntactical structure competence depending on the different genres of learning resources or materials they prefer to read or given to them. Moreover, every type or genre of materials offers different faces of syntactical complexity. This further implies that the complexity of grammatical items embedded in such

types of reading materials affects and causes a difference on their level of syntactical structural competence level. This finding aligns with research by Brown and Clark (2024), who investigated the syntactical complexity of different text genres. They found that newspapers, e-books, and social media platforms each present unique syntactical features, such as varied sentence structures and linguistic conventions, which collectively enrich readers' syntactical competence.

The t-value of 4.60 and a p-value of 0.00 indicate that the differences in syntactical structure competence across the different groups are statistically significant. This suggests that the type of reading materials significantly influences the syntactical structure competence of the respondents.

According to a study by Wang and Guthrie (2021), students who engage with diverse reading materials, including newspapers, e-books, and social media, demonstrate higher levels of syntactical proficiency compared to those with limited exposure to varied texts. Their findings align with the results of the current study, which found that respondents who read a combination of newspapers, e-books, and social media achieved the highest mean score in syntactical structure competence. Moreover, the study by S. Li et al. (2022) supports the notion that exposure to a wide range of reading materials enhances students' language skills, including syntactical competence. S. Li et al. (2022) found that students who regularly read e-books and online articles exhibited more advanced syntactical structures in their writing compared to those who primarily engaged with traditional print materials.

Table 7. Difference on the level of Syntactical Structure Competence of the Respondents When They Are Grouped According to Their Strand

Syntactical Structure Competence	Group Means		T-Value	P-Value
	STEM	HUMSS		
	2.72	2.43	3.10 [ns]	0.38

Table 7 illustrates the disparity in the level of Syntactical Structure Competence among respondents when categorized based on their academic strand—STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences). The mean score for Syntactical Structure Competence among STEM students is 2.72, whereas for HUMSS students, it is 2.43.

Despite the observed difference in mean scores, the statistical analysis reveals a non-significant result (t-value = 3.10, p-value = 0.38). Therefore, the difference in Syntactical Structure Competence between STEM and HUMSS students is not statistically significant at the conventional threshold of 0.05. To further explore this finding, recent research by Garcia and Hernandez (2023) provides valuable insights. In their study, they examined the linguistic competence of students across different academic strands and found nuanced variations in syntactical proficiency. While STEM students often excel in technical writing and precision of language due to the nature of their disciplines, HUMSS students tend to demonstrate strengths in narrative and persuasive writing styles, which may require different syntactical structures. However, Garcia and Hernandez (2023) also noted that these differences were not always statistically significant, highlighting the complex interplay between academic strand and syntactical competence.

Additionally, a study by Kim et al. (2022) explored the impact of academic strand on language acquisition and found that while students in STEM fields may have a stronger foundation in technical language and syntax, HUMSS students often develop a broader repertoire of linguistic styles through exposure to diverse literary texts and critical analysis. These findings imply the importance of considering the unique linguistic demands of each academic strand and tailoring instructional approaches to support students' syntactical development effectively.

While the study indicates a slight difference in syntactical structure competence between students enrolled in STEM and HUMSS strands, it is important to consider the broader context of academic specialization and its impact on language proficiency. This finding aligns with recent research by Eslami et al. (2022), which explored the relationship between academic discipline and language skills among undergraduate students. Eslami et al. (2022) found that while students in STEM disciplines tend to demonstrate stronger syntactical skills due to the technical nature of their coursework, the differences in language proficiency between STEM and non-STEM students were not statistically significant. This corroborates the results of the current study, suggesting that academic specialization may have a nuanced influence on syntactical structure competence, but ultimately, students across different academic strands exhibit comparable levels of syntactical proficiency.

Table 8. Least Proficient Syntactical Structure Competence Basis for Contextualized Instructional Material

Syntactical Structure Competence	Frequency	Percentage
Transitional Devices	70	27.13
Verb Tenses	44	17.05
Subject Verb Agreement	144	55.81
Total	**258**	**100**

Table 8 presents the frequency and percentage of the syntactical structure competence domains including transitional devices, subject-verb agreement, and verb tenses. The data shows that 144 students, or 55.81% of the total population, highlighted that subject-verb agreement least proficient among the three domains. This shows that a significant portion in the teacher- made tests were answered incorrect.

This implies that these students' foundation for grammar is weak where subjects and verbs do not agree in number and person, leading to a consideration for a strong focus on providing intensive activities to master the subject-verb agreement rules.

5. Conclusion
Based on the findings of the study several key conclusions can be drawn that highlight its significance and relevance in educational contexts. Firstly, the study provides a detailed profile of senior high school students, revealing a predominant female presence and a notable preference for digital reading materials such as e-books and social media. This demographic and behavioral insight underscores the evolving nature of literacy practices among youth, emphasizing the importance of integrating digital literacy skills into educational frameworks.

Secondly, the analysis of syntactical structure competence among students indicates varying levels of proficiency. While a significant portion of students demonstrate an intermediate grasp of syntactic rules, a considerable number exhibit low mastery or minimal understanding. This highlights a critical need for targeted instructional strategies that focus on enhancing syntactical competence from foundational to advanced levels. Effective interventions should include explicit teaching of grammar rules, ample practice opportunities, and personalized feedback mechanisms to support students' language development.

Furthermore, the study reveals no significant gender-based differences in syntactical structure competence but does show variability based on the types of reading materials students engage with. Those exposed to a diverse range of texts, including newspapers, e-books, and social media, demonstrate higher syntactical proficiency. This finding underscores the role of varied reading materials in enriching students' language skills and suggests the importance of promoting diverse literacy practices within educational settings.

Additionally, while there is a slight variation in syntactical competence between STEM and HUMSS academic strands, this difference is not statistically significant. This implies that both streams require tailored approaches to language instruction that consider their unique disciplinary demands. STEM students may benefit from technical writing skills, whereas HUMSS students may excel in narrative and persuasive writing styles, each necessitating different syntactical competencies.

Hence, the study contributes valuable insights into the syntactical development of senior high school students and underscores the importance of comprehensive language instruction that addresses diverse learning needs. By enhancing syntactical competence through targeted interventions and promoting digital and print literacy skills, educators can better prepare students for academic success and lifelong language proficiency in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

5.1 Study Limitations and Future Research
One significant limitation of the study was its focus on only three grammatical areas: verb tenses, transitional devices, and subject-verb agreement. While this focus allowed for an in-depth exploration of these specific aspects of syntactical structure competence, it inherently restricted the scope of the findings. As a result, the study may not have provided a comprehensive evaluation of the overall grammatical proficiency of the participants. The narrow scope could have influenced the results by potentially overlooking other critical areas of syntactical structure that might affect academic writing.

Future research should address this limitation by expanding the range of grammatical items under investigation to include aspects such as clause structures, punctuation, and sentence variety. Additionally, incorporating a more diverse range of input materials,

such as different genres of writing and varying levels of instructional support, could contribute to a more robust analysis of syntactical competence. Another limitation was the reliance on a single instructional material designed for this study, which may not have accounted for individual differences in learning styles and needs among students. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of different types of instructional materials and teaching methods to identify which approaches best support syntactical structure competence.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of instructional interventions on students' grammatical skills. By addressing these areas, future research could build upon the findings of this study to develop more effective educational strategies and materials for enhancing students' grammatical proficiency in academic writing.

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