



Writing Strategies of Freshmen and Sophomore Students in a Tertiary Institution: Implications to English Teacher

Catherine M. Mobo¹, John Mark R. Asio^{2*}, Mark Jaebel U. Anico³, Arwill Antoine G. Calderon⁴, Mika Capistrano⁵
Gordon College, Philippines

Corresponding Author: John Mark R. Asio asio.johnmark@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: writing, strategies, revising, planning, monitoring, thinking

Received : 25 August
Revised : 27 September
Accepted: 29 October

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine students' writing strategies in a tertiary institution in Olongapo City, Philippines. Seventy-two (72) college freshmen and sophomore students participated in the study. The researchers used a standardized survey questionnaire to gather pertinent data. Also, the researchers calculated the descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS 20. The study results revealed that the student respondents have a "neutral" response to the monitoring and planning for writing. On the other hand, the student-respondents gave an "agree" remark for the revising and thinking aspects of writing. Furthermore, the study also found significant differences in the writing strategies of the freshmen and sophomore students when grouped according to their sex regarding revising, thinking, and planning.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills that has contributed to human work. We can read many records of recent activities today as much as we read the future. Some essential features of writing exercises are that teachers write critical things on the blackboard, or students may write notes that the teachers dictate; lots of people who apply for jobs in offices write English. Writing is a fundamental form of communication, allowing people to convey their views, ideas, and emotions. Whether a student working on an assignment, a professional crafting a report, or an aspiring author penning a novel, writing skills are essential for effectively conveying a message to the intended audience. However, writing is not merely a mechanical process of putting words on paper or typing them into a digital document. It is a creative endeavor that requires careful planning, organization, and thoughtful execution. This context is where writing strategies come into play. Writing strategies are techniques, approaches, and methods writers employ to enhance their writing process and produce high-quality, engaging work.

Moreover, a grammatical form of expressed ideas by an individual, there is a time when an individual is not able to express their ideas; as confirmed by (Telaumbanua et al., 2020; Az Zahra & Febria, 2023), students encountered a variety of obstacles that hindered their ability to effectively achieve writing skills while learning English as a foreign language, such as grammar problems, poor vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and layout problems (Moses, 2019). However, besides the obstacle of the writing process, as mentioned before. A study conducted on the correlation between writing motivation and writing skills by Süğümlü et al., (2019) indicated that students felt bored with writing, were hesitant to write and expressed difficulty in writing, which indicated negative attitudes toward writing. Thus, making writing an enjoyable pastime and habit is imperative for students. Educators must focus on providing students with a positive writing environment, helping them find writing pleasurable. Also, Süğümlü and colleagues (2019) pointed out that motivation was critical to the process of writing and that creating and maintaining motivation was not an easy task. Furthermore, "good reading is about asking questions of your sources. (Rael, 2004). Keep the following in mind when reading primary sources. Even if one cannot arrive at the answers, imagining possible answers will aid an individual's comprehension. Reading primary sources requires the use of historical imagination. This process is about the willingness and ability to ask questions about the material, imagine possible answers, and explain the reasoning (Rael, 2004).

Meanwhile, strategy instruction helps students engage and make sense of their learning through an active learning process (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). At the center of strategy, instruction is getting students to talk and write about their comprehension and understanding. Strategies cover all parts of literacy development, but we often use them during comprehension, vocabulary, and writing instruction with adolescent learners (Cullen, 2016). When should a person practice a specific strategy? A commonly used approach is to consider if a strategy is best used before, during, or after students read and write.

Based on the reviewed literature, the researchers decided to recreate research focusing on writing strategies, especially in higher education institutions. With this, the researchers aimed to determine the writing strategies of freshmen and sophomore students in a tertiary institution. It covered the writing strategies regarding Monitoring, Revising, Planning and thinking. Lastly, an intervention to help improve the writing strategies of the students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Eliwarti and Purwanti (2021) mentioned that the purposes of writing are to gain popularity, make other people happy, give criticisms, Influence the thinking readers, get money, or have a divisible experience with the readers. Furthermore, Alkthey and Al-Qiawi (2020) mentioned that most writing falls into three categories: writing requires more than just a good command of language. It demands effective writing strategies to help organize a person's ideas, develop arguments, and showcase one's writing skills. To achieve this feat, the writer should start by carefully analyzing the essay prompt and identify the key points. Then, plan the essay structure, including the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Use relevant evidence to support the arguments and ensure coherence and clarity throughout the essay to eliminate grammatical errors and ensure the writing effectively communicates the message. In the paper of Eka (2018), the author mentioned that the purpose of writing is simply the reason you are writing. Influential writers always reflect on why they are writing before actually composing a document. Writers can become verbose or uncertain in their communication because they need a clear idea of their purpose (Eka, 2018).

Determining the primary purpose of writing will help writers express their thoughts more clearly. For academic purposes, Umpa et al. (2019) state that one language skill is essential. We can inform others, conduct transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell our feelings through writing. However, Bascos-Ocampo and Abayo-Rillo (2016) stipulated that learning to write, particularly in a second language, is not simply "writing things down." It is one of the four fundamental skills that are very intricate and problematic to learn. Writing is one of the decisive skills in teaching English. It has always occupied a place in most English language courses. Kusumadewi (2017) also emphasized that writing is a way to produce language, which a person does when speaking. Writing is communication with others verbally. Writing is also an action, a process of discovering and organizing one's ideas, putting them on paper, and reshaping and revising them. Another definition comes from Kinanthi (2018). Writing is often a bond in the way a dialogue is. When writing, students typically have more time to contemplate than they do in oral exercises. They can browse back on what they remember and even access dictionaries, grammar books, or others. Writing is an English skill that has always been vital in students' English language learning (Eka, 2018). The act of writing itself involves how individuals express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in words. In essence, writing transfers information, a message, or a view by putting it into grammatical form (Telaumbanua et al., 2020).

Writing is one of the complex processes in EFL skills, which involves cognitive and metacognitive activities such as brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting, and revising (Alisha et al., 2019; Agili & Prabhashini, 2021). Considering the importance, writing can be found and needed in every field. In other studies, writing difficulties are also affected by the learning process and strategy while writing (Bakry & Alsamadani, 2015;). Consequently, they could not produce their ideas in well-written paragraphs or essays (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). Okpe and Onjewu (2021) also pinpointed that obtaining essay writing skills may be one of the crucial things to do as it can improve day-to-day communication, obtain good grades, and be a better professional. Consequently, the essay writing course becomes a notable subject for students at the tertiary level. In the Indonesian context, higher education (HE) curriculum is highly required of university students, particularly in the English Education Department, to produce a well-written essay (Fatimah, 2018). In addition, writing is a prolific skill which realizes cognitive processes (Jebreil et al., 2015) such as expressing intentions, composing ideas, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Fareed et al., 2016; Ginting, 2019). Likewise, Driscoll and Powell (2016) shared that students' emotions, such as their interest in writing, anxiety, lack of self-efficacy and confusion, play a pivotal role in the development of individual learning. Moreover, the teacher's instruction can also shape the students' emotions and attitudes while writing. As such, those aspects are categorized as affective problems, which must be another focus of this study. In an academic setting, writing has developed the most indispensable skill students must master (Fareed et al., 2016; Tseng, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers employed a quantitative technique, defined as quantifying an issue by creating numerical data through exact measurements or data that can be turned into usable statistics. Quantitative research quantifies attitudes, views, actions, and other specific factors to generalize the findings from a more comprehensive sample group. It gains a better awareness and knowledge of the social world. The researchers employed a descriptive study approach. The results of descriptive research cannot be used to confirm or reject a theory. However, when the limits are recognized, they may still be a helpful tool in many fields of scientific inquiry.

Respondents

The study's respondents are freshmen and sophomore students pursuing a Bachelor of Secondary Education majoring in English in a tertiary institution in Olongapo City, Philippines. Since students in the first- and second-year levels of BSED-English are learning in a modular fashion, only 72 of the 100 students were able to complete the questionnaire. The researchers distributed a standardized questionnaire with closed-ended responses to the chosen respondents personally. The data gathering commenced during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023 in April and May.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire employed by the researchers was a Likert Scale Survey Questionnaire. An adaption from the study of Gundín et al., 2021, entitled "Validation of the Writing Strategies Questionnaire in the Context of Primary Education: A Multidimensional Measurement Model." One of the researchers distributed the tool to responders using Google Forms. It includes their strategies when it comes to writing. This tool also addresses the question of what tactics or learning—the most efficient way to acquire the writing strategies of the respondents. The study patterned a five (5) - point Likert scale response from the students. Regarding reliability, the composite reliability (CR) of each factor in all of the proposed models is high (0.81 - 0.92 for the monitoring variable, 0.70 - 0.93 for the thinking variable, 0.70 - 0.82 for the planning variable and 0.81 - 0.91 for the revising variable). The instrument shows an excellent overall fit for the sex and grade variables, with the indicators meeting the established parameters.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher treated the gathered data with the help of the following statistical tools, including frequency, percentage and mean for the descriptive analysis of the study. Then, a t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used for the inferential statistics. The study also used software such as MS Excel for the tabulation and SPSS 20 for the inferential computation of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study intends to analyze the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents among 1st year and 2nd-year students of BSED- English in Gordon College, Olongapo City. The study also intends to find variations in students' responses regarding the variables involved in the research. The succeeding tables present the results of the study.

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the respondents' profile variables. As seen in the table, 51% of the respondents, with a total of thirty-seven (37) out of seventy-two (72) students, are between 18 to 19 years old. The percentage of students aged between 20 to 21 years old was 49%, with a total of thirty-five (35) students. A related concept based directly on the social identity approach is age-related meta-stereotypes, which refer to beliefs about how other people think about one's age group (Bal et al., 2015).

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age:		
18-19 years old	37	51
20-21 years old	35	49
Sex:		
Male	21	29.2

Female	51	70.8
Year Level:		
First Year	37	51
Second Year	35	49
Parent’s Educ. Background:		
High School	41	56.9
College	31	43.1
Total	72	100

Next in line was the profile in terms of sex. Male respondents were 29.2%, with four (21) out of seventy-two students (77). Meanwhile, the percentage of females is 70.8%, with fifty-one (51) students from the same respondents. Since the terms are used by authors interchangeably, many outcomes are likely affected by sex and gender simultaneously (Day et al., 2016). Furthermore, regarding the year level, the table shows that most respondents came from the First Year, which is 51%, with thirty-seven (37) students. At the same time, the respondents from the Second Year are only thirty-five (35) students from the totality of respondents with a percentage of 49%. Studies using only pre-university and socioeconomic situations data had less accurate results (Singh & Kaur, 2016). However, studies with university data and results broken down by year level had better outcomes (Anuradha & Velmurugan, 2015). Lastly, the parent's educational background shows that most respondents came from college, 43.2 %, with thirty-one (31) parents' educational backgrounds. In contrast, the respondents from high school had thirty-one (31) parents' educational backgrounds from the totality of respondents with a percentage of 42.1%. Parent engagement is parents' voluntary work at home or school to advance a child's education. According to Mautone et al. (2015), parental involvement is essential for academic success and social development.

Table 2 presents the writing strategies of the respondents in terms of monitoring. As seen from the table, Statement 1 generated the highest mean, 4.11, with a corresponding descriptive rating or analysis of agree. The result shows a good outcome for students. On the other hand, statement 4 got the lowest mean with a score of 2.83, corresponding to a neutral rating. Overall, the average mean was 3.23, which also falls under the descriptive rating of neutral. The results of the current study also confirm the previous study (Enago Academy, 2023). Editing and proofreading are essential portions of the writing process. They help with the effectiveness of the writing style and the clarity of ideas.

Table 2: Writing Strategies in Terms of Monitoring

Monitoring Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1.While writing, I regularly check whether my text does not contain sentences that are too long or incorrect	4.11	Agree

2. I usually hand in my text without checking whether the paragraphs are well arranged	3.00	Neutral
3. Before I hand in my text, I check whether it is structured logically,	2.97	Neutral
4. When I rewrite my texts, the content often changes a lot.	2.83	Neutral
Average Mean	3.23	Neutral

Table 3: Writing Strategies in Terms of Revising

Revising Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. When writing, I sometimes write paragraphs which I know that they are not yet correct, but I prefer to continue writing	3.27	Neutral
2. I have to reread the texts I wrote to prevent redundancies	3.58	Agree
3. When I reread and rewrite my text, the structure of my text changes a lot	3.44	Agree
4. When I finished writing, I reread and improved a lot; there might change a lot in my text	3.75	Agree
Average Mean	3.51	Agree

Presented in Table 3 were the writing strategies of the respondents in terms of revising. As the table shows, Statement 4 generated the highest mean, 3.75, with a corresponding descriptive rating or descriptive analysis of Agree. This result shows a good outcome. However, statement 1 produced the lowest mean score of 3.27, equating to a neutral descriptive rating. The average mean for the writing strategies in terms of revising was 3.51, which has a descriptive rating of agree on the scale. The rating of the current study also confirms the previous study (O'Neill & Gravois, 2017). Revision is essential to proficient writing, but students frequently need help with it, particularly with doing substantive revisions. They need to pay more attention to the importance of revision and may even resist changing their first draft. When students revise their work, they focus on surface-level revisions.

Table 4: Writing Strategies in Terms of Thinking

Thinking Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Before I start to write a text, I prefer to write down some thoughts on a scribbling paper to discover What I think about the topic	3.52	Agree
2. When I reread my texts, sometimes they are very chaotic	3.18	Neutral
3. When I write a text, I think about how to approach it.	3.05	Neutral
4. Writing helps me to clarify my thoughts.	3.91	Agree

Average Mean	3.41	Agree
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Table 4 presents the writing strategies of the respondents in terms of thinking. As the table shows, Statement 4 generated the highest mean, 3.91, with a corresponding descriptive rating or descriptive analysis of Agree. On the other hand, statement 3 generated the lowest mean with a score of 3.05, corresponding to a descriptive rating of neutral. Overall, the average for the writing strategies in terms of thinking was 3.41, equating to a descriptive rating of agree on the scale. This result means that the outcome is good and confirms the previous study by Mese and Sevilen (2021). The participants who reflected on the moral things in their lives once a week by jotting them down were more optimistic and inspired about their current situations and futures.

Table 5: Writing Strategies in Terms of Planning

Planning Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. I always use a diagram before I start to write.	2.71	Neutral
2. Before writing a text, I jot down some notes on a scribbling paper. Later, I will elaborate on these notes.	3.01	Neutral
3. I need to have my thoughts clear before I can start to write.	3.73	Agree
4. Before I write down a sentence, I have it clear.	3.51	Agree
Average Mean	3.24	Neutral

Table 5 presents the respondents' writing strategies in terms of planning. As the table shows, Statement 4 generated the highest mean, 3.51, with a corresponding descriptive rating or descriptive analysis of agree. Nevertheless, statement 1 obtained the lowest mean score of 2.71, with a descriptive rating equivalent to neutral. Finally, for the average mean, the study obtained a score of 3.24 for the writing strategies in terms of planning. The said result is good because it shows they can participate in planning. The result also confirms the study of Romer (2016) that clear writing produces clearer thoughts. Sloppy writing produces messy thoughts.

Table 6: Differences in the Writing Strategies of the Respondents when grouped according to Profile Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Monitoring					
Male	3.33	0.6	3	3.08	0.054
Female	3.17	0.6			
First Year	3.20	0.5	3	-0.43	0.697
Second Year	3.25	0.7			
High School	3.24	0.6	3	0.51	0.643
College	3.22	0.6			
Revising					

Male	3.69	0.2	3	7.98*	0.004
Female	3.44	0.2			
First Year	3.51	0.2	3	-0.023	0.983
Second Year	3.51	0.2			
High School	3.49	0.2	3	-0.85	0.459
College	3.54	0.3			
Thinking					
Male	3.73	0.3	3	5.56*	0.012
Female	3.41	0.2			
First Year	3.50	0.2	3	2.64	1.000
Second Year	3.50	0.3			
High School	3.49	0.2	3	-4.95	0.654
College	3.51	0.3			
Planning					
Male	3.62	0.4	3	4.79*	0.017
Female	3.36	0.3			
First Year	3.42	0.3	3	-1.15	0.332
Second Year	3.46	0.4			
High School	3.44	0.3	3	0.095	0.930
College	3.44	0.4			

Note: * $p < .05$

The study performs a *t*-test for a significant difference in Table 6 to see variations in the respondents when grouped according to sex, year level, and highest educational qualification. As seen from the table, when grouped according to their sex, we observe a significance in revising, thinking, and planning; then, for the monitoring, we did not observe any significance. We obtained the following results: for monitoring: $t(0.05) = -3.08, p = 0.054$; for the revising, $t(0.05) = 7.98, p = 0.004$; for the thinking, $t(0.05) = 5.56, p = 0.012$, for the planning $t(0.05) = 4.79, p = 0.017$. In the case of year level, we did not observe any significant difference in their responses. We obtained the following results: for monitoring: $t(0.05) = -0.43, p = 0.697$; for the revising, $t(0.05) = -0.022, p = 0.983$; for the thinking, $t(0.05) = 2.64, p = 1.000$, for the planning $t(0.05) = -1.15, p = 0.332$. It is safe to conclude that there was no significant difference in the respondents when grouped according to their year levels. Lastly, we observed no significant difference in their responses regarding parents' highest educational attainment. We obtained the following results: for monitoring: $t(0.05) = 0.51, p = 0.643$; for the revising, $t(0.05) = -0.85, p = 0.459$; for the thinking, $t(0.05) = -4.95, p = 0.654$, for the planning $t(0.05) = 0.095, p = 0.930$. It is safe to conclude that there was no significant difference in the respondents when grouped according to their educational attainment. The results of the present study are also supported by studies addressing the positive effects of the writing strategy on writing skills development (Cer, 2019; Grenfell & Harris, 2017; and Simeon, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's results, the researchers concluded that The respondents or the survey results indicate a predominance of 18 to 19-year-old students, a majority of female responders, a reasonably balanced distribution between first-year and second-year students, and a higher percentage of parents with a high school education compared to those with a college education. The data analysis reveals varying levels of agreement and neutrality in the writing techniques employed by the respondents across different aspects, such as monitoring, revising, planning, and thinking. The findings suggest agreeable and neutral approaches to the respondents' writing strategies. There was a significant difference in revising, thinking, and planning when grouped according to sex. No significant differences exist according to age, year level, and parents' educational attainment.

Based on the conclusions mentioned above, the researchers offer the following recommendations: (1) further raise the writing proficiency of the BSED-English 1st year and 2nd-year students at Gordon College; other writing strategies must be absorbed. This suggestion can be made through seminars and skills training intended for the need of the students. (2) confirm the findings and further enhance the writing strategies employed in this research. An additional study can be carried out. Furthermore, a hands-on or demonstration seminar for writing and upgrading is essential. (3) Collect more information that may be utilized to enhance writing strategies; this study might be expanded to more schools.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Research writing is a tedious task, and just like any other articles in the field, this research has no exceptions regarding its shortcomings. First, the kind of samples, future researchers should look into other criteria that will interest them to assess. Second, the research variables and future research should also include other exciting indicators to test, examine, and try to relate them with the current one. Third, the methodology, future researchers may try other and more sophisticated research designs (like mixed-method type). Furthermore, constructive criticism of this paper is open, and future collaboration can be made.

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