

IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS USING MODIFIED QUIPPER LEARNING MATERIALS: AN EXPLANATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHOD STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Writing is a complex skill that students still need help with. Despite English being a second language and students being exposed to it from early schooling, many students still need help using it in writing. Thus, this explanatory sequential mixed method study use the modified Quipper learning materials to test whether it effectively improves students' writing skills. The paired t-test result greatly increased students' writing competency level from below frustration to instructional. Though there is a significant improvement, it is still evident that students still have a long way to go to become proficient in writing, further supported by the qualitative data collected from the participants' responses. The students' experiences and struggles explained the quantitative data results. Therefore, the modified Quipper learning materials are good learning tools; however, there is a need for more intervention to improve students' writing skills.

Keywords: *writing skills, modified Quipper learning materials, explanatory sequential mixed method design, competency level*

1. INTRODUCTION

English writing is not just a skill for students to acquire; it's a vital tool for their global engagement. It equips them to express their thoughts and feelings effectively, demonstrate their understanding, and showcase their critical thinking skills. Despite its pivotal role in academia, many students struggle with writing proficiently in English. As a global language, English presents persistent challenges for students regarding acquisition and usage for academic and daily purposes [1]. This study, therefore, holds significant implications for students not just in our local context but also in the global educational landscape.

In Saudi Arabia, students are also grappling with challenges in creative writing despite the various efforts and attempts to set goals, identify students' weaknesses, and provide them with educational writing books. In response to this, Mostafa and Alghamdi (2022) [3] conducted a comprehensive study. They used the Learning Management System (LMS) of their school, specifically Moodle, as a tool to enhance students' creative writing skills. The results were remarkable, with the 2-tailed value of the t-test in the different areas of the creative writing skills being measured (form skills, language skills, writing the introduction skills, presentation skills, and writing the conclusion skills) being less than 0.05, which is 0.000. This indicates a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results, proving that LMS can indeed significantly impact the development of students' creative writing skills. This study serves as a valuable reference point in the field of educational research and provides a strong foundation for our own study on the effectiveness of modified Quipper learning materials in improving students' writing skills.

In the Philippines, the same problem in writing skills is also experienced by different schools, including the Centro Escolar University in Makati City. Thus, Sicat (2015) [4] researched to find ways how they can effectively teach business writing to their students to make sure that they will be able to gain the knowledge, set of skills, and attitudes that they need to deal with the competence required by their respective professions through utilizing Schoology as their school's LMS. The study then showed that Schoology is an effective tool in teaching business writing as a supplement to the traditional method of teaching, and most importantly, it addresses the diverse needs of

modern-day learners. Thus, this study aims to develop students' writing skills using the modified Quipper learning materials, one of the learning management systems prominent in the Philippines.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

In the continuously globalizing world, communication impacts all fields, and language is the primary key to communication. According to Rao (2017) [5], even if it is possible to communicate nonverbally, using signs and gestures will not satisfy human beings' desires completely. Thus, humans need to learn a language to establish continuous relationships with others. Writing can be expressed as any conventional system of marks or signs that represent the utterances of a specific language and make a language visible (Olson, 2024) [6]. Puranik et al. (2023) [7] also expressed that writing is a critical skill deemed necessary for different purposes such as employment, further education, participation in civic activities, health reasons, and the fulfillment of personal reasons.

However, despite its utmost importance, Berman and Cheng (2010) [8] have agreed that students find writing more difficult than listening and reading, as most students are least proficient in writing when they are in the process of new language acquisition. It cannot be denied that many are facing writing challenges, especially the students of these days. According to Misbah et al. (2017) [9], students are experiencing difficulties in learning writing skills because they lack the necessary pool of vocabulary, which is a primary element in sentence construction, one of the cores of displaying writing skills effectively (Asep, 2014) [10].

Since writing is one of the survival skills used throughout an individual's life, teachers have also taught writing in many ways, long before modern ways brought by technology (McQuinty, n.d.) [11]. This method is known as the traditional writing method. According to Padmavati (2023) [12], traditional writing methods highlight the human touch and the ability to write compelling content. It depends on one's creativity, critical thinking skills, and manual application of conventional writing, encompassing the ability to brainstorm, outline, draft, and revise. However, this method is no longer that effective today. According to Wihastyanang et al. (2014) [13], some writing instruction processes, for instance, require learners to write a composition, turn it in, have it checked by the teacher, and return it to them the next day. However, despite the corrections and feedback given by the teacher, most students hardly ever check the corrected writing outputs they have received. Moreover, Imran (2011) [14] also mentioned that the traditional approach to teaching and learning writing is one of the reasons learners encounter many mistakes and errors in their written outputs. Hence, there is a need for teachers to change approaches to teaching writing.

According to Wihastyanang et al. (2014) [14], the educational paradigm has shifted from passive to active learning; thus, involving students actively in teaching and learning is necessary. Lee (2012) [15] also expressed that technology is beneficial in nurturing writing skills as it motivates and encourages the learner to engage in the learning process and provides various learning opportunities. Hence, integrating existing technology as part of teaching writing is becoming more substantial in this age and era.

Shih (2010) [16] stated that integrating blended learning and face-to-face instruction will result in an effective teaching and learning encounter for the teacher and students. Saine and West (2017) [17] also concluded that virtual interactions between teachers and students have greatly influenced self-efficacy beliefs about teaching writing, which proves that the advent of technology has caused drastic increases in teaching writing through e-learning methods (Febriyante et al. (2022) [18].

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of modified Quipper student learning materials to improve student writing skills.

Specifically, the study will seek the answer chapters to the following questions:

1. What is the writing competency level of the students based on the pretest scores?
2. What is the writing competency level of the students based on the post-test scores?
3. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores?

Null Hypothesis

In order to treat the problems extensively and accurately, the following hypotheses are formulated:

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the pretest and post-test administered.

Research Questions

This study aims to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of students in learning writing skills using the modified Quipper material?
2. What are the challenges commonly encountered by students during writing using the modified Quipper material?

- How do the participants cope with the difficulties they have faced in learning to write using the modified Quipper material?

2. METHODS

This study used an explanatory sequential design to gather the data needed for the research. The quantitative data was first collected and analyzed, followed by the collection and analysis of the narrative data during the qualitative phase.

A pretest and posttest tool was administered to the 35 research subjects. The experimental study was done within a month using the Quipper learning materials modified by the researcher. After analyzing the results of the quantitative phase using the paired t-test, five of the research subjects underwent an in-depth interview that focused on three elements: experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms using the questionnaire designed by the researcher.

2.1 Rating Interpretation

The mean percentage scores of the students in each session were interpreted as follows:

80% - 100%	Independent
59% - 79%	Instructional
58%	Below Frustration

In addition, to arrive at the results easily, the researcher used JASP to determine and compare the T-test results based on the pretest and posttest results given to the experimental group.

The **T-test** is a statistical test that compares the means of two groups. It was used in testing hypotheses to determine whether a process or the treatment given to the population has an effect or none.

Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 was also used to test the reliability of the research instruments.

Mean and Class Proficiency were utilized to determine the competency level of the two groups according to the pretest and post-test results, aiming to answer problems 1 and 2.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the collected data and the subsequent meticulous analyses, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings, are presented below and divided into two phases: the quantitative results are presented first, followed by the qualitative data.

3.1 Quantitative Phase

Table 1
Writing Competency Level of the Students Based on the Pretest Scores

No. of Students	Total No. of Items	Mean	Class Proficiency	Competency Level
35	40	14.943	37.36%	Below Frustration

The result showed that many Grade 11 students have difficulty establishing their writing skills because of different factors. Their competency level of below frustration shows that many students lack knowledge of employing different writing skills, such as using the mechanics of writing, namely punctuation, capitalization, spelling, boldface, italics, and underlining, to add emphasis to their writing.

Pretest scores are expected to be low, especially if many students do not know the measured lessons. Pretests are just one of the assessments administered to identify student's current level of knowledge and measure their prior knowledge. This also allows teachers to see if the students have mastered a certain topic or skill and to identify if there is a need to further elaborate the lesson. Moreover, Kuehn (2024) [19] states that a teacher designs a pretest to measure the learning a student has acquired for a specific subject.

Table 2
Writing Competency Level of the Students Based on the Post-test Scores

No. of Students	Total No. of Items	Mean	Class Proficiency	Competency Level
35	40	24.657	61.64%	Instructional

The results showed that the student's writing skills improved after the intervention. This implies that teaching writing using the modified learning Quipper materials is effective. The student's competency level before the

intervention was below frustration and became instructional afterward. This indicates that the students improved their writing skills and showed good development; however, they still need the guidance of a teacher. Implementing interventions has been significant in improving student performance. According to Davis (2022) [20], teachers must better understand the struggles faced by the learners before creating an intervention. Intervention is a must as soon as a problem arises. If the intervention is effective, it will improve the student's performance. Jung et al. (2017) [21] support this, as they examined the effects of research-based early writing intervention within data-based instruction. Their study's findings emphasized that the intervention employed significantly affects the student's writing skills, indicating that when a proper intervention is used, the student's competency level will surely progress.

Table 3
Pretest and Posttest Scores Paired T-test Result

	Total No. of Students	Mean	t-value	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Pretest	35	14.943	-8.743	<.001	Reject H_{01}	There is a significant difference between the pretest and post-test administered.

The result illustrates a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores, indicating that the student's writing skills improved after the implemented experimental study. Hornbuckle (2024) [22] states that student growth is measured by giving pretests and posttests. Pretests set the baseline of what the students must learn, while posttests show what and how much they have learned. Hence, the treatment is effective if there is a significant difference between the two results, just like the results presented based on the pretest and posttest given to the 35 research subjects.

3.2 Qualitative Phase

Writing Skills Learned Using Modified Quipper Learning Material. Four (4) essential themes emerged from the participant's responses to this structured theme: constructing sentences, organizing ideas, technicalities in writing, and comprehension skills.

The findings revealed that while the students were learning the four writing mechanics, they could also learn other skills. Learning about spelling and punctuation helped the students improve their sentence construction skills. It is indisputable that despite English being the second language in the Philippines, some students still have difficulty using it in different aspects. Many students struggle with constructing their ideas and putting them into sentences. This was also pointed out by Dastger and Afzal (2015) [1], who stated that even though English is the universal language, students continue to face scuffles when using it in the academe and other areas.

Moreover, learning writing also improves the skills of students in organizing ideas. In writing, a person has to organize ideas in a way that will make sense. Hence, it discloses a person's analytical and critical abilities (Long et al., 2020) [23].

It is also significant to understand the importance of technicalities in writing and how they affect the overall presentation of ideas. It is undeniable that students these days would prefer using the different applications available to write. It is easier and more convenient on their part since technology is very much accessible. However, there is a disadvantage. Students have become so dependent on different technological advancements that sometimes, they forget the basics of writing, such as the proper usage of indentions and spacing, to make their written output more organized, formal, and presentable.

In addition, writing contributes to developing students' comprehension skills. Writing can also help students improve their reading skills since students have to think more deeply about their ideas and write them in a way they understand. Ferlazzo (2024) [24] further supports this, stressing that reading comprehension improves as students better format their writing. When students write, they learn to comprehend the texts they are reading as part of their references before they can lay out their ideas and arguments based on the texts they read. Thus, one's comprehension is enhanced every time a student engages in writing activities, as it is already a part of the writing process.

Description of Experience in Learning Writing Skills Using Modified Quipper Learning Material. Three emerging themes were generated from the responses given by the participants: easy, confusing, and quite hard.

The data collected shows that students have different descriptions of their experiences in learning writing skills. Some claim they had it easy, some say it was confusing, while others consider it hard. They have different experiences because they also have different learning capabilities.

The results only prove that students have different learning paces. Some may grasp the lesson easily, while others may take more time to master a skill. In addition, prior knowledge and exposure to the fundamentals of writing in the early years can greatly influence students' learning capabilities. Knowledge acquisition and the ability to exhibit higher-order cognitive skills are greatly influenced by the amount and quality of prior knowledge (Mrsstrickey, 2021) [25]. Hence, the more prior knowledge in writing that students have, the easier it is for them to learn writing skills.

On the other hand, some students struggle with writing. They display messy sentences with spelling errors and misuse of punctuation; sometimes, they might not be able to write anything when asked to. Some students struggle to write because of their age since not all children can develop writing skills simultaneously. However, most students struggle to learn writing because they have not been taught the important writing skills in school. This includes the basics, like the proper usage of the different punctuations, which are essential in writing ideas properly to relay the author's message, or the harder skills, such as writing complex academic papers from academic essays to research papers.

Furthermore, Lee (2024) [26] emphasized that some students have trouble writing because of their differences in learning and writing. Some students experience written expression disorder wherein they encounter problems organizing and expressing their ideas through their writing. Writing is a complex task that involves different components, such as reading comprehension, analytical skills, and writing mechanics, such as grammar, sentence structure, and spelling (Carnegie Mellon University, n.d.) [27]. Thus, if students lack skills in these aspects, it is expected that their writing skills may appear unsatisfactory in several ways. Their poor grammar, syntax, reasoning, and disorganized ideas will reveal their low writing skills.

Challenges in Writing Using Modified Quipper Learning Material. Three emerging themes were generated for this structured theme based on the participants' responses. These themes include comprehension problems, punctuation usage confusion, and slow internet connection.

The responses have shown that students face different challenges in learning writing, and comprehension is still one of those. As defined by Balintucas (2021) [28], reading comprehension is the student's skill to understand the meaning of the written words and relate new information to their previous knowledge. Comprehension is more than the ability to merely read the text on a page; it is about giving meaning to those texts.

It is indisputable that students continue to face the challenge of comprehending the text because this problem was probably never addressed properly. Balintucas (2021) [28] further elaborated that there are several causes of comprehension issues, and lack of support is one of those. This support includes the accessibility of various reading materials. Students must have access to different reading materials that interest them to encourage them to practice understanding complex ideas and organizing their thoughts. Aside from that, students also need additional learning accommodations from their teachers. The role of educators in this learning process is vital, as students can ask for assistance if they are having difficulty learning independently.

Moreover, Lastiri (2022) [29] also pointed out that poor writing skills indicate comprehension problems. Spelling mistakes, punctuation errors, limited vocabulary, and grammatical errors are signs that students are having trouble showcasing their writing skills.

Furthermore, some students also identify slow internet connectivity as a significant challenge in learning writing. A stable internet connection is crucial as online learning becomes increasingly integral to education. Various online learning platforms, like Quipper, are gaining popularity. While these platforms offer convenience, they also pose a significant challenge to the student's learning process. As Sapin (2024) [30] emphasized, slow internet connectivity disrupts virtual classes, leading to dropped connections and compromising the overall learning experience. This issue must be urgently addressed to ensure a seamless learning environment for all students.

Difficult Writing Lesson to Learn Using Modified Quipper Learning Material. Two emerging themes were generated from the participants' responses: spelling and punctuation.

The narrative data collected have shown that students struggle to learn spelling and punctuation along with learning writing skills. Both are important in expressing ideas correctly and precisely. Spelling helps the students to effectively communicate their ideas in written form and display their ability in writing. However, due to the vast vocabulary, students find spelling difficult. Many adults experience trouble with spelling for different reasons, such as because spelling is a complex activity that involves many skills (Rosen, 2024) [31].

Spelling involves the ability to decode the sounds that make up the words; however, not all English words are spelled in the way they are pronounced. Some words are spelled way differently from how they are being said, which means there are cases in which memorization is involved. English vocabulary continuously changes from time to time, which adds to the broadness of the words that students are unfamiliar with. Additionally, Team (2024) [32] pointed out that spelling problems are directly related to writing problems. Thus, students will find it hard to learn writing if they have trouble spelling, especially if their learning opportunities are limited.

On the other hand, students also struggle to properly use punctuation marks. A study conducted by Abdallah and Mohamed (2016) [33] further supports this, as they highlighted that students in Al-Mustafa Secondary Schools in South Darfur State experience challenges when using punctuation marks in writing. The learners have shown confusion and errors in using different punctuation, such as commas, colons, quotation marks, and exclamation marks, to mention a few. Hence, learning punctuation is difficult for students, especially for all the above reasons, further emphasizing the need for educational intervention.

Coping Mechanism in Learning Writing. The themes generated from the participants' responses include rewriting, web surfing, and self-studying.

As students face different challenges in learning to write, they also learn to cope with their struggles differently. They find their means to maximize their learning opportunities; one is rewriting. Many students opt to rewrite the notes that they have written during the discussion to better organize the content and improve its clarity and coherence. Students find it effective as it involves different levels of understanding, such as adding more information, removing unimportant details, reorganizing content, and communicating the content more effectively. Rewriting has several benefits, such as improved understanding of the text, enhanced critical thinking and analysis, effective communication skills, and improved writing and articulation (Importance of Rewriting in Education and Its Benefits for Students, n.d.) [34].

Moreover, some students use the different materials available on the web to support their learning experience. Cantave (n.d.) [35] claims that the web provides learners and educators with various interesting ESL websites, giving students learning opportunities and making them authentic for reading practice and writing. Students can take full advantage of the availability of materials on the web to cope with their difficulties in writing, which is also very helpful for students who prefer to self-study. Students engage in self-study to enhance their learning experience and improve their writing and critical thinking skills. It has also advanced in different aspects due to the abundance of online learning resources. The students can learn what they want when they want and how they want to learn. They have the direct control of their learning experiences.

Techniques Used in Learning Writing. The research participants' responses generated four emergent themes. These include note-taking, peer assistance, memorization, and blurring.

Considering that writing is a complex skill to learn, making it more difficult to master, the students learned to adapt techniques to make it easier on their part. The data showed that learners utilize the benefits of notetaking in learning writing. According to Agarwal (2021) [36], note-taking is more than just writing or typing down everything; it involves reviewing, connecting, and synthesizing ideas from class discussions or reading.

Holt (2023b) [37] further explained the benefits of notetaking in writing, including improving comprehension, organizing thoughts, and facilitating effective review. These are just a few of the advantages note-taking contributes to learning writing.

Moreover, some students prefer asking for peer assistance. When they have problems with writing lessons, they ask their classmates for help, making it easier for them to understand the lesson. Aside from that, some students favor memorization, especially in learning spelling, since some words are spelled differently compared to when they are pronounced. Some students also memorize the rules to better familiarize themselves with the fundamentals of writing.

Aside from the abovementioned techniques, students also utilize the blurring method to learn writing. According to Holt (2023a) [38], the blurring method is a technique of active recall that can help students learn and remember information. The students write everything they can remember, making their brains work harder and improving their critical thinking and writing skills. According to Lee (2022b) [39], blurring is also referred to as a memory dump, a great way to demonstrate writing skills and put into practice what the students have learned all at once.

Convergence of Data

The pretest-post-posttest scores show that although the students have greatly improved their competency level in writing skills, they still need more learning opportunities to further develop their skills and enhance their capabilities in writing. The student's competency level in writing after the intervention is instructional, which means that the students can write but still need the constant assistance of their teacher.

This can be connected to experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms that students have shared after the intervention. Modifying the Quipper learning materials has greatly improved the students' writing skills. However, it was evident that despite modification, there were still students who experienced extreme difficulties in learning due to varied reasons, for which prior learning experiences and their respective individual writing abilities are significant. This is why the students have employed coping mechanisms to bridge their learning gaps.

The results of the quantitative data may be justified with the qualitative data or vice versa. In other words, the test scores may be warranted by the challenges that the students met during the intervention.

The divergence or convergence of data may have been visible if the quantitative instrument is specified and categorized based on the structured themes from the qualitative approach.

4. CONCLUSION

It is indisputable that students continue to face challenges in learning writing despite it being taught in the early years of schooling. Writing is a complex skill that combines other essential skills such as comprehension, organization of ideas, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, etc., which makes it more difficult for students to learn. Based on this study's pretest and posttest results, it has been shown that the students have improved their writing skills after the month-long study. Therefore, it can be concluded that modified Quipper learning materials are effective. However, teachers must continue to design learning materials according to the student's needs and interests to achieve a better outcome. The school must also take the initiative to implement a writing intervention program to better equip students with the writing skills expected of them. Both teachers and students must work together to expand the quality of instruction (Shi et al., 2017) [40]. The teachers will provide the students with various differentiated opportunities while the students maximize those to enrich their skills.

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