

# Writing Skills of Junior High School Students of the University of Saint Anthony, Iriga City, Philippines

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**Abstract**—The study is about the writing skill competence of the Grade 8 students of The University of Saint Anthony, The Philippine. It is aimed at finding out the level of writing skill competence in terms of grammar such as organization, content, mechanic, and style; common errors in grammar and mechanic in essay writing; and proposing writing activities based on the findings. This research was conducted by using quantitative method utilizing descriptive-evaluative research. The respondents of this research were 20 students of the Grade 8 Junior High School enrolled in Summer Enrichment Class of the University of Saint Anthony during school year of 2018- 2019. The statistical tools used were Frequency and Weighted Mean. Among the findings are: 1) The students are good in writing contents, style and organization but they are still poor in mechanics and grammar; 2) The students have more errors in grammar aspects such as the usage of subject and verb, proper usage of tenses, organization of thoughts, contracted words, distribution of thoughts per sentence, and on mechanics wherein students have errors on usage of punctuation, capitalization of proper nouns, proper indention of the paragraph and sentence breaks, and 3) The supplementary learning material must be developed to improve the writing skills competence of the students.

**Keywords**—writing skills, TEFL, writing mastery

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is important part of communication skill. Good writing skills allow one to communicate with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face conversation. Poor writing skills can create poor impressions. Writing is a process of construction and it has been one of the most challenging skills that students have to learn. Because writing is one of the productive skills in learning languages, then writing activities are totally different from listening, speaking, and reading activities. In writing there are a number of aspects of language that must be obeyed for conveying the ideas, and self-actualization that can be understood by people who read. This aspect of the language contained in writing activities are grammar and vocabulary. This means that writing can provide good opportunities for students to further deepen their grammar understanding.

Writing is a complex process that provides an opportunity for writers to express their thoughts and ideas. In writing activities, writers must be skilled at utilizing the structure of language and vocabulary because it involves several sub-skills. Some of them are related to accuracy, namely using the correct form of language including spelling correctly, punctuation, lay out, vocabulary, grammar, sentences and arranging correct paragraphs. It means that the ability to write involves several subskills that must be considered in teaching writing.

There are four kinds of writing skill that developed by language learner [1]. These are grammatical skills or the ability to write correct sentences, stylistic skills or the ability to manipulate sentences and English usage; mechanical skills including punctuation marks, spelling, etc.; judgemental skills or the ability to write in appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information. Thus, in the theory Writing as Process and Product [2] writing challenges the writer to imagine, organize, edits, drafts, read, rereads. As a process, writing is often cyclical and sometimes disorder which produces any forms of discourse such a narration, description, exposition, or argumentation. It requires the mastery of the logical system.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is meant as the expression of ideas, opinions, or thoughts and feelings [3] but writing is a recursive process, which means students, revise throughout the process, frequently moving back and forth among the stages [4]. The students should learn strategies for invention and discovery, and teachers should help students generate content and discover a purpose. It is also stated that readers, purpose, and occasion, all define types of writing, writer's intention, and the readers' needs. It means that writing is a complex process and it seems reasonable to expect, then, that the teaching of writing is complex as well. Moreover, writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use [5] because they consider the language use when the students engage in their writing process. This activity will provoke language development because the students resolve problems when transferring their ideas into the composition they made.

Actually there are six steps in the writing [6]. The first step is to maintain a steady gaze or concentrate on a specific topic. The second one is to be conversant with its literature or background. The third sequence is to research and think of an approach. The fourth step is to make a draft by putting down the details of the chosen topic. The fifth one is to get the article written. When all these are done with organization on a style sheet, the composition radiates uniformity and pleasing appearance. It is ready for sixth or the last step, which is subjected to editing, review, and decision-making whether to accept, reject or improve the piece.

From a study conducted to the Sophomore Engineering Students in Batangas State University [7], it was found that there were four skills that undeveloped yet; the stylistic skills, grammatical skills, and judgment skills. The respondents for example, failed to identify correct adverb, article, subject-verb agreement, the use of inverted sentences, appropriate

punctuation marks as well as the use of contrasting ideas in passage.

English language teaching aims to develop the macro-language skills of listening, speaking reading, and writing through measureless lesson extracted from language elements of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. The expected synergy of these integrated skills and elements is superior writing skill mastery. Being the ultimate output of this study, this mastery serves as the essence of numerous related literature and studies like works of Lee and Tessema.

In improving students writing skills the emphasis should be given on the valuable use of coherence [8]. This involves the need to compose a macrostructure and the use of appropriate metadiscourse. The former is necessary in providing outline of main categories or function of the text. It helps this writer and reader understands how sentence are related to each other. Having good preposition, supported with evidence, elaboration, relationship between or among prepositions and connectivity, of the surface text are met by the use of cohesive advices correctly. Metadiscourse feature and markers in texts yield coherence. These expressions in writing help the reader organize, interpret and evaluate information in the piece of writing.

Writing task is a very difficult skill for the students because they need to master appropriate grammar and vocabulary and their ideas must be presented clearly in an organized fashion [9]. The use of appropriate motivation as a complex construct might inspire them to master English. Focus on students' interests and needs enable them to respond positively to meaningful learning like classroom project that offer the chance to match task with interesting topic that are relevant to the target students.

It can be summarized that writing is a productive process done through two main stages: exploring and transmitting ideas, thought and feeling into written form, and conducting a number of revising process to carry out a grammatically and orderly texts. The writing productions are in the forms of readable texts which should be meaningful to everyone who read the writing.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted under quantitative method utilizing descriptive- evaluative research since this kind of research concerns with describing the nature characteristics and the components of population or phenomenon [10]. This design attempts to find general attributes of the presently existing situation and determine the frequency it occurs. Descriptive- evaluative research was used to gather and analyze measureable of data. Thus it presented research finding referring to the number or frequency written in numerical forms such as percentages, fractions and numbers.

The researcher invited English reviewers to re-check and validate the confirmed errors in the academic output to determine their levels of writing competence for validation of the quality of the work of the students in terms of writing. The respondents of this research were 20 students of the Grade 8 Junior High School enrolled at Summer Enrichment Class of the University of Saint Anthony for school year 2018- 2019. The instrument used for writing competence was based on criteria and patterned from HD Brown scoring checklist in order to gauge the students' writing competence. The structure

Academic Writing Criteria Checklist was used in the majority of the research to determine the writing competence of the junior high school students. The instrument contains five (5) criteria; (1) grammar, (2) organization (introduction, body, and conclusion), (3) logical development ideas, and content, (4) punctuation, spelling, and mechanics, (5) style and quality of expression. The students' writing was rated with the scale of 5 for excellent which pertains to a student that already proficient in the writing; 4 for a very satisfactory, grades a student with good abilities and understanding in writing, 3 for satisfactory, student that has good enough knowledge but flaws are still existent, 2 for fair, it refers to a student who has a lack of writing proficiency, 1 for poor which refers to no or little knowledge in writing.

### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After the data collected, the data were analyzed and interpreted through academic writing criteria checklist as instrument to yield the valid and reliable result of the data obtained from the respondents of the Grade 8 Junior High School Students of the University of Saint Anthony, Iriga City, Philippines, Iriga. Table 1 shows the writing competence comprised by grammar and the quality of writing, mechanics, organization and content and style of writing.

TABLE I. WRITING SKILLS COMPETENCE

Indicators	Researcher's Evaluation			English Teacher's Evaluation					
	WM	VI	R	WM	VI	R	AWM	VI	R
Grammar	3.40	VS	4	3.10	S	5	3.25	S	5
Organization	3.45	VS	3	3.35	S	3	3.40	VS	3
Content	3.7	VS	2	3.61	VS	1	3.66	VS	1
Mechanics	3.35	S	5	3.18	S	4	3.27	S	4
Stylistic	3.8	VS	1	3.50	VS	2	3.65	VS	2

**Legend:**

AWM- Average Weighted Mean	Excellent (E)	4.20 – 5.00
WM – Weighted Mean	Very satisfactory (VS)	3.40 – 4.19
VI – Verbal Interpretation	Satisfactory (S)	2.60 – 3.39
R – Rank	Fair (F)	1.80 – 2.59
	Poor (P)	1.00 – 1.79

The grammar is ranked 5 with average weighted mean of 3.25 interpreted as satisfactory. From researcher's evaluation, ranked 4 interpreted as very satisfactory with 3.40 as weighted mean, higher than the teacher's evaluation ranked 5 interpreted as satisfactory with 3.10 as weighted mean. This means that there is a need for more highlights and emphasis to exercises and activities on grammar for the students. Also the evaluation will reflect to the evaluator wherein English Teacher considered English as first language and use it as medium of instruction that's more fluent than the researcher. It implies that grammar is essential to be developed to improve the writing skills competence of the students.

The findings above are in line with the results of previous research [11]. He found that the verbs are the main source of students' error, and the future tense which all of these are rated very experience errors in EFL writing: irregular past tense, 3rd person singular, auxiliary verbs such as do / does, can, may, shall, will ,and their variants. The nature of writing skills seems to be at least as valid for measuring proficiency.

The Mechanics is ranked 4 as average weighted mean of 3.27 interpreted as satisfactory. From researcher's evaluation ranked 5 interpreted as satisfactory with 3.35 as weighted

mean, lower than the teacher’s evaluation ranked 4 interpreted as satisfactory with 3.18 as weighted mean. This means that punctuation, spelling and mechanics must be stressed out to because students lack in punctuation mastery, spelling and mechanics. It implies that this skill is essential to be stressed out for the students not to be confused as they are to use semi-colon on their craftsmanship and they will avoid mistakes in spelling word such as, missing letters or incorrect writing.

The Organization, is ranked 3 interpreted as very satisfactory as average weighted mean of 3.40. From researcher’s evaluation, ranked 3 interpreted as very satisfactory with 3.45 as weighted mean, same with the teacher’s evaluation ranked 3 interpreted as satisfactory with 3.35 as weighted mean. This means that organization, introduction, body and conclusion must be developed critically for the students to have an organized idea in writing contents. It implies that this skill needs more practice that should be used to improve it.

The Stylistic is ranked 2 interpreted as very satisfactory as average weighted mean of 3.65. From researcher’s evaluation, ranked 1 interpreted as very satisfactory with 3.80 as weighted mean. It was higher than the teacher’s evaluation, ranked 2 interpreted as very satisfactory with 3.50 as weighted mean. This means that beyond the important elements of spelling, grammar, and punctuation, students' writing style is considered very good, students use the right choice of words with fairly good sentence structure, as has been reviewed in the previous grammar criteria. It implies that students have been very good at writing style and quality of expression.

The Content is ranked 1 interpreted as very satisfactory as average weighted mean of 4.66. From researcher’s evaluation, ranked 2 interpreted as very satisfactory with 3.70 as weighted mean that lower than the teacher’s evaluation ranked 1 interpreted as very satisfactory with 3.61 as weighted mean. This means that students are able to express their ideas in writing very well. It implies that students have good mastery in criteria of writing of content.

The results are confirmed [12] that in terms of writing, critical thinking approach provides the skills to create well-written text by knowing how to analyze and evaluate how to write with clear purpose and position. Through critical thinking skills, this adds competence to students if this certain talent would be developed and empowered at very young age

The writing skills competence of the students shows that they are expert in writing contents, stylistic and organization but lack in mechanics and grammar. It implies that students need to have more intervention writing activities to develop their writing skills competence like supplementary activities for effective writing.

Errors are identified in essay writing for grade 8 students. These errors composed of grammar and mechanics. Errors for grammar includes consistency of the usage of the subject-verb agreements, usage and consistency of tenses used all throughout the essay, organization of thoughts in a sentence/paragraph, confusion on the usage of contracted words e.g. They’re, couldn’t, its, it’s,, and distribution of thoughts per sentence.

TABLE II. ERRORS IN GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS IN ESSAY WRITING

Errors	frequency	Rank
<b>GRAMMAR</b>		
Consistency of the usage of the subject-verb agreements.	17	1
Usage and consistency of tenses used all throughout the essay.	15	2
Organization of thoughts in a sentence/ paragraph.	12	3
Confusion on the usage of contracted words e.g. They’re, couldn’t, its, it’s	10	4
Distribution of thoughts per sentence.( Students tend to compress ideas in a sentence.)	9	5
<b>MECHANICS</b>		
Proper usage of punctuation marks such as commas, periods, colons, semi-colons.	16	1
Capitalization of proper nouns and opposite for common nouns.	14	2
Proper indention of the paragraph.	12	3
Sentence breaks. (Sentences are too long to read.)	8	4

Table 2 shows the identified errors in grammar and mechanics in essay writing of 20 students. Most of the student’s errors is grammar, rank 1 is the consistency of the usage of the subject-verb agreements with the frequency of 17, rank 2 is the usage and consistency of tenses used all throughout the essay with the frequency of 15, rank 3 is the organization of thoughts in a sentence/ paragraph with the frequency of 12, rank 4 is the confusion on the usage of contracted words e.g. They’re, couldn’t, its, it’s with the frequency of 10 and rank 5 is the distribution of thoughts per sentence. (Students tend to compress ideas in a sentence.) with the frequency of 9. This means students need to study on how to be consistent of the usage in subject-verb-agreement, usage of tenses, organization of thoughts, usage of contracted words and distribution of thoughts.

The findings above are supported Delbarton in [13] that grammar, essay structure, as well as numerous ways of exploring and developing one’s ideas are essential elements of good writing. In addition to these, students’ awareness of the working of language and learning relevant literature compose a lively part of beginning writer’s academic and personal life. So, it needs for the students to explore and develop ideas to solve their grammar issues. It implies that students must focus on subject-verb agreement, tenses, contracted words and distribution of thoughts in writing.

For mechanics, the students had errors on the proper usage of punctuation marks such as commas, periods, colons, semi-colons as rank 1 with the frequency of 16, capitalization of proper nouns and opposite for common nouns as rank 2 with the frequency of 14, proper indention of the paragraph as rank 3 with the frequency of 12 and sentence breaks as rank 4 with the frequency of 8. It means that students need to study on usage of punctuation, capitalization of proper nouns, proper indention of the paragraph and sentence breaks. Writing is a must to be strengthened as students experience the constant practice they will be more specialized in writing. So, writing must be strengthened to develop the mechanics in writing like punctuation, capitalization, proper indention and sentence breaks. It implies that the students must be given more

activities to practice and enhance their writing skills competence.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that the students are good in writing contents, stylistic and organization but lack of skill in mechanics and grammar. The students have more errors in subject-verb agreement, proper usage of tenses, organization of thoughts, contracted words, distribution of thoughts per sentence, and on mechanics wherein students have errors on usage of punctuation, capitalization of proper nouns, proper indentation of the paragraph, and sentence breaks.

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