

Lexical Competence, Metacognitive Skills, and Writing Self-Efficacy as Links to Writing Performance among Struggling Grade 12 Writers

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ABSTRACT

Writing proficiency is a fundamental academic skill that requires the integration of vocabulary knowledge, strategic regulation, and confidence in written communication. However, limited studies have examined the combined roles of lexical competence, metacognitive skills, and writing self-efficacy in relation to writing performance among struggling senior high school writers. This study examined the relationships among lexical competence, metacognitive skills, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance in a group of 149 struggling Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) writers in a selected school in Bukidnon during the School Year 2025–2026. Using a quantitative descriptive–correlational design, data were collected through the Lexical Competence Test, the Metacognitive Strategies of Writing Survey (MSWS), the Questionnaire of English Writing Self-Efficacy (QEWSE), and an analytic rubric for writing performance. Descriptive statistics, canonical correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The results revealed that participants demonstrated a Fair level of lexical competence, with strength in word formation but weakness in collocation knowledge. Metacognitive skills were High, while writing self-efficacy was Moderate. Writing performance remained at a Fair level. Canonical correlation analysis indicated that lexical competence and metacognitive skills were significantly associated with writing performance, whereas writing self-efficacy was not. Multiple regression analysis revealed that the model was statistically significant; however, only lexical competence emerged as a significant predictor. The findings highlight the role of vocabulary knowledge in writing development. It is recommended that English teachers implement collocation-focused vocabulary instruction and structured writing supports to improve learners' writing performance.

Keywords: Lexical competence, Metacognitive skills, Writing self-efficacy, Writing performance, Struggling writers

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in communication and learning, enabling learners to access information, construct meaning, and express ideas effectively. Proficiency in English is particularly essential in academic contexts, as it supports critical thinking and the ability to perform complex tasks (Kamasak & Sahan, 2023). Among the macro skills, writing remains one of the most demanding, requiring the integration of vocabulary knowledge, grammar, organization, and clarity of expression (Braun, 2021).

Within the Philippine K–12 curriculum, writing is emphasized as a key skill. However, many learners continue to experience difficulties in writing, particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand, where writing tasks are frequent and analytically demanding. Prior studies and classroom observations indicate persistent challenges in coherence, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy among senior high school learners (Roxas, 2020; Urbano et al., 2021).

Writing performance is widely recognized as a multidimensional process influenced by linguistic, cognitive, and motivational factors (Graham, 2020). Lexical competence enables learners to express ideas clearly and accurately through appropriate vocabulary use. Metacognitive skills support planning, monitoring, and evaluating processes that regulate writing, while writing self-efficacy reflects learners' confidence in managing writing tasks.

Although these variables have been examined independently, limited research has explored how lexical competence, metacognitive skills, and writing self-efficacy are collectively associated with writing performance, particularly among struggling senior high school learners in the Philippine context. This gap highlights the need to examine writing performance as an outcome of interacting linguistic, cognitive, and motivational factors.

This study examined the relationships among lexical competence, metacognitive skills, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance among Grade 12 struggling HUMSS writers.

Research Questions

This study examined the associations among lexical competence, metacognitive skills, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance among Grade 12 struggling writers. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

What is the participants' level of lexical competence in terms of:

- 1.1 collocation knowledge; and
- 1.2 word formation?

What is the participants' level of metacognitive skills in terms of:

- 2.1 planning;
- 2.2 monitoring; and
- 2.3 evaluating?

What is the participants' level of writing self-efficacy in terms of:

- 3.1 ideation;
- 3.2 organization; and
- 3.3 mechanics?

What is the participants' level of writing performance in terms of:

- 4.1 coherence;
- 4.2 content;
- 4.3 grammar;
- 4.4 mechanics; and
- 4.5 vocabulary?

Are the participants' levels of lexical competence, metacognitive skills, and writing self-efficacy significantly associated with their writing performance?

Do lexical competence, metacognitive skills, and writing self-efficacy significantly influence writing performance?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationships among lexical competence, metacognitive skills, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance. The study was conducted among Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) learners in a selected school in Bukidnon during the School Year 2025–2026.

The participants were 149 struggling writers selected using criterion-based purposive sampling and simple random sampling. Learners were identified as struggling writers based on their performance in the English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) position paper, categorized as Fair or Poor using an analytic rubric.

Four instruments were used in the study. The Lexical Competence Test, adapted from Liontas et al. (2023), consisted of 20 multiple-choice items assessing word formation and collocation knowledge. The Metacognitive Skills of Writing Survey (MSWS) developed by Moqballi et al. (2020) contained 15 items divided into planning, monitoring, and evaluating, measured using a five-point Likert scale. The Questionnaire of English Writing Self-Efficacy (QEWS) developed by Sun (2021) consisted of 15 items measuring ideation, organization, and mechanics using a five-point Likert scale. Writing performance was assessed using an analytic rubric adapted from Sánchez and Salazar (2024), evaluating coherence, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary.

The instruments underwent content validation and pilot testing. Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, all of which met acceptable thresholds, and inter-rater reliability for writing performance was confirmed using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient.

Data were gathered in two phases: administration of the instruments and completion of a writing task. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, canonical correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

The study was limited to Grade 12 HUMSS struggling writers in one selected school and focused only on the variables examined in the study.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in terms of the levels of lexical competence, metacognitive skills, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance, as well as their relationships and predictive influence.

Problem 1. What is the participants' level of lexical competence, metacognitive skills, writing self-efficacy, and writing performance?

Table 1 presents the summary of the participants' levels across the four variables. Lexical competence was interpreted as Fair ($M = 10.07$, $SD = 2.98$). Metacognitive skills were interpreted as High ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.52$). Writing self-efficacy was interpreted as Moderate ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.51$). Writing performance was interpreted as Fair ($M = 10.46$, $SD = 4.08$).

Table 1 Summary of the Participants' Levels of the Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Lexical Competence	10.07	2.98	Fair
Metacognitive Skills	3.83	0.52	High
Writing Self-efficacy	3.29	0.51	Moderate
Writing Performance	10.46	4.08	Fair

Problem 2. Are the participants' lexical competence, metacognitive skills, and writing self-efficacy significantly associated with writing performance?

Ho₁: Lexical competence is not significantly associated with writing performance.

Ho₂: Metacognitive skills are not significantly associated with writing performance.

Ho₃: Writing self-efficacy is not significantly associated with writing performance.

Table 2 presents the results of the canonical correlation analysis. Lexical competence showed a significant association with writing performance ($R_c = 0.51$, $p < .001$). Metacognitive skills also showed a significant association ($R_c = 0.36$, $p = 0.004$). Writing self-efficacy did not show a significant association with writing performance ($p = 0.074$).

Table 2 Summary of Canonical Correlation Analysis

Variable	Rc	p-value	Interpretation
Lexical Competence	0.51	<.001	Significant
Metacognitive Skills	0.36	0.004	Significant
Writing Self-efficacy	0.29	0.074	Not Significant

Problem 3. Do lexical competence, metacognitive skills, and writing self-efficacy significantly influence writing performance?

Ho₄: Lexical competence does not significantly influence writing performance.

Ho₅: Metacognitive skills do not significantly influence writing performance.

Ho₆: Writing self-efficacy does not significantly influence writing performance.

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis. The model was statistically significant and explained 21.1% of the variance in writing performance. Lexical competence was found to be a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$). Metacognitive skills ($p = 0.301$) and writing self-efficacy ($p = 0.456$) were not significant predictors.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	β	p-value	Interpretation
Lexical Competence	0.39	<.001	Significant
Metacognitive Skills	0.10	0.301	Not Significant
Writing Self-efficacy	0.08	0.456	Not Significant

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal that learners demonstrated a Fair level of lexical competence and writing performance despite exhibiting High levels of metacognitive skills. This suggests that while learners are able to apply planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies during writing, these cognitive processes alone may not be sufficient to produce high-quality written outputs without adequate vocabulary knowledge. This finding supports previous studies which emphasize that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in writing development and overall writing quality (Heng et al., 2023; Abdelaziz et al., 2024).

The results further showed that lexical competence and metacognitive skills were significantly associated with writing performance. This indicates that learners who possess stronger vocabulary knowledge and those who actively regulate their writing processes tend to perform better in writing tasks. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that both linguistic competence and metacognitive regulation contribute to writing development (Ahmad & Rawshdeh, 2023; Lavigne et al., 2022). In contrast, writing self-efficacy did not show a significant association with writing performance, indicating that learners' perceived confidence does not necessarily correspond with their actual writing ability.

Although metacognitive skills and writing self-efficacy did not significantly predict writing performance in the regression model, earlier analyses revealed that metacognitive skills were significantly associated with writing performance. This may be explained by the presence of shared variance among the predictor variables. When the variables are considered collectively, lexical competence accounts for a larger portion of the variance in writing performance, reducing the unique contribution of metacognitive skills and writing self-efficacy. This indicates that while these variables are related to writing performance, their effects may be indirect or dependent on stronger predictors such as lexical competence.

Overall, the findings highlight that lexical competence plays the most significant role in writing performance. This underscores the importance of strengthening learners' vocabulary knowledge, particularly in the use of

appropriate word combinations, to improve the overall quality of writing.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that learners demonstrated a Fair level of lexical competence, with relative strength in word formation and weakness in collocation knowledge. Metacognitive skills were found to be High, while writing self-efficacy was Moderate. Despite these, writing performance remained at a Fair level, indicating that learners continue to experience difficulties across coherence, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary.

The results further showed that lexical competence and metacognitive skills were significantly associated with writing performance, whereas writing self-efficacy was not significantly associated.

When analyzed collectively, the regression model was statistically significant; however, only lexical competence emerged as a significant predictor of writing performance. Metacognitive skills and writing self-efficacy did not significantly influence writing performance.

Overall, lexical competence plays a central role in writing performance among struggling Grade 12 HUMSS writers.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that English teachers implement collocation-focused vocabulary instruction to strengthen learners' ability to use words appropriately in context. In addition, structured writing supports such as guided writing activities, modeling, and feedback mechanisms may be provided to enhance learners' writing performance.

Future researchers may conduct similar studies using larger or different populations to further validate the findings. Additional variables may also be explored to better understand other factors that may influence writing performance.

Compliance With Ethical Standards

This study adhered to ethical standards in research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from participants and their parents or guardians, and participation was voluntary with the option to withdraw at any time. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were strictly maintained, and data privacy was ensured. The well-being of the participants was safeguarded throughout the study. There was no conflict of interest in the conduct of this research, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. Plagiarism was strictly avoided, and no bias was introduced in the interpretation of the findings. Any use of artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this manuscript was limited to language refinement and did not influence the analysis or interpretation of the data.

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