

Exploring sentence structure variations in grade 8 students under different programs

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Abstract

This study was focused on exploring the sentence structure of Grade 8 learners under different tracks in order to provide instructions and activities tailored to the specific needs of the learners under these tracks. It made use of a descriptive qualitative design to thoroughly investigate the learners' sentence patterns and variations. Ten research participants were involved in this study, selected through purposive sampling. In analyzing the data, both structural and content analysis were used. The results of the study found out that learners across different tracks have their own distinctive writing styles as revealed in the difference between their sentence structures. STE and SPJ tend to use complex structures, while SPA and SPS preferred simple sentence structure, and BEC learners balanced both complex and simple forms in their writing. Moreover, learners under different tracks also varied in the lexical cohesions they used. As a recommendation, teachers and school administrators should organize track-specific workshops to strengthen the learners' writing skills and to develop the skills that they lack. Curriculum developers should also create a curriculum that highlights each track's unique writing styles, providing ample opportunities for learners to practice their unique strengths.

Keywords: sentence structure; varied tracks; cohesion; descriptive qualitative

1. Introduction

Developing proficiency in sentence structuring is a vital skill for effective communication, and mastering this skill is particularly crucial especially for learners who navigate different academic tracks with varying standards and demands. Since elementary years, learners are already taught with the basics in writing, and the complexity of these concepts progresses as they move to higher grade levels. At the junior high school level, learners are expected to demonstrate their proficiency in using language with accuracy and appropriateness in terms of form and function (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, Hook, & Defazio, 2010).

However, it can be observed that there is a gradual deterioration on the English Proficiency over the past years. According to Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), the country slipped four notches down to 22nd place out of 111 countries in the 2022 edition of the English Proficiency Index (EPI).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) had introduced the K-12 curriculum which has included a number of tracks in order to better prepare high school students for their future careers or further study. Depending on their chosen concentration, students' language skills—particularly in sentence construction—may evolve differently as they move through various courses.

In Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, Grade 8 learners are dispersed in different tracks, namely: Science, technology and Engineering (STE), Special program in Journalism (SPJ), Special Program in Arts (SPA), Special Program in Sports (SPS), and the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC). These programs were established to cater to learners' different interests, ensuring that learners would reach their full potential if their strengths are aligned with the program. However, it is inherent that some programs prioritize language skills while some programs place greater emphasis on scientific, artistic, and athletic competencies. As a result, learners in these programs may demonstrate notable differences in their skills of constructing varied sentences.

Thus, this study is conducted to understand how these learners in different tracks actually utilize

sentence structure in their writing. Though there are several studies conducted about analyzing sentence structure of learners, few studies have focused on exploring the sentence structure of different tracks. Through this study, the researcher aims to unveil how sentence structure proficiency varies across different programs. By uncovering this problem, educators can tailor their teaching strategies to meet the specific needs of learners in each track. More so, this study can be helpful in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

This section presents a series of articles that are relevant to the topic of the study. Thematic approach is utilized in its organization for a clear and understood presentation.

Writing and Syntax. Among the four macro-skills in English, writing is viewed as one of the most difficult skill to be mastered. According to Chen and Yu (2019), in the field of English, writing is the most challenging skill because learners need to be engaged in many complex ways in terms of literary and topical knowledge, writing experiences, and English use. It challenges the students because writing involves aspects of English which are phonology, morphology, semantic, and syntax (Gottardo et al., 2018; Ngoc Tu & Thao, 2019). Aside from that, Atmaca (2016) and Wu & Huang (2017) cited that learners find it hard to perform good writing because of the involvement of various elements such as vocabulary, spelling, meaning, structure of the sentence, and grammar.

Truly, writing consists of several components, including spelling, vocabulary, story structure or organization, and syntax (Chong, 2018). Of these components, syntax seems to be one of the most crucial elements that deserves attention from a writer. According to Hartsuiker, Pickering, & Veltkamp (2004), syntax is the realm of how phrases, clauses, and sentences are modified. Moreover, Liao (2014) and Yeo & Tsoulas (2013) define syntax as a linguistic branch oriented towards the ways words are combined into a set of phrases, phrases into clauses, and clauses into sentences so that a good writing work can be produced by modifying those syntactic components. To simplify, syntax studies the rules that control how words are combined to form a sentence, as Miller (2002) stated, “Syntax is agnostic about ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ English”.

Sentence Structure. Part of the syntax focuses on how sentences are constructed, and this is termed as sentence structure. Datchuk & Rodgers (2019) and Demirezen (2012) define sentence structure as the arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. Simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences are the four categories into which this can be divided.

The first structure of a sentence is the simple sentence. Depraetere & Langford (2020) define simple sentence as a sentence that only has one set of subject and verb, or it is commonly called independent clause. Moreover, it is also regarded as a fundamental structure that influences the capacity to generate compound and complex sentences. The sentence “I ate the bread” is an example of a simple sentence. It has one subject, or the noun phrase, which is the pronoun “I”, and one verb phrase, which is “ate the bread”, wherein ate is the verb and “the bread” is the direct object or the receiver of the action.

The second structure is the compound sentence. According to Jacobs (2020), this type of sentence construction is made up of two or more independent sentences joined by coordinating conjunctions such as and, but, or, nor, for, still, so, etc. The sentence “I got mad, so they cleaned the classroom” is an example of this structure. It has two independent clauses, which are “I got mad” and “They cleaned the classroom”, and these clauses are connected by the coordinating conjunction “so”.

The third one is the complex sentence. One independent clause and one or more dependent clauses make up this sentence (Torres & Gouzerh, 2019). Subordinating conjunctions like when, while, because, although, if, that, and so on are typically used to bridge these clauses. An example of this structure is “Noli went home because he was sick.” In this sentence, there is one independent clause which is “Noli went home”, and one dependent clause “because he was sick.”

The last sentence structure is the compound-complex. According to Sundari (2013), this structure consists

of one or more dependent clauses and two or more independent clauses connected by a coordinating conjunction. For instance, "My teacher scolded me because I broke the vase on the table, so I apologized to her immediately." This sentence consists of one dependent clause, "because I broke the vase in the table," and two independent clauses, "My teacher scolded me" and "I apologized to her immediately."

Sentence structure development in adolescents. Learning a knowledge of sentence structure is an essential element in attaining policy in the English language, since it allows learners to proficiently articulate their thoughts and concepts (Ramadani & Manurung, 2024). For Schleppegrell (2001), learners are required to produce written language that conveys sophisticated meanings in various academic communication tasks as they enter upper elementary and middle school grades. However, language learners struggle most with effective sentences.

Sasangka (2015) defines effective sentences as adhering to grammatical rules of straightforwardness, accuracy, clarity, efficiency, and parallelism. The comprehension of effective sentences entails the utilization of structural information to demonstrate syntactic capabilities (Brimo et al., 2017). In order to create coherent sentences, students need to be able to understand the formal and standardized grammatical rules of sentences (Leivada & Westergaard, 2020). This will help them create logical and significant statements by combining words and phrases (Wang, 2024).

Previous research indicates that individuals encounter difficulties in mastering grammatical sentences although they have acquired various syntactic patterns. According to Binger and Light (2008), most people have difficulty expressing more complex syntactic structures, although particular rules of syntactic structure are comprehended. This is because grammatical sentence structures are complicated (Lau et al., 2017), which makes it hard for students to understand and learn grammar (Khatib & Chalak, 2022; Wang, 2024). Furthermore, social communication does not always employ grammatically correct sentence structures. Students' comprehension and ability to produce high-quality written work are hampered in the learning context by their lack of competency in effective sentences (Citra & Afrita, 2019).

Sentence Structure Variations across Different Tracks. Exploring sentence structure variation among learners under different tracks requires consideration of multiple factors, including native language influence, proficiency levels, and educational context. Various research studies have demonstrated that various learner groups differ in their competency with sentence construction. For instance, a study by Ratna et al. (2020) on Padang fifth-grade students found that there is a significant variety of sentence structure variations based on basic Indonesian sentence patterns, suggesting that learners may possess different sentence construction abilities based on their level and the circumstance.

Studies have also revealed that one of the factors affecting the learners' mastery in English sentence structure is the fact that English differs from their native language patterns. This was uncovered in a study conducted by Din and Ghani (2017) on the Pakistani HSSC students. They posited that teaching English through literature alone proved insufficient for developing syntactic skills and sentence construction abilities. In the same manner, research has highlighted the complexity of English sentence structure as a significant obstacle for English language learners, emphasizing the need for effective teaching strategies to overcome these challenges (Thành, 2023).

Moreover, in the field of journalism education, studies have shown that students' interaction with disciplinary content knowledge is frequently irregular and lacks a consistent knowledge framework. Nonetheless, journalism students exhibit a strong ability to use scientific research procedures as a moral approach in their work, demonstrating a special fusion of theoretical and practical abilities (Ripatti-Torniainen & Mikkola, 2022). This research implies that a balance between professional and academic writing styles may be reflected in the sentence structure of journalism.

On the other hand, in sports education, the use of blended learning models in sports education has demonstrated notable gains in students' cognitive comprehension and motor skills (Pratama & Roesdiyanto, 2022). This implies that the terminology used in sports education might be changing to support both

theoretical ideas and hands-on training, which could result in different sentence structures.

Across disciplines, the integration of programming and coding into liberal arts programs, such as media, art, and statistics, creates both new opportunities and obstacles for language use across disciplines (Sarachan & O'Leary, 2019). This integration may lead to the development of unique sentence structures that combine technical and creative writing styles.

These variations may be addressed by specialized teaching methods such as task-based tactics (Din & Ghani, 2017), culturally varied resources, and multiple assessment forms (Evenddy, 2023). Furthermore, cutting-edge resources like web-based cooperative learning systems (Huang et al., 2008) and educational robot platforms (Kyprianou et al., 2023) have the potential to improve sentence production abilities across various learner groups.

Lexical and Grammatical Cohesion. Grammatical and lexical cohesiveness have been intensively investigated in a variety of settings, with academics investigating their roles in text comprehension, language acquisition, and discourse analysis. Cohesion, according to Mahlberg (2006), is a term used to refer to the property of connectedness that characterizes a text in contrast to a mere sequence of words. This implies that cohesion can enhance the reading of text and influence the argument's comprehensibility and clarity.

Interestingly, studies have revealed intriguing discrepancies in the relationship between cohesiveness and linguistic quality. While some research suggests that highly experienced L2 writers do not necessarily produce more cohesive writings, they do exhibit greater linguistic sophistication (Crossley & McNamara, 2010). On the other hand, other research suggests that both grammatical and lexical cohesive devices contribute to a text's overall coherence, with reference and conjunction being the most widely utilized grammatical devices (Bahaziq, 2016).

In conjunction to this, some studies have found that students, particularly second language learners, may overuse certain devices while underutilizing others. For instance, Arab students were found to underuse various grammatical cohesive devices (Khalil, 1989). In terms of lexical cohesion, repetition and use of synonyms are frequently employed by students to establish connections between ideas (Castro, 2004).

1.2. Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored in Halliday's Cohesion Theory, which is rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Traditional Grammar Theory. Cohesion theory highlights the value of cohesive devices in producing writings that are meaningful and coherent, which is especially relevant when analyzing students' writing abilities (Clarke, 2017; Hasanah & Daud, 2024). According to this theory, grammatical and lexical components like conjunction, ellipsis, reference, substitution, and lexical cohesion are what cause cohesion (Yavari et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Traditional Grammar Theory approaches sentence analysis by categorizing sentences into simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex structures based on their clausal composition and relationships (Bulak, 2020; Habermann, 2009). This theory highlights the importance of identifying the number and types of clauses present as well as the conjunctions used.

Using these theories can offer important insights into the linguistic patterns and choices displayed by students in various academic tracks, potentially guiding curriculum development and pedagogical approaches (He, 2014; Shrestha, 2020).

1.3. Research Questions

This study aims to reveal the variation of sentence structure among Grade 8 learners under different tracks. To uncover this, the following research questions will be used:

1. What are the common sentence structure patterns exhibited by Grade 8 learners in different educational programs?
2. What lexical cohesion patterns are present in students' writing throughout various tracks?

2. Methodology

This study made use of qualitative descriptive research design, which aimed at describing the variety of sentence structure of Grade 8 learners from different tracks of Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, namely: SPJ, STE, SPS, SPA, and BEC. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the 10 Grade 8 participants, with two learners representing each track. In collecting the data, the participants were convened in one place and were given one hour to write a three-paragraph composition on a topic “Overcoming Mental Health Struggles”. Data were analyzed through structural and content analysis. In structural analysis, the grammatical and syntactic components of sentences were examined while in content analysis, the meaning and context of the sentences were the main subjects.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. Common sentence structure patterns exhibited by Grade 8 learners in different educational tracks

Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE)

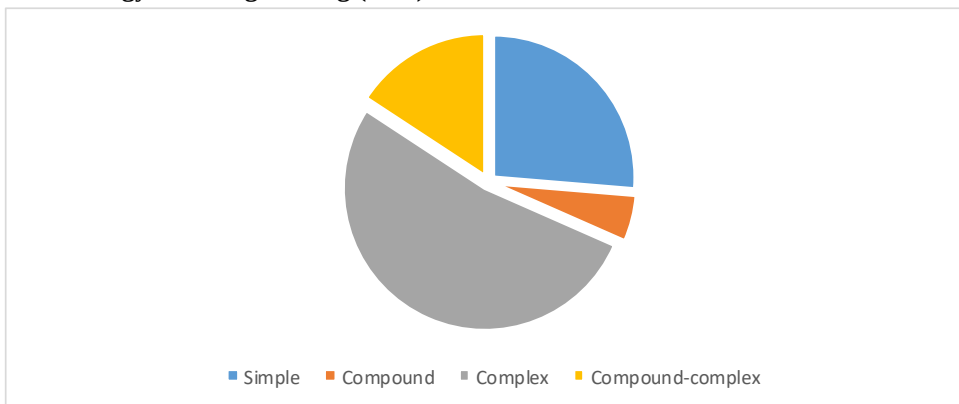


Figure 1. Sentence Structure Analysis of STE learners

In Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) class, complex sentence is the dominant structure observed. This reveals the STE's distinct preference for complex sentence, showcasing their ability to connect ideas through subordinating conjunctions and dependent clauses, and demonstrating their skill in providing detailed explanations of their ideas.

In STE's complex sentence, the dependent clauses are introduced by subordinating conjunctions (e.g. because, although) and include varied components like noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP), and adverbial phrases (AdvP). Sentence 9 of Participant 2 is an example of the learners' complex structure, as shown below.

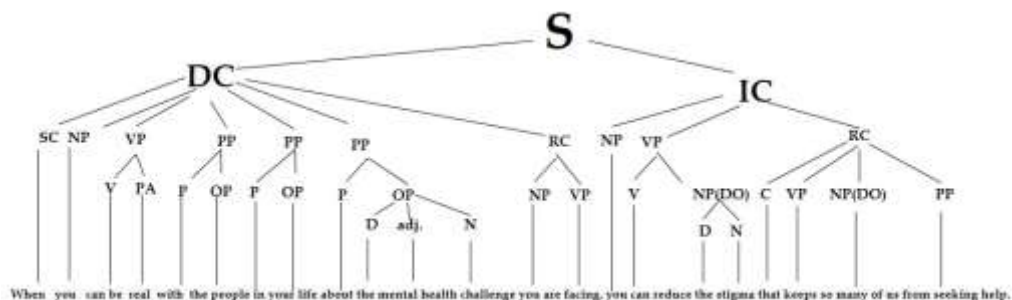


Figure 2. STE's complex structure sample

In this sentence, the dependent clause (DC) acts as an adverbial clause, modifying the independent clause (IC) by indicating the condition under which the action in the main clause occurs.

Simple sentences are also present in the STE learners' writing and the usual pattern they exhibit includes noun phrase (NP), prepositional phrases (PP), and verb phrases (VP) that are often paired with direct objects (DO). This shows that despite constructing concise sentences, their writing still includes some level of syntactic details such as the use of prepositional phrases and infinitive phrases. Sentence 1 of participant 2 is an example of this, as shown below.

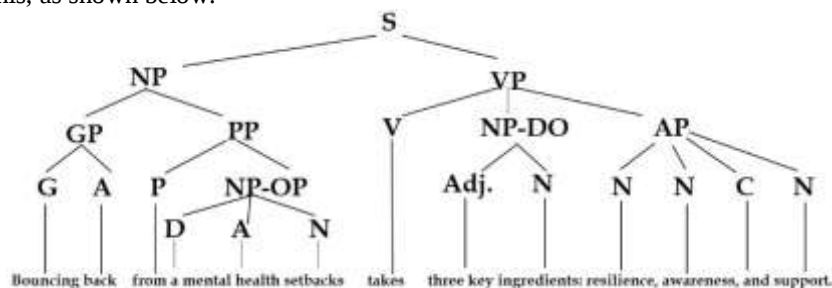


Figure 3.. STE's simple structure sample

In this sentence, there is only one independent clause which contains the noun phrase (NP) and the verb phrase (VP). However, embedded in the noun phrase is a prepositional phrase (PP) which adds context to the subject, specifying the source of the action. Similarly, in the verb phrase, and adverbial phrase (AP) is embedded to further elaborate on the direct object, providing a list of the specific ingredients.

STE learners have also utilized compound sentences which is made up of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction. These independent clauses frequently include direct objects, complements, and infinitive phrases. Sentence 2 of Participant 1 is an example of this structure.

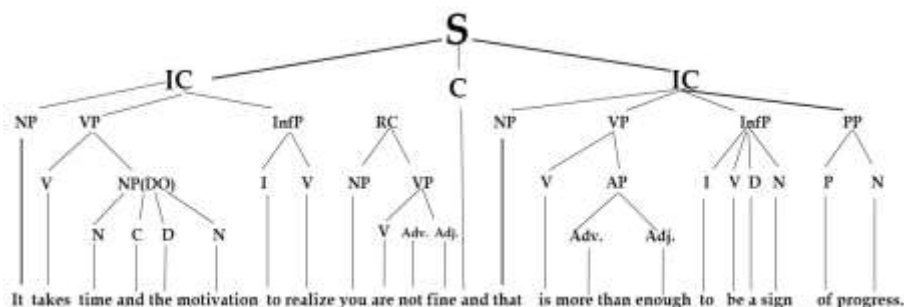


Figure 4. STE's compound structure sample

In this sentence, there are two independent clauses present connected by the conjunction "and". In the first clause, there is an embedded infinitive phrase (InfP) that explains the purpose of motivation and a relative clause (RC) which functions as the direct object of the verb "realize." In the second clause, three more phrases are embedded: infinitive phrase (InfP) which explains the purpose or result of "more than enough", adverbial phrase (AdvP) which modifies the verb "is", and prepositional phrase (PP) which functions as a modifier within the infinitive phrase.

The learners also came up with two compound-complex structures. Though these sentences are fewer in count, it shows the learners advanced syntactic skills by blending multiple independent clauses with dependent clauses.

Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)

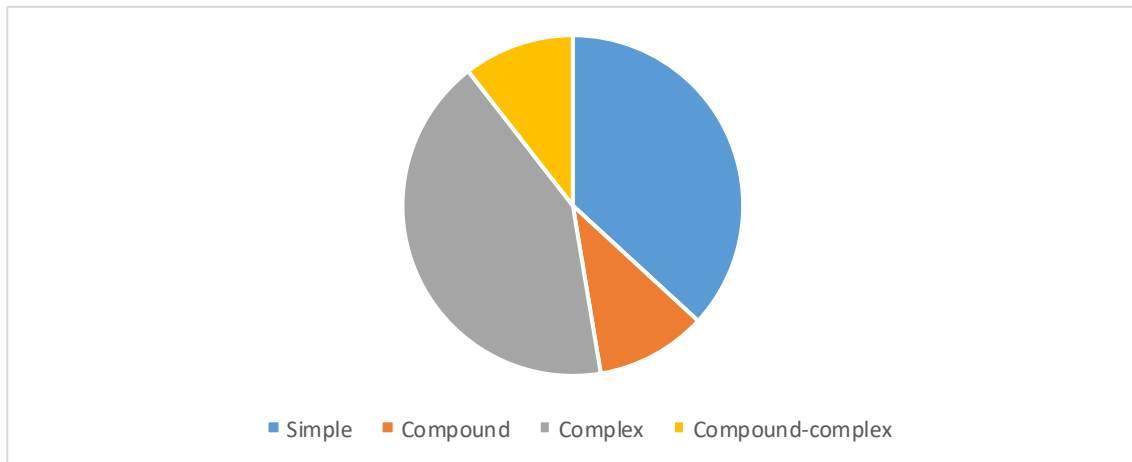


Figure 5. Sentence Structure Analysis of BEC learners

In the Basic Education Curriculum, most of the sentences they came up with are complex, suggesting that the BEC learners frequently combine dependent and independent clauses to elaborate on ideas and provide additional context. From their complex sentence structure, it can be noted that they expand their ideas by adding explanatory or conditional information to the main points. BEC learners' sentence pattern often includes additional details through prepositional phrases (PP) or gerund phrases (GP) to make their writing more descriptive.

Sentence 2 of Participant 3 is an example of this structure, demonstrating the integration of dependent and independent clauses. In this sentence, both dependent and independent clauses are present, with two prepositional phrases added in the main clause. The first prepositional phrase modifies the verb "connected" while the second one modifies the noun "addiction".

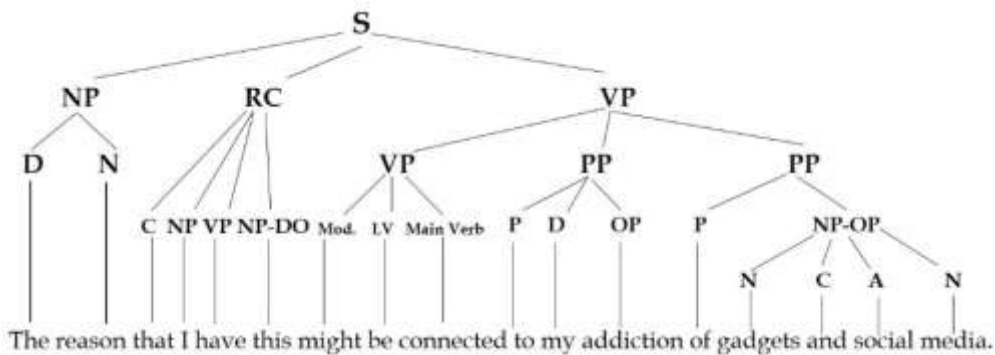


Figure 6. BEC's complex structure sample

Meanwhile, simple sentence followed the count of complex sentence in the BEC learners write up. BEC learners' simple sentences are generally straightforward, consisting of a single independent clause with minimal complexity. Only prepositional phrases or gerund phrases are added, evident in Sentence 2 of Participant 4 as elaborated below.

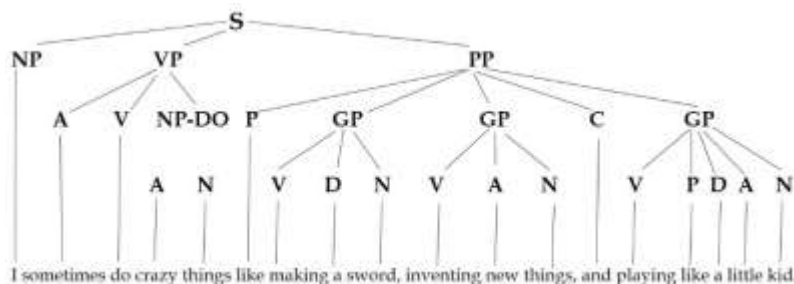


Figure 7. BEC's simple structure sample

Compound sentence and compound-complex sentence appears less frequently, with only two examples each. BEC learners' occasional usage of these structures would indicate that they save this structure for extremely complex knowledge that necessitates thorough explanations of several issues.

Special Program in Journalism (SPJ)

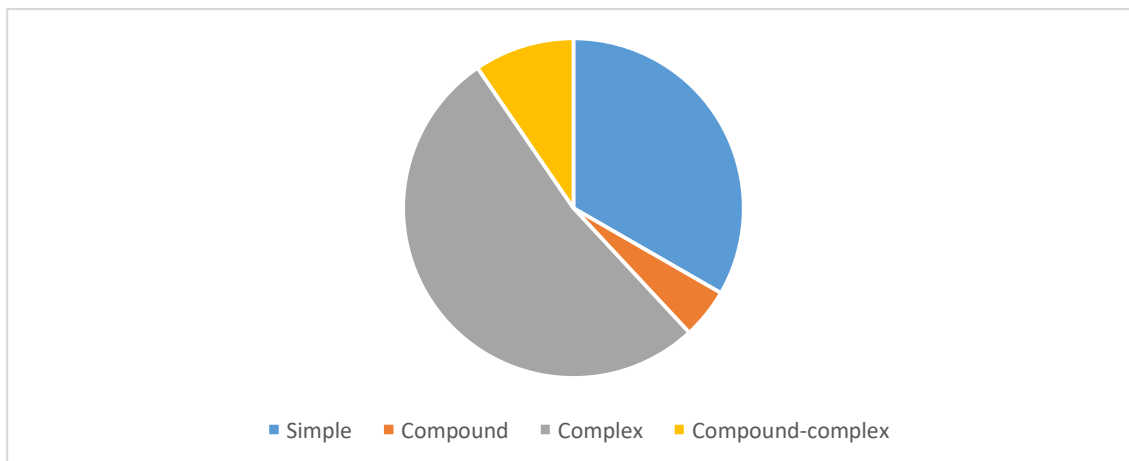


Figure 8. Sentence Structure Analysis of SPJ learners

Complex structure dominates the sentences written by SPJ learners, followed by simple, then compound and the least is compound-complex.

The typical structure of the SPJ learners' complex sentence includes an independent clause accompanied with a dependent clause that contain direct objects, prepositional phrases, or even infinitive phrases. Moreover, SPJ learners' dependent clauses frequently contain conjunctive elements or noun phrases that bring in more detailed information or thorough elaboration of the main clause.

Example of this structure is Sentence 2 of Participant 5, which demonstrates the use of subordination to expand the independent clause. It can be observed in this sentence that within the subordinate clause (SC) is a prepositional phrase (PP) which add details about the location of the phrase "their existence".

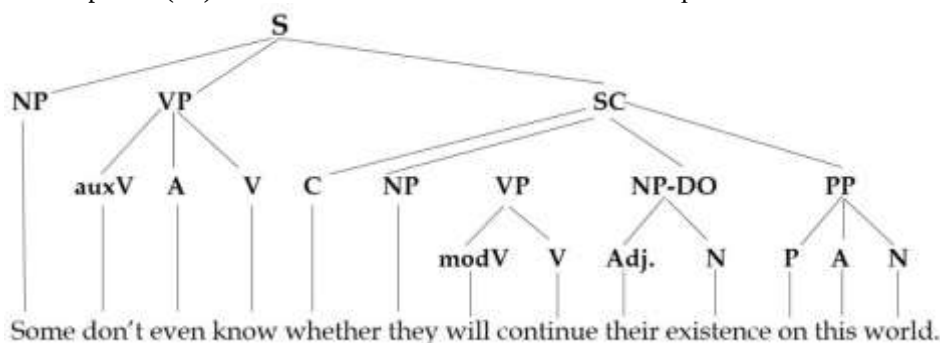


Figure 9. SPJ's complex structure sample

As to the simple sentence, it generally consists of independent clause with straightforward noun and verb phrases, often supplemented by prepositional phrases or infinitive phrases. Below is an example of simple sentence that incorporates a prepositional phrase for specificity while maintaining structural simplicity.

S8-P5:

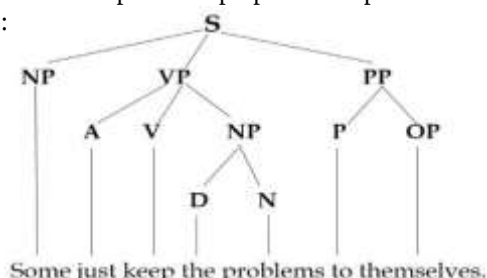


Figure 10. SPJ's simple structure sample

Meanwhile, as to the compound and compound-complex, it has rare occurrence which may indicate that SPJ learners favors a more straightforward but detailed style, focusing primarily on elaborating through complex sentence rather than layering multiple independent ideas.

Special Program in Arts (SPA)

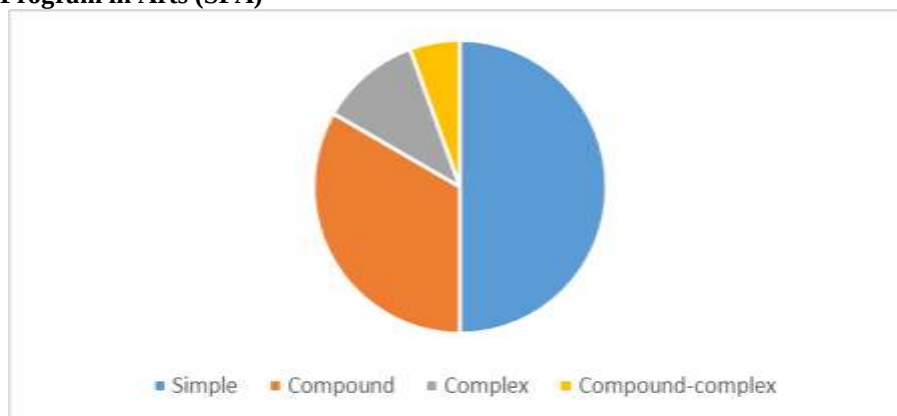


Figure 11. Sentence Structure Analysis of SPA learners

Based on the analysis of SPA learner's sentence structure, it was revealed that they preferred writing in simple structure.

SPA learners' simple sentences contain a single independent clause, with or without additional elements like noun phrases, verb phrases, and prepositional phrases. They construct their sentences straightforwardly, often focusing on one idea or action. Below are examples of their simple sentence structure:

S3-P7:

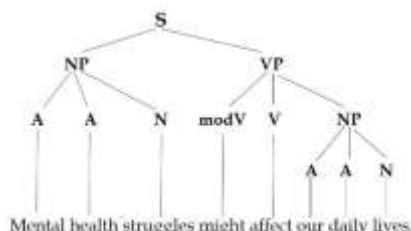


Figure 12. SPA's simple structure sample

S6-P8:

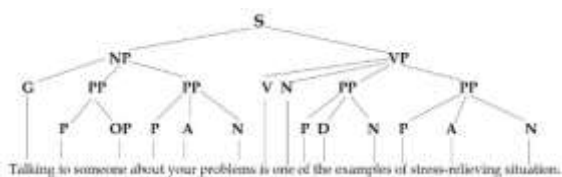


Figure 13. SPA's simple structure sample

Meanwhile, SPA learners' inclination to complex sentence is also evident. Their complex sentence structure contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause which are often introduced by subordinators or prepositional phrases.

Sentence 9 of Participant 7 demonstrates how the learners expanded a simple independent clause with a dependent clause that elaborates the action.

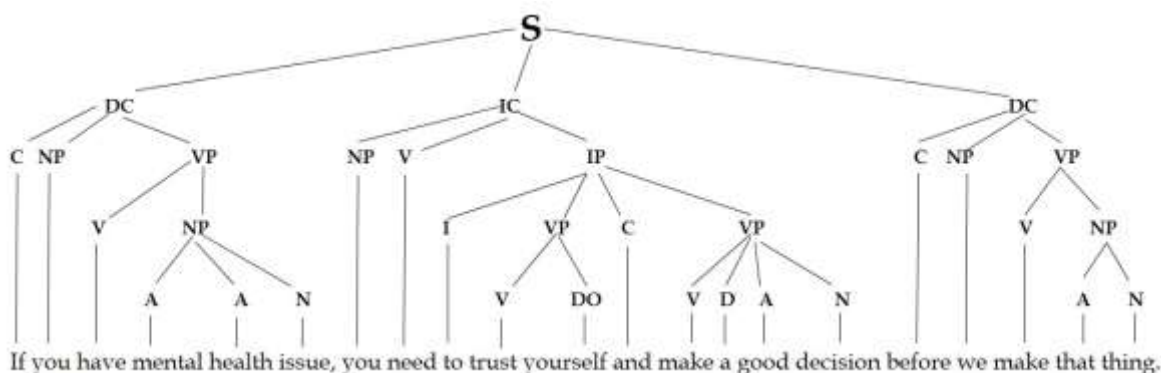


Figure 14. SPA's complex structure sample

In this sentence, there are two dependent clauses and one independent clause. The first dependent clause modifies the independent clause by setting a condition for it while the second dependent clause modifies the main clause by indicating the time frame. In the independent clause, an infinitive phrase is added to serve as an object of the verb "need".

Compound and compound-complex structures are hardly seen on SPA learners' write-ups, suggesting that they may prefer to separate their ideas through a simple sentence rather than embedding multiple layers within a single sentence.

Special Program in Sports (SPS)

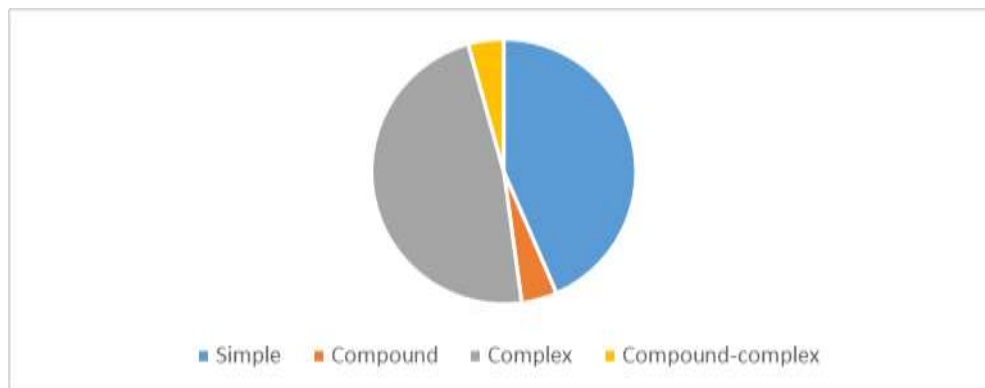


Figure 15. Sentence Structure Analysis of SPS learners

From the analysis of SPS learners' sentence structure, it can be noted that they are also inclined to both complex sentences and simple sentences. SPS learners' independent clauses are usually patterned as **NP VP NP-DO** in the clause 'I can fix my struggles' in sentence 8 of Participant 10 and **NP VP AdjP** in the clause 'I don't feel bored anymore' in sentence 12 of Participant 9.

SPS learners' dependent clauses providing reasons, time, or conditions are commonly introduced by subordinating conjunctions such as *because*, *when* or *that*. Among the common patterns observed in the learners dependent clauses includes **sub.conj. NP VP NP-DO** in S6-P9 (i.e. *because eating is not my habit*) and **sub.conj. NP VP PP** in S12-P9 (*when I go back to school*).

SPS learners are also inclined to writing simple sentences which are typically structured as subject-verb-object format or the **NP VP NP-DO**. Example of this is S7-P9:



Figure 16. SPS' simple structure sample

Aside from the common format, SPS learners also expand their simple sentence by adding additional details like prepositional phrases, adverbial phrases or infinitive phrases, evident in the example below.

S2-P9:

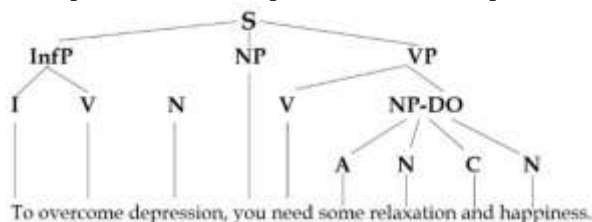


Figure 17. SPS' simple structure sample

In this sentence, there is only one independent clause but it is expanded through an infinitive phrase which functions as an adverbial phrase modifying the main verb "need."

S2-P10:

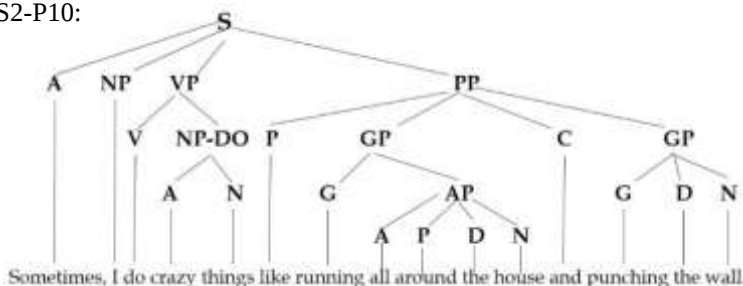


Figure 18. SPS' simple structure sample

In this sentence, only one independent clause is seen but the idea is expanded by adding a prepositional phrase which acts as an adverbial modifier and two gerund phrases which illustrate the kind of "crazy things" the subject performs.

From SPS learners' sentences, they rarely used compound and compound-complex structure with only one occurrence of each. This may suggest that the learners are still exploring more advanced syntactic structures.

3.2 Lexical cohesion patterns present in students' writing throughout various tracks

Science, Technology, and Engineering

In the STE Track, they use plenty of pronoun reference to maintain links between sentences and ideas. Example of this is Sentence 2 and 3 of Participant 2:

*The first step—the most important—is to admit that there's a problem. **This** is hard for many people, but **it's** necessary, and **it** creates space not only for individual reflection but also the pursuit of professional help, be it in the form of therapy or some other method.*

The pronouns used here which are "**this**" and "**it**" both served as elements that ensure coherence and provide different angles for discussing the central action. The word "**this**" in the second sentence ties back to the preceding clause which is admitting that there's a problem. It serves as the subject of clause, while encapsulating the entire concept previously introduced. Meanwhile, the pronoun "**it**" in the clause "**it's necessary**" still refers back to the act of admitting that there's a problem. It subtly shifts focus to what admitting the problem achieves, showing its consequence. On the other hand, the word "**it**" in the clause "**it creates space**" links back to the same idea, tying it to subsequent outcomes like reflection and seeking professional help.

Secondly, they also used a lot of conjunctions, both coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, as seen in the Sentence 5 of Participant 1:

***But** when you take courage **and** tell yourself that you don't want to be imprisoned in a cell that you built **or** another person built, that will be the best decision you'll ever make.*

In this sentence, the transitions "but", "and", and "or" serve distinct purposes that enhance the overall meaning and flow. The word "but" introduces a contrast, suggesting a change in perspective or an opposing idea to what might have been previously stated, emphasizing the importance of courage in difficult circumstances.

The word "and" connects the action of taking courage and self-reflection, indicating that both are essential components of making a profound decision. On the other hand, the word "or" presents an alternative, underscoring the choices available to the individual, either being imprisoned by their own actions or those of others.

Together, these transition words help to structure the sentence, guiding the reader through the speaker's reasoning and reinforcing the message of empowerment and choice.

Repetitions are also observed in their writing. The key terms like "**mental health**", "**challenges**", "**overcome**", and "**support**" recur throughout their essays, linking different aspects of the journey such as admitting a problem, self-reflection, and seeking help. These words they have repeatedly used tie back to the journey metaphor, emphasizing its complexity and persistence.

Another lexical cohesive device the learners employ is the use of synonymy. It is observed that they uses related terms to build on the same concept without redundancy. This cohesion pattern is evident in the use of the terms "**safety net**" and "**support network**" in their essay. "Safety net" is used here in a metaphorical sense, implying emotional reassurance and protection while "support network" emphasizes the practical and tangible connections individuals rely on. By alternating these two synonymous phrases, the essay keeps the text engaging and avoids overusing a single term.

Basic Education Curriculum

In the Basic Education Curriculum, the following cohesion patterns are observed: pronoun reference, use of conjunctions, repetitions, synonymy, and listing.

In the pronoun reference, pronouns such as **I**, **it**, **my** and **we** establish connections between sentences by referring back to previously mentioned ideas or subjects. Below is an example of this lexical cohesion, as cited in Sentence 1 and 2 of Participant 3:

My mental health issue is depression and anger. The reason that I have this might be connected to my addiction of gadgets and social media.

In these sentences, the pronoun **'this'** refers back to **'depression and anger'**, ensuring that the readers understand the relationship between mental health issues and their causes. Using this pronoun emphasizes that the speaker is specifically referring to the mental health problems as a singular, encapsulated entity, even though it involves multiple aspects such as depression and anger.

As to the use of conjunctions, their essay contains the conjunctions **'because'**, **'and'**, **'but'**, **'when'** and **'so'** to establish logical relationship between sentences and ideas. Example of this is Sentence 3 of Participant 4:

When I have severe mental health struggle like stress and trouble at home, I hang out with my friends because it relieves my stress.

In this sentence, the conjunctions "when", "and", and "because" are used to create a logically structured sentence that conveys a clear relationship between the speaker's struggles, the conditions under which they act, and the reason for their actions. To specify, the word "when" introduces a condition, specifying that the action in the main clause which is "hanging out with friends" occurs during or in response to the situation described in the subordinate clause which is "severe mental health struggles". As to the word "and", it connects the two related words "stress" and "trouble at home" within the subordinate clause, indicating that both factors are contributing to the speaker's mental health struggles. On the other hand, the word "because" establishes a cause-effect relationship between the relief of stress and the speaker's decision to spend time with friends.

As to the use of repetitions, words like **"depression," "anger,"** and **"addiction,"** are repeated to emphasize the main issues discussed. The repetition of the word "depression" emphasizes the writer's persistent battle with depression and the variety of ways they address it; "anger" emphasizes the reactive nature of this emotion, showing how it connects to external triggers; and "addiction" is tied to external influences, like gadgets and social media, showing a cause-and-effect relationship with mental health struggles.

The same with synonymy wherein the learners use words **'addiction'** and **'obsession'** to describe their dependence on gadgets, as well as the words **'mad'** and **'anger'** to describe their feeling of frustration in their mental health struggles.

Another cohesion pattern used by the BEC learners is through listing. They use listing to emphasize the multiplicity of challenges, showing that mental health issues often involve a combination of factors like emotional states as depression and anger. Moreover, BEC learners' listing mechanism illustrates the variety of ways the writer manages their struggles, showing that no single method is sufficient on its own.

Special Program in Journalism

In the SPJ track, the cohesion patterns observed from the learners output includes pronoun reference, conjunctions, repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy.

In the use of pronoun reference, the learners maintain continuity and reduce redundancy by using pronouns that link back to what is previously stated. Example of this is S8-P6:

"If mental health struggles cause death, then probably it is dangerous as it seems".

Here, pronoun **"it"** in the phrase "it is dangerous" refers back to the noun phrase **"mental health struggles"** in the subordinate clause, serving as a substitute to avoid repetition of the full phrase, thereby

building a cause-and-effect relationship between mental health struggles and the potential for harm. The second “it” in the phrase “as it seems” connects the perceived danger of mental health struggles to the reader’s or speaker’s perspective, emphasizing subjectivity in how this danger is interpreted.

As to the use of conjunctions the learners repeatedly used conjunctions **“and”, “because”, “if”, “then”,** and **“so”** to help clarify cause-and-effect or sequential relationships. Example of this is Sentence 9 of Participant 6.

Other people are struggling because of their mental health now but they’re just silent about it.

In this sentence, the words “because” and “but” presents a cause and effect relationship followed by a contrasting outcome. The word “because” introduces a causal relationship, connecting the struggle experienced by “other people” to its reason which is the mental health issue. Whereas the word “but” introduces a contrast, indicating that although people are struggling, their reaction or behavior contrasts with what might be expected.

As to the use of synonymy, the terms **“battling”** and **“struggling,”** and **“issues,”** and **“problems”** are used by learners interchangeably to describe the challenges that people experience, while preserving lexical coherence. Both the words “battling” and “struggling” describe the active engagement of individuals in fighting or enduring mental health challenges. These synonymous words show the internal conflict and emotional or psychological toll individuals face, thus connecting with words like “illnesses,” “challenges,” and “health” in the context. Meanwhile, the words “issues” and “problems” tie directly to the earlier mention of mental health struggles, emphasizing that these challenges are not isolated events but part of a larger societal and personal struggle.

SPJ learners also use hyponymy in their writing. In their article, they provided specific instances of mental issues, such as **“bullying,” “school struggles,”** and **“family problems,”** creating a hierarchical relationship between more general concepts and specific instances of mental health struggles. Aside from hyponymy, they also use antonymy. Their write-up highlights the significance of mental health awareness by drawing comparisons between various states, such as **“care”** and **“don’t care”** about mental health, highlighting the idea that taking care of one’s mental health is a choice, and neglecting it can have serious consequences, including death or long-term struggles.

Special Program in Arts

The cohesion patterns observed in the SPA learners’ outputs include pronoun reference, conjunctions, synonymy, and antonymy.

Like any other tracks, SPA learners utilizes pronoun reference in their writing. The common pronouns seen in their essays to refer back to what is previously mentioned are **“we”, “it”, “our”, “this”,** and **“that”**. S2-P8 and S3-P8 is example of how pronoun reference is observed in their write-up.

*There are a lot of challenges in life which affects our daily routine and **those** harmful emotions are called depression, stress, or frustration. **This** is very harmful or stressful to our mental health.*

In this example, pronoun reference “those” and “this” are used. The word “those” links back to “harmful emotions,” which are part of the challenges mentioned earlier. On the other hand, the word “this” as the subject of the second sentence refers back to the phrase “very harmful or stressful to our mental health”, making a direct connection between the harmful emotions and their effect on mental health.

Additionally, they also use conjunctions to ensure coherence. Among the conjunctions they commonly used are **“and”, “or”, “because”** and **“if”**. In Sentence 4 of Participant 7 **“It is because our brain is affected if our mental health gets tired because of overthinking and pressure”**, the first use of the conjunction **“because”** introduces a reason or justification, explaining why the statement “our brain is affected” is true. On its second use, the word “because” provides specific factors that contribute to mental health fatigue. It explains why mental health gets tired, linking it to “overthinking and pressure.” On the other hand, the word “if” links the condition “our mental health gets tired” with the result “our brain is affected.” It works alongside “because” to clarify that while the brain being affected depends on mental health becoming

tired, the tiredness itself is caused by overthinking and pressure.

At the same time, SPA learners also employ synonymy by interchangeably using the terms such as **"harmful,"** and **"stressful,"** to help maintain a cohesive discussion about mental health. Though these terms are not identical in meaning, they share an overlapping connotations that help reinforce the negative impact of mental health struggles.

On the same note, they also used antonymy in their essays to create contrast and emphasize the significance of taking care of mental health. They used the terms **"harmful emotions"** versus **"relaxation"** and **"stress-relieving solutions,"** to emphasize the contrast between the negative consequences of untreated mental health issues and the advantages of successful coping mechanisms.

Special Program in Sports

In the SPS track, pronoun reference, conjunctions, repetitions, and collocations are the lexical cohesion patterns employed by the learners.

SPS learners consistently used the pronouns **"you," "I," "my," "it,"** and **"this"** to link their ideas to what is previously mentioned. In Sentence 4 of Participant 9 below, it can be noted that the pronoun **"it"** in the clause **"it's becoming my habit"** refers to the previously mentioned **issue of overeating**, creating a clear connection between the problem and its solution. **"It"** in the second sentence refers to the writer's **"mental health challenge,"** which, in this context, is specifically tied to their weight and the habit of overeating.

*My other mental health challenge is my weight because in 2020, I ate too much and **it's** becoming my habit. I overcame **it** in 2022.*

Another cohesive device they employed is the use of conjunctions, such as the Sentence 8 of Participant 10 below:

I can fix my struggles when I play offline and online games.

In this sentence, the subordinating conjunction **"when"** indicates a temporal relationship, showing how a specific activity alleviates struggle, while the conjunction **"and"** connects the two types of games, presenting them as complementary parts of the writer's strategy for managing struggles.

Repetitions are also observed in the learners' write-ups. The terms **"struggles," "stress"** and **"boredom"** are repeated throughout the essays, ensuring thematic unity. These repetitions establish a rhythm and reinforce the importance of addressing these mental health issues, making it relatable to the readers.

Moreover, SPS learners also employed collocation. They used words that naturally go together such as **"doing house chores"** and **"hanging out with friends"**. These collocations serve to illustrate specific actions that contribute to managing their mental health struggles.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

From the results of the study, it was found out that across all tracks, complex sentences emerged as the most prevalent structure, suggesting that Grade 8 learners are developing a strong understanding of complex sentence construction. However, while complex sentences dominated, notable variations were also observed across tracks. For example, STE students tended to use complex phrases, demonstrating their capacity to incorporate subordinating elements and in-depth explanations. In the same way, complex structures were preferred also by SPJ learners, highlighting their inclination for in-depth and elaborate writing. This suggests that STE and SPJ tracks have a greater emphasis on analytical and elaborative writing. In contrast, SPA learner tended to use simpler sentence structures and preferred direct communication, while BEC learners balanced both complex and simple forms in their writing. As to the SPS learner, they displayed a range of simple and complex words, demonstrating their capacity to express ideas succinctly while also going into detail on particular topics.

Moreover, as to the use of lexical cohesion, the study revealed common lexical cohesion patterns

across tracks, including pronoun reference, conjunctions, repetition, synonymy, and listing. To specify, pronouns, conjunctions, and repetition are all skillfully used by STE students to preserve thematic connections and clarity. Similarly, in order to strengthen their arguments and make them easier to comprehend, BEC and SPJ students use a variety of coherent strategies, such as synonymy and listing. The SPA and SPS tracks, on the other hand, represent their distinct writing styles by using more straightforward coherent techniques. Overall, these results provide insights into the language development of Grade 8 students and highlight the significance of educational tracks in forming sentence structure and lexical cohesion.

4.2 Recommendations

As the findings of the study revealed distinct sentence structure and lexical cohesion patterns among Grade 8 learners across various educational tracks, the following recommendations are proposed.

First, for the curriculum developer, they should create a curriculum that highlights each track's unique writing styles. This curriculum would provide ample opportunities for learners to practice their unique strengths. Also, they should use continuous evaluation techniques to monitor learners' writing skill development over time. This can assist in pinpointing areas that require additional attention and development. Secondly, for the teachers, it would be good if they will organize track-specific workshops to strengthen the learners' writing skill and to develop the skill which they lack of. English teachers could also conduct training on cohesion, teaching learners techniques such as synonymy, pronouns, conjunctions, and repetition.

Lastly, for the learners, they should start reading diverse materials aligned with their track. It would be good if they are exposed to different writing styles. Also, they should allot a time for regular writing practice tailored to their tracks' strength and weaknesses.

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Appendix A. Analysis of learners' sentence structure

A.1 Science, Technology, And Engineering (STE)

	Sentence Structure	Classification
S1-P1	The journey of overcoming mental health challenges isn't as easy as to just tell yourself "I'm okay" or others to tell you that you are okay.	Complex
S2-P1	It takes times and the motivation to just simply realize you are not fine and that's more than enough to be a sign of progress.	Compound
S3-P1	Overcoming this forces you to dive into areas of your life that you promised yourself never to go back to.	Complex
S4-P1	For example, it could be because of an encounter that left a cut on you that never healed, a cut that kept bleeding since that day.	Complex
S5-P1	But when you take courage and tell yourself that you don't want to be imprisoned in a cell that you built or another person built, that will be the best decision you'll ever make.	Compound
S6-P1	The pace of overcoming mental health challenges is slow but steady.	Simple
S7-P1	You won't see any progress at the start but after a while, it will become so obvious.	Compound
S8-P1	The solutions to overcome this is to talk to someone—family, friends, a therapist, or God.	Simple
S9-P1	Know that our Father in heaven is always ready to be there when you need Him, and when you think He's far, just know that He wasn't the one who moved.	Compound-complex
S10-P1	Seeking for freedom is not merely a desire but a courageous journey towards liberation, where every step is a pursuit of	Complex

	freedom and hope.	
S1-P2	Bouncing back from a mental health setbacks takes three key ingredients: resilience, self-awareness, and support.	Simple
S2-P2	The first step—the most important—is to admit that there's a problem.	Simple
S3-P2	This is hard for many people, but it's necessary, and it creates space not only for individual reflection but also the pursuit of professional help, be it in the form of therapy or some other method.	Compound-Complex
S4-P2	Contrary to popular belief, admitting that you need help is not a weakness.	Complex
S5-P2	It's an important part of the journey towards healing and the management of mental health symptoms.	Simple
S6-P2	Once a person has the right mindset, they can go about trying to create a support network which is kind of like a safety net for the human condition.	Complex
S7-P2	Having friends, family, or support groups is essential because such connections lessen the feeling of loneliness and act as motivators.	Complex
S8-P2	Hearing someone else be honest about their mental health issues can and often does obliterate the stigma that surrounds these conversations.	Complex
S9-P2	When you can be real with the people in your life about the mental health challenges you're facing, you can reduce the stigma that keeps so many of us from seeking help.	Complex
S10-P2	When it comes to mental health, you're more likely to recover if you've got a supportive team in your corner.	Complex

A.2 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)

	Sentence Structure	Classification
S1-P3	My mental health issue is depression and anger.	Simple
S2-P3	The reason that I have this might be connected to my addiction of gadgets and social media.	Complex
S3-P3	The influence of social media made me addicted to it.	Simple
S4-P3	Whenever my phone and tablets are confiscated by my mother, I always got mad and just cry.	Complex
S5-P3	My obsession also is something I have.	Simple
S6-P3	Whenever I get scolded by my parents, I cry and throw tantrums, but I don't show it.	Compound-complex
S7-P3	I only do it whenever I'm alone.	Complex
S8-P3	I don't know what to do about it.	Simple
S9-P3	I'm just the same, I didn't change.	Compound
S10-P3	We all have our differences and traumas that we can't stop.	Complex
S11-P3	To me, anything is curable.	Simple
S1-P4	I overcome my mental health struggle by listening to music,	Simple

	playing call of duty, and doing household chores.	
S2-P4	I sometimes do crazy things like making a sword, inventing new things, and play like a little kid.	Simple
S3-P4	When I have severe mental health struggle like stress and trouble at home, I hang out with my friends because it relieves my stress.	Complex
S4-P4	When my mental health sometimes become way too depressed, I just find a way to make myself happy like watching TV, watching funny videos, eat foods, and sleep.	Complex
S5-P4	I can reduce my mental health struggles by praying to God when my problem is unbearable, consult my mom, and try to fix it by myself.	Complex
S6-P4	I can find a way to overcome my mental challenges, but sometimes it is very worse, so I sometimes seek help from my parents, friends, or I will solve my own problem.	Compound
S7-P4	I also help reduce my mental health struggles by playing with my cat, petting my dog, or just bully stray dogs that chase me when I'm walking.	Complex
S8-P4	There are some times that my mental health problems get too worse and makes me give up, I try my best to sustain my health and not be depressed when I am overpressured.	Compound-complex

A.3 Special Program in Journalism (SPJ)

	Sentence Structure	Classification
S1-P5	Some people nowadays are struggling with life.	Simple
S2-P5	Some don't even know whether they will continue their existence on this world.	Complex
S3-P5	There are so many reasons why people are having mental issues these days.	Complex
S4-P5	One of the reason is bullying which affects people the most and causes them to end their lives.	Complex
S5-P5	This is most common in the LGBTQ community because people are assaulted for not being the gender that they are given.	Complex
S6-P5	Many LGBTQ people struggles because of this reason.	Simple
S7-P5	Some reasons too are school struggles and family problems which give them pressure to handle on their own.	Complex
S8-P5	Some just keep the problems to themselves.	Simple
S9-P5	None of these would've happened if there's no harassing, assaulting, and giving them pressure.	Complex
S10-P5	Many people took their own lives and keep their problems to themselves.	Simple
S11-P5	There's many ways to release the problems like opening up to your family or to the people you are comfortable opening with.	Complex

S1-P6	Mental health struggles is one of the current issues in our world now.	Simple
S2-P6	It is because most of the teenagers were battling with their mental illnesses.	Complex
S3-P6	It may be caused by family problems, academic failure, and maybe heartbreaks.	Simple
S4-P6	Some people died just because of their mental illnesses.	Simple
S5-P6	People say that “mental health matters”, and it really does.	Compound
S6-P6	Mental health matters to the point that if you don’t care about your mental health, you’ll probably going to die.	Compound-Complex
S7-P6	If this is the case, you should probably care about your mental health now!	Complex
S8-P6	If mental health struggles cause death, then probably it is dangerous as it seems.	Complex
S9-P6	Other people are struggling because of their mental health now but they’re just silent about it.	Compound-Complex
S10-P6	So, if you mind your friends’ mental health, check them now!	Complex

A.4 Special Program in Arts (SPA)

	Sentence Structure	Classification
S1-P7	Many of us experience mental health issue and some of these experience are caused by stress and depression.	Compound
S2-P7	We can prevent stress and depression by enjoying and making ourselves happy.	Complex
S3-P7	Mental health struggles might affect our daily lives.	Simple
S4-P7	It is because our brain is affected if our mental health gets tired because of overthinking and pressure.	Complex
S5-P7	Having mental health issue is not easy.	Simple
S6-P7	To prevent that kind of situation, we need to relax our brain from anything that affects our mental health.	Complex
S7-P7	We need to use our social health to communicate with one another and it can help us to be relieved from stress.	Compound
S8-P7	We should also use our spiritual value to think positive and prevent negative thoughts.	Simple
S9-P7	If you have mental health issue, you need to trust yourself and make a good decision before we make that thing.	Complex
S10-P7	Talking to another person or your family or friends and opening up to them all your rants and problems can be a big help to yourself.	Simple
S1-P8	Mental health is like our spiritual health that defines our own personality.	Complex
S2-P8	There are a lot of challenges in life which affects our daily routine and those harmful emotions are called depression, stress, or frustration.	Compound-Complex

S3-P8	This is very harmful or stressful to our mental health.	Simple
S4-P8	To avoid this harmful issue, we must take regular meditation or take a break from work, or a break from all the problems that will or might harm our mental state.	Complex
S5-P8	We can start a program that will help other people solve or overcome their mental issues.	Simple
S6-P8	Talking to someone about your problems is one of the examples of stress-relieving solutions.	Simple
S7-P8	I made this essay to let people know the danger and importance of taking care of our mental health.	Simple
S8-P8	We should always do our best to take care of our mental health.	Simple

A.5 Special Program in Sports (SPS)

	Sentence Structure	Classification
S1-P9	I have depression because of money.	Complex
S2-P9	To overcome depression, you need some relaxation and happiness.	Simple
S3-P9	To have happiness, you need some entertainment.	Simple
S4-P9	My other mental health challenge is my weight because in 2020, I ate too much and it's becoming my habit.	Compound-Complex
S5-P9	I overcame it in 2022.	Simple
S6-P9	Because eating is not my habit anymore, I realize I can do more things in this world.	Complex
S7-P9	My habit is basketball.	Simple
S8-P9	When I play basketball, my stress is gone.	Complex
S9-P9	My other mental health challenge is boredom because in 2019, I easily get bored because I cannot go out because of COVID.	Complex
S10-P9	I cannot play basketball anymore and it is my only stress reliever.	Compound
S11-P9	I overcame it in 2020 because there was no longer COVID.	Complex
S12-P9	When I go back to school, I don't feel bored anymore.	Complex
S1-P10	I am overcoming my mental health struggles by playing online games, playing basketball, listening to music, and doing house chores.	Simple
S2-P10	Sometimes, I do crazy things like running all around the house and punching the wall.	Simple
S3-P10	When I struggle, I hang out with my friends and play call of duty with them.	Complex
S4-P10	Sometimes, I become too depressed.	Simple
S5-P10	I calm myself by communicating with God.	Simple
S6-P10	For me, I become calm when I listen to music.	Complex
S7-P10	I become calm with my dogs and hanging out with my friends.	Simple
S8-P10	I can fix my struggles when I play offline and online games.	Complex
S9-P10	I can be calm when I see my friends and family.	Complex

S10-P10	I believe that when you are struggling with your mental health, just be calm.	Complex
S11-P10	Try to listen to music, play online games, or play basketball.	Simple