

DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS THROUGH STRUCTURALIST APPROACH: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of using the Structuralist Approach in literary criticism as a teaching method to improve students' writing skills. The research was conducted at Canidkid Integrated School in the Davao de Oro province of the Philippines. A purposive sampling method was used to select the participants, who were Grade 10 students. The study employed an experimental approach, utilizing pretests and posttests to assess and compare the students' writing performance. The results showed a substantial improvement in the students' writing abilities after implementing the Structuralist Approach. The post-test mean score was significantly higher than the pre-test, indicating the positive impact of this instructional approach. The findings have important implications for educational practices. They can inform the Department of Education's efforts to integrate effective interventions and programs that enhance teachers' strategies for improving students' writing proficiency. By incorporating the structuralist approach, educators can potentially develop students' writing skills and address the challenges they face in this crucial academic area. Overall, this experimental study provides empirical evidence on the efficacy of the structuralist approach in literary criticism as an effective teaching method for improving students' writing abilities. The results contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing writing skills.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, structuralist approach, student performance, teaching strategies, experimental research design

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is described as how and what is produced in the mind is transferred into writing, transferring a certain emotion, thought, and knowledge to the reader by using observation and existing knowledge (Erol, 2016). Although speaking, listening, and reading are all related to writing, writing is harder to master than these other skills. It takes work to master writing skills such as page layout, punctuation, spelling rules, integrity of meaning, beautiful handwriting, appropriate word choice and usage, proper application of grammar rules, subject, main idea, writing style, harmony of introduction, body, and conclusion parts in the composition, and forms of thinking and expression (Inal, 2006). Thus, writing takes more work than other skills, students may find it difficult to learn writing or even grow dissatisfied with the art.

Numerous students encounter writing difficulties due to their communicative competency, learning style, and the extent to which English is used as a first (L1) or second (L2) language in their home countries. Writing problems are those that involve a departure from the grammar, syntax (sentence construction), and meaning of a target language, according to Yates and Kenkel (2002). They are further classified into two categories: surface problems, which deal with grammar, and global problems, which deal with meaning, cohesiveness, and organization (Hyland, 2003). Kho, Wong, and Chuah (2013) cite that two of the reasons behind writing problems are that some

student writers think in their L1 when writing and that they tend to perceive formal writing as difficult due to its complexity in terms of conventions and structure.

The Philippines is regarded as one of Asia's best English-speaking nations. Because it may impact Filipinos' prospects of finding employment both domestically and overseas, the nation's EPI result is therefore regarded as significant. One of the Filipino people's assets that has boosted the nation's economy is their fluency in English. This surpassed India in 2012 to make the nation the most sought-after location for outsourcing worldwide. Before hiring an applicant, employers frequently take their communication skills into account. Put differently, candidates with subpar English proficiency have a lower chance of being hired. Moreover, if the Philippines' declining EPI persists, it may have a detrimental effect on Filipinos' ability to compete internationally (Valderama, 2019).

Additionally, it was noted that elementary school students share the same concerns regarding Filipino literacy. According to Saavedra's (2011) study, elementary students' Filipino handwriting was subpar for the components being assessed. In her study, Pambid (2002) also found the same outcome. Respondents made several mistakes when asked to write a composition in Filipino by elementary school pupils. The unfavorable findings of several studies prompt the researcher to look into the reasons why students' writing abilities in both English and Filipino are lacking.

Writing difficulties are still evident among the students at Canidkid Integrated School, where the researcher teaches. It is not shocking that after two years of modular learning, the pandemic's disruptions negatively impact quality education, especially poor reading and writing habits. Even though tenth graders are expected to be proficient writers when they enter the senior high school division, there is evidence of multiple errors in writing, especially in the areas of grammar and sentence structure as well as vocabulary at this junior high education level. This opportunity to close the learning gap, particularly in writing, is made possible by the new normal of education. Teachers struggle to meet the target in the skills as students complete their work because of sluggish learners and low performance in writing. But, these challenges may be surmounted and writing abilities can be enhanced with the correct approaches and assistance.

For these reasons, the researcher decided to investigate the effectiveness of applying a structuralist or formalist literary criticism approach when writing a critique paper on a particular passage to assess the student's writing ability while adhering to the established guidelines of the relevant approach.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed experimental research by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006). They stated that the basic idea underlying all experimental research was quite simple; they tried something and systematically observed what happened. This study was a Quasi-Experimental research. The design of this study was Pretest and Posttest Group Design. The population was a group of individuals who had one or more characteristics. It was the group of interest to the researcher, the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of a study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). The results were acquired from the outcomes of the pre-test and post-tests on each subject that was scheduled for class discussion throughout the experiment.

The researcher intended to evaluate the writing proficiency of Canidkid Integrated School Grade 10 students by holding a workshop on writing critique papers. By putting the Structuralist Approach's guidelines to use, the study hoped to significantly enhance students' writing skills. Pre-writing and post-writing were the two stages of the writing exercises that made up the workshop. The respondents read a selection from the researcher's list and then wrote an essay about it. The respondents were permitted to use the essay's free-writing format as a pre-writing strategy by the researcher.

After the intervention, the respondents underwent training on writing a critique paper applying the Structuralist Approach in the post-writing phase to determine if there was any change brought about by the intervention. Thus, in this study, the researcher conducted a free-writing essay format in the pre-writing phase and a Structuralist Approach in the post-writing phase to assess and establish comparability on the improvement.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Canidkid Integrated School located at Purok 2 Canidkid, Montevista, Davao de Oro. Montevista is one of the 11 municipalities of Davao de Oro. The province is divided into two legislative districts, with New Bataan, Compostela, Maragusan, Monkayo, and Montevista belonging to the first district, and Laak, Mabini, Maco, Mawab, Nabunturan, and Pantukan belonging to the second.

Montevista is a third-class Municipality in the Province of Davao de Oro, Philippines. According to the 2020 census, it has a population of 46,558 people. Caumanga, the original name of Montevista, was a peaceful haven of the Mandaya Tribe. During the Japanese occupation, Caumanga became the headquarters of the Japanese Imperial Forces which induced them to flock to the place for protection, shelter, medicine, and food. With the increase of Christian settlers in the early part of the 1950s, the name "Caumanga" was changed to San Jose in honor of their Patron Saint, Saint Joseph the Worker.

2.3 Research Respondents

The research respondents of this study were selected through the purposive sampling method. They were comprised of 27 Grade 10 students of Canidkid Integrated School who were officially enrolled in the S.Y. 2023-2024. As a result, the researcher was teaching English 10 in the aforementioned section and discovered that since this group would be moving to senior high school in the upcoming months, research on them was necessary. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to equip them with the writing skills they would need to handle the subjects that called for writing proficiency.

2.4 Research Instruments

For the research instrument/s, the researcher used in this study the adapted writing scale from Lumley (2001). The said instrument was composed of 5 rating scales with writing performance criteria and descriptors that were used by the inter-rater for checking the students' output. The tool on the following page measured the students' proficiency in writing. Students' written output was scored by using the following scale (See Appendix B): Content, Mechanics, Organization, Vocabulary, and Grammar. Scores were interpreted through Jacob's Writing Proficiency Interpretation Scale.

Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
81-100	Very High	This means that the writing proficiency of the students is very high.
61-80	High	This means that the writing proficiency of the students is high.
41-60	Moderate	This means that the writing proficiency of the students is moderate.
21-40	Low	This means that the writing proficiency of the students is low.
0-20	Very Low	This means that the writing proficiency of the students is very poor.

SPSS on Statistical Treatment of Data

Other than that, to have the results easily, the researcher used JASP and SPSS software to determine and compare the T-test results between the pre-writing test and the post-writing test of the respondents in both phases of the study.

Mean and Class Proficiency. These were used to determine the competency level of the class according to their pretest and posttest result.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

After the approval of the panel members, the researcher underwent the following procedures:

The researcher sent requirements to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for the review of the ethical standards. After obtaining clearance, a request letter for permission to conduct the study through e-mail to the Senior Education Program Specialist for Research of the Davao de Oro division. After the approval of the division office, a written letter of request to conduct the study has been submitted to the Head Teacher II of Canidkid Integrated School, Montevista, Davao de Oro, where the study was conducted.

Pretests has been administered to the class before the topic was discussed. After the allocated number of weeks in teaching, utilizing the Structuralist Approach in literary criticism, posttests had been administered. The results between the pretests and posttests of the group has been treated as students' writing skills. The mean gain scores were the basis in testing the significant difference between the performance of the students in the pretests and posttests.

After the pretest was given, the researcher gathered the students' performance in writing proficiency level in terms of content, mechanics, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. Then, the researcher's lesson plans were used during the conduct of the intervention phase with the experimental group. After the administration of lessons for 10 sessions, a posttest was conducted with the same instrument used in the pretest.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study following the statement of the problem.

This chapter includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the results of the experiment conducted in the study. The sequence of the presentation was based on the statement of the problems and the null hypotheses presented.

Table 1: The Result of the Writing Competence of the Class During the Pretest

Pretest	
Class Mean	39.11
Class Proficiency	39%
Number of Students	27
Level of Performance	Low

The data displayed in table 1 revealed that 27 students performed relatively poorly on the pretest assessment, with a mean score of 39.11 out of a possible 100. This mean score indicates that the students, on average, answered less than 40% of the questions correctly. In Jacob's Scale, the score of the pretest belonged to the mean range of 21-40, this means that the writing proficiency of the students is low.

Table 2: The Result of the Writing Competence of the Class During the Posttest

Post Test	
Class Mean	87.7
Class Proficiency	88%
Number of Students	27
Level of Performance	Very High

Based on the data displayed in table 2, it appears that the control group performed exceptionally well on the post-test. The mean score of 87.7 out of a possible 100 is a strong indication of the group's proficiency in the subject matter. Additionally, the class proficiency of 88% and the competency level of "Very High" further support this conclusion.

Table 3: Test of Difference of Means in Pretest and Posttest Performances of the Grade 10 Students

	Mean	p-value	t-value	Remarks
Pretest	39.11	.001	-23.743	Significant
Posttest	87.7			

The data presented in the table shows a significant improvement in the writing skills of Grade 10 students who were taught using a structuralist approach to literary criticism. The mean pretest score was 39.11, while the mean post-test score was 87.7, indicating a substantial improvement in the students' performance. The p-value of .001 and the t-value of -23.743 further suggest that the improvement is statistically significant, meaning that it is unlikely to occur by chance. Thus, this indicates that the null hypothesis was rejected and accepts the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the pre-test scores and posttest scores of the respondents.

Test Results of the Hypotheses

The statistical test was based on the JASP software. Through the result of Tabular t which is -23.743 and $df=26$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and there was significant difference in class means between pretest and posttest. The comparative results of the pretest and posttest scores showed the class learned much from the structuralist approach application in developing writing skills of the students.

4. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This segment presents a further discussion of the findings of the study as well as the conclusions being drawn and the relevant and valuable recommendations offered.

4.1 Discussion

Competence level of the students' pretest scores in writing proficiency. The writing skills of the Grade 10 students in the pretest had a mean that indicated their competency level was fairly satisfactory based on the DepEd standard. This implied the students garnered a low rating in their pretest performance.

This suggests that the students in Grade 10 struggle to write effectively in terms of using proper grammar, vocabulary, organization, mechanics, and content. Writing assignments and evaluations should be focused on precise writing structures and demonstrate communicative competence because writing is a difficult skill to learn when learning a second language (Dar & Khan, 2015). Writings need to be more carefully planned and use language appropriately to generate error-free writing. One's writing can be highlighted if one follows the right process and doesn't make any mistakes when creating it.

According to Hawkins B. (2013), proficient writing is essential to a liberal arts education, scholarly research, and students' achievement in a range of endeavors. Teachers should teach their students how to write by having them evaluate, synthesize, and apply information to produce coherent documents and arguments. To write more effectively, information and critical thinking are also necessary. If students write accurately and concisely while applying analytical and strategic thinking, they can show that they are proficient in academic writing.

Students' lack of confidence in their writing can exacerbate writing difficulties in addition to their proficiency with sentence organization, word relationships, and proper grammar structure (Rico, 2014). Ahmad et al. (2013) claim that a teacher's method of instruction that is at odds with the students' cultural backgrounds and learning preferences may also be a factor in the student's lack of confidence when it comes to writing. The teacher needs to make sure they are aware of each student's abilities to give them the better instruction they want.

Competency Level of the students' posttest scores in writing proficiency. The writing skills of the Grade 10 students in the posttest had a mean that indicated their competency level was outstanding based on the DepEd standard. The mean score of the student's writing proficiency manifested a very high level when interpreted by Jacob's Writing Proficiency Scale.

This implies that there is an increased and improved writing proficiency of the students in the posttest, this further showed that the application of the Structuralist Approach to Literary Criticism would substantially support the writing skills development as observed by the researcher.

Furthermore, Brown and Lee (2015) contend that educators must provide their students with encouragement and support following the assignment. They asserted that monitoring the assignment and providing guidance or support were among the teacher's responsibilities. Therefore, it makes sense that all teachers should let their students know that they are available to help them stay on track by offering advice and answering questions.

Creative writing, then, is the study of writing (including poetry, fiction, drama, and creative non-fiction) and its contexts through creative production and process reflection. When we speak of writing, we consider both planned and spontaneous performances, spoken and recorded works, books, and other printed materials, as well as the variety of formats available in electronic, digital, and other new media. For a creative writing assignment, any genre or style of writing can be used as an example; however, the works created in this genre usually offer readers or viewers sophisticated, imaginative interpretations of the world instead of informational pieces (Bennett et al., 2008).

Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Means of the Group. The student's performance on the pretest had a mean score, while their mean score on the posttest was significantly higher. The statistical analysis results showed a p-value and t-value that indicated the null hypothesis could be rejected. This meant there was a significant difference between the pretest scores and posttest scores of the respondents.

According to one study, it is critical to change people's viewpoints about how to approach problems in writing. To facilitate students' idea generation and writing, educators need to use a variety of tactics. To help students become more confident writers, they should provide them with timely, insightful feedback on their work (Haider, 2012). Teachers can tailor their pedagogical approaches and design captivating activities that inspire and motivate their students by letting students choose their topics or write about anything that interests them (Pineteh, 2013).

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of lecturers and teachers to help students understand why they write and the procedures that are required for writing. Writing is an important skill because it allows students to incorporate their ideas and writing processes into their work. Furthermore, they go through three stages of writing: brainstorming before writing, writing and revising, and editing (proofreading). The students' developing language skills reflect their ability to write with accuracy, fluency, and appropriate meanings and messages (Azizah et al., 2010).

This effort, however, has significant implications for what we mean as teachers when we say we're teaching our students to be better writers. Kock, (2009) contends that one tradition of understanding the activity of "writing" focuses more on writing down, that is, writing is viewed as the "mere" textualization of ideas and arguments that the writer has already arrived at through prior reading and thought. In this sense, writing becomes the manifestation of a mental product that existed before the actual task of writing. This undoubtedly represents a reductive view of writing that does not consider how a writer's thinking evolves as she puts pen to paper.

4.2 Conclusion

The view of the foregoing findings, the researcher concluded that in writing skills, the respondents have an outstanding competency level. There is a significant difference in pretest and posttest scores which means, the students have improved their writing skills.

The performance level of respondents in the pretest and posttest using the Structuralist Approach in Literary Criticism proved to be still effective in a 21st-century classroom setting, and it can significantly improve the writing skills of students at Canidkid Integrated School in terms of accurate content usage, mechanics, organization, vocabulary, and grammar, producing an outstanding level of competency. Increases in pretest and posttest scores indicate that students' writing skills are improving. Students explored and effectively mobilized their creative and technical writing abilities using the interventions' established strategies and approaches. Thus, the problem with Grade 10 students' writing skills has gradually diminished but should be maintained. This implied that if there was an intervention to be employed there is always a good response.

4.3 Recommendations

Structuralist Approach in Literary Criticism and its strategies facilitated and encouraged the learners, especially the Grade 10 students to learn. It was because there is something unique in it, and something that would tickle their minds at exploring things around them especially in appreciating the beauty of literature through an in-depth analysis of its structure and elements.

Because of the foregoing research, the following recommendations were formulated:

1. Increase the sample size: To improve the accuracy of the study's findings, increase the sample size of the control group. A larger sample size would yield more representative data and improve the generalizability of the results.

2. Incorporate a control group: To better understand the effectiveness of the structuralist approach, include a control group that did not receive the intervention. Comparing the performance of the control group to the group that received the structuralist approach would help isolate the intervention's effect and identify the specific factors that contributed to the improvement in writing skills.

3. Analyze other contextual factors: To gain a more complete understanding of the structuralist approach's effectiveness, it would be beneficial to examine other contextual factors that may have influenced the students' writing abilities. For example, the study could look into the students' prior knowledge and skills, the teaching methods used, and the assessment tools used to evaluate their writing abilities. This would assist in identifying the specific factors that contributed to the improvement in writing skills, as well as providing a more nuanced understanding of the structuralist approach's effectiveness.



4. Further exploration and experimentation on this line of research to cope with the global standard.

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