

Influence of Vocabulary Expansion and Grammar Lessons on Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication among Ordinary Level Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined how vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons influence the minimization of ambiguity in English written communication among lower-secondary school students in Mbale Secondary School, Uganda. A cross-sectional descriptive survey methodology was adopted using a mixed-methods approach. Data collection was conducted between February and April, 2026. The sample consisted of 340 participants, including 320 ordinary-level students and 20 teachers of English language. For respondents' demographic characteristic Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM version 4), SPSS version 30 for demographic data and qualitative thematic analysis using NVivo. The results indicated that vocabulary expansion had a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with minimizing ambiguity in English written communication ($\beta=0.651$, $p<0.000$) while structured grammar lessons demonstrated a statistically significant but weaker relationship with minimizing ambiguity in English written communication ($\beta=0.154$, $p<0.000$). Collectively, the two predictor variables accounted for 55.0% of the variance in minimizing ambiguity in English written communication ($R^2=0.550$), indicating moderate explanatory power of the model. Qualitative findings further revealed that vocabulary expansion and continuous grammar lessons improved clarity, coherence, and precision in students' writing. The findings suggest the need for secondary schools to strengthen vocabulary development programs and structured grammar instruction to improve students' writing competence and reduce ambiguity in written communication. The study provides empirical evidence for teachers, curriculum developers, and education policymakers seeking to improve English language instruction and writing clarity among ordinary level secondary school learners in Mbale Secondary School and Uganda at large.

Keywords: Vocabulary Expansion, Grammar Lessons, Minimizing Ambiguity, English Written Communication, Ordinary Level Secondary School Students

INTRODUCTION

Clarity in writing is essential as it is meant for effective communication in English (Salsabilla et al., 2025; Phillips, 2023). Written English enhances communication clarity because messages can be read and reread, minimizing the need for immediate verbal clarification (Rahman & Akter, 2023). Clarity of communication is diminished when words, phrases, or sentences can be interpreted in multiple ways, thus creating ambiguity (Salsabilla et al., 2025).

Ambiguity in student-written communication negatively affects academic success, as teachers and/or examiners often cannot accurately interpret the intended message in assignments or examinations (Braumoh & Eriel, 2024).

Scholars like Ashyralyyev et al., (2025) suggest that English language is a widely accepted language for global communication, education, science and technology, therefore, proficiency in writing has become critical for

students pursuing academic success and career advancement. Nonetheless, successfully conveying messages through clear written communication remains a significant obstacle for numerous learners in English as a second language (ESL) environment (Tran & Miralpeix, 2024). Many learners have difficulty with vocabulary limitations, grammar error/, syntax, and/or semantics that increase the likelihood of ambiguity in their writing.

In Africa, English is typically the official language and primary means of instruction in national educational systems (Obiakor, 2024). Despite its widespread usage, many learners function in multilingual environments where local languages predominate in everyday conversation (Abebe & Davidson, 2020). Due to frequent use of local languages in day-to-day conversation with family/friends/etc, local languages often create linguistic interference within English writing, resulting in unclearly constructed sentences and ambiguous expressions (Raut, 2024). Examples of these issues exist among secondary school students who are continuing to develop proficiency in the English language (Adelekea & Onyebuchib, 2023).

East African countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, etc., continue to experience barriers toward attaining high levels of English language proficiency among students. Although English is used as the medium of instruction at upper levels of education, students generally receive very little exposure to the language outside the classroom (Tran & Miralpeix, 2024). Limited exposure to English outside the classroom directly affects students' acquisition of new vocabulary, grammatical competence and fluency in writing, ultimately leading to increased probability of ambiguity in written communications (Samosir, 2024).

In Uganda specifically, English is the official language and primary language of instruction in secondary education (Ssentanda & Wenske, 2023). However, it is infrequently spoken at home by families in many Ugandan communities where local languages are predominant in conversational use, students generally experience difficulty articulating their thoughts clearly in written English (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). Ambiguity occurs when students lack the necessary vocabulary or grammatical skills to convey specific meanings in their writing (Guliyeva, 2023). Further complicating this issue are limited access to qualified English language instructors, limited availability of instructional materials/technologies and limited opportunity for students to write regularly in many schools (Abdullah, 2025). Absent adequate feedback regarding student's writing errors will likely continue to generate ambiguous sentences without realizing that they are generating incorrect or unclear sentences (Tuyet & Ngoc, 2024).

Students attending Mbale Secondary School in Mbale City are representative of a multilingual group of students. Given this multilingual nature of the students, it makes it a suitable for investigating ambiguity in students' written communication (Benzehaf, 2023). Studies done by Hamdalo et al., (2023). Multilingualism creates both opportunities and obstacles for language learning. On one hand, exposure to other languages enhances learners' overall linguistic awareness; however, it can also cause interference in learners' English writing (Benzehaf, 2023).

Although previous studies have examined vocabulary development, grammar instruction, and ambiguity in English language writing, empirical evidence on how vocabulary expansion and structured grammar instruction jointly influence the minimization of ambiguity remains limited, particularly in secondary school contexts in Uganda (Wanale, 2025). Existing research has largely investigated these constructs in isolation, with little attention given to their integrated effect on improving written communication among ordinary-level students (Andleeb et al., 2025). Furthermore, there is a scarcity of studies employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine these relationships within secondary education settings. Guided by Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), no known empirical study has investigated the interplay between vocabulary expansion, structured grammar instruction, and ambiguity reduction among ordinary-level students in Mbale Secondary School. In addition, validated measurement instruments tailored to this context remain underdeveloped, limiting the robustness and generalizability of existing findings.

Consequently, this study addresses these gaps by examining the extent to which vocabulary expansion and structured grammar instruction contribute to minimizing ambiguity in English-language written communication among ordinary-level students in Mbale Secondary School, Uganda.

Theory Review

The present study utilized Relevance Theory as a theoretical guide. Developed by Sperber and Wilson (1995), Relevance Theory posits that communication is an inferential process wherein listeners/interpreters construct meaning from received messages based on prior contextual clues and cognitive expectations. Relevance Theory argues that communication is effective when the information contained within a message produces maximal cognitive effect while requiring least possible processing effort. Relevance Theory indicates that effective communication relies not only on the linguistic content of a message but also on the context in which the message is received. Speakers/Writers must provide enough contextual clues so that listeners/interpreters can derive meaning from the message being received. If speakers/writers provide too few or ambiguous contextual clues; then ambiguity will occur as listeners/interpreters will interpret the message in multiple ways (Cuka, 2024). Ambiguity exists in English language learners' writing when they do not have the requisite vocabulary or grammatical competence needed to convey exactness. For example, words having multiple meanings are used improperly, resulting in lexical ambiguity. Poorly formed sentences create syntactical ambiguity and ambiguous expressions create semantic ambiguity. Relevance Theory offers an explanatory framework for understanding why ambiguity exists when learners fail to anticipate how their audience will interpret their messages.

Relevance Theory also emphasizes the role of linguistic competence in written communication. Writers need to take into consideration the knowledge base, expectations, and interpretative capabilities of their readers when creating messages. In educational settings, learners frequently produce ambiguous statements due to their inability to utilize pragmatic competence to anticipate how readers will interpret their writing. By applying Relevance Theory, vocabulary expansion and structured grammar instruction can serve as two important mechanisms for reducing ambiguity in learner writing as supported by (Andleeb et al., 2025). Greater vocabulary allows learners to choose words that convey exactness and greater grammatical competence enables learners to form clear sentences that promote coherence. Together, these two competencies assist learners in producing messages that are easy for readers to interpret; thus, promoting optimal relevance in communication.

Development of Hypotheses

Vocabulary expansion is considered likely to reduce ambiguity in students' written English (Demir, 2020). There is evidence of this from previous empirical research, which demonstrates that deliberate vocabulary instruction via reading programs, contextualized word learning, and increased exposure to different forms of language improve the clarity and accuracy of student writing (Rababah, 2022). As well, when students expand their vocabulary, they will be less inclined to use vague terms or repeat themselves and will choose words that best represent their intended meaning. According to Relevance Theory, expanding vocabulary will allow learners to create clearer linguistic cues for readers, thus making it easier for them to find meaning without having to expend as much mental energy (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Accordingly, we assume that there is a positive relationship between vocabulary expansion and the reduction of ambiguity in students' English writing.

Hypothesis 1: Vocabulary expansion positively impacts the minimization of ambiguity in secondary school learners' English writing.

Second, good grammatical competence contributes significantly to producing unambiguous written sentences. Inadequate knowledge of grammar can lead to ambiguity because poor syntax may give rise to alternative possible interpretations of what a sentence means (Nazar & Nordin, 2024). Learners who write in ESL settings commonly have trouble creating coherent sentences, e.g., incorrectly ordering words in a sentence, confusing pronouns, and improperly using punctuation – all of these elements also contribute to ambiguity in written work (Hasibuan, 2022).

Well-planned instructional strategies that teach students about organized ways to construct sentences, and to apply the relevant grammatical rules that connect clauses together have demonstrated a direct impact on the clarity and organization of students' writing (Adebayo et al., 2024). Students who learn how to organize sentences in logical ways and who utilize correct grammatical constructions are better equipped to communicate their intended message clearly and avoid ambiguity (Salsabilla et al., 2025).

Relevance Theory explains that grammatically organized sentences provide crucial cues for readers to determine intended meaning quickly. However, if sentences are poorly constructed, readers will experience greater difficulty in determining intended meaning and are more likely to misinterpret meaning. Therefore, instructional methods that develop strong grammar skills enable students to reduce ambiguity in their written communication. Thus, we hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between structured grammar instruction and reduced ambiguity in students' writing.

Hypothesis 2: Structured grammar instruction has a positive effect on reducing ambiguity in secondary school learners' English writing.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Population

A mixed-methods approach was used in order to explore the relationship between vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons and how each influences the minimization of ambiguity in English writing for ordinary level students in Mbale Secondary School, Uganda. The overall population included 3096 students and 20 teachers of English Language (Mbale Secondary School MIS data; 2025). Based upon the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size calculation based upon population size and proportion of interest, a total of 341 participants would be determined. Stratified random sampling was utilized to obtain students from various academic levels. Furthermore, 20 English language teachers were purposefully chosen to participate. Eligibility criteria included: (i) that they had taught or learned English for at least one year; (ii) that they had continuously attended classes for at least one full year; and (iii) that they consistently take part in English language exams. Questionnaire-based data collection occurred during *February and April, 2026*. Out of the 341 questionnaires given out, 340 were completed and considered usable, resulting in a response rate of 99.7%.

Measurement Variables

The extent to which vocabulary growth occurs and the degree to which students receive structured grammar instruction were both examined utilizing questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions taken from existing language acquisition studies. Document analysis of students' written compositions was used to assess ambiguity in writing. All questionnaire questions were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Before distributing the questionnaire to students, a pilot study consisting of 20 students was administered to ensure the reliability and clarity of the research instruments.

Analysis Methods

To analyze descriptive statistical values for demographic characteristics SPSS version 30 was used, PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) was used for analyzing measurement and structural models due to its appropriateness for assessing relationships among latent variables (Hair et al.; 2022). Two-stage analyses were performed. The first stage involved performing assessments of measurement models (validity/reliability/discriminant validity/collinearity). The second stage consisted of evaluating structural models (path coefficients/significance/predictive relevance). NVivo software was used to analyze qualitative data which was generated out of semi structured teacher interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative results discussion

According to Table 1, the majority of respondents were male, accounting for 65.0% of the sample, while women represented 35.0%, 94.12%, 5.88% represented students' teachers respectively. Regarding academic qualifications, 55.0%, 15.0%, and 30.0% represent diploma, bachelors and master's qualification. Teaching experience between 1-3, 4-6, 7-10 and Above 7 years represented by 20.0%, 10.0%, 15.0%, and 55.0%, respectively. Regarding the level of classes taught, the following classes were represented as follows Senior one (30%), Senior two (20%), Senior three (40%) and Senior 4 (10%) respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender of the student	Male	208	65.0
	Female	112	35.0
Category of respondent	Students	320	94.12
	Teachers	20	5.88
Students class level	Senior one	151	47.2
	Senior two	80	25.0
	Senior three	57	17.8
	Senior 4	32	10
Academic qualification of the teacher	Diploma	11	55.0
	Bachelors	3	15.0
	Masters	6	30.0
Teaching experience	1-3	4	20.0
	4-6	2	10.0
	7-10	3	15.0
	Above 7 years	11	55.0
Class level taught	Senior one	6	30
	Senior two	4	20
	Senior three	8	40
	Senior 4	2	10
Total	-	340	100.0

Source: Primary data (2026)

Measurement Model Assessment

Testing of the measurement model was done to find out how valid and reliable the variables were. Both convergent and discriminant validity were considered in the process. For convergent validity testing, factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) were considered, indicating how accurately each measurement item was reflected (Ghazali et al., 2025). Discriminant validity was utilized, namely having met the Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criteria, with all values within the acceptable limits (Mirhosseini et al., 2025). Table 2 shows that most factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating acceptable indicator reliability. However, a few items had loadings slightly below 0.70 but above 0.60. These items were retained because the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values remained above the recommended thresholds, indicating adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). Further, the average variance extracted meets the established threshold minimums > 0.5 . Additionally, in Table 2, for composite reliability, the least score across all variables was 0.814, exceeding the significant threshold minimum of > 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to measure whether collinearity exists among the indicators. Table 2 displays that all VIF values were well below the common thresholds of 3.3, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue in the model. In Table 3, although the Fornell and Larcker criteria measure discriminant validity sufficiently, we additionally measured discriminant validity by examining the Heterotrait-Monotrait measures to refute valid criticisms that empirical evidence indicates the Fornell and Larcker criteria cannot measure discriminant validity when indicator loadings of a construct differ by a couple of points (Cheung et al., 2024). All of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios were less than 0.9, indicating strong discriminant validity and high internal consistency among the construct items.

Figure 1: Measurement Model

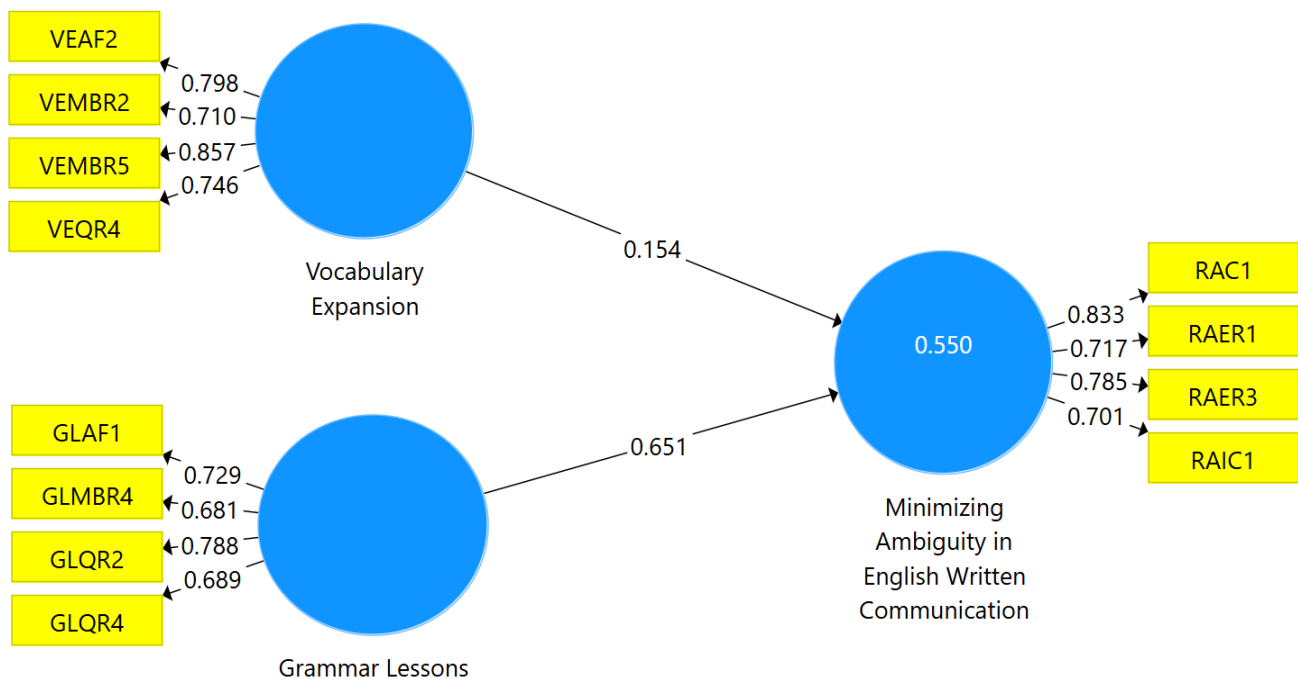


Table 2: Lower-Order Measure of Construct Validity and Reliability

Constructs	Codes	FL	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
Vocabulary Expansion	VEAF2	0.79	0.794	0.860	0.608	1.971
	VEMBR2	0.710				1.596
	VEMBR5	0.857				1.539
	VEQR4	0.746				1.505
Grammar Lessons	GLAF1	0.729	0.721	0.860	0.608	1.145
	GLMBR4	0.681				1.734
	GLQR2	0.788				1.571
	GLQR4	0.689				2.031
Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication	RAC1	0.833	0.769	0.846	0.579	2.724
	RAER1	0.717				1.731
	RAER3	0.785				2.254
	RAIC1	0.701				1.111

Source: Primary data (2026)

Discriminant Validity and Measurement Model Assessment

Discriminant validity was tested using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. According to the Fornell-Larcker results, the square root of the AVE of each construct was larger than the correlations of the constructs with others, which indicated good discriminant validity with (VE=0.780), (GL=0.723), and (MAIWC=0.761). All the values of the HTMT were less than the 0.90 threshold, and (GL-VE=0.515, GL-MAIWC=0.730, MAIWC-VE=0.489) indicate that the constructs are empirically different (Wingate et al., 2025). This means that the constructs adopted in the research were appropriate in the analysis of the structural model that followed. The Value (0.150) of SRMR is above the recommended value of 0.08, which indicates a less appropriate model fit (Ximénez et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2020). Nonetheless, PLS-SEM is more

concerned with predictive accuracy, but not a perfect fit of the model (Hair et al., 2025). This implies that SRMR gives valuable information but is not decisive, but complementary to it, where more importance is given to predictive relevance (Q2) and the importance of path coefficients. The predictive relevance of the model was determined by the procedure known as blindfolding, and it was found that the Q2 value was 0.271. This is larger than zero, which is why it shows that the model has good predictive ability (Hair et al., 2022). The structural model also showed that the influence of vocabulary expansion on vocabulary expansion and Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication was less significant ($f^2 = 0.154$, $p > 0.000$), which implies that the level of vocabulary expansion and Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication cannot be improved through vocabulary expansion alone Mir Hosseini. On the other hand, the vocabulary expansion and Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication was significantly and statistically affected by grammar lessons ($f^2 = 0.651$, $p < 0.000$), which means that well-developed grammar lessons contribute a lot to Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication among ordinary level students in Mbale Secondary School.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity and Measurement Model Assessment Results

		VE	GL	MAIWC	F2	Q2	SRMR
		Values					
						0.271	0.150
Fornell-Larcker	Vocabulary Expansion	0.780	0.515	0.489	0.039		
	Grammar lessons		0.723		0.691		
	Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication		0.730	0.761			
		VE	GL	MAIWC			
Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT 0.9)	Vocabulary Expansion		0.515	0.489			
	Grammar lessons						
	Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication		0.730				

Source: Primary data (2026)

Structural Model Assessment

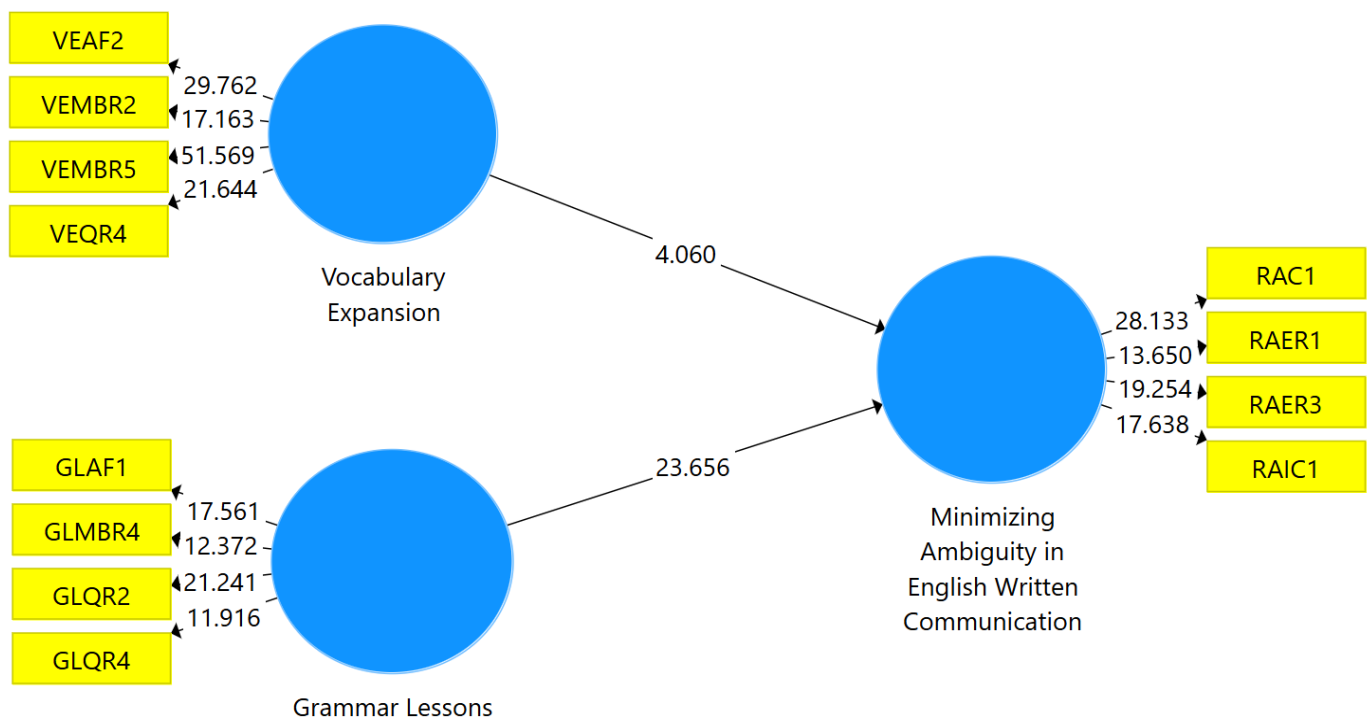
The R2 statistic was utilized to determine how well the proposed vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons explain the variation in efforts to minimize ambiguity in English Written Communication. The R² statistic for Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication was 0.550, indicating that cybersecurity training and access control mechanisms jointly explain 55.0% of the variance in Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication. This suggests moderate explanatory power of the model. In addition, the proposed hypotheses were tested with 5,000 replicates using a non-parametric bootstrapping method (Jacob et al., 2020). There were significant effects of vocabulary expansion and Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication (0.651, $p < 0.000$), grammar lessons and Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication (0.154, $p < 0.000$), on Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication, therefore supporting the hypothesis. Results shown in Table 4 demonstrate that vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons are significant factors influencing the vocabulary expansion and Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication among ordinary level students in Mbale Secondary School and other schools in general. Nonetheless, the confidence intervals reported (2.5% and 97.5%) indicate a two- tailed test. In PLS-SEM, when bootstrapping is used to assess path coefficients, the 95% confidence interval is calculated to determine if the effect is statistically significant.

Table 4: Path Effects Results

Direct Path Coefficient							Supported/Not supported
Hypothesis	Relationship	β	T Value	P Value	Confidence Interval 2.5%	Confidence Interval 97.5%	
H1	Vocabulary Expansion -> Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication	0.651	23.642	0.000	0.601	0.707	Supported
H2	Grammar Lessons->Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication	0.154	3.852	0.000	0.077	0.228	Supported
Minimizing Ambiguity in English Written Communication	R2 0.550	Adjusted R2 0.549					

Source: Primary data (2026)

Figure 2: Structural Model Depicting the Hypothesized Relationships and Empirical Findings



The study investigated the effects that vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons have on minimizing ambiguity in English written communication. The study was based on the Relevance Theory as a theoretical guide. Developed by Sperber and Wilson (1995), Relevance Theory posits that communication is an inferential process wherein listeners/interpreters construct meaning from received messages based on prior contextual clues and cognitive expectations. The hypotheses formulated above were validated by data findings for H1 and H2, supporting the proposed relationship, which determined that the effect of vocabulary expansion and grammar

lessons on minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary level secondary school students of Mbale Secondary School that are statistically significant. In consideration of the data findings (Figure 1). The two predictor variables, vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons, jointly explained 55.0% of the variance in minimizing ambiguity in English written communication ($R^2=0.550$ and R^2 Adjusted=0.549), indicating moderate explanatory power of the model.

The debate about what preemptive measures to take to minimize ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary-level secondary school students is ongoing. Research by (Yacob et al., 2023.) has continued to encourage factors such as vocabulary expansion and regular grammar lessons; however, many secondary schools, especially in developing countries, have still exhibited a high rate of ambiguity in English written communication that can ultimately impact on writing clarity among ordinary level students. This study contributes to the debate by establishing vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons in pursuit of minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary-level secondary school students in Mbale Secondary School in particular and other secondary schools in the region. The results show that regular vocabulary expansion efforts and grammar lessons have a significant effect on minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary-level secondary school students and their impact on clarity in communication.

In reference to **hypothesis H2**, the results revealed that grammar lessons have a significantly positive relationship with minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary level secondary school students (65%). This means that if the teachers invest more time in grammar lessons, the ability to minimize ambiguity in English written communication will significantly improve. In the Ugandan context Kibumba et al. (2026) have shown that secondary school teacher that engaged in regular grammar lessons have more chances of minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among students. Studies conducted by Wanale (2025) are in support of the findings that suggest that teachers who have well-structured vocabulary and also conduct regular grammar lessons will be far more valuable, in regard to minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary level secondary school students. The results also suggest that students who attend more grammar lessons are likely to minimize ambiguity in their English written communication (Muwanguzi et al., 2021). The relationship also indicates that vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons would generally minimize ambiguity in English written communication among ordinary level secondary school students.

The structural model revealed that both instructional approaches significantly reduced ambiguity in students' English written communication. However, their contributions differed substantially. Vocabulary expansion emerged as the dominant predictor ($\beta = 0.651$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that improvements in students' lexical knowledge had the greatest influence on writing clarity. Although grammar lessons also exerted a statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.001$), their contribution was considerably smaller. Together, the two predictors explained 55.0% of the variance in minimizing ambiguity ($R^2 = 0.550$), demonstrating moderate explanatory power. These findings suggest that while both interventions are valuable, vocabulary development provides the greatest leverage for improving students' written communication.

Therefore, English language teachers should put more emphasis on grammar lessons in an attempt to improve the clarity of written communication hence minimizing ambiguity in English written communication.

Qualitative results discussion

Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 20 English language teachers and analyzed using NVivo (Allsop et al., 2022). The analysis followed a thematic approach where interview transcripts were coded into categories related to vocabulary strategies, grammar instruction methods, challenges in implementation, and recommendations for improving clarity in students' writing. The themes generated from the analysis complemented the quantitative findings and provided deeper explanations regarding how vocabulary expansion and grammar instruction contribute to minimizing ambiguity in English written communication among Ordinary Level students.

Vocabulary Teaching Strategies and Reduction of Ambiguity

Teachers reported using several strategies to expand students' vocabulary and improve clarity in writing. The most frequently mentioned approaches included contextual reading activities, guided composition writing, dictionary use, vocabulary notebooks, word association exercises, debates, storytelling, and language games. According to the teachers, contextual learning was particularly effective because students understood words within meaningful situations rather than memorizing isolated definitions. These findings are supported by (Wanale, 2025)

One teacher explained:

"When students learn words through stories and comprehension passages, they can understand how those words are used correctly in sentences. This reduces confusion and improves clarity in their writing."

Another teacher emphasized the importance of extensive reading:

"Students who read novels, newspapers, and class readers regularly tend to use more precise vocabulary and avoid vague expressions."

The findings further revealed that teachers deliberately taught their learners multiple meanings of words to minimize lexical ambiguity. These findings are supported by studies conducted by Demir (2020). Teachers explained that many students often misuse English words because they fail to recognize that some words have different meanings depending on context. To address this challenge, teachers encouraged contextual interpretation, consultation of dictionaries, and sentence-construction exercises.

One respondent stated:

"We usually ask students to use one word in different sentences so that they can understand how meaning changes according to context."

The NVivo thematic analysis indicated that vocabulary expansion improved clarity in students' writing by helping learners select more precise and contextually appropriate words. Teachers observed that students with wider vocabularies produced fewer repetitive expressions and communicated ideas more effectively.

Table 5: NVivo Themes on Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Main Theme	Emerging Sub-Themes
Contextual Vocabulary Learning	Word meaning in context, sentence usage, interpretation
Reading Activities	Novels, comprehension passages, newspapers
Dictionary Use	Meaning identification, pronunciation, multiple meanings
Writing Practice	Composition exercises, sentence construction
Interactive Methods	Vocabulary games, debates, storytelling
Clarity Improvement	Precise word choice, reduced vague expressions
Ambiguity Reduction	Avoiding repetition, contextual accuracy

Source: NVivo qualitative analysis from teacher interviews (2026)

Teachers also provided examples illustrating how vocabulary instruction reduced ambiguity in students' written work. One teacher explained that before vocabulary intervention, students frequently used general expressions such as "that thing" or "it was bad," which created unclear meanings. After vocabulary-focused exercises, students became more capable of using exact descriptive terms that communicated intended meanings more effectively.

Assessment of vocabulary usage was mainly conducted through continuous writing exercises, composition marking, comprehension tests, oral presentations, and sentence construction tasks. Teachers reported that students who consistently practiced writing demonstrated gradual improvement in clarity and precision.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges affected effective vocabulary instruction. The most commonly reported challenges included;

“Limited reading culture among students, inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited time allocated to English lessons, and interference from local languages”.

Teachers further noted that

“Multilingual environments often influenced students to translate directly from local languages into English, thereby increasing ambiguity in writing”.

One teacher commented:

“Most students think in their local language first and then translate into English, which causes unclear sentence structures and wrong word choices.”

Regarding the most effective vocabulary strategies, the majority of teachers identified contextual learning and reading activities as the most impactful methods because they expose students to authentic language usage and improve comprehension simultaneously.

Grammar Instruction Methods and Reduction of Ambiguity

The qualitative findings also revealed that grammar instruction plays a critical role in reducing ambiguity in students’ written communication. Teachers reported using several instructional approaches, including rule-based teaching, contextual grammar instruction, sentence construction exercises, guided writing, peer correction, and continuous error correction.

The most common method involved teaching grammar through sentence construction and practical writing activities. Teachers argued that grammar instruction becomes more meaningful when students apply grammatical rules in actual writing tasks rather than memorizing rules theoretically.

One respondent explained:

“Grammar should not only be taught as rules. Students need practice in writing sentences correctly so that they understand how grammar improves clarity in written communication.”

Teachers emphasized that sentence structure instruction significantly helps students avoid ambiguous expressions. They explained that poorly arranged sentences often create confusion regarding meaning, pronoun reference, and logical flow of ideas. To address this issue, teachers frequently used sentence reconstruction exercises and paragraph organization tasks.

Another teacher stated:

“When students learn proper sentence arrangement and punctuation, their writing becomes clearer and easier to understand.”

The NVivo analysis generated several themes regarding grammar instruction and writing clarity.

Table 6: NVivo Themes on Grammar Instruction Methods

Main Theme	Emerging Sub-Themes
Sentence Construction Exercises	Simple sentences, complex sentences, clause connections

Contextual Grammar Teaching	Grammar in composition writing, grammar in reading passages
Error Correction Techniques	Teacher feedback, peer correction, guided revision
Punctuation and Syntax Improvement	Comma usage, sentence arrangement, subject-verb agreement
Guided Composition Writing	Paragraph organization, logical sequencing, coherence
Practical Grammar Application	Classroom exercises, continuous writing practice
Clarity Enhancement	Improved sentence meaning, reduced misinterpretation
Ambiguity Reduction	Elimination of unclear expressions, proper pronoun reference

Source: NVivo qualitative analysis from teacher interviews (2026)

Teachers further reported that grammar instruction improved students' writing by strengthening coherence, punctuation accuracy, sentence organization, and logical flow of ideas. Many teachers observed that students who regularly attended grammar lessons demonstrated greater ability to express ideas clearly and reduce misinterpretation.

Examples shared by teachers indicated that grammar lessons particularly reduced syntactic ambiguity. For instance, students who previously wrote incomplete or disorganized sentences later demonstrated improved sentence sequencing and proper use of punctuation after receiving structured grammar instruction.

Assessment of grammatical accuracy was conducted through essays, continuous assessment tests, classroom exercises, examinations, and correction of composition work. Teachers noted that regular written assignments enabled them to identify recurring grammatical weaknesses and provide corrective feedback.

However, grammar instruction also faced several challenges. Teachers cited negative student attitudes toward grammar, inadequate instructional time, overcrowded classrooms, and weak foundational English skills among learners as major obstacles. Some teachers explained that many students perceive grammar as difficult and abstract, limiting active participation during lessons.

One respondent observed:

"Some students fear grammar because they think it is complicated, especially when they have weak English backgrounds from lower classes."

Regarding the most effective grammar teaching methods, most teachers identified contextual grammar teaching and guided sentence construction as the most successful approaches because they allow students to directly apply grammar knowledge in communication contexts.

Comparative Contribution of Vocabulary and Grammar Instruction

When teachers were asked whether vocabulary strategies or grammar instruction contributed more toward reducing ambiguity, most respondents indicated that both components are complementary and mutually reinforcing. However, a larger proportion of teachers believed that vocabulary expansion contributes slightly more because students first need appropriate words before they can organize them grammatically.

One teacher remarked:

"Without enough grammar, students cannot express ideas clearly even if they have enough vocabulary."

Nevertheless, other teachers argued that vocabulary is equally important because, without proper sentence organization, grammar is more likely to lead to ambiguous communication.

Overall, the qualitative findings support the quantitative results by demonstrating that vocabulary expansion and grammar instruction jointly contribute toward minimizing ambiguity in students' written communication as depicted in Figure 1. The findings particularly reinforce the statistical results where vocabulary expansion showed a stronger influence, while grammar instruction also demonstrated a significant positive contribution toward improving clarity in students' writing.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

The qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative results obtained from the structural model analysis. Quantitatively, grammar lessons demonstrated a stronger positive effect on minimizing ambiguity in English written communication ($\beta = 0.651$, $p < 0.000$), while vocabulary expansion also showed a statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.000$). Qualitative interview responses similarly revealed that grammar lessons strengthen vocabulary, sentence clarity, and coherence, whereas vocabulary expansion improves precision in word choice.

The qualitative findings strongly complemented the quantitative results. Teachers consistently identified contextual vocabulary learning, extensive reading, vocabulary notebooks, and guided writing as the most effective strategies for reducing ambiguity because they enabled students to select precise and contextually appropriate words. Although respondents also emphasized the importance of grammar instruction for improving sentence structure and coherence, they generally viewed grammar as most effective after students had acquired an adequate vocabulary. This convergence between the qualitative themes and the structural model strengthens the conclusion that vocabulary development represents the primary mechanism through which ambiguity is minimized, while grammar instruction serves a complementary role in refining sentence organization and syntactic accuracy.

The integration of both findings, therefore, confirms that effective English language instruction requires a balanced emphasis on vocabulary enrichment and structured grammar teaching in order to improve clarity and minimize ambiguity among Ordinary Level secondary school students.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study concludes that both vocabulary expansion and grammar lessons significantly influence minimization of ambiguity in English language writing among Ordinary Level students in Uganda. However, the magnitude of their contributions differs (Wanale, 2025). Vocabulary expansion demonstrated a strong effect in improving students' ability to select precise words and convey clear meanings, while structured grammar lessons contributed by strengthening sentence construction and syntactic clarity. Guided by Relevance Theory, the findings reinforce the perspective that effective written communication is both a linguistic and cognitive process that requires adequate vocabulary knowledge and grammatical competence to ensure clarity of meaning.

From a practical standpoint, the findings imply that secondary schools should prioritize systematic vocabulary development and structured grammar instruction as key strategies for improving students' writing skills. Teachers should adopt instructional approaches that emphasize contextual vocabulary usage, sentence construction, and regular writing practice to minimize ambiguity in students' written communication. Strengthening these language competencies can enhance students' academic performance, improve their confidence in written expression, and support better comprehension by readers.

At the policy level, the study provides valuable insights for curriculum developers, education policymakers, and school administrators seeking to improve English language teaching in secondary schools. Integrating vocabulary development programs and structured grammar lessons into classroom instruction can strengthen students' communicative competence and reduce misunderstandings in academic writing. Ultimately, improving clarity in student writing contributes to better learning outcomes and prepares learners to participate effectively in academic and professional communication contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the reduction of ambiguity in English writing among Ordinary Level students.

School administrators and curriculum planners should strengthen instructional programs that promote systematic vocabulary development. Teachers should incorporate vocabulary-building activities such as contextual reading, word usage exercises, and writing practice to help students expand their lexical knowledge and improve clarity in written communication.

Second, English language teachers should emphasize structured grammar instruction that focuses on sentence construction, punctuation, and syntactic accuracy. Regular grammar lessons and practical writing exercises can help students develop stronger language structures that reduce ambiguity in their writing.

Schools should encourage frequent writing practice and constructive feedback mechanisms. Peer review sessions, guided composition exercises, and teacher feedback can help students identify ambiguous expressions and revise their writing for clarity.

Education authorities and policymakers should support teacher professional development programs that equip educators with effective strategies for teaching vocabulary and grammar. Providing adequate instructional materials and language-learning resources will further strengthen students' writing competence and contribute to improved English language outcomes in secondary education.

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