



DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS OF SOPHOMORE COLLEGE STUDENTS

Andrei Vista Batalla

*Pedro T. Orata National High School
Urdaneta City, Philippines
vistadrewx1@yahoo.com*

Presley V. De Vera, Ed. D.

*Pangasinan State University
Lingayen, Pangasinan
presley_devera@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The study determined the level of difficulties in English writing skills of the sophomore Teacher Education students, under the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program at Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus, Sta. Maria, Pangasinan who were enrolled during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016 across the following variables: sex, type of high school graduated from, highest educational attainment of parents, academic performance in an English writing course, preferred reading resource material in English and number of hours spent using social networking sites on a weekly basis.

The study employed descriptive and correlational research designs with the use of questionnaire on gathering the profile of the respondents, their written outputs, and rubrics which were utilized as main instruments in gathering data and supported by related literature and studies.

The data gathered were properly recorded, tallied, tabulated, interpreted, and further analyzed. Frequency, percentages, average weighted mean, minimum, maximum, skewness, and kurtosis were used in the treatment of data. The different treatments of data namely Chi Square and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient were used in this research study.

This study revealed that there were more female respondents than male. Furthermore, a greater number of the respondents graduated in public high schools compared to private high schools. In terms of educational attainment of parents, there were more mothers who were undergraduate. The same goes with the fathers when it comes to their highest educational attainment. Moreover, regarding the academic performance in an English writing course of the respondents, most of the respondents got a rating of fair. Most of the respondents preferred textbooks as their reading resource material in English. The number of hours spent by the respondents in using social networking sites on a weekly basis ranges from 1 hour to 30 hours, with a mean of 6.08 hours per week.

Additionally, it is recommended that students should read different reading materials in English and scribble various types of essays and academic writings. It is also proposed that faculty members of the university should employ different types of learning tasks for the students. It is also highly recommended that future researches explore other indicators to writing skills such as focus, purpose, main idea, research and style in sentence structure, word choice or tone, details and examples.

Introduction

Writing, as one of the language skills, plays a major part in communicating a person's ideas, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. Through writing, people are adept of sharing and communicating with other people. People may write for personal enjoyment or for some other purposes. For students, they write in order for them to familiarize with the English language. There are many reasons to include writing in a second or foreign language syllabus but basically writing helps learners learn. It helps them have a chance to escapade with the language.

Language is the written and spoken methods of combining words to create meaning used by a particular group of people. Language is something specific to humans, that is to say, it is one of the most important characteristics of the human beings which distinguishes them from all other living beings. Language therefore, remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes (Manivannan, 2006).

Communication is essential in life. Through it, people learn a lot of things. They are able to express their reactions and share information with others. Writing is one form of

communication. Go and Posecion (2011) state that writing communication is an application of knowledge obtained from learning a language. In schools, the writing ability of the students is crucial to their academic performance since a greater part of school activities from examinations, to assignments, reports, and researches are written.

Brown (1987) as cited by Armana (2011) describes English as a way of life, the context within which we exist, think, and relate to others, a context of cognitive and affective behavior, and a blueprint for personal and social existence. He also states that language and culture are intricately interwoven to the extent that separating the two would result in a loss of significance of either language or culture. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that separating language from culture would result in a change in the significance of the two.

In like manner, Huy (2015) defined writing as one of the ways to transmit thoughts or ideas to the other people. Writing is also the important skill in studying English, which need great investment from the students. Many students in high school do not know the important of writing, so they only spend a few times for practicing writing. Practicing writing skill will help students get acquainted with new types of writing as well as consolidate their writing skill.

Further, Cullingford (2000) poses that writing is not concerned with remembering but rather, it is the link between language and thought. He further stated that reading refers to the ability to translate symbols into meaning.

Moreover, writing skills offer a way of communicating one's thought and feelings on paper. So the message must be loud and clear between the teacher and the students (Dwivedi & Chakravarthy, 2015).

In the same way, writing is a skill, which is not only helpful in writing in English, but also useful in improving other factors considerably. In English learning classroom, the teacher aims at developing the four skills of his/her students especially the learner's ability to understand to speak, to read, to listen and to write. The ability to write occupies the last place in this order, but it does not mean that it is least important. Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man. It is an important tool, which enables man to communicate with others people in many ways. To students, the proficiency in writing will bring many benefits for them. First, writing is a good way to help develop their ability in using vocabulary and grammar, increasing the ability of using any language. Second, writing is an essential tool to support other skills. If students have good writing ability, they can speak and read the text more effectively. Third, writing is a way to approach modern information

technology as well as the human knowledge. Otherwise, it is necessary to master writing skill because it can help people have a well prepared when finding a job or attend English courses. With those benefits, writing is really very important to every student (Mandal, 2009).

Additionally, it is a process through which writers explore thoughts, and ideas, and make them visible and concrete. It is a difficult skill for native and non-native speakers alike, for writers should balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. Moreover, it encourages thinking and learning, motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed. Writing is especially difficult for nonnative speakers because they are expected to create written products that demonstrate mastery of all the aforementioned issues in a new language (Wells, 2008).

In addition, Huy (2015) explains that writing is one of the most important skills in studying English because not only is writing an academic skill, but it is also an important skill that translates into any career fields.

Huy further clarifies that writing is one of the ways to transmit thoughts or ideas to the other people. It is also an important skill in studying English, which need great investment from the students. Many students in high school do not know the important of writing, so they only spend a few times for it.

Dwivedi and Chakravarthy (2015) discussed that writing in a foreign or second language is a courageous experience especially for students whose native language is not of the same origin as the target language. Native language speaking students learning English is a good example here. These students are faced with the school curriculum that includes the four main skills of English language. Among these skills, they find writing skill the most difficult one and face many problems while composing simple short paragraphs (Dwivedi & Chakravarthy, 2015).

Moreover, of the four skills in English, writing is considered to be the most complex and difficult skill to master. This level of difficulties lies not only in generating and organizing of ideas but also in translating these ideas into readable texts (Richards & Renandya, 2002 as cited by Cabansag, 2013).

Even though writing comes as the last skill, it can't be neglected and needs a lot of attention from the teacher and the student because it is necessary in daily academic life.

Students are expected to learn how to be good writers. If they can't write correctly and logically using appropriate language and style, life will be difficult for them not only at school but in adult life, too (Neville, 1988 as cited by Dwivedi & Chakravarthy, 2015, 2015).

One of the main problems among students is the fact that many of them cannot develop their writing skills, mostly the ones who are making compositions in a foreign language. This has become very difficult not only for students but also for professors, because all of them are looking for good results in every single step of the learning process (Aragon, Baires & Rodriguez, 2013).

Although some of the strategies teachers use encourage their students to be creative and organized, that is not enough. Students must take into account many aspects at the time of writing such as: vocabulary, mechanics, grammar, organization and content and not only one of these items because to create adequate compositions students must take into account every single detail. The problem is that they do not care about the kind of essays they are creating and they do not follow the correct steps that will provide all the sources for their compositions. They just care about the grade they will receive at the end of a homework assignment (Aragon et al., 2013).

In the Philippine setting, the linguistic and cultural diversity in the country brings much complexity to the issue of language policy in education. With more than 7,000 islands and 181 distinct languages, the Philippines offers a challenging environment for implementing a language policy that can serve the whole country. This is despite the fact that about 80 percent of the population does not speak either of these as a first language. In 2009, the Department of Education challenged the Bilingual Education Policy by issuing an order that called for institutionalization of mother tongue based multilingual education. This order requires use of the learners' first language as the medium of instruction for all subject areas in pre-kindergarten through grade three with Filipino and English being taught as separate subjects. Another order was issued in 2012 that offered more specific guidelines for Mother Tongue-Based of Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and embedded the reform in the newly adopted K to 12 Basic Education Program. This order shifted from the original mother tongue approach by specifying twelve major regional languages to be used as the languages of instruction. Under this order, teachers are provided government-issued materials in their regional languages but are expected to adapt them to reflect the students' first languages (Burton, 2013).

In addition to, a popular English language teaching (ELT) approach in the Philippines is Task-Based Language Teaching which claims to be more mindful of the nature of second language acquisition, was developed as an alternative to traditional form-focused ELT practices (Martin, 2014).

Task-based teaching materials provide students with situations where they are given specific roles to play. The role requires students to negotiate or solve a problem in order to accomplish the task they are required to do. In the real world, students are always confronted with problems to solve, decisions to make or negotiations to handle. Task-based teaching materials simulate what the outside world does inside the classroom. Presenting reality in the classroom can challenge and motivate both students and teachers in creating a rewarding, interesting, meaningful and enjoyable classroom partnership. And since task-based materials involve decision making and problem solving activities and tasks which are conducted through language use, then students are given more chances to put language to practice. (Fortez, 1993).

Furthermore, task-based language teaching was defined by Richards et al. (1986) as cited by Nunan (2004) as an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of a language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative since it provides a purpose for classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake.

It is perceived that the decline of the use of English language, specifically in the writing skills of the students, is very apparent not only in the elementary and secondary levels but also in the tertiary level of education. College students and graduates who are expected to have assimilated language skills fall short of these expectations.

Besides, English teachers and instructors are having hard time evaluating compositions because college students cannot even write and express their ideas in clear, coherent and comprehensible sentences. That is why the teaching of the language skills is very important so that the students would be able to develop not only one skill but the four skills.

Thus, this research study is interested in exploring other ways and other means to help language learners to not be only competent in terms of grammar, mechanics, organization and

content. This study then hopes to serve as one of the ways and means on how to give solutions to the mentioned problems in English writing skills.

Review of Related Literature

On Writing

Writing is a form of communication where the writer has normally someone other than himself or herself to whom he or she intends to communicate. If the writers cannot convey the message, then there will be no communication. Reid (1994) as cited by Dwivedi and Chakravarthy (2015) stated that writing helps communication. Native language speaking students should develop an understanding of the basic requirement which is the knowledge that there must be common understanding between the writer and the reader when they attempt writing in English. The awareness of who the audience is and for what purpose the task is being done can help writing and help become successful writers. Telugu-speaking high school students lack the control over their writing in English because they are in the process of gaining data as much as possible from the teacher in the early stages of learning a foreign language. Even the teachers of English need guidance while writing.

Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching (TBLT) claims to be more mindful of the nature of second language acquisition, was developed as an alternative to traditional form-focused English Language Teaching practices (Nunan, 2004). The approach draws from Skehan's (1996) three dimensions of performance, namely: complexity, accuracy, and fluency. For TBLT, the goal of language learning is to acquire these three components of second language acquisition. However, it was pointed out that complexity, accuracy, and fluency are defined in reference to native speaker norms.

On Writing Skills

No one can deny the importance of writing together with the other skills in teaching and learning English. Likewise, writing is a productive skill which helps language learners to stimulate thinking and organize their ideas. It also increases learners' ability to summarize, analyze, and criticize (Rao, 2007).

This has also been the case that Bailey (2006) observed that those students who are not native speakers of English often find the written demands of their courses very challenging. Therefore, to the lecturers of English non-major writing course for post-graduate candidates,

they have to clearly understand their learners' challenges in order to help them finish the course successfully. Production of an effective piece of writing depends upon careful consideration of a number of basic constituents of writing, namely: content, organization, language use, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics which need to be integrated into writing basic paragraph and essay types.

Thuy (2010) mentioned that although writing checklists in different textbooks have various items, learners just need to focus on the two following ones: content and organization. First, content deals with ideas that are contained in a piece of writing. Second, organization works with how to arrange the ideas in a logical order.

In addition, Tribble (1996) as cited by Arslan (2013) also mentioned that the organization of a written text is therefore related to the layout, or physical organization on the page, of conventional texts, the ways in which texts are organized as a result of the social functions they fulfill relationships between clauses and clause complexes within written texts, irrespective of the purpose for which they were written.

Factors to Writing Skills

On the factors affecting the English writing skills in English, Reis and McCoach (2000) suggested that the impact of culture on academic performance should not be ignored when considering underachievement in schools, especially for foreigners. They maintained that these students face unique barriers to achievement, such as language problems.

According to Nurgiyantoro (2001) as cited by Mulianingsih (2014) there are some problems which are faced by students in learning writing. The problems are organizing idea, lack of vocabulary, grammar accuracy. Nurgiyantoro then concludes that the students can learn writing easier if they can organize their idea, mastery of vocabulary, and also mastery of grammar.

Additionally, the natural order hypothesis of language learning ranks writing as the last skill to be learned after listening, speaking and reading, respectively. But this order of language learning skills should not deceive the learners to underestimate the significance of writing skills in the academic setting in general and at university level in particular. Talking about its significance, Bjork and Raisanen (1997) as cited by Al-Khairi (2013) contends that highlighting the importance of writing in all university curricula not only because of its immediate practical application, for example as an isolated skill or ability, but because people

believe that, seen from a broader perspective, writing is a thinking tool. It is a tool for language development, for critical thinking and, extension, for learning in all disciplines.

Writing is defined by Huy (2015) as a complex metacognitive activity that draws on an individual's knowledge, basic skill, strategies, and ability to coordinate multiple processes. Huy further identified the following four vital areas in the writing process, namely: 1) knowledge of writing and writing topics, 2) skill for producing and crafting text, 3) processes for energizing and motivating participants to write with enthusiasm, and 4) directing thought and actions through strategies to archive writing goals.

In a study conducted by Nik, Hamzah, and Hasbollah (2006) which showed that writing performance depended on content, organization, vocabulary and language use; the researchers stated that there was no correlation between writing performance and mechanics. Therefore, they believed that, good writing performance definitely has very important criteria like content, which means the writer has an understanding of events, actions, findings, and views, that are vividly presented. Organization or structure is also an important criterion for students to have in their writing. A good essay is clearly structured with a beginning, middle and an end. Therefore, they assumed that all the four criteria which include content, organization, vocabulary and language use are important in the writing performance.

Moreover, Crisostomo (2000) determined the level of English proficiency of the 515 fourth year male students of Cardinal Reyes High School in Bronx, New York. He also determined the significant differences of the level of proficiency in written and oral English of the subjects considering sex, grade level, age, exposure to mass media; and the level of correlation between level of proficiency in written English and level of proficiency in written and oral English of the subjects.

Furthermore, on the difficulty of writing skills, Abu (2006) stated that writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers alike because writers must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics. In this regard, Abu writes that the higher standard of language is normally demanded in writing than in speech: more careful construction, more precise and varied vocabulary, and more correctness of expressions in general. Abu further states that writing is a mess business which requires passing through a number of untidy drafts before reaching a final version.

Additionally, Abu (2006) explained that much higher standard of language are normally demanded in writing than in speech: more careful construction, more precise and varied vocabulary, and more correctness of expressions in general. He further states that writing is a messy business which requires passing through a number of untidy drafts before reaching a final version.

In addition to, Gao (2007), in her study, attempted to address the major problems of college English writing: a heavy emphasis on linguistic accuracy; overlooking the development of students writing ability; over-emphasis on the product; lack of input of genre knowledge; and a lack of variety of assessment. Based on the discussion of current approaches to teaching writing, three implications are introduced to improve Chinese college English writing instruction as well as enhance effective learning: implementing diverse types of feedback; extending genre-variety process writing practice; and balancing forms and language use.

Local Studies

Filipino researchers are also interested in the phenomenon of second language learning, teaching and writing using English but only a few studies have been done regarding the development and improvement of second language writing. Thus, this study was conducted to contribute to the void on literatures regarding second language writing using the English language.

Lasaten (2014) conducted a research study which sought to analyze the prevailing linguistic errors in the English writings of the tertiary students of Mariano Marcos State University College of Teacher Education which specifically sought to: 1) identify the common linguistic errors committed by the students in their English writings; 2) describe the linguistic errors committed by the students; 3) investigate the possible causes of the students' linguistic errors; and 4) draw out implications of the identified errors to language learning and teaching and as a result, he found out that errors in verb tenses are the most common linguistic errors of the students, followed by error in sentence structure, punctuations, word choice, spelling, use of prepositions and articles. These errors fall under the grammatical, mechanics, substance and syntactic aspects of writing English. Majority of these errors are caused by learners' poor knowledge of the target language, specifically ignorance of rule restrictions. Others are attributed to the learners' carelessness, first language transfer or interference and limited vocabulary in the target language

In the same manner, Hamada (2001) conducted a research study where she used the forty fourth class cadets as participants and sources of data. The study has the following objectives: 1) to know the types of errors committed by fourth class cadets in their written compositions along the four rhetorical acts – description, exemplification, definition and comparison; 2) to know the level of comprehensibility of the deviant sentences committed by the fourth class cadets in their written compositions according to the perception of the panel; 3) to identify the effects of some selected variables such as type of high school graduated from, the first language, level of educational attainment of parents, previous grades in English grammar, and income of parents to the performance of her participants in their composition. On the other hand, the research method used in her study was the descriptive research method. She used this research method to describe the types of errors committed by the participants and the levels of their performance in the four rhetorical acts. A total of 1,137 errors were committed by the subjects namely: lexical errors, 463; syntactic errors, 437; and morphological errors, 237. Along the four rhetorical acts, the subjects did best in comparison and performed poorly in exemplification. In the level of comprehensibility of the deviant sentences the rhetorical acts of description, exemplification, definition and comparison, the judges differed in their evaluation of most deviant sentences. Likewise, in terms of the overall level of comprehensibility of deviant sentences along the four rhetorical acts, the judges differed in their evaluation of most deviant sentences. Most deviant sentences were judged by the four groups of evaluators as having average comprehensibility or were fairly understood.

Catimo's (2005) study is somehow related to the previous study reviewed above. Her study was also an analysis of linguistic errors. But unlike the preceding study which analyzed the linguistic errors by PMA Cadets, Catimo analyzed the linguistic errors committed by student teachers which discussed the importance of training and competence of student teachers who were bound to have a profession in language teaching. She also put emphasis on the contribution of linguistic errors as indicators of the learner's active contribution to second language acquisition. The last paragraph of her study's background seemed to be a synoptic paragraph where the researcher implied her stand on the matter of competence and fluency of the student teachers in English communication, particularly in written communication. To state this clearly, Catimo states that effective learning requires as its baseline, individuals who were academically able, who have command on the subjects they were required to teach and who care about the well-being of the children and the youth. It also requires individuals who can

produce results mainly those of student academic achievement and social learning. The student teachers will soon be graduating, managing classroom activities, structuring learning experiences and will likely be promoting communication patterns be it orally or in writing. These student teachers will soon be facilitating the student learning experiences. In the process, it is but imperative that they were competent in the use of English language. As a cooperating teacher, the researcher has encountered occasions where errors were committed by the student teachers which were clearly manifested in their oral as well as written communications.

Furthermore, Cadiz (2004) found out that the educational attainment of the parents did not have significant relationship with the communication skills of the respondents because, at home, in the neighborhood, and in the larger community, they interact, communicate, and socialize through their mother tongue. She said that although parents may have acquired college degrees, those educational attainments do not affect in any way the students' proficiency in communicating English. The communication skills of students are confined to classroom situations and any other context where focus on grammar, pronunciation, diction, and fluency are generally observed.

In a study conducted by Waguey and Hufana (2013) wherein it generally aimed to enhance the writing skills of the Bachelor of Science in Fisheries freshman students enrolled in English 102 (Writing in the Discipline) at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU) – Institute of Fisheries. Specifically, his study sought to: 1) determine the writing competency level of the students; 2) identify the learning strategies frequently used by the students; 3) develop task-based instructional materials based on the writing competency level of the students and their frequency of use of learning strategies; 4) determine the effectiveness of the task-based instructional materials in enhancing the writing performance of the students; and 5) determine the relationship between the effectiveness of the task-based instructional materials and the frequency of use of learning strategies. The first year BSF students had low level of competence in writing four types of texts (explanation of a process, recount, essay and paraphrase) and in nine writing skill areas (sentence unity, ability to carry out the task with minimal support, sentence emphasis, paragraph coherence, paragraph unity, paragraph emphasis, accuracy, sentence structure, and language features). The students' frequency of use of learning strategies was "Medium" or "Sometimes Used" for both direct and indirect strategies. The use of the task-based instructional materials significantly increased the posttest scores of the students in paragraph unity, paragraph coherence, paragraph emphasis, methods

of beginning and ending compositions and mechanics. Frequency of use of learning strategies is significantly and positively related with the pretest and posttest scores of the students. Based on the findings, the task-based instructional materials are recommended for use in order to improve students' writing skills particularly to students who frequently use their learning strategies. Likewise, the development of task-based instructional materials is encouraged in other subjects or disciplines.

Research Paradigm

The ability to write is an essential skill for Teacher Education students who will soon become teachers where English is the medium of instruction. Writing provides the students with tangible evidence that they are improving and learning in language

In this present study, the researcher examined how the respondents used English in their written outputs. Their level of difficulty in English writing skill was evaluated through analyzing their written outputs. This research work was conceptualized using the inputs of the respondents and the indicators to writing skills in English including grammar, mechanics organization and content. The input includes the profile of the respondents which is divided into two as shown in Figure 1 on page 36. The box on the left shows the profile of the respondents which include type of secondary school attended, parents highest educational attainment, preferred reading resource material in English and number of hours spent using social networking sites on a weekly bases which are deemed significantly related and the box on the right shows the profile of the respondents which included sex and academic performance in an English writing course and are considered under significantly differentiated. The level of difficulties in English writing skills of the respondents which included grammar, mechanics and organization was utilized as the process in the study. The relationships and differences of the profile variables to the level of difficulties in English writing skills were determined in this study and serves as the baseline of the learning tasks to be proposed to be included in an English writing course of the university.

This mechanism was conducted in order to evaluate if the profile of the respondents were significant to the resulting dependent variables.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed descriptive and correlational methods of research where the results of standardized instruments used by the respondents were conducted, collected and were rated by the evaluators. Correlation was used to find relationship between variables from the respondents' profile namely: sex, high school where the respondents graduated from, highest educational attainment of their parents, academic performance in an English writing course, preferred resource reading material in English, and the number of hours in using the social networking sites. Descriptive research was used because it is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation. This type of research method is not simply amassing and tabulating facts but includes proper analyses, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships (Aggarwal, 2008). Correlational research, on the other hand, determines if there is a relationship or correlated variation between the two variables, a similarity between them, not a difference between their means (Waters, 2010).

The research methodology was appropriate in this study because the data which were collected will determine the degree of relationships and differences between respondents' performance in their written output across the following variables, namely: sex, type of secondary schools attended, parents' highest educational attainment, academic performance in an English writing course, preferred reading material in English, and number of hours spent in using social networking sites in a weekly basis.

Respondents of the Study

The subjects of this study were thirty-nine (39) Teacher Education students enrolled under Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program of Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. The respondents were sophomore BEEd students, who took and passed an English writing course in the form of English 103 (Writing in the Discipline). Notably, the respondents were having difficulty using English especially in writing thus this study was conducted.

Due to the struggle of evaluating written outputs and time constraints, the number of the respondents was delimited to thirty-nine (39). They were chosen through purposive sampling technique because it was the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities

the informant possesses. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants (Lewis & Sheppard, 2006).

Research Instruments

Structured instruments were adopted and developed in order to accomplish this research study. A covering letter with a description of the purpose and the importance of the study was attached to the instruments. Respondents were assured of their anonymity all throughout the conduct of this research work.

The instruments used in the study were adopted from Crisostomo (2000), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), American University of Rome (AUR) and Indiana Academic Standards (IAS) of which all were downloaded from the internet.

The instrument that gathered the profiles of the respondents were adopted from Crisostomo (2000) but a few changes were made. The instrument utilized by Crisostomo included sex, grade level, age, exposure to mass media, reading preference; and the level of correlation between level of proficiency in written English and level of proficiency in written and oral English of the subjects. The present study omitted a few variables namely: grade level, age, exposure to mass media on the instrument utilized by Crisostomo for gathering the profiles of his respondents. The following variables were added to the present study namely: parent's educational attainment, academic performance in an English writing course and number of hours spent using social networking sites were also added because these were deemed essential for this study. The focus of this study is to find the level of difficulties in writing skills so oral proficiency from the study of Crisostomo was omitted.

The instrument from TOEIC was utilized because it indicates standardization in the use of the English language.

The adopted instrument from TOIEC includes three parts, namely: 1) writing a sentence based on a picture, 2) responding to written request, and 3) writing an opinion essay. The first part of the instrument was opted out because it does not conform with the adopted rubrics from AUR and IAS. Moreover, the second question was also omitted because it does not comply with the adopted rubrics. In lieu of the first part removed, two essay writing activities were administered to the respondents. The first writing activity of the instrument was personal essay writing wherein the respondents were given the autonomy to choose their topics which were relevant to them. The second writing activity of the adopted instrument was writing an opinion

essay but was altered to formal essay writing where the respondents were given the topic sentence “Role of technology in students’ learning.”

Clear instructions were directed to the respondents both orally and in writing that the essays namely personal essay and formal essay should be written in not less than 300 words, of which the respondents have abided.

The rubrics for checking the outputs of the respondents were adopted from the American University of Rome (AUR) and Indiana Academic Standards (IAS) of which both were downloaded from their official websites. The rubrics used by AUR have been chosen among others because it gathered data that concentrates on the indicators to writing difficulty, namely grammar, mechanics, organization, and content. Since the rubrics for grammar and mechanics of AUR are the same, the rubrics for grammar of AUR have been altered to the rubrics of grammar utilized by IAS.

The downloaded rubrics from AUR originally have 10 areas but only four areas were chosen as these were the focus of this research work; other areas from the rubrics included main idea, overall organization, research, style in sentence structure, style in word choice and tone, and style in details and examples. The rubrics were standardized as these were approved by the curriculum committee of AUR and IAS on February 2010 and on October 2014, respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission from the Campus Executive Director of the Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus was sought to administer the instruments to thirty-nine (39) sophomore Teacher Education students who were currently enrolled under the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016.

Data such as names of the respondents and academic performance in an English writing course (English 103 – Writing in the Discipline) were requested from the registrar of PSU Sta. Maria Campus when the permission was granted.

Afterwards, the instrument that gathered the profiles of the respondents and the two adopted instruments from Teaching of English for International Communication (TOEIC) namely writing of personal essay and writing of formal essay were administered to the respondents on two separate occasions as shown on Table 1. As soon as the respondents were finished in writing their essays on different dates, the essays were then collected and distributed

to the evaluators to be rated. The evaluators were selected because they teach writing subjects. They focused on determining the level of difficulty in writing skills of the respondents using grammar, mechanics, organization and content as indicators. Rubrics used in evaluating the outputs of the respondents were adopted from American University of Rome (AUR) and Indiana Academic Standards (IAS) which was centered on the indicators to writing difficulty namely grammar, mechanics, organization and content.

Table 1 indicates the dates, activities, times, places and persons involved when the instruments were administered to the respondents.

Table 1
Administration of Instruments

Date	Activity	Time	Place	Persons Involved
March 8, 2016	Gathering of the profile of the respondents Writing of personal essay	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	College Building 2, PSU Sta. Maria	Researcher Respondents
March 15, 2016	Writing of formal essay	9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	College Building 2, PSU Sta. Maria	Adviser Researcher Respondents

The table on the preceding page shows that the instruments were orchestrated on two separate occasions. The instrument that gathered the profile of the respondents and writing of personal essay were conducted on March 8, 2016. All respondents were present as they were properly notified.

The table also shows that the third instrument was conducted on March 15, 2016 during the vacant period of the respondents. Permission was sought from the adviser to conduct this instrument which was writing a formal essay with the topic sentence “Role of Technology in Students’ Learning” wherein the respondents followed.

Clear instructions were given to the respondents both orally and in writing that personal and formal essays should be written in not less than 300 words, of which the respondents should abide.

All the data gathered using the different research instruments were analyzed and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools.

Results and Discussion

PROFILE OF THE SOPHOMORE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

This part presents the answers to the first question based on data gathered on the profile of the sophomore Teacher Education students under Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program of Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus, Sta. Maria, Pangasinan who were enrolled during the second semester of academic year 2015-2106.

Table 2 on page 48 offers the frequency and percentage distribution of the profile of the sophomore BEEd students in terms of sex, type of high school graduated from, highest educational attainment of parents and academic performance in an English writing course.

Table 2

Socio-Demographic and Academic Profile of the Teacher Education Students

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	7	17.9
	Female	32	82.1
	Total	39	100.0
Type of High School Graduated from	Private	8	20.5
	Public	31	79.5
	Total	39	100.0
Educational Attainment of Mothers	Undergraduate	34	87.2
	Bachelor's Degree	5	12.8
	Total	39	100.0

Educational Attainment of Fathers	Undergraduate	30	76.9
	of Bachelor's Degree	9	23.1
	Total	39	100.0
Academic performance in an English writing course	2.75 – 2.50	25	64.1
	2.25 – 1.75	14	35.9
	Total	39	100.0

Sex. The table shows that out of the 39 respondents used for the study, there were 7 or 17.9 percent male respondents and 32 or 82.1 percent female respondents.

Overall, the table shows that most of the respondents were female.

This corroborates with the study of Arcelo (2003) when he found out that the Philippines is very accommodating of female students wherein 59.03 percent of enrollees in public higher education was female during the years 1996-1997.

High School Graduated from. The table also reflects the profile of the respondents with regard to the type of high school where the respondents graduated from wherein 8 or 20.5 percent of the respondents graduated from private high schools while 31 or 79.5 percent finished their high school from public schools.

Generally, most of the respondents graduated from public high schools

This somehow corroborates with the Poverty Map (see Appendix L) conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority – National Statistical Coordination Board (PSA-NSCB) when they found out that San Nicolas and Umingan are part of the top 10 poorest towns of Pangasinan for the year 2012. Three or 7.7 percent of the respondents are from the town of San Nicolas while 10 or 25.6 percent of the respondents are from the town of Umingan which makes a total of 13 or 33.3 percent of the respondents are from two of the poorest towns of Pangasinan.

Highest Educational Attainment of Parents. The highest educational attainment of the respondents' mothers and fathers can also be noted from the table. The highest level of education completed by the mothers of the respondents was under graduate with 34 or 87.2 percent, followed by bachelor's degree with 5 or 12.8 percent, there were no mothers who have finished master's or doctorate degree at 0 percent for both variables. It can also be seen from the table that 30 or 76.9 percent of the fathers of the respondents were under graduate, followed

by 9 or 23.1 percent have finished college degree, no fathers have obtained any degree at master's or doctorate at 0 percent for both variables.

Largely, most of the parents of the respondents were under graduate.

This corroborates with the findings of Torres (2011) as cited by Few (2013) when he found out that the functional literacy rates of Filipino boys are lower than those of Filipino girls. It is also reported that boys' underachievement in primary education is driven by the following factors: parents' and teachers' low academic expectations for boys, the economic viability of working, passive classroom experience, gender bias and stereotyping.

Academic Performance in an English Writing Course. The table similarly illustrates the academic performance in an English writing course. The table further elucidates that 25 or 64.1 percent have grades in English 103 ranging from 2.50 – 2.75 or a rating of Fair and 15 or 35.9 percent have grades ranging from 1.75 – 2.25 or Good rating. Zero or 0 percent of the respondents received a grade of 3.00, 1.50 – 1.25, 1.00 with the descriptive equivalents as passed, very good, excellent, respectively.

Overall, the table displays that most students got a grade within the range of 2.75 – 2.50 or an equivalent of Fair grade.

Table 3 on page 51 presents the preferred reading resource material in English of the respondents.

Table 3

Preferred Reading Resource Material in English

Preferred Reading Resource Material	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Newspapers	15	38.5	3
Magazines	14	35.9	4
Textbooks	29	74.4	1
Online Reading Materials	25	64.1	2
Others:			
Bible	1	7.7	5
Daily Bread	1		

It can be observed from the table that out of the 39 respondents, 15 or 38.5 percent prefer and 24 or 61.5 percent do not prefer reading newspapers, 14 or 35.9 percent prefer and 25 or 64.1 percent do not prefer reading magazines, 29 or 74.4 percent prefer and 10 or 25.6 percent do not prefer reading textbooks, 25 or 64.1 percent prefer and 14 or 35.90 percent do not prefer reading online materials, and 3 or 7.7 percent of the respondents read Bible, daily bread and pocketbooks as their preferred reading material.

Overall, textbooks ranked first with a total of 29 or 74.4 percent of the respondents.

The finding somehow reaffirms the study of Kohli (2014) wherein she mentioned that electronic books (ebooks), tablets and computer-based learning [might be pervading](#) elementary and middle schools throughout the United States of America, but college students are still old-school. She conducted a survey of about 1,200 students in 100 American colleges in October found that for almost every type of schoolwork, students prefer to use a book rather than a computer.

The result also corroborates the study of Sicat (2013) when he stated that learning from the books was thus a heavily and unnecessarily burdened activity. Waiting time to read in the library was long for many. Few students could afford to buy their own books. The learning process was more difficult just from the scarcity of supply of reading materials. Today, the photo copy machine, the internet and electronic editions of standard books are available more cheaply. The technology for copying is easily at hand.

Online reading materials ranked second at a total of 25 respondents who prefer it because as indicated by Valdez (2013) that the Philippines has a young and dynamic online population (with average age of 22.7) which is highly receptive to new media. Said study further revealed that 30 million Filipinos or almost 30 percent of the country's population access the web on a regular basis. Indeed, this young segment is hard to attract or engage and more likely obtain news and information from new media instead of newspapers.

Newspaper placed third with a total of 15 respondents who prefer it which can be supported by what Valdez (2013) stated that [Filipino consumers](#) are also highly receptive to new media. The Filipino consumers value and prefer instant, and attention-getting, a [trend](#) that adds another threat to the existence of traditional media such as print newspapers.

Magazines were ordered fourth as a preferred reading resource material as what Maclean (2010) elucidated that embracing the concept of digitalized media and adjusting your product accordingly is certainly seen as an increasingly pragmatic idea. Big-name magazine publishers have battened down the hatches and [invested heavily in the internet](#), as well as television, radio and mobile.

Others which included Bible, Daily Bread and pocketbooks ranked fifth as a preferred reading resource material in English by the respondents.

Table 4 offers the number of hours spent by the respondents in using social networking sites on a weekly basis in terms of average weighted mean.

Table 4
Number of Hours Spent in Using Social Networking Sites
in terms of Average Weighted Mean

Profile Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of Hours spent using Social Networking Sites on a Weekly Basis	1	30	6.08	7.02

It can be gleaned from the table that the minimum number of hours that the respondents spend in social networking sites is 1 hour per week, and the maximum is at 30 hours on a weekly basis. The average weighted mean that the respondents use social networking sites is 6.08 hours weekly at a standard deviation of 7.02.

The findings supports McCann-Erickson Intergenerational Youth Study (2006) as cited by Chanco (2006) when they mentioned that there is an increased popularity among the youth of activities relating to virtual connectivity.

Table 5 offers the number of hours spent by the respondents in using social networking sites on a weekly basis in frequency and percentages

Table 5

Overall Frequency Counts and Percentages of Number of Hours Spent Using Social Networking Sites on a Weekly Basis

Number of Hours spent using Social Networking Sites on a Weekly Basis	Frequency	Percentage
Rare	34	87.2
Fair	3	7.7
Heavy	2	5.1
Total	39	100

It can be gleaned from the table that 34 or 87.2 percent of the respondents are Rare Users or uses social networking sites 1 to 10 hours on a weekly basis, 3 or 7.7 percent are Fair Users or uses social networking sites 11 to 20 hours weekly, and 2 of the respondents are Heavy Users or spends 21 to 30 hours of their week on social networking sites.

The finding reaffirms the research conducted by the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (2008) wherein it was found out that Luzon respondents indicated the lowest incidence of membership of social networking sites probably because being located in mountainous areas give them limited access to the Internet.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH OF THE SOPHOMORE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

The level of difficulties in writing skills in English of the sophomore Teacher Education students, enrolled under Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program was further described in terms of their proficiency level and descriptive equivalent. There were only four indicators on the level of difficulties in English writing skills of the respondents which include grammar, mechanics, organization and content. There were also three evaluators aside from the researcher who have extended help in checking the essays of the respondents and to avoid biases. The results seen were determined using the rubric table adopted from American

University of Rome (AUR) and Indiana Academic Standards (IAS) for evaluating the written outputs of the students.

The results of the writing difficulties of the sophomore Bachelor of Elementary Education students in Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus, Sta. Maria, Pangasinan during the second semester of academic year 2015-2016 were reported.

Table 6 on page 56 shows the distribution of writing skills into different categories, namely: Highly Challenged, Moderately Challenged, Fairly Challenged and Slightly Challenged.

Table 6
Distribution of Level of Difficulties in English
Writing Skills of the Respondents

Indicators to Writing Difficulty	Level of Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
Grammar	Moderately Challenged	1	2.6
	Fairly Challenged	32	82.1
	Slightly Challenged	6	15.4
	Total	39	100.0
Mechanics	Moderately Challenged	4	10.3
	Fairly Challenged	28	71.8
	Slightly Challenged	7	17.9
	Total	39	100.0
Organization	Highly Challenged	1	2.6
	Moderately Challenged	4	10.3
	Fairly Challenged	21	53.8
	Slightly Challenged	13	33.3
	Total	39	100.0
Content	Moderately Challenged	4	10.3
	Fairly Challenged	18	46.2
	Slightly Challenged	17	43.6

	Total	39	100.0
Overall	Moderately Challenged	1	2.6
	Fairly Challenged	20	51.3
	Slightly Challenged	18	46.2
	Total	39	100.0

As shown in the table, specifically in the area of grammar, 0 or 0 percent has a rating of highly challenged, 1 or 2.6 percent got a moderately challenged rating, 32 or 82.1 percent received a rating of fairly challenged and 6 or 15.4 percent were deemed slightly challenged.

The table also discloses that in mechanics, 0 or 0 percent established a rating of highly challenged rating while 4 or 10.3 percent incurred a rating of moderately challenged, 28 or 71.8 percent acquired a rating of fairly challenged, and 7 or 17.9 percent earned an slightly challenged rating.

Furthermore, in the indicator organization, 1 or 2.6 percent gained a rating of highly challenged, 4 or 10.3 percent obtained a rating of moderately challenged, 21 or 53.8 achieved a rating of fairly challenged and 13 or 33.3 accessed slightly challenged rating.

The table also mirrors the respondents' rating when it comes to content where 0 or 0 percent was tallied with a rating of highly challenged, 4 or 10.3 percent scored a moderately challenged rating, 18 or 46.2 percent was recorded with a rating of fairly challenged, 17 or 43.6 percent accomplished slightly challenged rating.

In the overall rating where the mean 0 or 0 percent of the respondents gathered a rating of highly challenged, 1 or 2.6 percent garnered a rating of moderately challenged, 20 or 51.4 percent accumulated a rating of fairly challenged, and 18 or 46.2 reached slightly challenged rating.

Generally, the table shows that most of the respondents received a rating of fairly challenged.

Out of the four indicators to writing skills of this study namely grammar, mechanics, organization, and content, the respondents received the lowest rating of highly challenged in organization.

The result corroborates with the study of Navarossa (2001) where errors in the components of grammar, mechanics, and organization were serious. The researcher also concluded that writing cannot be separated from reading and so with other forms of

communication, that is, if the students fail to have a good performance in listening, speaking and reading, his respondents do not perform well in writing too.

Table 7 indicates the mean of the results from the four evaluators which was then obtained to determine the level of difficulties in writing skills in English of the respondents.

Table 7
Level of Difficulties in English Writing Skills of the Respondents

Indicators to Writing Difficulty				Standard		
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Grammar	4.00	7.50	5.72	.81	.047	-.032
Mechanics	3.50	7.00	5.55	.88	-.224	-.461
Organization	3.25	7.50	5.70	.93	.063	.215
Content	3.50	8.00	5.94	1.04	-.202	-.294
Total	14.25	30.00	22.91	3.43	-.072	.048

The table reflects that the respondents' level of difficulties in writing skills in English in the area of grammar has a minimum score of 4.00 or moderately challenged, a maximum of 7.50 or slightly challenged and a mean of 5.7179 or fairly challenged; mechanics has a minimum of 3.50 or moderately challenged, a maximum of 7.00 or slightly challenged, and a mean of 5.5513; organization has a mean of 3.25 or moderately challenged and a maximum of 7.50 or slightly challenged and a mean of 5.6987 or fairly challenged; and content has a minimum of 3.50 or moderately challenged, a maximum of 8.00 of slightly challenged and a mean of 5.9423.

Furthermore, the table mirrors that the respondents got lowest evaluation in the area of mechanics with a mean of 5.5513 or fairly challenged rating and highest on organization with a mean of 5.9423 or a rating of fairly challenged. Overall mean is reflected 22.9103 or fairly challenged.

The table also shows the standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the difficulties in writing skills of the respondents.

The table notes the respondents' level of difficulties in writing skills in English in the area of grammar has a standard deviation of .80741, negatively skewed at .047 and platykurtic at -.032.

It is also revealed in the table that the respondents' level of difficulties in writing skills in English in the area of mechanics has a standard deviation of .88329, positively skewed at -.224 and platykurtic at -.461.

The table correspondingly illustrates the respondents' level of difficulties in writing skills in English in the area of organization has a standard deviation of .92690, negatively skewed at .063 and leptokurtic at .215.

It is also disclosed in the table that the respondents' level of difficulties in writing skills in English in the area of content has a standard deviation of 1.03787, positively skewed at -.202 and platykurtic at -.294.

Generally, the level of difficulties in writing skills in English of the respondent's has a standard deviation of 3.4333, positively skewed at -.072 and leptokurtic at -.048.

The result corroborates with the study of Navarossa (2001) where errors in the components of grammar, mechanics, and organization were serious. The researcher also concluded that writing cannot be separated from reading and so with other forms of communication, that is, if the students fail to have a good performance in listening, speaking and reading, his respondents do not perform well in writing too.

CORRELATION BETWEEN THE INDICATORS FOR WRITING DIFFICULTY OF THE SOPHOMORE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS ACROSS THEIR PROFILE VARIABLES

The succeeding tables show the correlation of the indicators to writing difficulty of the sophomore Bachelor of Elementary Education students across their profile variables namely high school graduated from, highest educational attainment of parents, preferred reading resource material in English and number of hours spent using social networking sites on a weekly basis using Chi-Square.

This was done to determine whether the abovementioned profile variables are significant with the indicators to writing difficulty namely grammar, mechanics, organization and content.

Table 8 reflects the relationship between the high school where the respondents graduated from and their indicators to writing difficulty.

Table 8
Correlation between High School Graduated from
and Indicators to Writing Difficulty

Indicators to Writing Difficulty	Correlation	Significance
Grammar	2.202	.333
Mechanics	3.954	.138
Organization	.657	.883
Content	2.963	.227
Overall	2.338	.311

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table discloses that the correlation between grammar and the type of high school where respondents graduated from is 2.202 with a significance of .33 which shows that the relationship is not significant.

The table also exposes that the correlation between mechanics and high school graduated from of the respondents is 3.954 with a significance of .138 which indicates that it is not significant.

It is also revealed in the table that the correlation between organization and high school graduated from the respondents is .657 with a significance of 2.883 and which indicates that the abovementioned variables are not significant.

The table similarly leads that the correlation between the content and high school graduated from of respondents is 2.963 with a significance of .227 which points out that it is the two variables are not significant.

Overall, the table illustrates that the correlation between the type of high school where the respondents graduated from and indicators to writing difficulty has a correlation of 2.338 and significance of .311 which makes it not significant.

The finding reaffirms the study conducted by As-il (2003) wherein he stated that there is no significant difference between the composition writing proficiency and high school

graduated from. This implies that the type of high school graduated from is not a determiner of the level of difficulties in writing skills in English.

Table 9 on page 63 shows the relationship between the highest educational attainment of the respondents' mothers and their indicators for writing difficulty.

Table 9
Correlation between Highest Educational Attainment of Parents
and Indicators to Writing Difficulty

Indicators	to Categories	Correlation	Significance
Writing Difficulty			
Grammar	Mothers	-.128	.438
Mechanics	Mothers	-.203	.216
Organization	Mothers	.106	.520
Content	Mothers	.019	.909
Overall	Mothers	-.035	.832
Grammar	Fathers	-.028	.864
Mechanics	Fathers	-.192	.242
Organization	Fathers	-.060	.716
Content	Fathers	-.167	.308
Overall	Fathers	-.120	.465

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table reflects that the correlation between grammar and educational attainment of respondents' mothers is -.128 with a significance of .438 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables.

The table also tells that the correlation between mechanics and educational attainment of respondents' mothers is -.203 with a significance of .216 which indicates that the variables are not significant.

It is also presented in the table that the correlation between organization and educational attainment of respondents' mothers is .106 with a significance of .520 which indicates that the variables do not show significance relationship.

The table also directs that the correlation between content and high school graduated from of respondents is .019 with a significance of .909 which points out that there is no significant relationship between the two variables stated.

For the overall correlation between the highest educational attainment of mother and indicators to writing difficulty of the respondents, the table mirrors that the correlation between the indicators to writing difficulty and the highest educational attainment of mothers with a correlation of -.035 and a significant of .832 which signifies that the two variables are not significantly related.

The table also exposes that the correlation between the grammar and educational attainment of respondents' fathers is -.028 with a significance of .864 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables

The table also divulges that the correlation between mechanics and educational attainment of respondents' fathers is -.192 with a significance of .242 which indicates that the variables are not significant.

It is also shown in the table that the correlation between organization and educational attainment of respondents' fathers is -.060 with a significance of .520 which indicates that the two variables are not significant.

The table also reflects that the correlation between content and high school graduated from of respondents is .019 with a significance of .909 which points out that there is negative significant relationship.

For the overall correlation between the highest educational attainment of fathers and the indicators to writing difficulty, the table shows that the correlation of the two variables is -.120 and a significance of .465 which points out that the two variables are not significant.

The findings exhibited on the table which show the educational attainment of parents is not significant with the indicators to writing difficulty supports the study of Cadiz (2004) when she noted that although parents may have acquired college degrees, those educational attainments do not affect in any way the students' proficiency in communicating English. The communication skills of students are confined to classroom situations and any other context where focus on grammar, pronunciation, diction, and fluency are generally observed.

Table 10 on page 66 shows the relationship between the preferred reading resource material in English and indicators to writing difficulty.

Table 10
Correlation between Preferred Reading Resource Material in
English and Indicators to Writing Difficulty

Indicators to Writing Difficulty	Categories	Correlation	Significance
Grammar	Newspapers	4.320	.115
Mechanics	Newspapers	1.729	.421
Organization	Newspapers	2.058	.560
Content	Newspapers	.478	.787
Grammar	Magazines	1.111	.574
Mechanics	Magazines	.665	.717
Organization	Magazines	1.098	.777
Content	Magazines	1.089	.580
Grammar	Textbooks	5.564	.062
Mechanics	Textbooks	1.350	.509
Organization	Textbooks	4.496	.213
Content	Textbooks	1.395	.498
Grammar	Online Reading Material	1.835	.399
Mechanics	Online Reading Material	2.993	.224
Organization	Online Reading Material	3.104	.376
Content	Online Reading Material	2.047	.359
Grammar	Others	.461	.794
Mechanics	Others	.828	.661
Organization	Others	4.009	.260

Content	Others	2.459	.292
----------------	--------	-------	------

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table discloses that the correlation between the indicator to writing difficulty in the area of grammar and newspapers as preferred reading resource material of the respondents is 4.320 with a significance of .115 which indicates that it is not significant.

The table also shows the correlation between mechanics and newspapers as preferred reading resource material of the respondents is 1.729 with a significance of .421 which indicates that the two variables are not significant. The correlation of organization and newspapers is 2.058 with a significance of .560 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. The correlation between content and newspapers is .478 with a significance of .787 which indicates that the two variables not significant.

The table also exposes that the correlation between grammar and magazines as preferred reading resource material of the respondents is 1.111 with a significance of .574 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables mentioned. The correlation between mechanics and magazines is .665 with a significance of .717 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. The correlation between organization and magazines 1.098 with a significance of .777 which indicates that the two variables are not significantly related. The correlation between content and magazines is 1.098 with a significance of .580 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables.

It is also shown in the table that the correlation between the indicator to writing difficulty in the area of grammar and textbooks as preferred reading resource material of the respondents is 5.564 with a significance of .062 which indicates that the variables are significant. The correlation between mechanics and textbooks is 1.350 with a significance of .509 which indicates that the variables are negatively significant. The correlation between organization and textbooks is 4.496 with a significance of .213 which means that the variables are negatively significant. The correlation between content and textbooks is 1.395 with a significance of .498 which indicates that the variables are negatively significant.

The table also indicates that the correlation between the indicator to writing difficulty in the area of grammar and online reading materials as preferred reading resource material of the respondents is 1.835 with a significance of .399 which points out that the variables not significant. The correlation between mechanics and online reading materials is 2.993 with a

significance of .224 which points out that that the variables are not significant. The correlation between organization and online reading materials is 3.104 with a significance of .260 which points out that the variables are not significant. The correlation between content and online reading materials is 2.047 with a significance of .359 which points out that the variables are not significant.

Furthermore, the table divulges that the correlation between the indicator to writing difficulty in the area of grammar and others as preferred reading resource material does not have a significant relationship with a correlation .461 and significance of .794 which means that the two variables are not significant. The correlation between mechanics and others is not significant with a correlation of .828 and a significance of .661. The table shows the correlation between organization and others is not significant with a correlation of 4.009 and significance of .260. The table also illustrates the correlation between content and others is not significant with a correlation of 2.459 and significance of .292.

The finding reaffirms the study of Navarossa (2001) where he concluded that writing cannot be separated from reading and so with other forms of communication, that is, if the students fail to have a good performance in listening, speaking and reading, his respondents do not perform well in writing too.

The finding also corroborates with the study conducted by Gonulal (2012) when he found out that his respondents committed overgeneralization, inadequate application of rules, incomplete mastery, ignorance of rule restrictions and particularly negative transfer were found to be possible factors contributing to the occurrences of errors.

The finding is also reinforced by the study of Gao (2007) where she mentioned that the lack of input of genre knowledge can be an effect of the product approach of teaching English writing skills. Because of the focus on the grammatical and linguistic accuracy of the students, chances were the learners will only be concerned with the correctness of their grammar and spelling, students will pay less attention to the kind of narrative they write about and the social functions of different genres they can use in their English writing.

Table 11 on page 70 exposes the correlation between number of hours spent in using social networking sites on a weekly basis and indicators to writing difficulty.

Table 11**Correlation between Number of Hours Spent in Using Social Networking Sites in a Weekly Basis and Indicators to Writing Difficulty**

Indicators to Writing Difficulty	Correlation	Significance
Grammar	-.169	.303
Mechanics	-.086	.604
Organization	-.358*	.025*
Content	-.284	.080
Overall	-.316*	-.050*

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table shows that the correlation between number of hours spent in using social networking sites and grammar is -.169 with a significance of .303 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables.

The table also divulges that the number of hours spent in using social networking sites and mechanics is -.086 with a significance of .604 which indicates that the two variables are significant.

It is also disclosed in the table that the number of hours spent in using social networking sites and organization is -.358 with a significance of .025 which indicates that there is a positive significant relationship between the two variables.

The table also indicates that the correlation between number of hours spent in using social networking sites and content is -.316 with a significance of .080 which points out that the variables are negatively significant.

Overall, the table specifies that the number of hours spent in using social networking sites and indicators to writing difficulty is highly significant with a correlation of -.316 and significance of -.050.

The finding reaffirms the study of Huang (2006) who presented an analysis of 34 Taiwanese English majors writing errors based on a web-based training program. His study revealed major errors in word choice, followed by mechanics, style and grammar.

The result also corroborates with the study of Lasaten (2014) who indicated that the respondents are not aware of increasing vocabulary. He further stated that his respondents have poor attitudes towards reading. His respondents are not well-motivated to read. Generally, most

of his respondents admitted that they simply memorize synonyms and antonyms to improve their vocabulary.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INDICATORS TO WRITING DIFFICULTY OF THE SOPHOMORE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS ACROSS THEIR PROFILE VARIABLES

The following tables show the comparison of the indicators to writing difficulty of the sophomore Bachelor of Elementary Education students across their profile variables namely sex and academic performance in an English writing course using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

This was done to determine whether the aforementioned profile variables are comparable with the indicators to writing difficulty namely grammar, mechanics, organization and content.

Table 12 illustrates the difference between the sex of the respondents and indicators to writing difficulty.

Table 12
Difference between Sex and Indicators to Writing Difficulty

Indicators for Writing Difficulty	Correlation	Difference
Grammar	.154	.233
Mechanics	.102	.266
Organization	.138	.402
Content	.120	.465
Overall	.175	.287

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It is exhibited in table that the correlation between grammar and sex of the respondents is .154 with a difference of .233 which indicates that the variables do not have significant difference.

The table also reveals that the correlation between mechanics and sex of the respondents is .102 with a difference of .266 which indicates that there is no significant difference between the variables.

It is also displayed in the table that the correlation between organization and sex of the respondents is .138 with a difference of .402 which indicates that there is no significant difference between the variables.

The table similarly indicates that the correlation between content and sex of respondents is .120 with a difference of .465 which points out that there is a significant difference between the two variables.

Overall, the table displays that the indicators to writing difficulty has a correlation of .175 and a difference of .287. This clearly states that there is no significant difference between sex and the indicators to writing difficulty

The result supports the study conducted by As-il (2003) and Asilyang (2003) who revealed in their studies that there was no significant difference between the written English proficiency and the sex of his respondents.

The finding also corroborates with the study of Crisostomo (2000) which revealed that there has no significant difference between the written English proficiency of the male and female respondents. It was then concluded that sex had no significant difference with English Proficiency.

The finding supports the study of Jegede (1994) as cited by Solis et al. (2013) wherein the researcher mentioned that there was no significant difference between sex and English language academic achievement and motivation among the participants; but that the students' English language performance could be reliably inferred from their level of achievement and motivation.

Table 13 reflects the difference between the high school where the respondents graduated from and indicators to writing difficulty.

Table 13
Difference between Academic Performance in an English
Writing Course and Indicators to Writing Difficulty

Indicators to Writing		
Difficulty	Correlation	Difference
Grammar	-.105	.525
Mechanics	-.115	.485
Organization	-.263	.106
Content	-.282	.082
Overall	-.234	.152

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table reveals that the correlation between academic performance in an English writing course of the respondents and grammar is -.105 with a difference .525 which indicates that there is no difference between the two variables.

Furthermore, the table also divulges that the correlation between academic performance in an English writing course of the respondents and mechanics is -.115 and that there is no significant difference at .525.

The table also shows that the correlation between academic performance in an English writing course of the respondents and organization and that there is no significant difference at a correlation of -.263 and a difference of .106.

Moreover, the table also reflects that the correlation between academic performance in an English writing course of the respondents and content is -.282 with a difference of .082 which indicates that the two variables do not have significant difference.

Largely, the correlation between the overall indicators to writing difficulty has a correlation of -.234 and a difference of .152 which directs that the variables do not have significant difference.

The finding reaffirms Milan's (2004) research work which revealed that the grade in English can affect the level of competence in English grammar and composition and the commission of writing problems in the composition of her respondents.

PROPOSED LEARNING TASKS TO HELP IMPROVE THE WRITING SKILLS OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERMS OF GRAMMAR, MECHANICS, ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT

The respondents from Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus, Sta. Maria, Pangasinan were fairly challenged in their level of difficulties in writing skills in English. Despite that fact, it is still essential for them to improve these skills specifically on the indicators to writing difficulty, namely: grammar, mechanics, organization and content in order for them to be more competitive to the rest of the students graduating from different colleges and universities in the Philippines or even in other countries.

To increase the level of writing skills of the respondents and other students, they have to master the different indicators to writing skills which include grammar, mechanics, organization and content. Proficiency in writing skills will create a way in order for them to become better writers. Aside from the prior reason, the respondents need to enhance their writing skills in terms of focus, main idea, research and style.

Thus, based on the merits of the findings, the following learning tasks are proposed to be included in the syllabus of Writing in the Discipline (English 103) to help students improve their writing skills across the four indicators, namely: grammar, mechanics organization and content.

To help improve the grammar of the respondents, the researcher suggests that they should write a narrative essay and a descriptive essay which have the desired learning outcomes of identifying different sentence patterns, understanding subject-verb agreement, phrases and clauses and understanding different usage of infinitives.

To elevate the knowledge of the respondents in mechanics in writing, the researcher suggests that they will prepare script and create posters with images and with caption which have the desired learning outcomes of understanding correct usage on sentences and writing figures and capitalization.

To develop better understanding about organization in writing of the respondents, the researcher also suggests that they will write an opinion essay and a persuasive essay which have the desired learning outcomes of outlining, logical order and transitional words and phrases and organization patterns and unified controlling idea of paragraph.

To enhance the quality of content in writing of the respondents, the researcher finally suggests that they will write a speech and a personal essay which have the desired learning outcomes of creating meaning according to audience, purpose and context and choice of topic.

Summary

The study assessed and compared the level of difficulties in writing skills in English which was centered on the four indicators which are grammar, mechanics, organization and content of the sophomore Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students at Pangasinan State University, Sta. Maria Campus, Sta. Maria, Pangasinan enrolled during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2106.

Specifically, the study determined the profile of the freshman BEEd students on variables namely: sex, high school graduated from, highest educational attainment of parents, academic performance in an English writing course, preferred reading resource material in English, and the number of hours spent by the respondents in using social networking sites on a weekly basis.

This research measured the level of difficulties in English writing skills of the subjects along the four indicators which are grammar, mechanics, organization and content.

The level of difficulties in English writing skills was identified and analyzed using different statistical tools. The study looked into the relationships and differences among the difficulties in writing skills across the profile variables.

The study employed the use of descriptive and correlational method research designs with instruments such as instrument that gathered the profile of the respondents and writing instruments but there were some changes made by the researcher, the instruments adopted from Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and the outputs of the respondents were evaluated using the adopted and rubrics from American University of Rome (AUR) and Indiana Academic Standards (IAS).

The data gathered were properly recorded, tallied, tabulated, interpreted, and further analyzed. Frequency, percentages, average weighted mean, minimum, maximum, skewness, and kurtosis were used in the treatment of data.

Conclusions

Based on the merits of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Respondents are both males and females, their parents have graduated from elementary, secondary and college levels, respondents read newspapers, magazines, textbooks and online reading materials, academic performance in an English writing course ranges from 1.75 – 2.75, and respondents spend one hour to thirty hours per week in using social networking sites.

2. The level of difficulty in English writing skills of the respondents ranges from moderately challenged, fairly challenged and slightly challenged. The respondents have the least difficulty in the indicator content, and the highest difficulty in mechanics.

3. The level of difficulties in writing skills in English of the respondents is varied and indicators to writing difficulty are not comparable across their profile variables which include high school graduated from, educational attainment of parents, preferred reading material in English. There is a significant relationship between indicators to writing difficulty and the number of hours spent in using social networking sites on a weekly basis.

4. The level of difficulties in writing skills in English of the respondents is varied and not comparable across their profile variables which include sex and academic performance in an English writing course.

5. The learning tasks presented in Appendix M, together with their respective desired learning outcomes and objectives are proposed to be added to the syllabus in Writing in the Discipline (English 103) that is being employed at Pangasinan State University in order to help enhance the writing skills of the students, specifically in grammar, mechanics, organization and content.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the significant findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. For the students of Pangasinan State University, they should read various materials in English such as newspapers, magazines, textbooks, online reading materials and any available English reading materials in order for them to be timely when it comes to the topics and issues that they write about.

2. The researcher also suggests that the students write different types of essays such as narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive essays in order for them to adapt to different types of writing. It is also suggested that students should write other scholarly writings in order for them to delve into different types of academic writings – to learn about different processes, styles and types of writing and for them to see the progress that they undergo in the development of their writing skills;

3. For language teachers, it is suggested that they should try different learning tasks to be given to the students in order for the latter to be open to different types of writing and these learning tasks should be reflected in the syllabus of any English writing course employed by the university which is now outcomes-based; and

4. For future researchers, it is highly suggested that they include other indicators to writing skills, namely: focus, purpose, main idea, research and style in sentence structure, word choice or tone, details and examples.

References

A. Books

Cullingford, Cedric K. (2000). **How Children Learn To Read**. Virginia, USA: Stylus Publishing Inc.

Go, Mildred B. and Posecion, Ofelia T. (2011). **Language and Literature Assessment: A Comprehensive Guide**. Quezon City: Lorimar Publishing Inc.

Langman, Juliet S. (2003). **The Effects of ESL-Trained Content-Area Teachers**. Routledge.

Nunan, David. (2004). **Task-based Language Teaching**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reis, Sally M. and McCoach, Betsy D. (2000). **The Underachievement of Gifted Students: What Do We Know and Where**. Abingdon, England: Gifted Child Quarterly.

Valdez, Tessa P. (2013). **Ten Times Ten**. Quezon City: National Bookstore.

B. Unpublished Master's Theses and Dissertations

Armana, Mazen Ahmad Ramadan A. (2011). "The Impact of Remedial Program on English Writing Skills of the Seventh Grade Low Achievers at UNRWA Schools in Rafah." Unpublished Master's Thesis. The Islamic University of Gaza.

- Asilyang, Minda B. (2003). "English Communication Proficiency of the Students of Doña Eufronia M. Puzon Memorial National High School." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Baguio.
- As-il, J. F. (2003). "English Communication Proficiency of Freshman Students of Saint Louis High School." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Baguio.
- Bagamaspad, Nehemis P. (2000). "A Study of Common Errors Found in English Written Compositions of Freshman Students in the Western Isabela Academy." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Western Isabela Academy. Ilagan, Isable.
- Burton, Lisa A. (2013). "Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education in the Philippines: Studying Top Down Policy Implementation from the Bottom Up." Unpublished Dissertation. University of Minnesota.
- Cabansag, John N. (2013). "Written Language Proficiency of Laboratory High School Students in a State University in Cagayan Valley Philippines." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Isabela State University.
- Cadiz, Lenaida A. (2004). "Oral Communication Skills of the Second Year College Students of Abra Valley Colleges." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City.
- Cervantes, Rosalie Q. (2004). "Difficulties in the Written Compositions of College Freshman Mass Communication Students." Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Luzon. Dagupan City.
- Crisostomo, Budy G. (2000). "English Proficiency of the students of Cardinal Reyes High School, Bronx, New York." Unpublished Dissertation. University of Baguio. Baguio City.
- Fortez, Glenda E. (1993). "Task-Based Language Teaching in Difficult Circumstances: A Pedagogical Perspective." Miriam Colleges Foundation, Inc. Quezon City.
- Gao, Jiajing (2007). Teaching Writing in Chinese Universities: finding an Eclectic Approach. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Beijing Normal University. Beijing, China.
- Gonulal, Talip A. (2012). "A Correlational Study of the Relationships between Syntactical Accuracy, Lexical Accuracy and the Quality of Turkish EFL Student Writing." Unpublished Master's Thesis. The Ohio State University. Ohio.

- Hamada, Irene B. (2001). "An Error Analysis of Written Compositions in Four Rhetorical Acts by PMA Fourth Class Cadets." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Saint Louis University. Baguio City.
- Huang, Joanna L. (2006). "Error Analysis and Teaching Composition." Unpublished Master's Thesis. National Tsing Hua University. Hsinchu City, Taiwan.
- Maguien, Malvina C. (2001). "Towards the Improvement of Composition Writing in First Year High School Students in Taldian School of Arts and Trade, Mountain Province, School Year 2000-2001." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Baguio Central University. Baguio City.
- Maranan, Josefa W. (2000). "Proficiency in Written Communication among Student-Teachers: Its Philosophical Implications." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Saint Louis University. Baguio City.
- Milan, Remedios D. (2004). "Competence in English Grammar of First Year students of the Mountain Province General Comprehensive High School." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Baguio. Baguio City.
- Navarossa, Alex H. (2001). "Teaching Strategies in Theme Writing for High School Freshmen." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Naga College Foundation. Naga City.
- Mulianingsih, Indra R. (2014). "An Error Analysis of Students' Writing." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bakti. Penang, Malaysia.
- Solis, Nneka M., Eusebio, John Paul P., Yu, Sin H., Aguilar, May D., Bayot, Rhea V., Villaruel, Janelyn T. (2013). "Factors Associated with the English Proficiency of Elementary Pupils at Central Philippine University." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Central Philippine University.
- Thuy, Tieu T. (2010). "Challenges of Teaching English Writing Skills for Post-Graduate English Non-Major Students. Unpublished Dissertation. Tra Vinh University.
- Vega, Natividad V. (2000). "Student-Related Factors and the Composition Writing Performance of College Freshmen in the Catanduanes Agricultural and Industrial College." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Panganiban, Catanduanes. Virac, Catanduanes.
- Waguey, Loreto B. and Hufana, Esther R. (2013). "Effectiveness of Task-Based Instructional Materials in Developing Writing Skills of BS Fisheries Freshmen." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Graduate School, Saint Louis University. Baguio City.