

Tertiary Students' Partiality towards English Subjects Writing Activities: Basis for the Development of Reciprocal Study Guide(s)

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Abstract:

*Identifying the tertiary student's partiality towards writing activities in English subjects is the primary thesis of this research. This is a descriptive- survey study that carries forward a self – developed questionnaire of two parts: the respondents' profile and the respondents' level of partiality towards English subjects writing activities with their corresponding reason(s) to substantiate their liking(s). It uses a total population sampling consisting of 167 students officially enrolled in the subjects: Writing in the Discipline and Technical Writing and reporting this 2nd semester of CY 2019. The factor analysis yielded that out of the four factors of partiality; **Least Like** prevailed and has a weighted mean of **2.19**. Top three reasons that have a high level of importance in their partiality are **No Ideas to write in English (32%), Scarcity of Writing Materials (23%), and Lack of English Vocabulary/ Poor in spelling (20%)**.*

Keywords

Tertiary Students' Partiality; English Subjects Writing Activities; Basis for the Development; Reciprocal Study Guide(s)

1. Introduction

Republic Act No. 9146 issued last July 30, 2001 converted the Tangub Agro-Industrial School in the city of Tangub, province of Misamis Occidental into a state college to be known as the Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology.

Being a tertiary institution, NMSCST, has to cope and implement Changes in the educational model; Changes aimed at tapping the potential of information and communication technologies in the

creation and dissemination of knowledge and Changes for social responsibility and knowledge transfer. (The Challenges of Higher Education in the 21st Century | Guni Network www.guninetwork.org › Resources) Teaching and learning must be more active, connected to real life, and the products of their research must be shared effectively with society through appropriate knowledge-transfer mechanisms.

While it is a common knowledge that in the tertiary education, the amount of material to learn and the speed at which it's covered will take some getting used to. One is expected to take good notes as most lecturers don't have the time to make sure everyone's on the same page. However, it is considered a difficult skill, particularly in English as second language (ESL) contexts where students face many challenges in writing.

Previous studies have attempted to categorize these challenges into some broad domains, for example, Haider (2012) Vocabulary poses a problem for learners as they are not aware of collocation and connotation meanings of the words. Corresponding to the finding of (Megaiab, 2014), Spelling and Punctuations errors were also found in abundance in writing samples; (Haider, 2012; Mansoor, 2005; Harmer, 2008), Teachers' incompetence, (Byrne, 1991; Harmer, 2008) Methodological inappropriateness, where teachers also fail to impart effective writing skills and strategies to the learners and (Ahmad, Khan, Munir, et al., 2013; Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013; Siddiqui, 2007) Students' lack of interest Similarly, Ahmed (2010) learners do not possess topic-related knowledge where the concentration and efforts are limited only to attempt the writing section of the exam papers.

These problems and challenges can be resolved by several remedial measures at individual as well as institutional level. Recognition of students' prior experience with writing and the complex nature of writing can help much to more effectively design

Study Guide and provide support as students continue to hone their skills.

Thus, this study Tertiary Students' Partiality towards English Subjects Writing Activities: Basis for the Development of Reciprocal Study Guide(s) is conducted.

2. Conceptual Framework

The focused- rationale in this study are the Tertiary Students Partiality towards English Writing Activities; Top Three Reasons that substantiate the said Partiality, and the Basis for the Development of Reciprocal Study Guide(s)

Specifically the concept of the study is illustrated below:

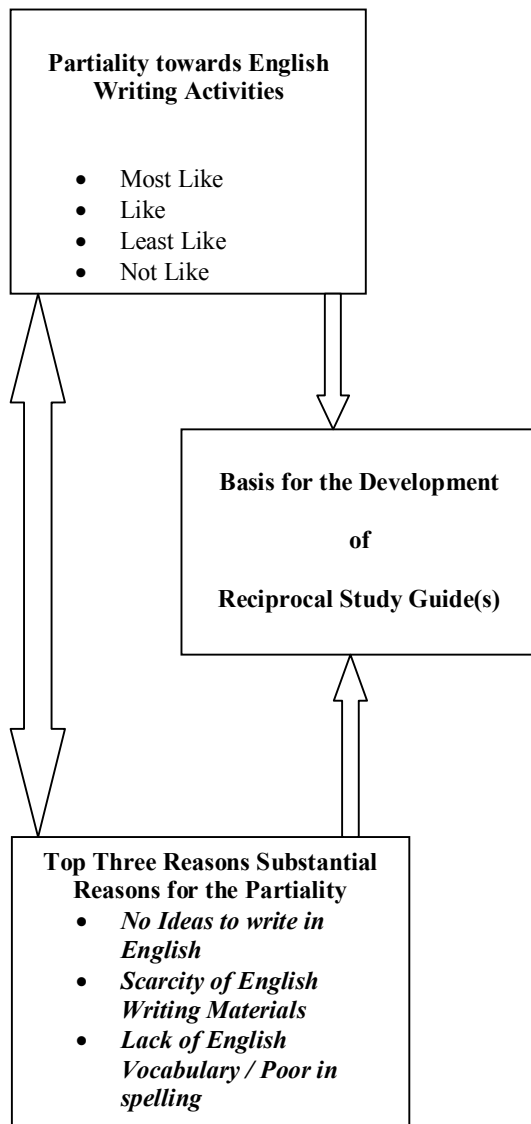


Figure 1, Schematic Diagram of the Study

3. Design and Method

According to Ogab Jabali (2018) Writing has always been seen as the most troublesome and challenging area of language learning for all students without exception especially if it is to be done in a foreign language.

3.1 Background Profile

This study employed a descriptive –survey method using a population sampling among the NMSCST 167 tertiary students officially enrolled to two English writing subjects – Writing in the Discipline and Technical Writing and Reporting – offered during the second semester of CY2019. There were 71 female students and 96 male students in these classes with varied backgrounds, different learning methodologies, varied levels of language skills and experience, let alone difference in insights, attitudes and conceptions about the writing skill.

3.2 Problem, Purpose and Significance

The researcher's nineteen years of experience in teaching these college two English subjects- Writing in the Discipline and Technical Writing and Reporting – found out:

- that most of these students fail to meet the needs of the course they were enrolled to in terms of producing a written form both communicatively and linguistically that fits or meet good communication' expectations ;
- that there have been little efforts to identify student's attitudes towards writing in a foreign language (ESL) in general as well as to detect and identify the reasons for students' low writing performance at NMSCST level in particular. Consequently, it was significant to find out what these students' think about writing activities and how they approach it from their own perspectives.

Thus, this study served three – fold objectives – and sought answers in:

- *Identifying the tertiary student's partiality towards writing activities in English subjects;*
- *Determining top three reasons that have a high level of importance in their partiality, and,*
- *Developing a Reciprocal Study Guide(s)*

3.3 Method

Ethical approval for this research was sought and provided by the college ethics committee, namely, The VPAA, SAS Dean and Research Director. This questionnaire was conducted according to established ethical guidelines, and informed consent was obtained among the NMSCST 167 tertiary students officially enrolled to two English writing subjects – Writing in the Discipline and Technical Writing and Reporting - offered during the second semester of CY2019.

To gather data from the respondents, a self – developed questionnaire of two parts: the respondents’ profile and the respondents’ level of partiality which uses a Liker scale descending from (4) as most like (1) as don’t like at all with their corresponding reason(s) to substantiate their liking(s). To ensure that students do not misunderstand the questionnaire, the researcher made a thorough orientation and discussion of what they should do and answer prior to the conduct of the study.

Data were then collected, collated, tabulated and scrutinized using the statistical tool of frequency distribution, mean and percentage.

4. Result(s) and Discussion

4.1 The main or primary thesis of this research is to identify the tertiary student’s partiality towards writing activities in English subjects.

Table1. Respondents’ Partiality towards English Writing Activities in English Subjects

S	4 – LM	3 – L	2 – LL	1 – NL	T	A	WM	VD
F	11	15	36	9	71	170	2.39	Least Like
M	10	15	39	32	96	195	2.03	Least Like
T	21	30	75	41	167	365	2.19	Least Like
%	12%	18%	45%	25%	100%			

*** Legend

S - Sex
 F - Female
 M - Male
 T - Total
 LM - Like Mostly
 L - L
 LL - Least Like
 A - Average
 WM - Weighted Mean
 VD - Verbal Description

Data shown on table 1 illustrate that the difference of .36 between the scores of NMSCST tertiary males and females’ students does not deny the fact that the total weighted mean of 2.19 – Least Like – was the result of students’ partiality towards English writing activities. The said result is in support to Yong’s (2010) study which indicated that

gender was not significantly related to attitude in writing which was also reinforced by Shawish and Abdelraheem (2010) study that students’ sex and academic level were not significant variables in the students’ estimates of the causes of writing apprehension at the three Palestinian universities. So it could be deduced that students’ partiality towards English subjects writing activities were influenced by their apprehension towards English language skills. Although, researches and had been conducted and that educational system initiatives have been implemented to assist students in their writing activities, it is not strange to see students with foreign language instruction having a lot of difficulty when tasked to write for communication in the English target language. One needs to work hard, master, practice writing skills for it is a productive skill that entails storage of ideas and thoughts plus the knowledge of language rules. Jahin and Idrees (2012) stated that writing entails coordination between content, vocabulary, spelling, organization and mechanics. Therefore, proficiency at writing is unlikely to be attained if students lack self-confidence and are unwilling to unfold their feelings through writing.

4.2 The next problem to seek answer for was to determine top three reasons that have a high level of importance in their partiality towards English subjects writing activities.

Table2. Respondents’ Top Three Reasons for their Partiality towards English Writing Activities in English Subjects

Students’ Reasons of Partiality	Respondents’ Sex		Total (167)	%	Rank
	Female (71)	Male (96)			
1. Lack English Vocabulary / Poor in Grammar & Spelling	14	20	34	20%	#3
2. Less Competent Instructors handling the English Writing Subjects	9	8	17	10%	#5
3. No ideas to write in English	14	40	54	32%	#1
4. Not interested and got No time to write	13	10	23	14%	#4
5. Scarcity of English Materials to refer with	21	18	39	23%	#2

The table above shows that through the factor analysis, data yielded that the top three reasons that have a high level of importance in the students’ “Least Like” partiality towards English subjects writing activities are as follows: **No Ideas to write in English (32%), Scarcity of Writing Materials to refer with (23%), and Lack of English Vocabulary / Poor in grammar and spelling (20%).**

These results were in consonance to the ideas presented by the following authors:

*Richard and Renandya (2010:303) as cited by Herdi (2015) explained that “writing is the most difficult skill for learners to master”. The difficulty is not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translation the ideas into readable text;

* Quintero’s (2008) study pointed out that problems with grammar, punctuation, lexical choice and the like have a negative impact on the content and the general understanding of a text;

* Jaramillo and Medina’s (2011) study, explained that there are many learners who need to express their ideas in a second language but they find themselves without the linguistic resources to carry it out; and,

* Robert Todd Caroll (1990), many students were never required to learn proper spelling or grammar. These poor students come to think that “English” and “writing” are nothing but spelling and grammar.

From the findings stated above, learning to write is uniquely challenging. Writing requires the mastery and concurrent use of a complex array of language skills, from vocabulary and spelling to the ability to organize and convey ideas. Writer(s) needs to balance several aspects of writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, mechanics, and the language use according to genre.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

English as Second Language (ESL) learners perceive and agreed that writing is the most complex and difficult skill. This difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. It is relative to promoting an idea, product, service, or organization to create value or make a sale (Khan). Writing skill is engineered to display information effectively on the page in order to get results, to inform, to request, to entertain, or to persuade (Holloway). In fact, with the presence of web communication, 90% of human transactions involve written communications, Hence, in order for it to be effective it demands ideas, thoughts, and concepts to be expressed and presented in an orderly, formal, and effective manner in the accuracy of word choices.

From the foregoing data, insights and knowledge gathered and learned, it can be deduced that the 167 respondents of this study generally “Least Like” the current English subjects writing activities done in class. This was proven by the follow through

interview conducted by the researcher after the results were collated, tabulated and interpreted.

Listed below were the common remarks given by the respondents:

- * “I don’t understand the given topic; no matter how simple it is, I could not still write because I have poor English vocabulary”;
- * “I could not translate my ideas into coherent sentences”;
- * “I hate writing. I don’t like to write at all”;
- * “I don’t have writing samples that I could refer to, besides with the present scheduling done in the college; I don’t have the time to visit the college library and the e-library, and,
- * “I don’t like writing because I am very poor in spelling and I don’t also read to improve my vocabulary.

The most common problem that confronts the writing class does not lie so much on what to ask students to write about; the difficulty is more on how to motivate the students to write interesting and effective materials. One very important point that needs consideration is to design a Study Guide (SG) that increases motivation and to actually become a very good supporter and facilitator in the entire writing process. The use of this Study Guide can be an effective intervention to implement in the writing-learning process because it serves and answers:

- **Time Constraint.** Classes in the college usually start from 7:30 am to 7:00 pm with a maximum break of one hour and thirty minutes for snacks and lunch. With the Study Guide, students can bring and study it at home;
- **Limited Library Reference Materials.** With the large number of students taking the writing subjects, the limited computers in the e – library and the not so updated library materials – could not cater the writing needs of these students; having an individual Study Guide maximizes individual’s learning’s;
- **Documented Portfolio of Activities.** Student’s writing outputs will be compiled and that students will be guided on their status / standing in the class plus the chance to use the compilation for future use, and,
- **Intervention to Students with Low English Proficiency.** The use of the Study Guide motivates students to write what

they want, as to what they need, and what they feel. It serves as guide as to what communicative language skills be acquired and developed (correct spelling, word forms, punctuations, sentence and paragraph structures) relative to technical and scientific activities. Because of the increased responsibility to participate through a variety of writing exercises, Students may gain confidence in using the target language in general. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning (Larsen – Freeman).

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