



21st Century Learning Skills and English Language Competence of Grade 8 Students: Basis for English Intervention Program

Aileen L. Hernandez

DepEd - Baco National High School

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.1224.0202>

ABSTRACT

In order to determine the relationship of 21st century learning skills --- such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, information & technology skills, and soft skill --- English language competence in terms of reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary, it is imperative to conduct this study. Quantitative research design was used to identify associations, correlations, and causal linkages among the study's variables. Descriptive statistics was used to measure the respondents' extent of English language competence and level of 21st century learning skills. Result showed that there is a direct relationship between the respondents' 21st century learning skills in terms of critical, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, information & technology and soft skill to the English language competence in terms of reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary. On the contrary, problem-solving skills and soft skill do not influence the learners' English language competence. Based on salient findings and conclusion of the study, the researcher recommends that students must be encouraged to seek guidance and support from their families and friends to establish a positive mental approach and desire for studying English. Teachers must also emphasize to the parents their important role in the education of their children. More studies are required to cover other skills under 21st - century learning skills, and there should be consideration of other discussions about English language competence.

Keywords: 21st century learning skills, English language competence, Descriptive statistics, quantitative research, correlations

Introduction

Change is constant and adaptability is essential to education. Educational content and delivery must meet the 21st-century needs and in order to secure a long-term future, numerous abilities, fields of knowledge, and individual and social aspirations are necessary.

The 21st-century talents comprise life skills, professional abilities, knowledge, habits, and attributes that help learners flourish in today's environment, notably in college, the workforce, and adulthood. This global movement stresses the skills students need to succeed in a fast-changing society. Teaching by the book doesn't prepare students for college, careers, and life. The "four Cs" of 21st-century learning criticism, communication, cooperation, and creativity are also included to help students develop their skills. Thus, students must adapt to our changing world and economy beyond math, social studies, and science. Soft skills are the key to success, according to higher education and workplace experts. Modern schools educate youngsters several skills for the future (Voogt, 2020).

The Philippine Republic Act 10533, known as the "Act Enhancing the Philippine Basic Education System," extends basic education by two years which reaffirms universal kindergarten, and sets curricular standards for the Department of Education. This educational reform includes 21st-century learning to help students flourish in the 21st century (DepEd Order No. 55, 2015; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). Globalization and technology are constantly changing our educational, professional, and personal lives.

According to the General Education English Language Curriculum, English is required in grades 3–12 as one of the core subjects in school, it helps students increase their English conversational skills and develop broad skills to live better, learn better, and keep learning throughout their lives. The General Education English Language Curriculum follows the Ministry of Education and Training's General Education curriculum, specifically: (1) Teaching and learning English in elementary grades (grades 3-5) helps children build their communication competencies through the four skills of hearing, talking, reading, and composing, with a concentration on speaking and listening. (2) English teaching and learning help lower secondary pupils develop and strengthen their communication skills, reasoning skills, and awareness of global cultures and societies, as well as their own. (3) Learning and teaching English at the higher secondary level builds on the fundamental and lower secondary curricula to improve English communication skills. With numerous languages and dialects in the world, English is the most commonly used. It is considered as the second language as it is widely used in schools in the Philippines to teach subjects such as Science, Mathematics, English and the like. Language shapes personality since communication drives our lives and improves us (Kotamraju, 2019).

Based on the findings of 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) among the 79 participating countries, Philippines got the lowest score in reading comprehension. With this challenging result, language teachers are more eager to come up with methods that will effectively improve students' proficiency in the aforementioned macro-skill.

A recent important study by Suyundikova et al., (2021) highlighted that without formal education, it is impossible to develop creative thinking abilities. The current world needs experts who can think creatively and exercise originality and flexibility when tackling challenging and unusual jobs. This is owing to the fact that people who are able to think creatively will be able to think more quickly, be more advanced thinkers, and disco.

In a study by Grigorenko (2018), found that problem-solving skills, innovation, and creativity are the assumptions of people that the labor market has. During the extreme change in education, through the use of modular distance learning modality, it was observed that the Grade 8 students did not perform well in English-related subjects wherein comprehension and understanding were some necessary skills to achieve the Most Essential Learning Competencies. As a result, during the implementation of face-to-face learning modality, students find it hard to embrace and cope up with the competencies being offered to them as well as the skills that need to be seen to their performance in class due to the two-year gap in the education settings. Moreover, the results of the assessment of reading comprehension level prescribed by Department of Education such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) conducted at the beginning of the school year were also not satisfying since the number of students that fell under frustration category has increased compared to the results before pandemic.

This study determined the relationship between the level of 21st century learning skills and English language competence of the target respondents. This study, which was based on the 21st century learning skills, was undertaken in an effort to identify and recognize the needs of the students and for every language classroom to achieve its goals.

Methodology

Quantitative research design was used to identify associations, correlations, and causal linkages among the study's variables. Descriptive statistics gave statistical details, whereas inferential statistics were used to deduce implications and draw conclusions from the data that had been collected.

The study was conducted in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines and focused on Grade 8 public junior high school students in the study. The responses, collected through the survey and questionnaire based on the formulated statement of the problem, have been successfully gathered.

Simple random sampling method was used to gather the data in this study using the Grade 8 students. The respondents were chosen to provide the most comprehensive answers.

The survey questionnaire was the main instrument for gathering the data of this study. The questionnaire is written in English with two parts. The Part I is the survey proper on the level of 21st Century Learning Skills of the respondents to their English Language Competence, and part II is the questionnaire proper that measured the competence of the respondents' in English Language. This study covered year 2023.

All empirical data gathered were subjected to the most appropriate statistical methods. The data gathered were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using frequency, percentage, mean, rank and multiple regression.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the level of competence of 21st century learning skills of the respondents in terms of critical thinking skills. Item number 1, which was the rank 1 got a mean of 2.56, followed by item number 3, (2.30), item number 4 (2.29), indicator , (2.21) and lastly item number 5 which has a mean of 2.12. It can also be gleaned from the table that the item got an overall mean of 2.29 and is at the low level of interpretation in terms of critical thinking skills. This means that the students find it hard to utilize the skills needed to think critically. Their level of competence in this skill is low and needed to improve.

Table 1

Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills of Grade 8 Students in terms of Critical Thinking Skills

A. Critical Thinking Skills	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
I utilize critical thinking skills to: 1. understand how knowledge or insights might transfer to other situations or contexts.	2.56	1	Agree	High
2. evaluate reasoning and evidence that support an argument	2.21	4	Disagree	Low
3. develop follow-up questions that focus or broaden inquiry	2.30	2	Disagree	Low

4. gather relevant and sufficient information from different sources	2.29	3	Disagree	Low
5. revise drafts and justify revisions with evidence	2.12	5	Disagree	Low
Overall	2.29		Disagree	Low

Table 2 presents that the respondents agreed in all items in this indicator and got a high level of interpretation. This also highlights that this indicator got a high level of competence of 21st century skills in terms of creativity skills and has an overall mean of 2.78.

Table 2

Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills of Grade 8 Students in terms of Creativity Skills

C. Collaboration Skills	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
I am confident in my ability to:				
1. help resolves issues without asking the teacher for help	2.53	5	Agree	High
2. follow rules for team decision-making	3.02	1	Agree	High
3. complete tasks without having to be reminded	2.54	4	Agree	High
4. help the team solve problems and manage conflicts	2.87	3	Agree	High
5. interact with team members effectively	2.99	2	Agree	High
Overall	2.78		Agree	High

It is seen from the table 3 that the respondents agreed in all the items for this indicator. The respondents are confident that they have the ability to settle issues without teacher's supervision. With the the mean of 3.02, the respondents confidently agreed that they can go after rules for the team's welfare. Additionally, in item number five (5), with the mean of 2.99, the respondents agreed that interact with team members effectively. Moreover, the respondents can also help the team solve and manage conflicts. It also has a high level of interpretation as can be seen in item number four (4), which has a mean of 2.87. It is very important and a must to collaborate with others to produce or create something and to achieve a common goal. Also, in item number three (3), with a mean of 2.54, respondents agreed that they can complete tasks without having to be reminded and lastly in item number 1, with a mean of 2.53 students are able to resolve issues without asking the help of the teacher.

Table 3

Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills of Grade 8 Students in terms of Collaboration Skills

C. Collaboration Skills	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
I am confident in my ability to:				
1. help resolves issues without asking the teacher for help	2.53	5	Agree	High
2. follow rules for team decision-making	3.02	1	Agree	High
3. complete tasks without having to be reminded	2.54	4	Agree	High
4. help the team solve problems and manage conflicts	2.87	3	Agree	High
5. interact with team members effectively	2.99	2	Agree	High
Overall	2.78		Agree	High

The table 4 highlights that item number one (1) with the mean of 2.53, agreed in being confident with their ability to examine all the facts and put them in order. This item also has a high level of interpretation. However, item numbers two to five (2-5) are at a low level of interpretation under problem-

solving skills. With the mean of 2.46, it says that students are not a quick learner, and they don't like theoretical, futuristic concepts. In item number 3, with a mean of 2.39, it shows that students are being upset by the problems. Next is item number 2, with a mean of 2.34, students can't solve problem rapidly. This indicator got an overall mean of 2.40 and fell under low level of interpretation.

Table 4**Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills of Grade 8 Students in terms of Problem-Solving Skills**

D. Problem-Solving Skills	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
I am confident in my ability to: 1. When I face a problem, I try to analyze all the facts and put them in systematic order.	2.53	1	Agree	High
2. I normally solve problems quickly without wasting a lot of time on details.	2.34	4	Disagree	Low
3. I don't let problems upset me, no matter how difficult they are.	2.39	3	Disagree	Low
4. I tend to focus on immediate problems and let others worry about the distant future.	2.29	5	Disagree	Low
5. I am a quick learner, but I don't like theoretical, futuristic concepts	2.46	2	Disagree	Low
Overall	2.40		Disagree	Low

Table 5 presents that all items were interpreted as high level where in 2.89 as an overall mean of the respondents agreed in the given items for this indicator. For item number two (2) having the highest mean of 3.17, respondents believed that they can learn many new things with the use of technology. With a mean of 2.98 in item number 1, students agreed that they can improve their language skills using the benefits of the internet. Item numbers 3 and 5, with the same mean of 2.86, respondents agreed that they would be a better learner if I knew how to use technology properly. And that they are very confident when it comes to working with technology at home/ at work/ at university/school. And lastly for item number 4, having a mean of 2.58, respondents also agreed that they know how to use technology in class. Based on the responses, the students are at a high level of competence of 21st century skills in terms of information & technology skill.

Table 5**Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills of Grade 8 Students in terms of Information & Technology Skills**

E. Information & Technology Skills	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
1. I believe that I can improve my language skills using the benefits of the internet.	2.98	2	Agree	High
2. I know that technology can help me to learn many new things.	3.17	1	Agree	High
3. I would be a better learner if I knew how to use technology properly.	2.86	3.5	Agree	High
4. As a student, I know how to use technology in class.	2.58	5	Agree	High
5. I'm very confident when it comes to working with technology at home/ at work/ at university/school.	2.86	3.5	Agree	High
Overall	2.89		Agree	High

Table 6 presents that n item numbers 1-3, with a mean of 3.14, 3.11 and 2.51, respondents agreed that they show a lot of compassion to others, they also believed that people can be more brilliant and that they utter words clearly and succinctly. Showing a lot of empathy towards others means that respondents have the ability to comprehend another person's thoughts and feelings in a situation from their perspective rather than their own. However in item number 4, having a mean of 2.39, respondents did not agree that they have a good self-control. This shows that the respondents find it difficult to

control their emotions, impulses, or behaviors to achieve a greater goal. Lastly, in item number 5, with a mean of 2.30, respondents also did not agree that they are associated in positive out-of-school undertakings.

Table 6

Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills of Grade 8 Students in terms of Soft Skills

F. Soft Skills	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
1. I show a lot of empathy towards others.	3.14	1	Agree	High
2. I think that people can become more intelligent.	3.11	2	Agree	High
3. I speak clearly and succinctly	2.51	3	Agree	High
4. I have a good self-control.	2.39	4	Disagree	Low
5. I engage in positive out-of-school activities.	2.30	5	Disagree	Low
Overall	2.69		Agree	High

Based on table 7, among the six indicators, four (4) are at a high level of interpretation and two (2) are at low. Indicator number 5 which is the Information & Technology Skill earned the number 1 rank having a mean of 2.89. It was followed by collaboration skills with a mean of 2.78, creativity skills, having a mean of 2.71, and then Soft skills, with a mean of 2.69, Problem-solving skills, 2.40 and lastly critical thinking skills with a mean of 2.29. The results showed that although there are some items being disagreed by the students in two of the given indicators, still the students are at the high level of interpretation in their level of competence of 21st century skills with the mean of 2.63.

Table 7

Summary Table of Level of Competence of 21st Century Learning Skills Of Grade 8 Students

Indicators	Mean	Rank	Description	Interpretation
1. Critical Thinking Skill	2.29	6	Disagree	Low
2. Creativity Skill	2.71	3	Agree	High
3. Collaboration Skill	2.78	2	Agree	High
4. Problem-Solving Skill	2.40	5	Disagree	Low
5. Information & Technology Skill	2.89	1	Agree	High
6. Soft Skill	2.69	4	Agree	High
Overall	2.63		Agree	High

It is seen from table 8 that 3 students or 2% got 9 to 10 scores with a grading scale of 90-100 interpreted as outstanding and considered as advanced learners while there are 19 proficient students who got 7 to 8 scores or 11% and a grading scale of 85-89 and interpreted as very satisfactory. In addition, there are 51 students who are considered in their approaching skills stage who got 28% with the scores of 5 to 6 and a corresponding grading scale of 80 - 84 and interpreted as satisfactory. There are 74 developing students who got 41% with the scores ranging to 3 to 4 and an equivalent grade of 75 - 79 and interpreted as fairly satisfactory while 32 out of 179 respondents got 0 to 2 scores or 18% and has an equivalent grade of 70 -74 and interpreted as did not meet expectations. Based on the scale, 41% of the respondents got scores ranging from 75 -79 or 3 to 4 and 18% of the respondents got a failing grade of 70 - 74 in the reading comprehension test.

The result implies that the current batch of Grade 8 Junior High School students are mostly at fairly satisfactory level of interpretation under reading comprehension. Students who got a failing grade and even those who fall under developing stage may take enhancement activities to improve their reading comprehension.

Table 8

Level of English Language Competence of Grade 8 Students in terms of Reading Comprehension

Grading Scale	Range	Frequency	Percentage	Description	Interpretation
---------------	-------	-----------	------------	-------------	----------------

90 – 100	9 to 10	3	2%	Advanced	Outstanding
85 – 89	7 to 8	19	11%	Proficient	Very Satisfactory
80 – 84	5 to 6	51	28%	Approaching Skills	Satisfactory
75-79	3 to 4	74	41%	Developing	Fairly Satisfactory
70-74	0 to 2	32	18%	Beginning	Did not meet expectations
TOTAL		179	100%		

Based on the table 9, 7 students

or 4% got 9 to 10 scores with an equivalent grade of 90-100, interpreted as outstanding and considered as advanced learners while there are 35 proficient students who got 7 to 8 scores or 20% and a grade of 85-89 and interpreted as very satisfactory. Additionally, there are 60 students who are in approaching skills stage who got 34% with the scores of 5 to 6 and a corresponding grade of 80 - 84 and interpreted as satisfactory. There are 48 students under developing stage who got 27% with the scores ranging to 3 to 4 and an equivalent grade of 75 - 79 and interpreted as fairly satisfactory while 29 out of 179 respondents got 0 to 2 scores or 16% and has an equivalent grade of 70 -74 and interpreted as beginners and did not meet expectations. It can also be gleaned that only 4% of the respondents or 7 students are in advanced level and 20% or 35 students are proficient while 27% of the respondents are in developing stage who got scores ranging from 75 -79 or 3 to 4 and 16% of the respondents got a failing grade of 70 - 74 and considered as beginners or did not meet expectations in grammar test.

The result implies that the current batch of G8 Junior High School students are mostly at satisfactory level of interpretation in terms of grammar. Students who got a failing grade and even those who fall under developing stage may take enhancement activities to improve their grammar.

Table 9

Level of English Language Competence of Grade 8 Students in terms of Grammar

Grading Scale	Range	Frequency	Percentage	Description	Interpretation
90 – 100	9 to 10	7	4%	Advanced	Outstanding
85 – 89	7 to 8	35	20%	Proficient	Very Satisfactory
80 – 84	5 to 6	60	34%	Approaching Skills	Satisfactory
75-79	3 to 4	48	27%	Developing	Fairly Satisfactory
70-74	0 to 2	29	16%	Beginning	Did not meet expectations
TOTAL		179	100%		

Based on table 10, 5 students or 3% got 9 to 10 scores with a grading scale of 90-100 interpreted as outstanding and considered as advanced learners while there are 14 students who fall under proficient level and got 7 to 8 scores or 8% and a grading scale of 85-89 and interpreted as very satisfactory. Also, there are 55 students who are considered in their approaching skills stage who got 31% with the scores of 5 to 6 and a corresponding grading scale of 80 - 84 and interpreted as satisfactory. There are 56 students under developing stage who got 31% with the scores ranging to 3 to 4 and an equivalent grade of 75 - 79 and interpreted as fairly satisfactory while 49 out of 179 respondents got 0 to 2 scores or 27% and got an equivalent grade of 70 -74.

The result implies that the current batch of G8 Junior High School students are mostly at fairly satisfactory and satisfactory level of interpretation in terms of vocabulary. Students who got a failing grade and even those who fall under developing stage may take enhancement activities to improve their vocabulary.

Table 10

Level of English Language Competence of Grade 8 Students of in terms of Vocabulary

Grading Scale	Range	Frequency	Percentage	Description	Interpretation
90 – 100	9 to 10	5	3%	Advanced	Outstanding
85 – 89	7 to 8	14	8%	Proficient	Very Satisfactory
80 – 84	5 to 6	55	31%	Approaching Skills	Satisfactory
75-79	3 to 4	56	31%	Developing	Fairly Satisfactory

70-74	0 to 2	49	27%	Beginning	Did not meet expectations
TOTAL		179	100%		

Based on table 11, it can be gleaned that the computed F-values of 3.6263 for reading comprehension, 6.8969 for grammar, and 3.9593 for vocabulary are all greater than the critical F-value of 2.1516 using 0.05 level of significance with 6 and 172 degrees of freedom, thus the null hypotheses attached to this is rejected. There is a positive low to moderate correlation between the level of 21st century learning skills and English language competence of Grade 8 students and therefore, there is a significant relationship between the variables being correlated.

Table 11

Regression Results Between the Level of K to 12 21st Century Learning Skills and English Language Competence of Grade 8 students

English Language Competence	R	R ²	Computed F-Value	Interpretation		
				Direction	Degree	Significance
Reading Comprehension	0.3351	0.1123	3.6263	Positive	Low Correlation	Significant
Grammar	0.4404	0.1939	6.8969	Positive	Moderate Correlation	Significant
Vocabulary	0.3484	0.1214	3.9593	Positive	Low Correlation	Significant
Critical F - Value: 2.1516			Degrees of Freedom: 6 and 172			

As gleaned from table 12, the degree of influence of the 21st century learning skills particularly critical thinking skill to reading comprehension is 20.59%, 14.24% to grammar and 9.17%. This shows that there is a highest degree of influence in reading comprehension in all of the English language competences.

The results imply that among the given learning skills, soft skill has the great impact in the language competence since the given results were all negative. Next to it is the problem-solving skill that has negative results in both reading comprehension and grammar.

Table 12

Degree of Influence of the 21st Century Learning Skills to English Language Competence

21st Century Learning Skills	English Language Competence		
	Reading Comprehension	Grammar	Vocabulary
a. Critical Thinking Skill	20.59%	14.24%	9.17%
b. Creativity Skill	7.43%	5.99%	11.99%
c. Collaboration Skill	7.60%	12.15%	-6.73%
d. Problem-Solving Skill	-5.13%	-5.83%	9.72%
e. Information & Technology Skill	1.39%	19.13%	10.90%
f. Soft Skill	-12.45%	-8.19%	-4.98%

The overall level of competence of 21st century learning skills of selected Grade 8 students was in a high level. Though the respondents have a low level of interpretation in terms of Critical Thinking Skills and Problem-Solving Skills, they still got high level in terms of creativity, collaboration, information and technology and soft skills. There is a significant relationship between the level of K to 12 21st Century Learning Skills in terms of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, information & technology and soft skills and the level of English Language Competence of selected Grade 8 Students. The level of 21st century learning skills had a positive relationship with the level of English Language Competence of selected Grade 8 Students in the School Year 2022-2023.

References

Grigorenko, E. (2020). Creativity: a challenge for contemporary education, *Comparative Education*, 55:1, 116-132 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2018.1541665>

Kotamraju M. (2019). Innovative Teaching Methods in English Language Laboratory for B. Tech Students. *Journal for research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching. JRSP-ELT*, Issue 11, Vol. 3, 2020

Suyundikova, M. (2021). Prerequisites Defining the Trajectory of Creative Thinking The Education and Science Journal <https://doi.org/10.17853/1994-5639-2021-3-100>

Voogt, J.(2020). 21st century skills discussion paper. Technological pedagogical content knowledge – a review of the literature University of Twente. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2012.00487>