

Morphological Awareness and Writing Proficiency in English of Grade 7 Students

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Abstract

This study examined the level of morphological awareness and writing proficiency in English among Grade 7 students and explored the relationship between these variables. Morphological awareness was investigated in terms of morphological analogy, morphological relatedness, and morphological structure, while writing proficiency was assessed through vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, organization, and content. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed using validated instruments to gather data from Grade 7 learners in a public secondary school. Findings revealed that students demonstrated moderate awareness of morphological analogy and morphological relatedness, while awareness of morphological structure was relatively lower. In terms of writing proficiency, most students performed within the novice to intermediate levels, indicating the need for further development of their writing skills. The study also found a significant positive relationship between morphological awareness and writing proficiency, suggesting that learners with stronger awareness of word formation and structure tend to perform better in writing tasks. The results underscore the important role of morphology in language learning and writing development. The study recommends the integration of explicit morphological instruction and regular writing activities in English classes to enhance students' language proficiency and overall academic performance.

Keywords: morphological awareness, morphological analogy, morphological relatedness, morphological structure, writing proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential language skill that enables learners to communicate ideas, construct knowledge, and participate effectively in academic and social contexts. However, many students encounter difficulties in writing due to limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, poor organization of ideas, and inadequate understanding of word formation processes. One factor associated with language development is morphological awareness, which refers to an individual's ability to understand and manipulate the meaningful units of language known as morphemes.

Morphological awareness contributes significantly to vocabulary development, reading comprehension, spelling, and writing proficiency. Learners who understand the structure of words can more effectively infer meanings, construct sentences, and express ideas in writing. Despite its importance, previous studies indicate that many learners

demonstrate low levels of morphological awareness, which may negatively affect their literacy skills.

In the Philippine context, studies have revealed that students often struggle with morphological tasks and writing performance. These challenges became more apparent during the implementation of distance learning modalities, where opportunities for immediate feedback and language practice were limited. Consequently, there is a need to investigate how students' awareness of morphology influences their writing proficiency.

This study aimed to determine the level of morphological awareness and writing proficiency of Grade 7 students and examine the significant relationship between these variables. The findings serve as a basis for developing instructional materials and interventions that enhance English language learning.

METHODS

Research design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component assessed the levels of morphological awareness and writing proficiency among the students, while the correlational component examined the relationship between morphological awareness and writing proficiency.

Participants and Sampling

The participants consisted of 30 Grade 7 students enrolled in a public secondary school in Pangasinan during the School Year 2021–2022. Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, purposive-convenience sampling was used to select the respondents.

Instrument

The study utilized two adapted instruments for data collection. The first was the Morphological Skills Test for Grade Seven Learners developed by Coggins (2016) and localized by the researcher. It consisted of 60 items divided into three parts: Morphological Analogy, Morphological Relatedness, and Morphological Structure, with 20 items each. Scores were interpreted as follows: 0–4 (Poorly Aware), 4.43–8 (Slightly Aware), 8.43–12 (Moderately Aware), 12.43–16 (Highly Aware), and 16.43–20 (Extremely Aware).

The second instrument was the Writing Proficiency Assessment adopted from Petajen-Brillantes (2014), which required students to write essays based on given topics. Writing outputs were evaluated in terms of Vocabulary, Grammar, Mechanics, Organization, and Content using a scoring rubric.

Both instruments were content-validated by research and education experts, and their recommendations were incorporated. The instruments were pilot-tested among 30 Grade Seven students to establish reliability. The researcher personally administered the instruments, and the responses were scored and interpreted according to the prescribed criteria.

Data collection

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Schools Division Office and the school administration. The researcher personally administered the tests following prescribed health and safety protocols. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality of responses was ensured.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, variance, skewness, and kurtosis, were used to describe the variables. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was employed to determine the relationship between morphological awareness and writing proficiency.

RESULTS

This study examined the morphological awareness and writing proficiency of Grade 7 students and determined the relationship between the two variables. The results revealed that the respondents demonstrated moderate awareness of morphological analogy and morphological relatedness, while their awareness of morphological structure was lower. In terms of writing proficiency, most students performed at the intermediate level. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship existed between morphological awareness and writing proficiency.

Table 1. Level of Morphological Awareness of the Students

Component	Mean	Description
Morphological Analogy	9.07	Moderately Aware
Morphological Relatedness	11.40	Moderately Aware
Morphological Structure	6.10	Slightly Aware
Overall Mean	8.86	Moderately Aware

The findings indicate that respondents demonstrated moderate levels of awareness of morphological analogy and relatedness, while their awareness of morphological structure was comparatively lower.

Table 2. Writing Proficiency Level of the Students

Writing Activity	Dominant Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage
Activity 1	Novice	12	40.0
Activity 2	Intermediate	19	63.3
Activity 3	Novice	19	63.3

The results show that most students performed within the novice and intermediate proficiency levels across the writing activities.

Table 3. Writing Proficiency According to Writing Components

Component	Mean Score
Vocabulary	3.83
Grammar	3.58
Mechanics	3.96
Organization	5.57
Content	11.66

Among the writing components, content obtained the highest mean score, while grammar obtained the lowest mean score. The findings suggest that students experienced challenges in language use and writing conventions.

Table 4. Overall Writing Proficiency of the Students

Mean Score	Proficiency Level
28.59	Intermediate

The overall writing proficiency of the respondents was at the intermediate level, indicating their ability to communicate simple ideas but with limitations in vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Table 5. Relationship Between Morphological Awareness and Writing Proficiency

Variables	r-value	Interpretation	Decision
Morphological Awareness and Writing Proficiency	0.700	High Positive Correlation	Significant

The computed correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive relationship between morphological awareness and writing proficiency. Students with higher levels of morphological awareness tended to demonstrate better writing performance.

Table 6. Summary of Findings

Variable	Major Finding
Morphological Awareness	Moderately Aware
Writing Proficiency	Intermediate
Relationship Between Variables	Significant Positive Relationship

Overall, the findings indicate that morphological awareness is associated with the writing proficiency of Grade 7 students. Higher awareness of word structure, relatedness, and analogy contributes to better writing performance.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that respondents demonstrated moderate awareness of morphological analogy and relatedness but only slight awareness of morphological structure. This suggests that although students understand word relationships and patterns, they still struggle to manipulate morphemes and recognize structural changes that affect word meaning and function. These findings support the claim that morphological awareness remains a developing literacy skill among secondary learners and may influence their language performance.

The results are consistent with the study of Silvano et al. (2019), which reported low morphological awareness among Filipino learners, particularly in tasks involving derivational morphology. Similarly, the present study found that students had difficulty with morphological structures, noun derivations, irregular forms, and word transformations. These findings imply that learners may require more explicit instruction in word formation processes to strengthen their understanding of English morphology.

In terms of writing proficiency, the respondents generally performed at the intermediate level. Although the students were able to communicate simple ideas in writing, weaknesses were observed in vocabulary use, grammar, mechanics, organization, and content development. The findings support those of Tutto and Ramos (2021) and Galalang (2020), who found that students often struggle with writing tasks because of limited

vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and inadequate organization of ideas. The results suggest that writing proficiency remains a challenge among English language learners and requires continuous instructional support.

The significant positive relationship between morphological awareness and writing proficiency indicates that students with higher levels of awareness of word structure and word formation tend to perform better in writing. This finding supports the studies of Fowler and Apel (2015) and Graves et al. (2012), which found that morphological knowledge contributes significantly to literacy development, including spelling, reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and written communication. The result further confirms that morphology serves as an important foundation for effective writing because it enables learners to understand and use words more accurately and meaningfully.

The findings provide important implications for English language instruction. Teachers may strengthen students' writing proficiency by integrating morphology-based activities into classroom instruction, such as word analysis exercises, affix identification, vocabulary-building tasks, and structured writing activities. Such interventions can improve students' understanding of word formation while simultaneously enhancing their ability to express ideas effectively in writing.

A limitation of this study is that it involved only a small number of participants from a single public secondary school. Consequently, the findings may not be generalized to all Grade 7 learners in other educational settings. In addition, the study focused primarily on morphological awareness and writing proficiency and did not investigate other factors that may influence writing performance, such as reading comprehension, motivation, socioeconomic status, and language exposure. Future studies may include larger samples and additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' writing development.

CONCLUSION

Based from the results, the following conclusions were drawn: A great majority of the students are slightly aware of morphology. The respondents' level is intermediate in terms of their writing proficiency. There is a significant high correlation between the morphological awareness and the English writing proficiency of the students.

In accordance with the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations were offered: The English teachers may find time to focus on teaching students the basic grammar through enrichment activities and conduct regular writing activities, especially injecting the morphological analogy, relatedness and structure so students would be used to it. The administrators may stimulate teachers to develop the learners' writing skills by providing more learning facilities, such as workbooks/worktexts, technology-based materials and implement a regular school-based competition regarding writing skills which requires all students to foster their writing capabilities in English. The Master Teachers for English may conduct collegial sessions among English language teachers to ensure and monitor their learners' morphological and writing skills progress by meeting individually with their teachers to discuss their students' learning progress and come up with a development plan in achieving optimal curriculum goals. The future researchers may conduct a thorough study in morphology and writing proficiency with greater number of populations to achieve more accurate result which can be used as basis in crafting effective instructional materials.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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