

Vocabulary Skills of Grade 5 Learners Relative to their Speaking and Writing Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the vocabulary skills of Grade 5 learners in relation to their speaking and writing performance and determined the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies in enhancing these communication skills. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 22 Grade 5 learners from OLPC–San Manuel Inc. during the School Year 2025–2026. Data were gathered through documentary analysis of learners’ outputs, teacher observation checklists, and profile information obtained from School Form 1 (SF1). Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, Chi-square test, and Pearson r correlation were employed to analyze the data. Findings revealed that learners initially demonstrated a Satisfactory level of performance in vocabulary, speaking, and writing during the profiling assessment, indicating the presence of

basic communication skills but limited mastery. Learners encountered challenges in vocabulary usage, particularly in grammatical forms and word application, as well as in speaking due to anxiety and lack of confidence, and in writing due to difficulties in organization and coherence. However, the implementation of scaffolding strategies significantly improved learners’ performance across all domains. Most learners achieved Very Satisfactory to Outstanding levels after the intervention, demonstrating the effectiveness of structured and guided instructional support. Furthermore, results showed that there was a significant relationship among vocabulary, speaking, and writing skills, indicating that improvement in one area positively influences the others. In contrast, learners’ profile variables such as age, gender, and language used at home were found to have no significant relationship with their overall performance. The study concludes that scaffolding strategies play a crucial role in enhancing learners’ communication skills by providing systematic support that gradually leads to independent learning. It highlights that instructional quality, rather than learner background, is a key factor in improving academic performance.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Skills, Speaking Performance, Writing Performance, Scaffolding Strategies, Language Development, Communication Skills, Instructional Intervention*

INTRODUCTION

The development of 21st-century competencies places strong emphasis on communication skills that enable learners to understand information, express ideas, and participate effectively in academic and social contexts. Vocabulary is a central component of this competence because knowledge of words supports comprehension and provides learners with the linguistic resources needed for oral and written expression.

The study is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. In the Philippine context, the K to 12 Basic Education Program and related curriculum policies emphasize functional literacy and communicative competence. DepEd’s English curriculum likewise treats language as an essential instrument of thought and communication, while classroom assessment policies encourage authentic demonstrations of learning.

Despite these curricular expectations, the learners examined in the present study showed areas of difficulty in vocabulary use, speaking confidence, and writing organization. The initial profiling assessment indicated that most learners were only at the Satisfactory level in vocabulary and speaking. Writing performance was somewhat stronger for some learners, but many remained within the Satisfactory and Fairly Satisfactory categories. The classroom evidence also showed difficulty with inflections and unfamiliar words, anxiety and lack of confidence during speaking, and grammar and organization during writing.

These conditions point to a gap between possessing basic linguistic knowledge and using that knowledge effectively in communication. Scaffolding provides a structured response to this gap by giving learners temporary support through modeling, guided practice, prompts, feedback, and gradual release of responsibility. The present study therefore investigated learners' vocabulary, speaking, and writing performance, the challenges they encountered, the relationships among the three domains, and the relationship between scaffolding activities and performance.

Literature Review

Jiang, Logan, and Jia (2018) explained that learners in the intermediate grades undergo an important stage of linguistic and cognitive development in which vocabulary growth becomes increasingly structured. According to the authors, developing vocabulary supports higher-order language tasks such as inference, explanation, and organized expression. Anaya et al. (2026) further emphasized that the frequency, quality, and context of language exposure influence how effectively bilingual school-age learners develop vocabulary. In multilingual settings, meaningful exposure to English is therefore important in helping learners move from basic language knowledge toward functional communication.

Vocabulary development

Idham, Qadir, and Mugair (2025) emphasized that vocabulary knowledge is closely connected with learners' ability to express ideas clearly and accurately, particularly in writing. Jiang et al. (2018) likewise linked vocabulary growth with broader grammatical development and awareness of word relationships. Schmidt (2024) noted that more complex aspects of vocabulary, including prefixes, suffixes, inflections, and other morphological features, are more difficult to master and require explicit instruction and repeated exposure. These authors collectively show that vocabulary development involves not only knowing word meanings but also understanding and using words accurately in context.

Speaking and writing performance

Al-Azzawi (2026) explained that speaking performance depends on vocabulary knowledge, confidence, and the ability to process language in real time; anxiety may therefore limit learners' participation and fluency. Miller (2026) described writing as a cognitively demanding process involving planning, organization, drafting, and revision, which requires learners to manage grammar, vocabulary, and ideas simultaneously. Mahapatra (2024) further connected vocabulary knowledge with writing quality, while Patel (2025) discussed the interrelated cognitive processes involved in speaking and writing. Together, these authors support the view that vocabulary, speaking, and writing should be developed as interconnected language competencies.

Scaffolding as instructional support

Mulyana et al. (2024) defined scaffolding as temporary instructional support that helps learners perform tasks beyond their independent capability, with support gradually reduced as competence develops. Kessler (2024) explained that scaffolding can reduce cognitive demands through tools such as models and sentence frames, allowing learners to focus on language meaning and use. Fan, Yang, and Huang (2024) cautioned that scaffolding should be adjusted as learners progress because students may continue to experience difficulty with increasingly complex language tasks. These studies establish scaffolding as a structured and adaptive approach to language learning.

The Department of Education (2016), through the K to 12 English Curriculum Guide, emphasizes language as a central means of communication and thought and requires learners to develop language skills through meaningful oral and written activities. The Department of Education (2015), through DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, likewise promotes authentic and performance-based classroom assessment. Republic Act No. 10533 (Republic of the Philippines, 2013) provides the policy foundation for the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the development of functional literacy and communication skills. Cruz (2025) observed that Filipino learners may have limited opportunities to use English outside school, while Reyes (2025) highlighted difficulties in applying vocabulary accurately within grammatical and contextual structures. These local sources reinforce the need for contextualized instruction and sustained opportunities to use English in meaningful situations.

Axrorova (2025) found that scaffolding techniques such as modeling, guided practice, peer collaboration, and teacher feedback can improve writing proficiency, confidence, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. Naibaho (2019) similarly reported that scaffolding improved speaking achievement by providing learners with guided support for developing fluency and confidence. Al-Ebadi (2016) found positive effects of scaffolding in grammar instruction, particularly in supporting productive language use. Sarmiento-Campos et al. (2022) further demonstrated that scaffolding can reduce fear of making mistakes and enhance speaking achievement, while Abdulaal et al. (2024) reported that teacher and peer scaffolding improved vocabulary learning and reading comprehension.

Cruz (2025) reported that Filipino Grade 5 learners may experience difficulty with vocabulary use because of limited English exposure and reliance on memorized forms. Dela Rosa (2024) found that structured speaking activities, prompts, cues, and teacher guidance can support learners' spoken discourse competence. Dela Cruz (2025) identified organization, coherence, and grammar as recurring challenges in learners' writing. Martinez (2019) reported that instructional scaffolding improved scholarly writing performance through structured support that was gradually withdrawn. Kabigting and Alipasa (2025) found that learners performed better in structured and straightforward language tasks but experienced difficulty with more complex and contextualized language use. These local studies provide direct support for examining vocabulary, speaking, writing, challenges, and scaffolding together in the present study.

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive procedures were used to determine learners' performance and challenges, while correlational procedures were used to examine relationships among vocabulary, speaking, writing, profile variables, challenges, and scaffolding-related performance.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at OLPC–San Manuel Inc., San Manuel, Isabela, during School Year 2025–2026. The participants were 22 Grade 5 learners. Total enumeration sampling was used because all learners in the class were included.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were 22 Grade 5 learners. Total enumeration sampling was used because all learners in the class were included.

Research Instrument

A documentary analysis checklist was used to evaluate classroom outputs and performance tasks in vocabulary, speaking, and writing. A teacher observation checklist was used to identify challenges. Profile information was obtained from School Form 1, and standardized scoring rubrics were used to provide consistent evaluation of learner outputs.

Data Gathering

Permission was secured from the school head. Profile data were obtained from School Form 1, while learners' vocabulary, speaking, and writing outputs from the first and second grading periods were examined. Classroom observations were conducted continuously to identify challenges. The collected data were then tabulated, interpreted, and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage distributions described profile variables and performance levels across scaffolding activities. Average grades summarized overall performance. Frequency and ranking distributions identified challenges. Chi-square tests examined relationships between overall performance and profile variables, while Pearson's r examined relationships among language skills, challenges, and scaffolding-related performance.

Ethical Consideration

The study secured school permission, protected respondent identities, used collected information only for academic purposes, and reported findings accurately. The activities were part of regular instructional processes and were designed to support rather than disadvantage learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

Most were 10 years old, male, and used Filipino at home. These characteristics provide the context in which the learners developed English vocabulary, speaking, and writing skills.

Performance before scaffolding activities

Before the scaffolding activities were introduced, most learners performed at the Satisfactory level in vocabulary and speaking. In writing, most of the learners reached the Outstanding level, although many were still at the Satisfactory and Fairly Satisfactory levels. Overall, the results suggest that the learners already had basic language skills, but they still needed appropriate guidance and structured support to improve their confidence and use of language effectively and consistently.

Performance after scaffolding activities

Across the first and second grading periods, learners generally demonstrated high performance in structured vocabulary, speaking, and writing activities. In vocabulary, strong performance was evident in analogy, adverbs, suffixes, and other more accessible language tasks, while more complex grammatical structures such as noun forms and pronouns remained comparatively difficult. Speaking performance improved particularly in structured activities such as role-playing, storytelling, news reporting, and introductory speech, although fluency and confidence continued to require support. Writing performance was generally strong in structured tasks such as sentence construction, narrative writing, letters, news reports, and explanation texts.

Scaffolding can help learners handle tasks that exceed their independent performance. The results also suggest that support is especially useful when tasks require contextual application, organization, and confidence.

Challenges encountered

The learners' difficulties were more pronounced in particular aspects of language use than in general vocabulary availability. In vocabulary, grammatical form or inflections ranked first, followed by exposure to unfamiliar or new words. In speaking, psychological factors, anxiety, fear, and lack of confidence were the most prominent challenge. In writing, grammar and sentence structure and organizing ideas in a paragraph tied as the leading difficulties. These findings indicate that effective language instruction should address both linguistic accuracy and affective or organizational demands.

Relationships between profile and performance

Results showed no significant relationships between overall performance and age, sex, language used at home, or the profiling assessment score in either grading period. Thus, within this group, the observed performance differences were not statistically associated with the profile variables examined.

Relationships among vocabulary, speaking, and writing

Results showed significant relationships among the three language domains in both grading periods. Vocabulary and speaking, vocabulary and writing, and speaking and writing. This finding supports the view that language competencies develop in an integrated manner: vocabulary provides lexical resources for oral and written expression, while speaking and writing provide contexts in which vocabulary is applied and strengthened.

Relationship between challenges and performance

The challenges encountered by the learners were not significantly related to their overall performance in vocabulary, speaking, and writing. Although learners reported or demonstrated anxiety, grammatical difficulties, and organizational problems, these difficulties did not prevent them from reaching satisfactory to outstanding performance levels after the instructional activities.

Relationship between scaffolding activities and performance

In contrast to profile variables and challenges, scaffolding activities were significantly related to performance in vocabulary, speaking, and writing in both grading periods. All reported p-values were .000. This result identifies scaffolding as the instructional factor most clearly associated with the learners' improved performance in the present study.

DISCUSSION

The findings emphasize the importance of treating vocabulary, speaking, and writing as interconnected language competencies. The significant relationships among the three domains in both grading periods emphasizing vocabulary as a foundation for expressive language and the shared cognitive demands of oral and written production.

The challenges also provide instructional implications. Inflections and other grammatical forms require learners to understand how words change according to grammatical context. Speaking anxiety can restrict participation even when learners possess adequate language knowledge. Writing difficulties in grammar and paragraph organization indicate that learners need explicit support not only in sentence correctness but also in connecting ideas into coherent texts.

The findings therefore suggest that structured, repeated, and appropriately adjusted support can help Grade 5 learners translate developing vocabulary knowledge into more effective speaking and writing performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Grade 5 learners initially possessed foundational but uneven vocabulary, speaking, and writing abilities, with many learners at the Satisfactory level during profiling. Following scaffolding activities, learners generally achieved Very Satisfactory to Outstanding performance across the three language domains. The learners' age, sex, language used at home, and initial profiling score were not significantly related to their overall performance. In contrast, vocabulary, speaking, and writing were significantly interrelated, indicating that development in one domain is associated with development in the others. The challenges identified by the learners were not significantly related to their overall performance, suggesting that the presence of difficulties did not prevent achievement when instructional support was available. Most importantly, scaffolding activities were significantly related to performance in vocabulary, speaking, and writing in both grading periods.

Thus, the findings support the continued use of structured scaffolding to help learners move from guided practice toward more independent and confident language use.

Recommendations

1. School administrators and school heads may support the continued use of scaffolding-based language interventions and provide teachers with opportunities for professional development on vocabulary, speaking, and writing instruction.
2. Teachers may integrate modeling, guided practice, sentence frames, structured oral tasks, and gradual release of responsibility into regular English lessons, with additional practice for inflections, grammar, fluency, and paragraph organization.
3. Teachers may create supportive speaking environments that reduce fear of mistakes and provide low-risk opportunities for learners to rehearse before performing in front of the class.
4. Learners may be encouraged to read, listen, speak, and write in English regularly and to apply newly learned vocabulary in meaningful sentences and conversations.
5. Parents may support language development at home through reading, conversations, and exposure to age-appropriate English materials.
6. Future researchers may replicate the study with larger samples, other grade levels, additional schools, or longitudinal designs and may examine variables such as motivation, learning styles, and parental support.

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