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College Student's Expository Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzed the expository writing skills of College students in a private catholic institution in Misamis Oriental. A descriptive analysis was conducted to find out the difficulties encountered by the respondents in essay writing through *Focus Group Discussion sessions*, *survey questionnaire*, and *essay writing analysis.* The focus group discussion identified students' difficulties in *organization of ideas*, *grammar*, *word choice*, *spelling*, *supporting ideas*, *punctuation* and *capitalization*.The survey revealed that the respondents do not like writing activities and that they find essay writing a difficult task. A pre-test was likewise given among these respondents, which manifested a Developing Proficiency level with a mean of 1.78. With these foundational data, the researchers developed a Coaching Intervention Program. This was implemented for a month, with the aid of grammarly software. In consequence, the post-test then gave a positive result of 3.62 as mean with an Approaching Proficiency level. The paper concluded that the intervention program made the research respondents acquire an understanding of the purpose and structure of expository writing. They were thus led to compose meaningful texts in both group and individual set-ups.

KEYWORDS

Expository writing, Coaching Intervention Program, Descriptive Analysis

Introduction

As the global world demands for enhanced communication skills, it is crucial for students, to pay further attention to the mastery of English in their writing. Zagada (2018) posits that communication is transmitted more through writing than any other type of media. Hence, to make the writing clearer and more understandable, free from ambiguous meaning and misunderstanding information, an evaluation is required to be conducted before submitting any written piece. Hence, the relevance of essay wiring in the academe cannot be withheld. Fitzgerald (2017) claims that it is an important part of studying for a number of reasons. It increases students' understanding and helps the process of learning, develops writing skills by structuring arguments through lucid, persuasive and coherent writing; and enables writers to assess and provide feedback on their writing. Considering the importance of developing the students' essay writing skills, this paper was then conceived.

This study focused on expository writing, a form of structured academic writing that uses factual evidence to explain or investigate a specific topic. Its purpose is to present a balance, objective description of a topic. As a valuable skill in many field of work including journalism, the skill helps college students in business courses to enhance and develop their expository writing skills that they could use before and after they find work.

Initially, the proponents of this paper conducted an analysis of the academic write-ups of the respondents. It was found out that 80% of the expository essays did not observe standards of academic writing. The target respondents lacked knowledge of the subject matter; had casual writing styles, poor grammar, had typographical and spelling mistakes; with careless choice of words, and were guilty of plagiarism. These issued led the researchers to conduct an in-depth descriptive analysis of these causes.

Methodology

This paper modified Boateng's (2018) five focus group discussion prompts, used Zurong's (2019) survey questionnaire and the Department of Education's (2019) essay writing scale. The researchers likewise conducted a writing pre-test among the respondents with focus on meaning, organization, development, language and convention. Triangulation method was employed from these research results.

These data were gathered remotely due to this pandemic. For easy access to the questionnaire on line, the researchers used *Survey Monkey.* This electronic tool represented an opportunity to reach out to different student groups. An online focus group discussion was also done for an hour. The pre-test was conducted with the aid of the grammarly software for the scoring process. The essay writing scale, ranging from Beginning, Developing, Approaching Proficiency, Proficient and Advanced, was adopted from Zier (2015).

Results

The focus group discussion revealed the respondents' writing difficulties in *organization of ideas*, *grammar*, *word choice*, *spelling*, *supporting ideas*, *punctuation* and *capitalization*. The survey questionnaire found that the respondents disliked writing activities. They find essay writing a difficult task. They did not like the themes given for them to write about. However, they shared that their interests were on politics and history. The pre-test manifested a *Developing Proficiency level* with a mean of 1.78. With these foundational data, the researchers developed a Coaching Intervention Program. This was implemented for a month, with the aid of grammarly software. In consequence, the post-test then gave a positive result of 3.62 as mean with an Approaching Proficiency level. Table 1 show this as follows.

Table 1. Summary of the Respondents' Ratings in Essay Before and After the Coaching Intervention

Essay Components	Coaching Intervention Program			
	Pretest		Posttest	
	M	Int	M	Int
Meaning	1.68	Dev.	3.44	AP
Development	1.73	Dev.	3.32	AP
Organization	1.78	Dev.	3.48	AP
Language	1.90	Dev.	3.88	AP
Convention	1.83	Dev.	4.00	Pro.
Overall	1.78	DEV	3.62	AP

The above table shows the summary of the students' ratings in expository essay before and after the implementation of the coaching intervention program. Data reveals that the expository writing proficiency of the respondents had considerable improvement in meaning, development, organization, language and

most especially in convention after the intervention program. It was observed that the respondents found the Grammarly application very helpful in their writing and motivated them to enhance their writing skills. These initial findings of the study underscore the importance of exposing students to the Grammarly application. Krashen (2004) cited studies showing that good language writers do rescanning and revising than poor writers. In Zamels' (2018) study, better second language writers treated writing as a process, investigating and explaining their ideas before worrying about grammatical accuracy; the less skilled writers were overly concerned about following an outline and about having correct grammar and vocabulary from the beginning. Third party applications indeed helped the respondents in their writing prompts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The implementation of the developed Intervention program towards writing was effective in enhancing students' essay writing skill. By comparing the writing samples of students who were taught before and after the intervention, it produced positive impact on students' skills. The program addressed the specific writing difficulties with inclusion of the grammar skills. Moreover, the coaching intervention program enabled teachers to focus on the various parts of the writing process and to give more freedom for students to experiment and self-correct their language use. In addition, such orientation helped students develop confidence and establish writing fluency.

Furthermore, the findings of this study show the important role of the teacher and technology in providing students with scaffolding to help the respondents improve in their writing. Specifically, the grammar aspect facilitated the transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the students in developing their writing skills with the help of technology. Hence, the researchers recommend for the grammarly-software-laden intervention program to be implemented among other year levels in the College classes.

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