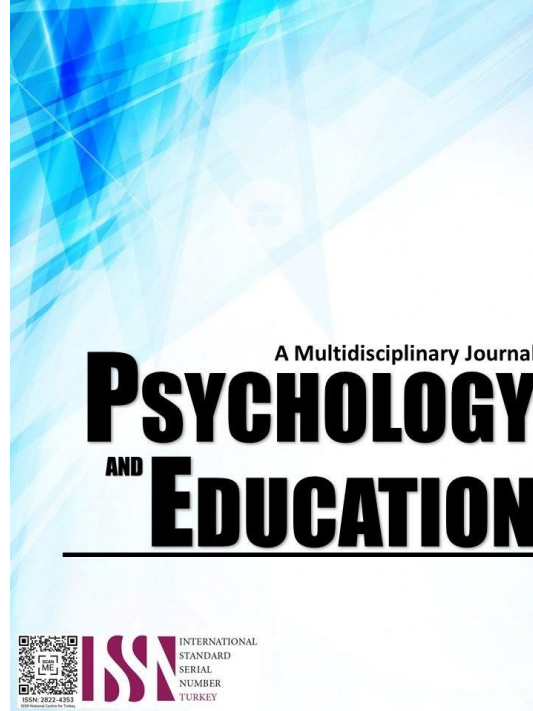


LANGUAGE LEARNING INVESTMENT AND STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH



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Language Learning Investment and Students' Communicative Competence in English

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Abstract

Investing in language learning is necessary, especially to improve communicative competence in English. This study was undertaken to determine the relationship between the language learning investment and communicative competence in English of Grade 9 students of Palo 19 National High School. The study explored various facets of language learning investment, including educational resources, technology and tools, academic and personal commitment, and supplementary activities. The study also examines the students' performance in strategic, grammatical, socio-linguistic, and discourse competencies. Using descriptive statistics, the study presented the levels of students' language learning investment and communicative competence. The findings showed that students display moderate to high investment across all areas, with personal commitment showing the highest level of engagement. Meanwhile, students demonstrate competent communicative abilities, with strategic competence being their strongest area. There was a significant positive relationship between language learning investment and communicative competence, suggesting that increased investment in language learning activities leads to higher levels of communicative proficiency. These results align with the Investment Theory in language learning, emphasizing the importance of sustained engagement and commitment in language acquisition. Based on the result of this study, an instructional primer has been developed to further enhance students' language learning experiences. This primer integrates diverse learning strategies, including hands-on activities, problem-solving exercises, and real-world applications, to promote greater engagement and enhance students' English proficiency.

Keywords: *language learning, personal commitment, socio-linguistic, english, communicative competence*

Introduction

Educational authorities worldwide have been developing national standards-based outcomes assessment and reporting systems to evaluate language acquisition in recent years. These systems serve as accountability measures and track individual progress in language proficiency. However, their implementation has often faced political, technical, and operational challenges (Norton, 1995). He further suggests that language learning investment is shaped by learners' social and psychological identities, motivations, and opportunities to engage in meaningful language use. In other words, acquiring a second language, such as English, depends not solely on individual effort but also on available learning environments and institutional support systems.

Internationally, research on language learning investment highlights the significance of communicative competence in second language acquisition. In ASEAN countries like Indonesia and Thailand, language education has increasingly adopted communicative-based instruction and technology-enhanced learning to improve student proficiency. In contrast, despite English being an official language in the Philippines, many students, especially those in Department of Education (DepEd) barangay high schools, continue to struggle with oral communication skills due to traditional teaching methods, limited resources, and lack of exposure to real-life language use (Batnag, 2020).

Furthermore, in the DepEd public school system, English instruction is often teacher-centered, focusing more on grammatical accuracy than fluency and interactive communication. Rural schools face large class sizes, inadequate technological resources, and minimal access to extracurricular English-speaking activities. While DepEd has introduced Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in early grades, the transition to English in junior high school remains difficult for many students due to limited exposure to English in their daily lives. Moreover, while DepEd Commons and self-learning modules (SLMs) provide supplementary resources, students in barangay high schools often lack internet access or personal devices to fully benefit from these learning tools.

These gaps in English language instruction create several problematic situations in rural schools, such as limited student exposure to communicative English where classroom activities focus more on written assessments than real-world language use; lack of access to technology-enhanced learning where the use of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and AI-driven tools is minimal in barangay high schools due to poor internet connectivity and lack of teacher training; traditional, teacher-centered instruction where lessons prioritize rote memorization instead of interactive and student-centered approaches. Lastly, there is a scarcity of supplementary language learning activities where students have few opportunities for practical English application, such as speech clubs, debate competitions, and conversational practice sessions.

Although extensive research has been conducted on language learning investment and communicative competence, studies focusing on public high school students in rural Philippine settings remain limited. A literature gap exists in understanding how language learning investment directly affects communicative competence in resource-constrained environments like barangay high schools.

Thus, this study aimed to examine how language learning investment impacts the communicative competence of Grade 9 students in

Palo 19 National High School, a DepEd barangay high school. The research findings helped develop contextualized strategies for improving English language instruction, considering rural public schools' unique challenges. The study provided insights into how teachers can incorporate MALL and AI-driven tools into English instruction despite infrastructural and resource limitations. By addressing these concerns, the research aimed to contribute to DepEd's ongoing efforts to enhance English language education, particularly in underserved communities with fewer opportunities for English language exposure.

Research Questions

Methodology

The data were analyzed using a comprehensive statistical approach to ensure accurate and meaningful interpretation of results. Specifically, frequency counts and weighted means were utilized to assess Language learning investment and communicative competence in English among Grade 9 students at Palo 19 National High School. These descriptive statistics are essential for summarizing and understanding the central tendencies and distributions of the variables (Cohen et al., 2018).

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed to examine the relationship between the two variables. This parametric test is widely recognized for its effectiveness in measuring the strength and direction of linear relationships between continuous variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Applying this method, the study aimed to uncover significant correlations between students' engagement in language learning activities and their communicative abilities. This statistical treatment provides a robust framework for identifying patterns and relationships in the data, offering valuable insights into how language learning investment influences communicative competence.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings on students' language learning investment and communicative competence in English. The analysis explores students' investment in educational resources, technology and tools, academic commitment, personal commitment, and supplementary activities. It also examines its relationship with their communicative competence. The results are discussed in light of relevant literature, providing insights into how students engage with language learning and its relationship to their communicative competence.

Table 1. *Level of Students' Language Learning Investment in Educational Resources*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Access to books and materials	2.54	0.39	Moderate Investment
Quality of materials	3.47	0.38	High Investment
Section Mean	3.01	0.30	Moderate Investment

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Low investment; 1.76– 2.50 – Fair Investment; 2.51 – 3.25 – Moderate Investment; 3.26 – 4.00 – High Investment

The analysis of students' investment in educational resources, as shown in Table 1, resulted in a section mean of 3.01 ($SD = 0.30$), indicating a moderate level of investment. Specifically, Access to books and materials recorded a mean of 2.54, suggesting moderate investment, while Quality of materials had a mean of 3.47, indicating high investment. These results suggest that while some students actively utilize educational materials, others may have limited access or engagement. This aligns with Gall et al. (2015), who emphasized that access to quality educational resources significantly influences students' language learning engagement. Furthermore, Tolentino and Angeles (2021) highlight that resource availability is crucial in students' language acquisition, particularly in developing self-directed learning strategies.

Table 2. *Level of Students' Language Learning Investment in Technology and Tools*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Digital tools	2.84	0.39	Moderate Investment
Online learning platforms	2.79	0.34	Moderate Investment
Section Mean	2.82	0.31	Moderate Investment

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Low investment; 1.76– 2.50 – Fair Investment; 2.51 – 3.25 – Moderate Investment; 3.26 – 4.00 – High Investment

For technology and tools, as shown in Table 2, the section mean was 2.82 ($SD = 0.31$), reflecting a moderate investment level. Digital tools ($M = 2.84$) and Online learning platforms ($M = 2.79$) suggest that while students engage with technological tools, their usage remains inconsistent. This finding is supported by Stockwell (2022), who noted that while technology enhances language learning, its effectiveness depends on accessibility and user familiarity. Additionally, Sun and Yang (2023) emphasize that digital learning tools can only be fully effective when students possess adequate digital literacy skills, which may explain the variability in investment levels.

Table 3. *Level of Students' Language Learning Investment in Academic Commitment*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Attendance and Participation	3.21	0.32	Moderate Investment
Goal-setting and study habits	2.84	0.37	Moderate Investment
Section Mean	3.03	0.30	Moderate Investment

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Low investment; 1.76– 2.50 – Fair Investment; 2.51 – 3.25 – Moderate Investment; 3.26 – 4.00 – High Investment

Table 3 shows the academic commitment results, which yielded a section mean of 3.03 (SD = 0.30), indicating a moderate investment level. Attendance and participation scored 3.21 (moderate investment), while goal-setting and monitoring study habits had a mean of 2.84 (moderate investment). These results suggest that students are generally engaged in their academic responsibilities, though variations exist in their commitment levels. According to Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), sustained academic motivation is crucial for language proficiency development. More recently, Gao and Zhang (2022) have emphasized that students with higher academic commitment tend to perform better in communicative language skills, as they are more willing to engage in structured learning activities.

Table 4. Level of Students' Language Learning Investment in Personal Commitment

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Intrinsic motivation	3.49	0.30	High Investment
Time management	3.03	0.47	Moderate Investment
Section Mean	3.26	0.34	High Investment

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Low investment; 1.76– 2.50 – Fair Investment; 2.51 – 3.25 – Moderate Investment; 3.26 – 4.00 – High Investment

Among the five areas, personal commitment, as shown in Table 4, exhibited the highest investment level, with a section mean of 3.26 (SD = 0.34), classified as high investment. Intrinsic motivation (M = 3.49) indicated high commitment, while Time management and self-regulation (M = 3.03) reflected moderate commitment. This suggests that students exhibit strong intrinsic motivation in language learning, consistent with Deci and Ryan's (2020) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in sustained learning engagement. Furthermore, Ushioda (2020) asserts that personal motivation is one of the strongest predictors of long-term success in second-language acquisition, reinforcing the importance of fostering autonomy in learners.

Table 5. Level of Students' Language Learning Investment in Supplementary Activities

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Extracurricular involvement	2.49	0.45	Fair Investment
Media and cultural exposure	2.67	0.35	Moderate Investment
Section Mean	3.01	0.30	Moderate Investment

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 – Low investment; 1.76– 2.50 – Fair Investment; 2.51 – 3.25 – Moderate Investment; 3.26 – 4.00 – High Investment

On the other hand, the lowest investment was observed in Table 5 for the supplementary activities, with a section mean of 2.58 (SD = 0.34), reflecting a moderate investment level. Extracurricular involvement and language immersion scored 2.49 (fair investment), while Media and cultural exposure had a mean of 2.67 (moderate investment). These findings suggest that while some students participate in extracurricular learning opportunities, others may not actively engage. This aligns with Oxford (2017), who emphasized the importance of self-directed learning activities in second language acquisition.

Similarly, Lee and Lo (2022) found that students who invest more in supplementary activities, such as language clubs and online discussion forums, tend to develop stronger communicative competence due to increased exposure to authentic language use.

Table 6. Level of Students' Communicative Competence in English in Strategic, Grammatical, Socio-Linguistic and Discourse Competencies

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Strategic Competence	2.81	0.27	Competent
Grammatical Competence	2.66	0.33	Competent
Socio-Linguistic Competence	2.58	0.26	Competent
Discourse Competence	2.61	0.27	Competent
Section Mean	2.67	0.23	Competent

Legend: 1.00 – 1.74 – Not Competent; 1.75 – 2.49 – Moderately Competent; 2.50 – 3.24 – Competent; 3.25 – 4.00 – Highly Competent

As shown in the table, students achieved the highest score in strategic competence (M = 2.81, SD = 0.27), indicating a strong ability to employ strategies that help overcome communication challenges. According to recent research, strategic competence is crucial in language learning, as it enables learners to compensate for linguistic gaps and maintain communication flow (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Recent advancements in technology have also been shown to support strategic competence development. For instance, artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT and voice-assisted applications have enhanced learners' ability to navigate conversations effectively,

thus reinforcing their strategic competence (Gong et al., 2023).

Moreover, with a mean score of 2.66 (SD = 0.33), students demonstrate competence in grammatical structures. This suggests they have a functional understanding of syntax and morphology, which aligns with Chomsky's (1965) theory of grammatical competence as the foundation of linguistic proficiency. Recent studies support the role of communicative language teaching (CLT) in improving grammatical competence. Research has shown that students exposed to CLT-based instruction exhibit higher proficiency in grammar due to its interactive and learner-centered nature (Wang & Zhang, 2022). To further enhance grammatical competence, incorporating task-based activities and contextualized learning experiences is recommended (Richards, 2021).

Also, the mean score of 2.58 (SD = 0.26) in sociolinguistic competence suggests that while students can adjust their language in social contexts, they may still struggle with cultural nuances and appropriateness in communication. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in improving sociolinguistic skills (Byram, 1997). More recently, García and Li (2021) found that embedding ICC in language curricula significantly enhances students' ability to adapt to different social contexts and cultural expectations. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory suggests that sociolinguistic competence is essential for effective and respectful communication. Given this, integrating intercultural activities and real-life communication scenarios in classroom settings can further enhance students' sociolinguistic skills. On one hand, students scored 2.61 (SD = 0.27) in discourse competence, indicating competence in organizing ideas but highlighting challenges in maintaining coherence and cohesion in extended speech or writing. Halliday and Hasan (1976) emphasize that discourse competence is vital for structuring communication effectively. Recent studies support this, showing that learners who engage in collaborative discourse analysis and reflective writing exercises significantly improve their ability to construct logical and well-structured discourse (Smith & Liu, 2023). Furthermore, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has been found to support discourse competence by allowing students to practice extended conversations and structured discussions in real-world contexts (Zhao & Chen, 2021).

The overall mean score of 2.67 (SD = 0.23) indicates that students are competent in their communicative abilities. This suggests they possess adequate skills in English communication, though areas for improvement remain. While their proficiency allows them to engage in various communicative situations effectively, gaps in fluency, accuracy, and context-appropriate language use may still be present.

Table 7. *Testing of Significant Relationship on Students' Language Learning Investment and Communicative Competence*

		Pearson r	Interpretation	p-value	Decision
Language Learning Investment	Communicative Competence	0.602	High Positive Correlation	.008	Reject Ho

0.05 level of significance

As shown in Table 7, the results indicate a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.602, which suggests a high positive correlation between students' language learning investment and their communicative competence. Additionally, the p-value of .008 is lower than the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). This finding suggests that higher investment in language learning is significantly associated with greater communicative competence.

The high positive correlation found in this study aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of language learning investment in developing communicative competence (Gao, 2010; Ushioda, 2009). According to Peirce (1995), language learning investment is not merely a matter of motivation but also reflects learners' commitment, identity, and perceived value of the language. The present study supports this perspective by showing that students who invest more time, effort, and resources into language learning tend to achieve higher communicative competence. Recent studies have emphasized that language learning investment extends beyond formal education, including self-directed learning, digital engagement, and intercultural exposure (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2022). In an increasingly globalized and technology-driven world, students with higher language learning investment are more likely to engage with authentic language materials, online language communities, and immersive experiences, contributing to their communicative competence (García & Li, 2021).

These findings reinforce Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital, which suggests that individuals who invest in acquiring a language gain greater communicative power and social mobility. Similarly, Oxford's (1990) framework on language learning strategies highlights that students who actively engage in cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies tend to improve their language proficiency more effectively. Moreover, the strong positive correlation indicates that students with a higher academic and personal commitment to language learning tend to achieve better linguistic outcomes, reinforcing that motivation and sustained effort are crucial factors in second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2020). These findings highlight the importance of fostering an environment that encourages active participation in language-learning activities, access to educational resources, and engagement with authentic communication opportunities.

Generally, the result of the study confirms a significant and strong positive relationship between students' language learning investment and communicative competence in English. These findings suggest that students actively invest time, effort, and resources into language learning to develop stronger communicative skills. This aligns with recent studies emphasizing that learners who consistently practice, utilize diverse learning strategies, and access quality resources demonstrate higher proficiency in a second language (Mercer & Ryan, 2021; Ushioda, 2020). Additionally, the results support the Investment Theory in language learning, which posits that learners'

commitment to acquiring a language is directly linked to their communicative success (Darvin & Norton, 2021).

Based on the findings of this study, which highlight the significant relationship between students' language learning investment and their communicative competence in English, it is evident that while students demonstrate competence, there is still room for improvement.

Conclusions

This study examined students' language learning investment about their communicative competence in English. The Grade 9 students demonstrated a moderate to high level of investment across various areas, with personal commitment showing the highest investment and supplementary activities as the lowest. The analysis of communicative competence indicated that students were generally competent in strategic, grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competencies, though areas for improvement remained.

Moreover, the correlation analysis established a significant and strong positive relationship ($r = 0.602$, $p = .008$) between students' language learning investment and their communicative competence in English, rejecting the study's null hypothesis (H_0). Students actively investing time, effort, and resources in language learning tend to achieve stronger communicative skills. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the crucial role of sustained investment, motivation, and access to quality learning resources in developing linguistic proficiency.

While students possess adequate communicative competence, enhancing language learning strategies, expanding access to educational tools, and fostering engagement in supplementary activities can further strengthen their proficiency. To address these needs, an instructional primer was developed to provide structured learning interventions to improve students' communicative competence in English.

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