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Factors affecting the writing skills of the education students: A descriptive study

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the factors affecting first-year BSED students' writing skills in a selected Local College in Misamis Oriental. To achieve this goal, a fishbowl method-based sampling technique was employed to gather 50 students, focusing on the student's motivation, classroom environment, reliance on applications, and feedback systems. The results revealed that students' motivation played a significant role in their writing abilities, as they were encouraged to write to express themselves and enhance their skills. Furthermore, the classroom environment was found to have an impact on writing skills, with students being more engaged in writing when there was appropriate ventilation. In terms of practical applicability, the use of grammar checkers was found to be useful in improving writing skills. Additionally, the study discovered that the feedback system influenced students' writing abilities, with automatic grading being preferred by students. Overall, the study suggests that the factors that affect motivation also impact writing skills, and creating a conducive learning environment can enhance students' writing abilities.

Keywords: Writing Skills; Motivation; Classroom Environment; Online Application; Feedback

1. Introduction

Writing plays a crucial role in academic success and is an essential skill that students need to develop. Writing assignments can be challenging, and time-consuming, and often require students to exercise control over various factors. Analyzing students' writing skills can be particularly instructive as it clearly indicates their creativity, comprehension, and situational analysis.

Writing serves as a medium of communication, wherein language is expressed through written symbols. It is recognized as a productive skill that enables writers to articulate their original viewpoints and ideas through written forms. According to Rao (2017), writing provides students with diverse opportunities to explore contemporary approaches to conveying their thoughts and ideas in a foreign language. In the process of writing, several variables influence students' writing abilities, including learner motivation and a supportive writing environment. Developing writing abilities requires a stimulating atmosphere that encourages students to write and supports their learning. Through writing, teachers can identify and address students' mistakes immediately, providing constructive feedback that helps them improve their writing skills. Therefore, students need to develop their writing abilities by practicing consistently and in a supportive learning environment to excel academically and professionally.

Writing is considered one of the essential skills in the English language, alongside speaking, reading, and listening (Ling, 2016). It is widely acknowledged that writing is a multifaceted and intricate process. It is imperative to introduce writing activities among students from elementary school onwards to cultivate their ability to produce proficient written compositions in the future. Despite the multitude of subjects covered in elementary education, writing holds paramount importance as one of the essential academic disciplines for students. Furthermore, Anyiendah (2017) mentions a lack of student interest as a challenge. Developing writing talents is typically a difficult but always interesting

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endeavor. Some students, especially when writing, zone out. Students are indifferent to writing since producing a good piece of work requires them to be knowledgeable in many areas. Students must learn punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structure to write well.

As stated by Brookes and Grundy (2017), motivation is considered to be the most significant factor in developing writing skills. Motivated learners exhibit greater interest in writing, which, in turn, encourages them to write more. Students who are motivated are also more likely to participate in class activities and demonstrate a keen interest in honing their writing abilities. Students who possess a positive perception of school, along with a sense of belonging, demonstrate a higher tendency to actively participate in school-related tasks, engage in profound learning experiences, and enhance their academic performance (Voelkl, 2012). By creating a supportive learning environment in the classroom, teachers can reduce behavioral issues and allow students to focus on their studies. Creating a nurturing atmosphere is a fundamental element in the process of language acquisition, as it facilitates students' ability to effectively articulate their thoughts and ideas through writing.

Writing skills are a critical aspect of language learning, and students must develop their writing abilities along with reading and experiencing the language. It is not possible to claim that one has learned a language if one cannot write effectively in it. Although writing is often perceived as a challenging task, teachers can effectively teach writing skills if they understand the underlying elements that affect this development. Badayos (2008) enumerated relevant premises that teachers can reflect on in developing effective writing skills among learners. These fundamental writing skills provide a crucial starting point for students to learn how to communicate effectively through writing.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The researchers employed a descriptive research design in this study and developed a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The purpose of this design is to provide an accurate portrayal of a situation or phenomenon as it naturally occurs, without manipulating or intervening in any way. The collected data is then analyzed and summarized using statistical measures or qualitative methods to provide a clear and detailed description of the research subject.

2.2. Respondents

The study was conducted at a selected local college in Misamis Oriental, and the research participants were first-year education students taking BSED-major in English who were enrolled for the academic year 2022-2023. The fishbowl method-based sampling technique was used to determine the study's respondents. The researchers randomly selected 50 students from the total student population to participate in the study.

2.3. Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in this study was developed and modified based on the survey questionnaire, "Affecting Students' Writing Skills," originally created by August and Hakuta in 2005. The questionnaire gauged the extent to which students perceived various factors to influence their writing abilities. The respondents were asked to provide accurate and truthful responses to four questions related to each of the following factors: classroom environment, use of technology, feedback system, and student motivation. The elements were assessed using the Likert Scale, which included the following options: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly Agree.

Table 1 The Level of Writing Abilities

Criteria	Value	Range	Interpretation Criteria
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80	Very Low Level
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60	Low Level
Neutral	3	2.61-3.40	Medium Level
Agree	4	3.41-4.20	High Level
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.00	Very High Level

2.4. Research Procedures

The researchers obtained clearance from the President's Office and the Dean of Education, as well as consent from the participating students. Upon obtaining approval, the research questionnaire was distributed to the respondents to conduct the study. Appropriate statistical tools were employed to analyze the data and provide a meaningful and descriptive interpretation of the study's findings.

3. Results

The findings and the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from the administered questionnaires were presented in tabular form based on the specific inquiries stated in the problem statement.

3.1. Problem 1: What are the factors affecting the student writing skills in terms of learner motivations?

Table 2 Factors Affecting Learners' Motivation

STATEMENT	SA	A	N	SD	D	Total	SD	Interpretation
Q1: I cannot write efficiently because I'm tired.	4	14	22	8	2	50	2.8	Medium Level
Q2: I like to write essays, poems, and journals and I don't know how to construct sentences.	3	6	19	14	8	50	2.3	Low Level
Q3: I am having a hard time writing because of my poor vocabulary.	10	14	12	12	2	50	3.0	Medium Level
Q4: I am motivated to write because it helps me to express my feelings.	20	17	11	2	0	50	3.7	Medium Level
Q5: I am eager to learn every day.	35	12	3	0	0	50	4.2	High Level
Q6: I'm fascinated to write because I like writing	8	18	23	1	0	50	3.2	Medium Level

The table reveals that question number 5 obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.6, indicating that students exhibit high motivation and enthusiasm for daily learning. However, writing poses challenges primarily due to limited vocabulary. Following closely is question number 4 with a weighted mean of 4.6, suggesting that students are motivated to write as it allows them to express their feelings or emotions, albeit encountering vocabulary-related difficulties.

The Motivation and Engagement Scale (Martin, 2007) is utilized within educational settings by professionals such as teachers, counselors, and psychologists to assess students' proficiency across the different components of the Wheel framework. This scale comprises two versions: the Motivation and Engagement Scale – Junior School for primary school students, and the Motivation and Engagement Scale – High School for students in higher grade levels. Recognizing the significant role of motivation, particularly in the cultivation of writing skills, this psychological factor plays a vital role in instilling enthusiasm and active participation among students in the realm of writing. Brookes and Grundy (2017) argue that motivation not only increases engagement but also encourages learners to write. Additionally, student learners' motivation to study or acquire new skills can change rapidly due to obstacles along the way (Kusurkar, 2013).

Blattner and Fiori (2017) note that digital technologies have revolutionized the way students acquire various skills, including writing. The prevalence of technology-based learning has resulted in an increased reliance on Internet applications to improve written output. Students need digital tools to learn, understand, and express their thoughts in writing, as it aids them in reaching a wider audience. The advent of digital technologies has enabled students to have access to vast resources and connect with experts from all around the world. This has resulted in enhanced learning and has made the process of writing more engaging and interactive.

In conclusion, the table shows that students are motivated to write, but still face challenges with vocabulary. Writing motivation and engagement are subject to the influence of various factors, including achievement motivation and the

utilization of digital technologies. Thus, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive exploration of the multitude of elements that contribute to writing motivation and engagement. In particular, the incorporation of digital tools holds significant potential in enhancing the efficacy and effectiveness of the writing process.

3.2. Problem 2. What are the factors affecting the student writing skills in terms of classroom conditions?

Table 3 Factors Affecting the Classroom Environment

STATEMENT	SA	A	N	SD	D	Total	SD	Interpretation
Q7: I cannot write properly due to a small chair.	5	10	17	7	11	50	2.6	Low Level
Q8: I usually feel difficult to write due to the hot room condition in the classroom.	30	10	10	0	0	50	3.8	High Level
Q9: I don't have enough access to the library.	3	26	12	1	8	50	3	Medium Level
Q10: I like to write with proper classroom ventilation.	16	24	10	0	0	50	3.6	Medium Level
Q11: Writing is easy for me because of the	9	12	25	3	1	50	3.1	Medium Level

Table 3 presents the collected data, revealing that question number 8 achieved the highest ranking with a weighted mean of 4.4, closely followed by question number 10 with a weighted mean of 4.1. These findings suggest the importance of providing adequate classroom ventilation to foster an ideal learning and writing environment. The significance of this discovery lies in the fact that a well-ventilated classroom setting contributes to optimal learning conditions. Students benefit from increased motivation, active engagement in classroom discussions, and subsequently, improved academic performance. The recognition of the value of appropriate facilities (Marquez et al., 2016) further emphasizes their positive influence in facilitating effective learning experiences for students.

Briones et al., (2022) conducted a study titled "Factors Affecting the Students' Scholastic Performance" which examined how the characteristics of students contribute to their academic achievements. The research analyzed a sample of students with diverse traits and characteristics. Among the identified factors, "Laziness" emerged as the most commonly reported characteristic by respondents. Laziness and procrastination manifest in various forms among students with different levels of academic performance. The study revealed a negative correlation between students' academic performance and their tendency to engage in academic procrastination. Additionally, a connection was observed between laziness and factors such as "capability deficiency" and "lack of interest" (Dautov, 2020).

Classrooms encounter various national and international challenges when it comes to English writing. As the demand for effective communication and written expression in English continues to rise, the need for quality English language instruction has similarly intensified (Ahmed, 2010). According to Cole and Feng (2015), the development of writing skills plays a crucial role in achieving proficiency in language learning. Additionally, Said (2018) highlights the widely recognized significance of writing as a key skill in acquiring the English language, as it not only enhances vocabulary but also enables effective communication.

Considerable research has been dedicated to examining the numerous benefits associated with active participation, particularly within the realm of education. The active involvement of students in classroom activities has been established as a pivotal factor contributing to their academic achievements and personal growth in future endeavors (Tatar, 2005). Notably, students who demonstrate a proactive engagement in the learning process have reported higher levels of satisfaction and displayed greater perseverance (Astin, 1999). However, it is important to acknowledge that the bulk of participation studies primarily focus on children, leaving a dearth of knowledge regarding the dynamics of classroom environments comprising adult or young adult learners (Fassinger, 1995). Consequently, there exists a notable gap in the scholarly literature pertaining to investigations conducted in university settings and from the vantage point of young adult students themselves.

Tatar (2005) observed that there is a dearth of studies that have examined classroom participation through the lens of students or sought to uncover the underlying factors contributing to their limited involvement, despite efforts to encourage participation. The exploration of classroom participation from the students' perspective assumes critical significance as it provides a first-hand account and valuable insights into their emotions and perceptions. The students' individual perceptions constitute their own lived realities in the context of classroom participation. Notably, research on classroom participation in the Malaysian context remains limited, with Liew's (2009) investigation on the factors influencing second language learners' classroom participation standing as a noteworthy contribution. Liew's study predominantly focuses on the realm of second language acquisition.

Previous research has identified numerous factors that can either facilitate or hinder students' participation in classroom settings. These factors encompass various aspects, including age (Howard & Henney, 1998), gender (Crawford & MacLeod, 1990), students' inclination to engage in verbal communication (Chan & McCroskey, 1987), the level of the course being undertaken (Fritschner, 2000), and the level of preparation demonstrated by students (Howard et al., 2002).

3.3. Problem 3. What are the factors affecting the student's writing skills in terms of user application?

Table 4 Factors Affecting Relying on the Applications (Grammar Checker)

STATEMENT	SA	A	N	SD	D	Total	SD	Interpretation
Q12: It is easy for me to write with the help of the grammar checker.	8	23	18	1	0	50	3.3	Medium Level
Q13: It is fun to write because I can use grammar application it is easier for me to write.	9	11	27	3	0	50	3.1	Medium Level
Q14: I often face problems to comprehend sentence structure so I use grammar applications.	4	16	22	8	0	50	2.9	Medium Level
Q15: I usually feel difficult while using conjunction and preposition so I use grammar applications.	20	13	7	5	5	50	3.4	High Level
Q16: I don't rely on the application because I can write effectively.	4	21	16	8	1	50	3	Medium Level
Q17: It is fine to write because I'm knowledgeable about sentence structure, spelling, and technicality.	0	10	22	3	15	50	2.2	Low Level

Table 4 displays the rankings of the survey questions, indicating that question number 12 received the highest score with a weighted mean of 3.8, followed closely by question number 15 with a weighted mean of 3.76. These findings indicate that most students use grammar checkers to enhance their writing skills. The ability to effectively utilize sentence structure, spelling, and technical aspects of writing contributes to their confidence in the writing process. Strain's study (2016) on "Perceptions of Technology Use and Its Effects on Student Writing" revealed that students appreciated the convenience of technology in editing and creating multiple drafts. Additionally, teachers found word processing helpful in correcting illegible handwriting and making learning more relevant to today's students.

The use of digital technology has significantly impacted the way students acquire writing skills. Blattner and Fiori (2017) stated that digital tools help learners in learning, understand, and express their thoughts in writing, reaching a wider audience. The use of digital libraries and thesauri has accelerated learning and improved learners' vocabulary. Due to technological advancements, using technology in writing is necessary, as it breaks down barriers and allows for exploring new domains in this global and informational age (Salmah & Alsulami, 2016).

Lai and Kritsonis (2006) suggested that computers can offer a variety of fun games and communicative activities, reducing stress and anxiety while learning a language. Technology-based language learning can help students improve their linguistic skills, change their attitudes toward language learning, and increase self-confidence. Abu Seileek (2016)

conducted a research study with the objective of evaluating the effectiveness of two mediated techniques, namely cooperative learning and collective learning, in the instruction and development of oral skills, specifically listening and speaking. In other words, as digital technologies continue to develop, students increasingly rely on internet-based applications to enhance their writing skills.

3.4. Problem 4. What are the factors affecting the student writing skills in terms of feedback systems?

Table 5 Factors Affecting the Feedback System

STATEMENT	SA	A	N	SD	D	Total	SD	Interpretation
Q18: When we will have a writing activity the teacher did not return the activity.	5	17	18	5	5	50	2.9	Medium Level
Q19: I'm fine that the teacher gives the score automatically with my write-up.	26	14	7	2	1	50	3.8	High Level
Q20: I'm upset because the teacher just returns the write-up with a score of no corrections.	6	21	9	6	8	50	3	Medium Level
Q21: Once I submit my writing output, I'm fine because my teacher will not read my output.	2	4	12	12	20	50	1.9	Low Level
Q22: No feedback and comments on my output.	3	11	17	9	10	50	2.5	Low Level

The information presented in Table 5 indicates that question number 19 obtained the highest ranking, as evidenced by its weighted mean of 4.2. This suggests that students perceived that their teacher's assigned automatic scores for their written work. On the other hand, question number 18 obtained a slightly lower weighted mean of 3.3, indicating that students felt that their written activities were not returned to them by the teacher. These findings imply that while students received scores for their writing assignments, they did not have the opportunity to review their work or receive feedback from the teacher.

Teachers give elaboration and suggestions to correct their writing works related to the word circled on the whiteboard. Furthermore, teachers allow students to identify their friends' writing on the whiteboard. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to speak their opinions regarding the writings of their friends who have errors. It attempts to increase students' confidence to share their ideas (Kepner, 1991). The underlying aim of teacher-provided feedback is to enhance students' proficiency in learning. In the context of writing, which entails a multifaceted process involving the organization of words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs, the task at hand is undeniably intricate. Consequently, feedback assumes a critical role as a potent element within the learning framework, as it serves to furnish students with invaluable instances for growth and improvement in their writing abilities.

Feedback serves as a crucial element in the process of learning; however, its universal efficacy is not without limitations. Dunning et al. (2004) presented an extensive monograph that delved into the inherent flaws of self-assessment, shedding light on the psychological basis underlying these deficiencies. This conclusion aligns with the recurring request from students for additional feedback to complement their self-evaluations. It is essential to incorporate practice patterns that furnish external information to augment personal assessments, as an abundance of evidence demonstrates the potential of such external feedback to enhance performance (Boehler et al., 2016). Another valuable form of feedback emerges from examinations, be they written or clinical, as they provide a distinct yet equally influential avenue for evaluation. Such external feedback falls under the broader classification of "desirable difficulties," a concept coined by Bjork. Importantly, the benefits derived from these learning strategies often contradict individuals' intuitions regarding the study conditions that optimize learning outcomes (Kornell & Son, 2009).

Furthermore, feedback assumes a critical role in the context of writing, an essential proficiency in the acquisition of the English language. According to Said (2018), proficient writing not only reinforces English vocabulary and grammar but also serves as a pedagogical tool for teachers and learners engaged in the process of teaching and learning English

writing skills. The provision of feedback during the writing process holds paramount importance in enhancing the quality of students' written compositions. The feedback bestowed upon them acts as an invaluable source of information, illuminating their strengths and weaknesses in writing, thereby facilitating their improvement. Additionally, a body of research indicates the efficacy of corrective feedback in augmenting the writing abilities of ESL/EFL students (Ferris, 1999).

In the research conducted by Bitchener (2008), direct corrective feedback is defined as the explicit provision of the accurate linguistic form or structure in close proximity to or above the identified language error. This form of feedback encompasses actions such as striking out unnecessary words/phrases/morphemes, inserting missing words/phrases/morphemes, or offering the appropriate form or structure. Additionally, direct corrective feedback can involve meta-linguistic explanations and/or oral discussions about language errors. On the other hand, indirect corrective feedback occurs when an incorrect form is highlighted without explicitly providing the correct form. Indicators for indirect corrective feedback can take various forms, such as underlining or circling the error, recording the number of errors in a particular line, or using a specific code to denote the location and type of error (Ellis, 2009). It is hypothesized that students who receive direct corrective feedback would exhibit higher writing quality compared to those who receive indirect corrective feedback, as direct feedback offers explicit correction of the errors.

4. Discussion

The collected data has revealed several key findings regarding the students' writing motivations and preferences. Firstly, it has been discovered that students are highly motivated to write because it provides them with a means of expressing their emotions and enables them to strive for self-improvement. Secondly, the data indicates that students are more active in writing when the classroom environment has proper ventilation, as it provides them with a sense of comfort and ease. Furthermore, the data also highlights the increasing reliance of students on grammar checkers as a tool to aid their writing. Thus, the data reveals that students prefer to receive automatic scoring from their teacher for their written assignments, which helps to streamline the evaluation process and provide students with a clear understanding of their performance. These findings can inform educators on how to better support and motivate students in their writing endeavors.

Based on the analyzed data, it is apparent that certain factors have a substantial impact on students' writing abilities. Specifically, various variables exert influence over students' writing styles. While students may possess the motivation to learn, they may encounter difficulties in constructing well-articulated sentences due to inadequate skills. It is noteworthy that achievement motivation encompasses a range of constructs, such as motivational beliefs, task values, goals, and achievement motives (Wigfield et al., 2016). Additionally, students face difficulties in using conjunctions and prepositions due to their reliance on application factors. This reliance poses a challenge to their writing skills in terms of syntax and grammar.

Moreover, a multitude of research studies has consistently shown that students who exhibit greater engagement, awareness, and a sense of comfort in their learning environments are more likely to actively participate in their educational pursuits and hold positive perceptions of their learning and performance outcomes (Tinnesz et al., 2006). Unfavorable room temperatures, such as extreme heat or cold, have a detrimental impact on students' concentration and performance. Barnard (2004) discovered that university Students' achievement is dependent on parental care and support, as parents tend to inspire, support, and care for their children. for their children's education and assist them in order for them to attain academic achievement

Lastly, the feedback system plays a critical role in fostering the development of students' writing abilities. Through the implementation of an automated scoring mechanism within the feedback system, teachers can provide students with a more precise assessment of their writing strengths and weaknesses, thereby facilitating their ongoing skill improvement. Furthermore, the feedback system involves teachers assigning scores to students automatically.

5. Conclusion & recommendations

Developing proficient writing skills is paramount for academic success and represents an essential competency that students must nurture. The primary aim of the study was to investigate the determinants influencing the writing proficiency of first-year Bachelor of Secondary in Education (BSED) students. These determinants encompassed various aspects, including the learners' motivation, classroom environment, reliance on writing applications, and feedback system. To accomplish this primary objective, several prerequisite goals were established, which involved identifying the underlying factors and comprehending their correlations with students' writing aptitude. The research

methodology employed in this study was descriptive in nature, aiming to provide a comprehensive account of the observed phenomena.

The insights obtained from this study will serve as valuable resources for academic administrators and college instructors in assessing and evaluating the current proficiency levels of first-year BSED students. This evaluation will enable them to conduct meaningful reviews and potentially implement revisions to enhance the student's current standing. Furthermore, the study's outcomes will assist in formulating effective strategies and approaches to promote comprehensive and lasting learning experiences. By providing instructors with a deeper understanding of the various factors influencing students' writing skills, the gathered data will equip them with the necessary knowledge to address these factors effectively. Additionally, the study's results will provide students with valuable insights into the factors impacting their writing skills, presenting them with comprehensive guidelines on how to navigate these influences. It is expected that the findings of this study will also serve as a valuable reference for future researchers who wish to explore related topics using alternative methodologies, such as experimental studies aimed at enhancing students' writing skills.

The writing abilities of students are significantly influenced by the aforementioned factors, and it is apparent that various variables shape their writing styles. Despite their motivation to learn, students encounter challenges when constructing sentences. It is important to note that achievement motivation is not a singular concept but comprises multiple constructs, including motivational beliefs, task values, goals, and achievement motives (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010).

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. We confirm that this research was conducted in an unbiased and impartial manner, without any financial or personal relationships that could potentially influence the integrity or objectivity of the study findings.

Statement of informed consent

All participants involved in this study provided informed consent prior to their participation. They were fully informed about the purpose and nature of the research, the procedures involved, any potential risks or benefits, and their rights as participants. Participants were assured of their confidentiality and the anonymity of their responses. Their voluntary participation in this study indicates their understanding of the research aims and their willingness to contribute to the data collection process.

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