

Improving Students' English Writing Proficiency through Interactive Writing Technique

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Abstract

One of the active skills required not only in the field of academe for students but also in the industry world with degree holder employees that cause predicament in both areas is writing. The study aims to determine the effectiveness of interactive writing technique in intensifying basic writing skills to produce competent employees. This study also sought to address the predicament of students' and employees' low-level proficiency in basic writing. Purposively, using these objectives: To investigate the level of English major's writing proficiency in pre-test and post-test along with content, mechanics, organization, diction, elaboration, and support; to identify the level of effectiveness of the interactive technique and be able to establish an output based on the research findings. The study used a mixed-method design. Results of Pre- test and Post-test scores were compared using the t-test. The study unveil that students writing in the post-test improved from the pre-test GWM of 2.28 interpreted as "developing" to 2.58 GWM in the post-test interpreted as "approaching proficiency", indicating that there is an improvement in the writing proficiency of the students using the Interactive Writing Technique. Moreover, these results were utilized to continuously strengthen and amplify student's basic writing skills.

Keywords: English Writing Proficiency, Interactive Writing, Intervention, Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The ability to write proficiently is one of the keystones for students and employees to excel both in the world of academe and the business industry. Students and employees who are skilled in writing can establish a strong framework which allows them to have a more auspicious future. It is a foremost need nowadays that students and employees should have the ability to present themselves well, not just in oral expression but in writing as well. One must have a more rooted understanding of how to efficiently and effectively write a good and accurate composition to qualify in the ever-changing demand of the global community where pen is more powerful than expressed words. Considering the low-level proficiency of students and employees when it comes to writing can result in extensive underserved graduates, poor performances, lack of mindedness, wane of credibility; the reduction of self-esteem and poor chances of employability and can result to various dilemmas. Thus, proficient writing is important for students and all employees to withstand in a global workforce. In this, we may say that the risk is at the hand of those who have insufficient knowledge in creating a well- made written output. Moreover, Gustilo (2016) asserted in her study about the difference between those less proficient and more proficient ESL undergraduates in the Philippines setting. It indicates that good writers have more skills and sufficient writing confidence compared to writers with a low level of proficiency in writing. Also, National Commission on Writing shows that industries are spending almost \$3.1 billion annually on just remedial writing training (Moore, 2016). Consequently, in the Philippines, students conform to the idea of "copy and paste" during writing activities which sacrifices the essence of critical thinking thus promulgating plagiarism. (Studymoose, 2016). These two published articles are shreds of evidence that writing skill is important or a need in the

academe and also in the world of business. Indeed, among the five macro skills writing is said to be an edge in Industry globally (Graham & Herbert 2014) and a need for students who are entering higher education. (Muhammad, Almas, Ashraft, & Muhammad Bilal, 2016).

In Philippine Classroom Setting (before the advent of technologies) there are different strategies that are already implemented by a lot for educators and one of them is traditional mode which is commonly used by the teachers as their strategy in providing quality feedback to the students' writings output through questioning and providing direct feedback while writing. Also, their peers can interact with the teachers' questions and comments. However this traditional mode of teaching can no longer suited to the 21st century because learners in the 21st century are more prone to digital tools and can demonstrates digital literacy which will help them in the writing process; and would prefer to maximize open tools software for learning rather than direct interaction among their teachers or peers. (Elizabeth Rich., 2010).

Furthermore, collaborative work between the students and teacher is important in ensuring language proficiency both in oral and in written works. This presents an idea that interactive usage of language even in writing may improve the students' language proficiency and this was examined even more in the study of Hall, Toland, Grisham, Brown (2013) where they look into the influence of interactive writing to 73 students (ages 3-5 years old) to their alphabet knowledge one of the salient findings is that interactive writing is a good intervention for head start students and the teachers should be educated on the overall steps of utilizing interactive writing in their lessons. Interactive Writing Technique is a constant collaborative effort of both the teacher and learners. So, various intervention should be made possible by the teacher to his/her learners in order to track their level of writing. However, Kronberg (2014) argued that interactive writing gives students supplementary experiences that are pleasurable appealing and suited to 21st century learners especially when this is associated with a teaching strategy, and other technological tools to become more comprehensible. In more recent studies, Maarooof and Murat (2013) determined that Interactive Writing technique could be a link towards writing proficiency. With the proper training and practice in the writing process, students become more proficient in writing. On the other hand, Salahat (2014) scrutinized how efficient the interactive writing strategy in pair group activities that enhance the writing skill and attitude of Grade 7th Palestinian students.

As a result, the researchers utilized the experimental approach that come up to the conclusions that interactive writing administers an outbalanced learning environment which provided a great opportunity for low and intermediate achievers; increased their sense of leadership, builds confidence towards writing as a foreign language, established cooperative learning within the same and competing groups which allows students to have great amount of fun, enjoyment, enthusiasm and effective learning. Interactive writing technique provides a good outcome not only to the learner's writing output but as well in their character. The study signifies that interactive writing technique can mobilized the students to their future endeavors.

Students are all writers, students just need to have an adequate support, firm and clear instructions that comes from more experts individual to ignite their level of understanding and expound their reservoir of linguistics knowledge. Buhisan and Saysheng (2016) states that human has a wide range of thoughts like a vast universe of unlimited thought and ideas. If all teachers can maximize their undying concerns and would have spent time correcting students using constructive feedbacks and several interventions using this interactive technique appropriately, the problem in terms of writing in our country as well as in other part of the world can be resolved easily or might get lesser. The power is actually in the hands of both the teachers and the students. Interactive writing technique all over the globe is only been conducted to primary and secondary year level and not to Higher level students. Therefore, the researchers draw the inspiration of pursuing this study from the mentioned

researches and further adapted interactive writing as a strategy and as a study to assess how the writing proficiency of the students in higher level using interactive writing technique in terms of Content, diction, writing mechanics, support and elaboration. Results of this study help to delineate the predicament of students in the writing process to produce competent professionals and also to remediate the students' and employee's issues in writing.

Apparently, the problems in terms of writing proficiency are mostly, in undergraduates lower year- level according to different studies conducted which have mentioned at the latter part, the researchers affirmed that the mere focus of this study were those students in the lower-year level specifically, those students under first or second-year level college undergraduates, to assess their strength and weakness in terms of writing. Be able to understand how this interactive writing technique, as well as the error density index of Malicsi, would help to delineate the low-level proficiency of students in terms of choosing and knowing the right words to use; punctuation, organization and most importantly in the writing mechanics.

Hence, being proficient in writing gives a person an edge in getting good job positions, promotions, and other global business opportunities. For this reason, the researcher pursue the study with interactive writing technique and to employ its advantages to the teacher and as well as to the students.

As to the limitations of the study, this research limits its scope on the writing performance of the respondents but does not investigated other factors that may affect the writing performance of the respondents such as writing attitude, personal profile, pre-writing techniques, materials, environment, teacher's strategy and teacher's approach should also be considered for future investigation.

Research Questions

The current study aimed to identify the level of English major's writing proficiency in pre-test and post-test along with: Content; Mechanics; Organization; Diction; and Elaboration and Support. Also, it sought to determine the effectiveness of the interactive writing technique to the respondents. Moreover, the research would like to create a writing module to address the predicament in writing through the use of the interactive writing technique.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research utilized mixed method in determining the level of proficiency in pre-test and post-test of the respondents along with: Content; Mechanics; Organization; Diction; and Elaboration and Support. Also, quantitative method will be employed to identify the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. An Error Density Index and a teacher-made rubrics will be utilized to assist the evaluator in evaluating the written output of the respondents. Lastly, survey questions writing skills was administered to assist the researcher in producing the module based on the findings of the study.

Location

The study was conducted at the College of Education at the University of Nueva Caceres, City of Naga, Province of Camarines Sur, Region V, Philippines.

Respondents

The present study was participated by 20 second year Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English of the University of Nueva Caceres in the Philippines and presently enrolled in the subject of Children's Literature.

Research Instruments

Research data were determined through the use of the research instruments namely: pre-test, intervention and post-test. The questionnaire was administered. It has three parts namely: writing process, mechanics and writing support system. It has 5 scale from 5 describe as strongly agree, 4 describe as agree, 3 describe as neither agree nor disagree, 2 describe as disagree, and 1 describe as strongly disagree.

A dry run for the survey questionnaire was conducted to professionals, teachers and students whose not member of the respondents to verify if the questionnaires is suitable and applicable to the respondents and for the enhancement of the study in the gathering of data.

For the meantime, the pre-test was conducted through an essay writing in which respondents were asked to write a reflection paper about the book they have read. Before the evaluation of the students' written output, they were first informed about the teacher made rubric which was utilized in evaluating their output along with: Content; Mechanics; Organization; Diction; and Elaboration and Support.

An Error Density Index Analysis by Dr. Malicsi was utilized to assist the researcher in identifying the error of the participants in the process or construction of their written output in English language.

In utilizing EDI Analysis, we asked the respondents to write an essay in double space. During the checking, we put a (|) tally mark on every beginning of the sentence or sentence to count the total number of sentence. In marking the error, first three consonants of the category such as: ADJ= adjective, AGR= agreement, SPE= spelling, SUB=subject and so on) and on the top of the margins we write, E stands for number of errors, S stands for number of sentences and EDI stands for Error Density Index. To know the equivalent of EDI, simply divide E by S and express the quotient with two decimal places. Then, the compositions was returned back to the respondents for revisions and new revisions was submitted and EDI Analysis was utilized again. Scores from the first and final revisions was recorded to know if there was an improvement happened on the output of the participants. (EDI Analysis, 2019)

The post-test was conducted right after the intervention was given and also used EDI Analysis and teacher made rubric to evaluate and assess the students' final output.

RESULTS/ FINDINGS

Level of Writing Proficiency in Pre-Test

Writing Proficiency Level of the Second Year English Major Students in Pre-Test

Table 1A shows the result of the writing proficiency level of the second year English major students along with pre-test.

Table 1A. *Level of Writing Proficiency in Pre-Test*

It is seen that ‘Organization of Ideas’ (wm of 2.75) and ‘Mechanics’ (wm of 2.45) got the highest weighted mean. This shows that the students are knowledgeable enough and independent as far as mastery of the external matters of mechanics is concerned. Also, students could write what is in their mind with less comma, splice, run-on sentence, and excessive use of connectives, dangling modifiers, punctuation misuse and many other writing dilemmas in terms of mechanics and has a positive attitude towards writing what they want to express coherently in pre-test.

Writing Proficiency Level of the Second Year English Major Students in Post-Test

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>Content</i>	2.40	<i>D</i>	4
<i>Mechanics</i>	2.75	<i>AP</i>	2
<i>Organization of Ideas</i>	2.95	<i>AP</i>	1
<i>Diction</i>	2.25	<i>D</i>	5
<i>Support and Elaboration</i>	2.55	<i>D</i>	3
<i>GWM</i>		2.58	

Table 1B. *Level of Writing Proficiency in Post-Test*

In this data, intervention was already given to the respondents and it shows that ‘Organization of Ideas’ (wm of 2.95) and ‘Mechanics’ (wm of 2.75) were still in the highest rank. With the used of intervention, the writers almost reach the level of being proficient in these terms. This only indicates that their ability to recognize correct grammatical rules increases and understanding of the difference between spoken and written language were manifested. With the use of error analysis during the intervention, helps the students to identify what grammar rule they have to correct and to familiarize.

The Level of Effectiveness of Interactive Writing Technique

As reflected in Table 2, it shows that the level of effectiveness of interactive writing was based on the confidence interval difference of the pre and post-test scores and helps to determine whether there are significant difference in the mean scores from pre-test and post-test using a paired t-test.

Table 2. *The Significant Difference between the Pre and Post Performance of English major students*

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>Content</i>	1.70	<i>B</i>	5
<i>Mechanics</i>	2.45	<i>D</i>	2
<i>Organization of Ideas</i>	2.75	<i>AP</i>	1
<i>Diction</i>	2.30	<i>AP</i>	3
<i>Support and Elaboration</i>	2.20	<i>D</i>	4
<i>GWM</i>		2.28	

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
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<i>Content</i>	0.7	1.34	2.33		
<i>Mechanics</i>	0.3	0.92	1.45		
<i>Org. of Ideas</i>	0.2	1.19	0.75	19	2.09
<i>Diction</i>	-0.05	1.09	-0.20		
<i>Support</i>	0.35	0.81	1.92		
<i>Overall</i>	1.5	2.39	2.80		

After the intervention was given, even if there were some parameters that are lower to the p value (2.09) , the table still implies that the overall t-value (2.80) are higher than the p value of 2.09 which indicates that there is a significant value between the pre-test and post-test of the writing scores of the participants when they were exposed to interactive writing technique. This implies that the respondents had improved in their writing skills through the use of interactive writing technique.

DISCUSSION

Level of Writing Proficiency in Pre-Test

Apparently, translating spoken words is far different in written symbols which lead the respondents to become conscious in terms of grammar and tend to misuse the correct rules. This claim was affirmed by Schallert, Kleiman, & Rubin, (2007) that written and spoken language are not the same as it is generally assumed while actual language used in writing tends to differ in different characteristics from what we used in speech.

Although, prior knowledge of the students is being activated that made them proficient in the punctuation part that incorporate the new information to their existing organization of knowledge (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2017), still, the anxiety on grammar is intensified as the students start to write even if they have the prior knowledge about the topic and the consciousness in grammar that creates another problem why the students cannot write well which becomes another factor in writing (Demdam, 2018).

Given these situations, the teacher must allocate time on addressing the needs of the students on knowing the differences in what we speak and what we write. Also, teachers should write corrective feedback through emphasizing the correct grammar rules on their written output.

On the other hand, ‘Diction’ and ‘Support and Elaboration’ had been in the least of the pre-test because they had limited reservoir of linguistic knowledge and they cannot make effective constructions from the consolidated information that they had gathered. Gustilo, (2016) stressed that revising written output several times and transcribing translated ideas into the written text help less proficient writers to become fluent and proficient writers.

Furthermore, the entire pre-test essay writing signifies that the student are just starting to develop with the entire writing process. Due to lack of importance given in writing drills and trainings in Junior and Senior, it did not address the needs of the writers to become proficient when they reach tertiary.

Therefore, college institution should give attention in giving clear understanding about maximizing all information from different sources and also to acquaint students about proper citing of relevant information. Nevertheless, trainings, workshops and different writing drills should also be made available during their stay in college to help them know their own writing styles and to promote proficient writing skills.

Writing Proficiency Level of the Second Year English Major Students in Post-Test

Mistakes are expected in the process of learning that is why it is significant to identify the cause behind this occurrence and through understanding students' weaknesses in writing, teachers will be able to use appropriate teaching style to address the manifestations (Singh, Singh, Razak, & Ravinthar, 2017).

On the contrary, 'Diction' (wm of 2.25) becomes the lowest mean in the parameters after 'Content'. Meaning possessing less topic familiarity, implies that it is hard for them to retrieve the information which make it difficult for them to fulfil purposes in writing and having limited content knowledge can add to the students' difficulty interpreting ideas into written texts.

Gustilo (2010) suggested that if students will be informed about their prior knowledge of the topic, this could facilitate and lead to a smooth construction of good writing output and will enhance linguistic knowledge with full effort. In other words, students difficulty in effective writing were attributable (Troia & Graham, 2003)

Hence, the difficulties in performing and controlling the writing process underlies in composing, planning and revisions of their output. Due to these circumstances, undergraduates were highly affected by these factors which hinders them to explore the use of grammar, syntactic and rhetorical structure and idioms in their writing performance (Nik, Hamzah, & Rafidee, 2010). This signifies that there is a need for teachers to identify different and appropriate strategies in writing and guide students in the entire writing process through the use of interactive writing technique that could assist the occurrence of challenges towards writing because of unquenchable support and effort of both the teacher and student during the writing process.

Therefore, there is still a need for them to enhance in the writing process. It is clear that there is a wide difficulty in the students' writing process. Through identifying the different strategies in writing and with the guidance of the teacher through interactive writing technique can help the occurrence of challenges towards writing. The teachers are not only involved in the enhancement of the students' writing proficiency. With the support of the institution in conducting writing trainings for the students and different workshop in interactive techniques for teachers, will supply the challenges facing by the students in writing and could lead to quality outputs and proficient writers.

The Significant Difference between the Pre and Post Performance of English major students

The present study finds that through combining their prior knowledge about the topic enable them to have a smooth construction of good writing output. Pablo & Lasaten, (2018) explicate that an essay must be logically structured to express related and different ideas and to have a detailed connection from each other. Because of this manifestation, the students were able to recognize specific examples and generalization towards the given topic that made them understand the relationship of their own writing goals to the expected written output. Olive, Favart et. Al. (2009) as cited in (McCutchen, 2011) explained that there is a big impact of having greater familiarity of the genre that could help facilitate during planning, revision, and translating that demands large amount of working memory.

Likewise, it was also seen that students were unaware of the proper usage of connectives and transitions which manifested in their writing outputs. Especially in the conclusion part because it is where writers generalizes all ideas they have presented in their writings which indicates poor flow of ideas, lack of fluent expressions and poor paragraphing. Strain in this part will not allow students to express themselves clearly and to link their ideas from one another. Pablo & Lasaten, (2018) explicate that an essay must be logically structured to express related and different ideas and to have a detailed connection from each other.

Thus, if the students were often informed on the grammar rules during the writing process, it will help them familiarize its importance and the teachers role will be more effective during the intervention.

Moreover, this implies that students become a proficient writer and develops good skill when they were guided and given a teacher's written feedback and corrective comments during the entire writing process. Burton et. al, (2011) believes that when teachers gives corrective feedback, proper guidance and support, it reduces the grammatical errors of the students in their essays and progress in their writing output which leads for better writing performance. Also, Salahat, (2014) found out that interactive writing technique provides a quality writing output and gives student the avenue to activate their own writing technique and schemes during the independent writing process.

Therefore, the study suggest that interactive writing technique should be used as part of the teaching methods of the teachers in subjects that requires writing ability. Also, the technique does not only limited to English writing subjects but as well as with other subjects that might require essay writings or journals. This will not only allow the students to become proficient in writing but also gives the teacher a bird's eye view of their students' status when it comes to writing. Likewise, the teacher and the students will have a good rapport in terms of developing one's ability.

CONCLUSIONS

Based from the findings of the study, the use of interactive writing technique during the entire writing process in the undergraduate classroom is effective in enhancing the students' writing proficiency. Because it allows student to realize where to improve on their writings and how develop good writing skills through teacher's corrective feedback and suggestions. Also, Interactive writing technique is a good teaching method not only to the teachers in knowing their students' strengths and weaknesses in writing but especially to help and address students writing deficiency.

Furthermore, interactive writing technique administers an outbalanced learning environment which provided a great opportunity for low and intermediate achievers; increased the students' sense of leadership, builds confidence towards writing as a foreign language, established cooperative learning within the same and competing groups which allows students to have great amount of fun, enjoyment, enthusiasm and effective learning. Also, interactive writing technique provides a good outcome not only to the learner's writing output but as well in their character that can mobilized the students to their future endeavors.

Therefore, guidance, support, corrective comments and written feedbacks from the teachers are highly encourage with the use of interactive writing technique during the entire process of writing.

The following recommendations are hereby presented based on the conclusion: (1) Writing drills, workshops and activities should be given to the students to address the challenges in their writing skills; (2) Teachers should provide suggestions which will also enhance students' ability in writing to determine in what extent they need to develop. (3) The teacher should use the interactive writing technique as a method of enhancing student's writing proficiency which allows to recognize student's weakness and strength in writing skills; and (4) Students should be guided properly in what personal writing strategy is appropriate and suited for them so they will be able to express themselves freely and achieve their set goals in writing.

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