Original Article

Unlocking Literacy: The Role of Reading and Writing Skills in Shaping Elementary Learners' Development

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Abstract

This study examined the reported levels of reading skills, writing skills, academic success, and challenges in literacy development among Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners. The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat during the School Year 2025–2026. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed. The respondents were 56 learners selected through proportionate sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-developed 40-item questionnaire covering reading skills (comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency); writing skills (syntax, grammar, and morphology); academic success; and challenges in reading and writing. The instrument obtained a mean validity score of 4.36 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.762, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that learners reported a very high level of reading skills (M = 4.40) and writing skills (M = 4.51). Academic success was reported as Very Satisfactory (M = 4.50), while challenges in developing literacy skills were reported as Challenged (M = 3.71). The correlation analysis showed a negligible positive relationship between reading skills and academic success (r = 0.119) and a negligible negative relationship between writing skills and academic success (r = -0.097). Neither relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The findings suggest that although learners reported high levels of reading and writing skills, these skills alone were not significantly related to their reported

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academic success. Other factors may also contribute to learners' academic development.

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1. Introduction

Reading and writing are important literacy skills that support learning and academic development among elementary learners. Reading helps learners understand information, develop vocabulary, and follow ideas presented in different texts. Writing allows learners to organize their thoughts, express their understanding, and communicate ideas through written work. For Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners, these skills become more important because they are expected to understand more complex lessons and communicate their ideas more clearly. Strong literacy skills can therefore support learners as they perform different academic tasks.

In the Philippine educational context, literacy development remains an important concern. Learners may experience difficulties in reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and sentence construction. Tomas et al. (2021) reported that learners who experience difficulties in reading may also have problems understanding texts and academic content. Similarly, Casinto (2025) discussed challenges in literacy instruction in public elementary schools, including limited learning resources and other classroom conditions. These concerns show the need to understand learners' reading and writing experiences and the difficulties they encounter in developing these skills.

Reading skills may be viewed in terms of comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Comprehension refers to the ability to understand and interpret information from texts, vocabulary refers to knowledge and understanding of words, and fluency refers to reading accurately, smoothly, and with appropriate expression. Previous research has examined reading through measures such as reading comprehension tasks, vocabulary knowledge, and reading fluency. Tomas et al. (2021), for example, focused on learners' perceived challenges in reading, particularly difficulties with understanding texts and engaging in reading activities. In the present study, however, reading skills were measured using learner-reported questionnaire items rather than a standardized reading test. Thus, the results describe the learners' reported level of reading skills and should not be interpreted as direct evidence of objective reading proficiency.

Writing is also an important part of literacy development because learners use it to express ideas, answer questions, and complete school activities. Writing skills in this study were considered in terms of syntax, grammar, and morphology. Syntax concerns the arrangement of words in sentences, grammar concerns the correct use of language rules, and morphology concerns the structure and formation of words. Graham et al. (2020) emphasized the important connection between writing and reading

development and described writing as a process that supports learning. In measuring writing in the present study, learner-reported questionnaire responses were used to describe their perceived level of writing skills. The study therefore focuses on reported writing abilities rather than performance on an objective writing assessment.

Reading and writing are also closely connected. Reading provides learners with exposure to words, sentence structures, and ideas, while writing gives them opportunities to apply and communicate what they have learned. Li et al. (2023) examined reading comprehension in relation to higher-order thinking and showed the importance of understanding information in learning. Graham et al. (2020) also examined the role of writing in reading development through a meta-analysis. These studies show that reading and writing are interrelated components of literacy development, although the ways these skills are measured may differ across studies. This difference in measurement is important when interpreting findings about literacy and academic outcomes.

The present study is anchored on Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Piaget (1952) viewed learners as active constructors of knowledge who connect new information with their previous experiences. In this study, reading and writing activities provide opportunities for learners to understand information, organize ideas, and engage in meaningful learning. Vygotsky (1978), on the other hand, emphasized that learning develops through social interaction and guidance from others. Teacher support, classroom discussions, peer interaction, guided reading, and feedback may provide learners with opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills. These theories provide a basis for understanding literacy development within both the learner's active learning process and the social learning environment.

Academic success is another important part of the present study. In many educational studies, academic success may be measured through grades, test scores, or other indicators of school performance. In this study, academic success was measured using five learner-reported questionnaire indicators: earning good grades, understanding lessons through reading, explaining answers in writing, completing schoolwork on time, and participating actively in class. This operational definition is important because the academic-success measure used in the present study was based on learners' questionnaire responses and not on official school records or general weighted averages.

Although many studies have examined reading, writing, and academic achievement, there remains a need for research that considers these literacy skills together among elementary learners in the local context. Previous studies have also used different ways of measuring literacy and academic outcomes. This makes it important to examine the specific indicators and measurement approach used in a particular study. In addition, learners may still experience challenges in understanding texts, learning difficult words, expressing ideas in writing, using grammar correctly, and reading aloud.

The study is anchored on Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Piaget's theory views learners as active constructors of knowledge who connect new information with their previous experiences. In this study, reading and writing activities provide opportunities for learners to understand information, organize ideas, and participate actively in learning tasks. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes learning through social interaction and guidance from others. Guided reading, classroom discussion, peer interaction, and teacher feedback are therefore relevant to the development of reading and writing skills. These theories provide a basis for examining literacy skills within learners' cognitive and social learning contexts.

Therefore, this study examined the reported levels of reading skills, writing skills, academic success, and challenges among Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners in Quevedo-Baptista Elementary School and Blingkong Central Elementary School during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it aimed to determine the levels of reading skills in terms of comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency; the levels of writing skills in terms of syntax, grammar, and morphology; the level of academic success; the challenges encountered by learners in developing reading and writing skills; and whether significant relationships existed between reading and writing skills and academic success. The findings may provide useful information for teachers and schools to understand learners' literacy experiences and to develop appropriate literacy support and learning activities.

2. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to summarize the reported levels of reading skills, writing skills, academic success, and challenges. The correlational component was used to examine whether reading and writing skills were significantly related to academic success.

The participants were 56 Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners from selected public elementary schools in Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat, during School Year 2025–2026. The total population was 128 learners. Proportionate sampling was used to ensure that the Grade 5 and Grade 6 groups from the two schools were represented. The final sample consisted of 17 Grade 5 and 14 Grade 6 learners from School A and 14 Grade 5 and 11 Grade 6 learners from School B.

The primary instrument was a researcher-developed 40-item questionnaire covering respondents' profiles, reading and writing skills, academic success, and challenges in reading and writing. Reading skills were represented by comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency, while writing skills were represented by syntax, grammar, and morphology.

The items were written in simple language and answered using a five-point Likert scale: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was evaluated by selected Master Teachers in

terms of clarity, relevance, coherence, and appropriateness. It obtained a mean validity score of 4.36.

A pilot test was conducted with learners who were not included in the actual sample. The 40-item scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.762, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

In this study, reading and writing skills refer to the learners' reported responses to the questionnaire indicators and should not be interpreted as results from a standardized literacy test. Academic success was also measured using five learner-reported indicators: earning good grades, understanding lessons through reading, explaining answers in writing, completing schoolwork on time, and participating actively in class. Challenges were measured through reported difficulties in understanding texts, understanding difficult words, expressing ideas in writing, using grammar, and reading aloud.

The questionnaire was formulated based on the study objectives and variables. It was reviewed and revised after validation and was administered after the required school permissions were obtained. Instructions were given to the learners before they answered the questionnaire.

After the questionnaires were completed, they were retrieved, organized, coded, and prepared for analysis. The data collection process was conducted in a way that avoided unnecessary disruption to regular school activities.

The mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the reported levels of reading and writing skills, academic success, and challenges. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to examine the relationships between reading and writing skills and academic success. Statistical testing was conducted at the 0.05 level of significance.

The purpose and procedures of the study were explained to the participants. Participation was voluntary, and the learners were informed that they could withdraw without negative consequences. Informed consent from parents or guardians and assent from the learners were secured before data collection.

The study observed the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). The responses were anonymized, kept confidential, and used only for academic purposes. Permission from the school authorities and the required ethical safeguards were secured before the data collection.

3. Results

Table 1. Level of reading skills among the respondents.

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Comprehension	4.52	0.61	Very High
Vocabulary	4.38	0.81	Very High
Fluency	4.30	0.87	Very High
Overall Mean	4.40	0.76	Very High

The results show that the learners reported a Very High level of reading skills, with an overall mean of 4.40 (SD = 0.76). Among the three indicators, comprehension obtained the highest mean of 4.52 (SD = 0.61), followed by vocabulary with a mean of 4.38 (SD = 0.81). Fluency had the lowest mean, 4.30 (SD = 0.87). All three indicators were interpreted as Very High.

Table 2. Level of writing skills among the respondents.

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Syntax	4.32	0.72	Very High
Grammar	4.67	0.58	Very High
Morphology	4.52	0.60	Very High
Overall Mean	4.51	0.63	Very High

The results show that the learners reported a Very High level of writing skills, with an overall mean of 4.51 (SD = 0.63). Grammar had the highest mean, 4.67 (SD = 0.58), followed by morphology, with a mean of 4.52 (SD = 0.60). Syntax had the lowest mean, 4.32 (SD = 0.72). All indicators were interpreted as Very High.

Table 3. Level of academic success based on learner-reported academic performance.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I get good grades.	4.36	0.70	Very Satisfactory
Reading helps me understand my lessons.	4.64	0.55	Very Satisfactory
Writing helps me explain my answers.	4.59	0.56	Very Satisfactory
I finish my schoolwork on time.	4.34	0.77	Very Satisfactory
I participate actively in class.	4.57	0.63	Very Satisfactory
Section Mean	4.50	0.64	Very Satisfactory

The overall mean of 4.50 (SD = 0.64) shows that the learners reported a Very Satisfactory level of academic success. The available item-level results show that finishing schoolwork on time had a mean of 4.34 (SD = 0.77), while participating actively in class had a mean of 4.57 (SD = 0.63). The academic-success measure was based on learner-reported questionnaire responses and not on official school records or general weighted averages.

Table 4. Challenges faced by learners in developing reading and writing skills.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I find it hard to understand some texts.	4.00	1.01	Challenged
I struggle with difficult words.	3.46	1.61	Challenged
I find it hard to write my ideas.	3.66	1.01	Challenged
I make mistakes in grammar when writing.	3.80	1.10	Challenged
I feel nervous when reading aloud.	3.63	1.36	Challenged
Section Mean	3.71	1.13	Challenged

The overall mean of 3.71 (SD = 1.13) indicates that the learners were challenged in developing their reading and writing skills. The highest mean was found in difficulty understanding some texts (M = 4.00, SD = 1.01). This was followed by grammar

mistakes in writing (M = 3.80, SD = 1.10), difficulty expressing ideas in writing (M = 3.66, SD = 1.01), and nervousness when reading aloud (M = 3.63, SD = 1.36). Struggling with difficult words obtained the lowest mean of 3.46 (SD = 1.61). All indicators were still interpreted as Challenged.

Table 5. Relationship between reading and writing skills and academic success.

Variables	R	t computed	t critical	Interpretation	Decision
Reading Skills and Academic Success	0.119	1.19	2.00	Negligible Positive Correlation	Accepted Null Hypothesis
Writing Skills and Academic Success	-0.097	-0.97	2.00	Negligible Negative Correlation	Accepted Null Hypothesis

Not significant at the 0.05 level. r^2 = 1.4% for reading skills and r^2 = 0.9% for writing skills.

The results show a negligible positive relationship between reading skills and academic success (r = 0.119). The computed t-value of 1.19 was lower than the critical value of 2.00, indicating that the relationship was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The results also show a negligible negative relationship between writing skills and academic success (r = -0.097). The computed t-value of -0.97 was also lower in absolute value than the critical value of 2.00. Therefore, the relationship was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The coefficients of determination were 1.4% for reading skills and 0.9% for writing skills. These values indicate that only small proportions of the variation in the academic-success measure were associated with the reported reading and writing skills. Since the relationships were not statistically significant, these results should not be interpreted as evidence that reading or writing skills caused changes in academic success.

4. Discussion

The results showed that the learners reported very high levels of reading skills. Comprehension obtained the highest mean among the reading indicators, followed by vocabulary and fluency. The findings indicate that the learners generally reported positive abilities in understanding texts, knowing words, and reading fluently. Duke and Cartwright (2021) emphasized that reading development involves the interaction of word recognition, language comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and self-regulatory processes. Similarly, Hwang et al. (2022) found that integrating literacy instruction with content-area learning produced positive effects on vocabulary and reading comprehension among elementary learners. Liu et al. (2024) also identified a significant relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension, emphasizing the importance of understanding word structures in developing reading abilities. However, the present results are based on learner-

reported questionnaire responses and should not be interpreted as results of an objective or standardized reading assessment.

The learners also reported a very high level of writing skills. Grammar obtained the highest mean, followed by morphology and syntax. These results suggest that learners generally reported positive levels of ability in the writing areas included in the questionnaire. Kim et al. (2021) found that writing instruction positively influenced the writing performance of elementary learners, particularly when instruction addressed multiple components of writing. Similarly, Graham et al. (2024) emphasized that effective writing instruction involves developing foundational writing skills, including grammar, spelling, sentence construction, and strategies for planning and revising written work. Their findings also highlighted the importance of connecting reading and writing instruction to strengthen literacy development. These studies support the importance of developing different components of writing, although the present findings describe learners' perceived writing skills rather than performance measured through an objective writing assessment.

Academic success obtained an overall mean of 4.50 and was interpreted as Very Satisfactory. The measure was based on five learner-reported indicators: grades, understanding lessons through reading, explaining answers in writing, completing schoolwork on time, and participating in class. This suggests that the learners generally reported positive academic behaviors and experiences. Kim (2022) found a positive association between parental involvement and academic achievement, particularly when parents maintained high educational expectations and aspirations for their children. Similarly, van der Sande et al. (2023) found that interventions promoting reading motivation positively influenced reading comprehension, highlighting the role of motivation in supporting learning outcomes. These findings suggest that academic development involves several learner-related and environmental factors beyond literacy abilities alone. However, the academic success scores in the present study reflect learners' self-reported experiences and should not be equated with independently verified academic grades.

Despite the high reported levels of reading, writing, and academic success, the learners also reported challenges in literacy development. The overall challenge mean was interpreted as Challenged. The highest mean was recorded for difficulty understanding some texts, while difficulty with difficult words obtained the lowest mean. This indicates that learners may perceive themselves as having strong literacy skills yet still experience specific difficulties understanding written information. Donegan and Wanzek (2021) emphasized that upper elementary learners who experience reading difficulties may require support in foundational reading skills, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Their review also identified the potential benefits of multicomponent reading interventions for learners experiencing literacy difficulties. Furthermore, Duke and Cartwright (2021) explained that reading difficulties may arise from several interacting cognitive, linguistic, and self-regulatory factors. These findings help explain why learners may report positive overall reading abilities while still experiencing challenges in particular literacy tasks.

The correlation analysis showed a negligible positive relationship between reading skills and academic success and a negligible negative relationship between writing skills and academic success. Neither relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the findings do not establish a statistically significant relationship between the reported reading and writing skills and the academic-success measure in this sample. Although previous literature recognizes the importance of literacy development in learning, the present findings did not demonstrate a significant association between these variables. Hwang et al. (2022) demonstrated that integrated literacy instruction can improve vocabulary and comprehension outcomes, while Graham et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of reading and writing instruction across learning areas. However, these studies examined instructional approaches and literacy outcomes rather than the specific self-reported relationships investigated in the present study. Thus, their findings should not be interpreted as directly confirming or contradicting the nonsignificant correlations obtained in this research.

The coefficients of determination were 1.4% for reading skills and 0.9% for writing skills. These values indicate that the observed bivariate relationships accounted for only a small proportion of the variation in the reported academic success scores. They should not be interpreted as evidence that reading or writing skills caused changes in academic success. Other factors that were not directly examined in the present study may be associated with learners' academic development. Kim (2022) emphasized the contribution of parental involvement to academic achievement, while van der Sande et al. (2023) identified the importance of reading motivation in improving comprehension outcomes. These studies suggest that learning outcomes may be associated with different personal, family, and instructional factors. However, the influence of these factors on the present sample cannot be established without further investigation.

The findings also highlight the importance of distinguishing learners' perceptions of their abilities from their actual academic performance. Michalsky and Bakrish (2024) found that elementary learners may have difficulty accurately judging their own understanding and learning performance. Their study demonstrated that metacognitive questioning could improve both performance and the accuracy of learners' judgments. This is relevant to the present study because reading and writing skills, as well as academic success, were measured using learner-reported responses. Consequently, the high mean scores may reflect positive perceptions of literacy abilities and academic experiences rather than independently demonstrated proficiency. This distinction may also be relevant when interpreting the weak and nonsignificant relationships among the variables.

The findings further suggest that literacy development should be understood within a broader learning process. Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory emphasizes the active involvement of learners in constructing knowledge, while Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory recognizes the importance of social interaction, guidance, and support in learning. These theoretical perspectives are consistent with recent studies

emphasizing the interaction of individual abilities and learning environments. Duke and Cartwright (2021) highlighted the role of active self-regulation in reading development, while Graham et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of supportive and motivating instructional environments in developing writing abilities. Similarly, Hwang et al. (2022) demonstrated the potential benefits of integrating literacy development with subject-area instruction. These findings support the continued provision of meaningful reading and writing activities that take into account learners' abilities, instructional experiences, and learning environments.

Overall, the findings suggest that learners reported high levels of reading and writing skills. Still, these reported skills were not significantly related to their reported academic success in the present study. The results do not diminish the educational importance of literacy development but indicate that the relationships among these self-reported measures were weak and not statistically significant. The findings support the continued development of literacy instruction while recognizing that academic success may involve several learner-related, instructional, and environmental factors. Future studies may incorporate standardized literacy assessments, verified academic grades, and additional variables such as learner motivation, parental involvement, and instructional support to provide a more comprehensive understanding of elementary learners' academic development.

5. Conclusion

The study examined the reported reading skills, writing skills, academic success, and literacy challenges of Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners. The findings showed that learners reported Very High levels of reading skills in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency, as well as Very High levels of writing skills in syntax, grammar, and morphology. Their reported academic success was Very Satisfactory, although they also reported challenges in understanding texts, dealing with difficult words, expressing ideas in writing, using grammar, and reading aloud. The correlation analysis showed a negligible positive relationship between reading skills and academic success and a negligible negative relationship between writing skills and academic success. Neither relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, within the limits of the sample and the learner-reported measures used, the study did not establish a significant relationship between reading and writing skills and academic success. The findings suggest that literacy skills remain important areas of learning, but academic success may also be connected to other learner, instructional, and environmental factors. Future research may examine these factors to provide a broader understanding of learners' academic development.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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