

Figurative Language Competence and Poetry Writing Skills of Senior High School Students

Florigine D. Tamesis¹, Dale Joseph P. Prendol², Ellene Joy P. Ungriano³,
 Catherine M. Rodriguez⁴, Merlito D. Prudente Jr.⁵ Joshua Eriberto Miguel G. Llames⁶

*florigine.tamesis@lspu.edu.ph¹, dalejoseph.prendol@lspu.edu.ph², ellenejoy.ungriano@lspu.edu.ph³,
 catherine.rodriguez@lspu.edu.ph⁴, merlitojr.prudente@lspu.edu.ph⁵,
 joshuaeribertomigue.lllames@lspu.edu.ph⁶*

Laguna State Polytechnic University
 Graduate Studies and Applied Research
 Siniloan (Host) Campus, Siniloan, Laguna, Philippines

Abstract

21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World offers activities and topics that engage students in critical study and enjoyment of 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and throughout the world, embracing their different aspects, genres, components, structures, settings, and traditions. Meanwhile, poetry, like other genres of literature, is written to communicate ideas, convey emotions, and generate imagery. Poets select words based on their meaning and acoustics. The purpose of this study was to assess and determine the relationship between figurative language competence and poetry writing skills of Senior High School (SHS) students. The study's respondents were fifty (50) randomly selected grade 11 students who had recently completed the SHS core subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World. Based on the results gathered, the following was therefore brought to conclusion: 1) students' figurative language competence is at the average level which signifies that they have knowledge about figurative language competence but there are still several sorts of figurative language that students should be more aware of; 2) students' poetry writing skills are high that signifies that they do good poems, and, 3) being a good poet does not always mean that he/she is a figurative language competent as well. One must be able to write poems following its structure and some of its elements because figurative language competence is not the sole determinant in writing or making poetry. Therefore, schools may still promote the teaching of figurative language in poetry for the students to write better poems and future researchers may explore the relationship between the students' poetry writing process and their poetry writing skills.

Keywords – 21st century literature, figurative language competence, figures of speech, poetry writing skills, senior high school

1.1 INTRODUCTION

With the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum, another two years are added to the basic education program. These two years, known as Senior High School, provide learners with the opportunity to specialize in subjects that are unique to each track and strand. However, the Senior High School program continues to focus on general education or core courses that cover a variety of fields of study, including humanities and literature.

In relation to this, 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and Around the World is one of the SHS core courses. It seeks to engage students in the appreciation and critical study of 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and throughout the world, taking into account its different aspects, genres, components, structures, settings, and traditions. In addition, one of the learning competencies that students will gain from the subject is the ability to analyze the figures of speech and other literary techniques and devices in the text (EN12Lit-Ie-27)

Moreover, the English language is versatile, with excellent qualities that captivate readers through the beauty of narration and expression. The unique quality is derived from its wide range of applications. It has some

distinct word categories known as figures of speech. It is a mode of expression in which words are used to create an effect outside of their literal meaning or ordinary use, often in places where they do not have their original or literal meaning. By comparing one thing to another, it is also used to add beauty, intensify emotion, and present a meaning familiar to the reader. Figures of speech are found in oral kinds of literature, polished poetry and prose, and everyday speech as an integral part of the language. Simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony, alliteration, onomatopoeia, pun, apostrophe, euphemism, repetition, oxymoron, imagery, allegory, and other figures of speech are examples (Nezami, 2012).

Figures of speech, according to Bernales (2017), are literary devices that achieve a special effect by using words in distinctive ways, as they provoke thought and add depth to the language. Furthermore, he stated that there are hundreds of different figures of speech.

Meanwhile, Menoy (2017) defined figures of speech as deviations from the standard or ordinary use of words to produce a special meaning or literary effect. He also classified figures of speech such as figures of comparison, figures of contrast, figures of representation, figures of reference, figures of sound, figures of order, and figures of repetition, among others.

Poetry, on the other hand, is one of the major literary genres, along with prose. Unlike prose, which is composed of sentences and paragraphs, poetry is composed of lines and stanzas or verses that are creatively and artistically arranged. Also, it is more condensed and suggestive. Poetry, unlike prose, leaves room for the reader's imagination to interpret and unlock its meaning by omitting many words and explanations.

Furthermore, students write English poems using the following strategies: (1) using popular poem templates as idea starters; (2) creating a vocabulary bank for writing rhyming poems; and (3) building emotions through personal story sharing and later channeling them through poetry writing. EFL students can enjoy poetry writing as expressive pedagogy, debunks the negative assumption about EFL students' lack of interest and appreciation for poetry writing, and thus refutes the negative assumption (Fithriani, 2021).

To recognize the nature and essence of poetry and prose, as well as enjoy their literary and soul-freshening qualities, it is necessary to analyze the linguistic, literary, and intellectual levels. (Golestani. M., & HASAN, Z. A., 2019)

As a corollary, in literature and creative writing classes, the study of poetry frequently begins with a discussion of its elements, which include theme, persona, tone, mood, structure, rhyme, and so on. The use of figures of speech is a prominent feature of poetry. Figurative language includes figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, and imagery.

With the inherent connection of figurative language to poetry, the researchers decided to assess the figurative language competence and poetry writing skills of students and determine if there's a connection between them – if knowledge of figures of speech influences skills in writing poetry.

1.1.1 Objectives of the Study

In general, the objectives of this study were to assess Senior High School (SHS) students' figurative language competence and poetry writing skills, as well as to determine the relationship between figurative language competence and poetry writing skills. This paper specifically sought to determine the relationship of various factors such as age, sex, and strand on both figurative language competence and poetry writing skills. Furthermore, it would also determine whether the learners' figurative language competence and poetry writing skills are significantly related to their grade or academic performance in the SHS core subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World.

2.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study followed the descriptive correlational method. The researchers used simple random sampling in gathering the respondents who are Senior High School students in one public school in the fourth district of Laguna. The instrument used was a researcher-made test questionnaire that underwent validation by a language and literature expert. Quantitative data analysis was applied.

2.1.1 Research Design

The descriptive-correlational method was used in this study of figurative language competence and poetry writing skills. According to Bhandari (2021), descriptive correlation is a research design that investigates the relationship between variables that the researcher does not control or manipulate. Furthermore, a descriptive correlation was stated to show the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. The design of the study conducted by Yazdanjoo and Fallahpour (2018) correlated the creative thinking of Iranian EFL learners and the use of metaphors in descriptive writing. The same design was used in the study of Hee-Sook and Sunghee (2017), which correlated figurative expression and writing in school-aged children. Both studies, however, are concerned with descriptive writing in prose form. As a result, the current study concentrated on poetry writing.

2.2.2 Participants/Respondents

The respondents of the study were the randomly selected Grade 11 Senior High School students of Siniloan Integrated National High School who were under modular learning. They were chosen as respondents because they take the core SHS subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World. Specifically, 50 respondents were taken as samples using simple random sampling.

2.2.3 Instrumentation

For this study, the researchers made their own instrument, consisting of three parts. The first part intended to gather the profile of the respondents, specifically their age, sex, SHS strand, and academic performance in the 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World. The second part was a 30-item multiple-choice test to measure the respondents' knowledge of figures of speech or figurative language competence. Meanwhile, the third part was a holistic rubric to rate the poems written by the respondents, as a measure of their poetry writing skills. The instrument was validated by an expert in language and literature.

2.2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Due to the restrictions brought by the pandemic, the conduct of the research was done purely online. The research instrument was made into a Google Form – a famous survey application developed by Google. The link to the Google Form was sent to the respondents. The Google Form also permitted the researchers to monitor the responses.

Because the data were gathered directly from the respondents, they were considered primary sources. The only secondary source of data used in the research was the grades of the respondents in 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World corresponding to their academic performance.

2.2.5 Ethical Consideration

The respondents' participation in this study was voluntary. They were not forced to answer the instrument, especially in the third part where they were asked to write a poem following the procedures. In the first part which is the profile, the respondents were not required to write their names. Requiring the email of the respondents was solely for the purpose of ensuring that no duplication of responses would be made. Moreover, all data gathered from the respondents were treated with the utmost confidentiality.

2.2.6 Data Analysis

The study used a quantitative method. As for the variables different statistical analyses were used. For the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, and SHS strand, frequency and percentage were used. Meanwhile, correlation tests (such as Chi-Squared Test and Spearman correlation) were used in determining the relationships between the variables.

3.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to assess the figurative language competence of SHS students and their poetry writing skills. Below are the tables and discussion of the study's findings:

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Sex	Count	Percent
Female	32	64.00
Male	18	36.00
N=	50	
Age	Count	Percent
16	14	28.00
17	29	58.00
18	5	10.00
19	1	2.00
25	1	2.00
N=	50	
Strand	Count	Percent
ABM	6	12.00
HUMSS	10	20.00
STEM	28	56.00
TVL	6	12.00
N=	50	

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age and strand. It is clearly shown that when it comes to sex, there were more female respondents with a frequency of 32 and caters 64 % than male respondents which has a frequency of 18 and has a percentage of 36.

Meanwhile, as for their age, respondents with the age of 17 ranked first with a frequency of 29 and a percentage of 58. It was followed by those with the age of 16 with a frequency of 14 and which is 28%.

Furthermore, as for the strand, STEM strand ranked first and got a frequency of 28 and has a percentage of 56. It was followed by HUMSS strand with a frequency of 10 and a percentage of 20.

Table 2. Level of Students' Performance in 21st Century Literature

Variable	Mean	StDev	VI
Q1 Grade in 21st Lit	92.020	4.442	High

Table 2 shows the level of students' performance in 21st Century literature from the Philippines and the World. It is clearly shown that the respondents' performance got a mean score of 92.020 and a standard deviation of 4.442. It implies that students' performance in 21st Century Literature is high and signifies that they perform well in the said subject.

Table 3. Level of Figurative Language Competence

Variable	Mean	StDev	VI
FIGURATIVE COMPETENCE	14.140	5.455	Average

Table 3 presents the students' level of figurative language competence, with a mean score of 14.140 and a standard deviation of 5.455. This shows that the students' competence in figurative language is on the average level. It suggests that students have an understanding of figurative language, but there are still several sorts of figurative language that students should be more aware of. Doiz and Elizari (2013) posited that the metaphor approach facilitates the acquisition of figurative language in the short term. Interestingly enough, the students did not transfer the conceptual knowledge of their L1 to the understanding of the expressions in the Foreign Language.

Table 4. Criteria of Students' Poetry Writing Skills

Variable	Mean	StDev	VI
Emphasis	<u>4.187</u>	1.207	High
Cohesiveness	<u>4.047</u>	1.16	High
Structure	<u>4.000</u>	1.475	High
Fig. Lang.	<u>3.293</u>	1.167	Average
Imagery	<u>3.400</u>	1.099	High
Title	<u>3.183</u>	1.292	Average

Table 4 shows the criteria for students' poetry writing skills. It signifies that students produce poetry with emphasis, cohesiveness, structure, and imagery but only an average level of competence in figurative language and title creation. This implies that students understand the standards for writing good poetry and that they have high skills in poetry writing.

Table 5. Level of Students' Poetry Writing Skills

Variable	Mean	StDev	VI
POETRY WRITING SKILLS	22.110	6.866	High

Table 5 shows the level of students' poetry writing skills wherein it got a mean score of 22.110 and a standard deviation of 6.866. It means that the respondents have a high level of poetry writing skills. Xiang and Yi (2020), stated that all components of poetry—reading, creating, and sharing—can serve as an extraordinary cure to loneliness in these unprecedented times such as the pandemic times when the study was conducted. Poetry may be a soothing and beautiful medium, reminding people that they are all inextricably linked, even when alone

Table 6. Significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and students' figurative language competence and poetry writing skills.

Vs. figurative language competence	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	0.570	Accept Ho	Not significant

Age	0.768	accept Ho	Not Significant
Strand	0.576	Accept Ho	Not significant
Vs. poetry writing skills	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	0.882	Accept Ho	Not significant
Age	0.369	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Strand	0.132	Accept Ho	Not significant

Table 6 shows the significant relationship between the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, and strand and their figurative language competence and poetry writing skills.

The table shows that the cited profile of the respondents does not influence their figurative language competence and their poetry writing skills. This is in contradiction to the study of Troia, et al (2013), who investigated the relationships between writing motivation, writing activity, and writing performance, as well as student factors such as grade, gender, and teacher evaluation of writing ability. He mentioned that female students and older students, as well as students with greater levels of writing skill, produced qualitatively superior fictional writing such as poetry.

Table 7. Significant relationship between the Level of students' performance in 21st Century Literature and their figurative language competence and poetry writing skills

Level of Performance in 21st Century Lit.	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Vs. figurative language competence	0.480	Accept Ho	Not significant
Vs. poetry Writing skills	0.426	Accept Ho	Not Significant

Table 7 shows that there is no significant relationship between 21st Century Literature performance of students and their figurative language competence which caters to a p-value of 0.480. This signifies that the students' learning from the subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World has no specific impact on their knowledge about figurative languages and that the said subject has less focus on teaching figurative language. Students are recommended to read and use journals, poetry, electronic media, or web articles/internet to hone and develop learners' competence in different language skills, especially writing. (Braga & Queroda, 2020).

On the other hand, the table also shows that there is no significant relationship between 21st Century Literature performance of students and their poetry writing skills which has a p-value of 0.426. This proves that the learnings that the students got from the subject 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World do not necessarily play a vital role in enhancing the skills of students in writing poetry and vice-versa. Khansir, (2012) stated that poetry language as a unique and distinct entity from a regular language. Students have not acquired literary competence in originality and sensitivity because teachers have not effectively supervised students in activities linked to this competency (Neranjani, 2011).

Hence, it can be therefore concluded that although they can't identify figurative language types they are still good at poetry writing.

Table 8. Significant relationship between figurative language competence and poetry writing skills

Figurative Language Competence	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Poetry Writing Skills	0.467	Accept Ho	Not significant

Table 8 shows that there is no significant relationship between the figurative language competence of students and their poetry writing skills with a p-value of 0.467. It implies that knowledge of the figurative language has nothing to do with their poetry writing skills. This also implies that at some points, being figurative language competent does not always mean that one is a good poet as well. In relation to this, Pournamdariyan and Sabe (2011), mentioned that there aren't many figures of speech that express thought in modern poetry. Hence, it can be therefore concluded that although the respondents are not well-versed in figurative language, they still have a high level of poetry writing skills.

3.2 Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

Based on the results gathered, the following were therefore brought to conclusions: 1) students' figurative language competence is at the average level which signifies that they have knowledge about figurative language competence but there are still several sorts of figurative language that students should be more aware of; 2) students' poetry writing skills are high that signifies that they do good poems, and, 3) being a good poet does not always mean that he/she is a figurative language competent as well. One must be able to write poems following its structure and some of its elements because figurative language competence is not the sole determinant in writing or making poetry.

Therefore, the researchers recommend the following: 1) Schools may still promote the teaching of figurative language in poetry in order for the students to write better poems; 2) further enhancement in poetry writing elements use are advised; and, 3) future researchers may explore the relationship between the students' poetry writing process and their poetry writing skills.

4.1 Acknowledgment

The researchers would like to express their gratitude to the following people and institutions who have significantly contributed to this research: Mr. Joshua Eriberto Miguel G. Llames, research adviser and Creative Writing instructor, for his extended effort and guidance in the completion of this study; Dr. Elaine Rose G. Nachon, CTE-GSAR associate dean, for supporting the conduct of the researcher; Dr. Cecilia B. Castillo, Principal III of Siniloan INHS, for granting permission to conduct the data gathering in the school she manages; Dr. Icy Princess A. Trencio, SINHS – Senior high School Coordinator for her support, the SHS teachers of Siniloan INHS for helping the researchers in the conduct of the study; and, the student-respondents for the expressing their willingness to participate.

5.1 REFERENCES

- Bernales, R. A. (2017). *Creative Writing: A Journey for Senior High School Students and Aspiring Writers*. Malabon City: Mutya Publishing House, Inc.
- Bhandari, P. (2021, July 7). *Correlational Research | When & How to Use*. Retrieved from Scribbr: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/correlational-research/>
- Braga, T. L. S., & Queroda, P. G. (2020). Composition Writing Skills of Grade 8 Students. *ASEAN Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 4.
- Doiz, A., & Elizari, C. (2013). Metaphoric competence and the acquisition of figurative vocabulary in foreign language learning. *ELIA*, 13, 47-82.
- Fithriani, R. (2021). Poetry writing in EFL classrooms: Learning from Indonesian students' strategies. *KnE Social Sciences*, 59-75.
- Golestani, M., & HASAN, Z. A. (2019). A Study of the Literary Style in Lamei Gorgani's Poems.

- Hee-Sook, B., & Sunghee, P. (2017). Developmental Aspects of Figurative Expression according to Discourse Types in Writing of School-Aged Children. *Communication Sciences & Disorders*, 22(2), 245-256.
- Khansir, A. A. (2012). Teaching poetry in the ELT classroom. *International review of social sciences and humanities*, 3(1), 241-245.
- Menoy, J. Z. (2017). *Creative Nonfiction*. Mandaluyong City: Books Atbp. Publishing Corp.
- Nezami, S. R. A. (2012). The Use of Figures of Speech as a Literary Device-A Specific Mode of Expression in English Literature. *Language In India*, 12(2).
- Pournamdariyan, T., & Tehrani Sabe, N. (2011). Figures of Speech in Modern Poetry. *Contemporary Persian Literature*, 1(1), 25-37.
- Troia, G. A., Harbaugh, A. G., Shankland, R. K., Wolbers, K. A., & Lawrence, A. M. (2013). Relationships between writing motivation, writing activity, and writing performance: Effects of grade, sex, and ability. *Reading and Writing*, 26(1), 17-44.
- Xiang, A., & Yi, D. (2020). Whatt Poetry Can Do For Us During the Pandemic, <https://blogs.bmj.com/medical-humanities/2020/08/20/what-poetry-can-do-for-us-during-the-pandemic/>
- Yazdanjoo, S., & Fallahpour, H. (2018). A study on the correlation between creative thinking of Iranian EFL learners and using metaphor in descriptive writing tasks. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 7(2), 32-44.