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The Case of English for Specific Purposes on Academic Writing Difficulties of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students

Kathy P. Maglalarang^{1*}

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the case of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) on academic writing difficulties of hospitality and tourism management students. This study used a qualitative approach upon a case study design because it deals with the study of an individual language learner. This study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The respondents of this study were ten hospitality management students and ten tourism students from the College of Business and Management. The researcher used an interview guide as the main data-gathering instrument supported by documentary analysis. Content analysis was used in interpreting the gathered data. Results indicated that hospitality and tourism management students performed poorly in writing because they had low self-efficacy toward writing. The majority of the students had little courage to spell words correctly, they had little confidence to put thoughts into writing and had much fear in writing a composition. Moreover, based on documentary analysis, students struggle to organize and use writing mechanics. Students encounter numerous writing problems regarding the correct use of grammatical rules, and they find writing in a second language quite tricky.

INTRODUCTION

Students at the tertiary level place a high value on competency in various language abilities. For any school-leaver seeking further education, the number of reading materials to cover and writing projects to complete is overwhelming. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) studies, students face rigorous tasks of learning subject-matter through English (Kavaliauskienė, 2010). The foundation of ESP is unknown vocabulary and subject-matter knowledge. Students must develop fluency in reading, writing, and translating English into their mother tongue and vice versa to succeed (Darginavičienė & Navickienė, 2015).

University students must cover a massive amount of reading material and submit numerous assignments and must be fluent in multiple languages. Students in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) encounter difficult hurdles of learning subject matter through English. The foundation of ESP is unknown vocabulary and subject-matter knowledge (Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė, 2010). However, a growing professional interest in teaching writing skills has been reflected in a number of publications in this field since the 1980s. Linguists and teachers are particularly interested in issues with the teaching of writing and study findings on the writing of non-native speakers, who believe that one of the most valuable and crucial abilities is the capacity to write precisely, briefly, and clearly. In actuality, Asiah *et al.* (2020) affirmed that students continue to experience writing issues and it is necessary to investigate why this occurred.

It is claimed that writing is without a doubt the most challenging talent to master for second language learners. Planning, drafting, and revising abilities must be developed

in order for the finished output to be appropriate for both the purpose of the writing and the intended readership. Furthermore, writing is a tough and laborious job that normally requires time for contemplation and rewriting and a tranquil environment, neither of which is usually available in the classroom.

The productive talent of writing is not the same as the productive skill of speaking. Writing must be coherent and unified. Coherent writing makes sense because it allows you to follow the progression of ideas and statements. Boudiaf (2013) stated that coherence is an important notion that encompasses a wide range of textual discourse properties that language learners must grasp. Cohesion is a more technical issue because we are focusing on the numerous linguistic ways of connecting concepts across phrases and sentences here. There are certain writing conventions that must be followed. Such rules and practices are neither written down nor easily defined. The rules for writing extend from computer users' 'netiquette' to acknowledged patterns or customs in various genres. It denotes a different level of formality, which is frequently referred to as 'distance' or 'closeness.' There are several reasons why students find language production difficult: students lack the basic language required to complete a task; there is no spontaneity in writing; and the topic or genre may present some challenges. Furthermore, traditions in one's home language are frequently incompatible with those in a second language. The capacity to summarize is an essential component of writing. Summarizing is extremely useful in education: students must sum up reading assignments, lecture notes, publications, and so daily. Perhaps the most crucial writing talent is composing a good summary.

¹ Mindoro State University, Philippines

* Corresponding author's e-mail: kathy.maglalarang@minsu.edu.ph

Students must be able to summarize before they may succeed at other types of writing. In addition, Awadalbari (2015) stressed that students must be fluent in their mother tongue language, including grammar, vocabulary, and style. On the other hand, self-efficacy in writing is defined as students' capacity to carry out writing assignments and, more particularly, the ability to build English paragraphs in the study's setting. The current research focuses on self-efficacy in the context of writing. According to Bandura (2013), self-efficacy affects a person's likelihood of success and motivates them to accomplish a certain goal. Self-efficacy has an impact on behavior because it motivates individuals to put in extra effort and persevere in the face of challenges, which leads to successful outcomes. A person with poor self-efficacy is more likely to put up less effort and give up readily when faced with difficulty, which results in less success. The pursuits that people make are influenced by their sense of self-efficacy. While someone who is unsure of their abilities may avoid situations that seem to be above their capabilities, someone who is confident in their abilities will prefer to engage in challenging activities.

Writing is a talent that needs more attention while studying a language and is necessary for the English Curriculum in the twenty-first century (2019). One of the productive language skills that can be a difficult problem for instructors and students to master is writing because there are various factors to consider. Acquired access to skill is a sophisticated ability that can be tough to master at times. Learners should be required to demonstrate not only mastery but also creativity, not only grammar, but also information exchange and writing elements. Furthermore, writing is the hardest of the macro-skills. The problem isn't just that it's complicated in terms of producing and organizing ideas, but also in terms of converting the ideas into words that can be read. In conclusion, writing appears to be difficult to implement (2016).

However, because it requires various processes to be finished in a timely manner, it is a challenging skill to acquire and a challenging project to complete. Communicating ideas, thoughts, and feelings are abilities through writing. Even if it seems easy when you think about it, writing frequently ends in scattered and fragmented content on paper. This usually causes miscommunication or conveys the wrong message. Thoennes (2016) revealed that two out of every five students with learning disabilities have writing objectives in their individualized education plans, which may be connected to their reading challenges. Students with learning challenges are more likely to originate ideas than to plan, organize, or review their work. They need to be taught certain writing processes in order to correct these shortcomings and improve as writers.

Gardner *et al.* (2018) discussed that writing is a critical skill for graduate students, but few studies in the literature describe how it is supported in the training of graduating students. This study aims to investigate how structured self-efficacy and writing treatments affected the caliber of students' writing. Writing is challenging because it

requires much more than simply clear syntax. In addition to mastering sentence structure, learners must increase their vocabulary and develop other essential writing abilities. As it stands, students must work very hard to hone and grow their writing abilities. One of the main responsibilities of language teachers is to raise students' self-efficacy in order to increase cognitive, behavioral, and motivational involvement.

Moreover, university students typically begin studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in their first year before acquiring subject matter for their eventual career. The foundation of the ESP is unknown lexis and diverse subject-matter notions. To succeed, students must gain expertise in reading professional materials and writing on relevant subject matters (Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė, 2010). Students are exposed to a variety of writing exercises in school. These activities aid in the development of students' communication abilities. Students' vocabulary expands as they write more, and they are better able to explain topics clearly and effectively to others. On the other hand, self-efficacy in writing might be particularly difficult for hospitality and tourism students. Because hospitality and tourism students have a low sense of self-efficacy in writing, they tend to avoid situations where they need to prepare written documents. However, writing activities are all crucial aspects of learning.

The researcher observed that most hospitality and tourism management students tend to have negative attitudes toward writing. Notably, these students have already taken their ESP course during their first year in college. However, majority of them can't write a business letter and find it difficult to choose correct words and construct simple sentences. Thus, within this context, the researcher was driven to determine the hospitality and tourism management students' self-efficacy and writing ability. Writing is an ability that is also associated in life, not just in school, and it should be practiced in normal language and ESP. The novelty of this study is that it particularly involved hospitality and tourism management students who are not typical participants of such a study. There is still a lack of research on the use and efficacy of the ESP method in addressing the unique writing challenges faced by students studying hospitality and tourist management, despite the expanding volume of literature on the topic. While studies have shown that ESP can be a useful pedagogical strategy for improving students' writing abilities in general, there is a need to look into how it might be applied to students studying hospitality and tourism management, who face particular difficulties in their writing assignments. In addition, little is known about the attitudes that students studying hospitality and tourism management have toward writing, which is a crucial factor that may affect their motivation and level of engagement during the writing process. The purpose of this study is to close this gap by examining the efficiency of ESP in addressing the unique writing challenges that hospitality and tourist management students face as well as by gaining an awareness of their

writing attitudes. As such, this study aimed to assess the case of English for Specific Purposes on academic writing difficulties of hospitality and tourism management students in the College of Business and Management. Specifically, this study seeks to determine the attitudes of hospitality and tourism management students toward writing and their writing difficulties.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Sampling

This study used a qualitative approach upon a case study design because it deals with the study of an individual language learner. Thus, a case study focuses on a particular situation or phenomenon; in this case, the event is the case of English for Specific Purposes on academic writing difficulties of hospitality and tourism management students in the College of Business and Management. The participants in the study were fourth-year Bachelor of Hospitality Management and Bachelor of Tourism Management' students enrolled in the second semester of the academic year (AY) 2021–2022 at the College of Business and Management. The researcher targeted fourth year students because they have already taken the ESP course during their first year in college. Further, ten (10) hospitality management students and ten (10) tourism management students were randomly selected as participants of the study. The researcher interviewed personally to ensure that all relevant data would be gathered.

Research Instrument

After carefully examining the literature review related to self-efficacy towards the writing of students, the study used an interview guide with an open-ended question. After obtaining the information, the researcher started drafting the interview guide, and it was submitted to the experts in the College of Business and Management Department for suggestions and comments. The interview guide was then submitted to three experts, specifically professors with doctoral degrees in Hospitality/Tourism Management, for verification of the accuracy of the items. Then, the researcher incorporated and modified the instrument based on comments and suggestions to review and validate the content of the interview guide. The interview guide was divided into two (2) main domains as follows:

1. The first part seeks to determine the attitudes of hospitality and tourism management students towards writing; and
2. The second part examines the hospitality and tourism management students' writing difficulties.

Data Collection

The data were gathered from ten (10) hospitality management students and ten (10) tourism management students who had a second-semester enrollment during the academic year 2021–2022 at the College of Business and Management. Personal interviews were conducted with the student participants in a closed room. Content analysis was used in interpreting the gathered data.

Ethical Consideration

The respondents were briefed and given important information on academic writing prior to the study's conduct. The respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the survey through an informed consent. This study was not required to obtain institutional approval. The information collected was handled with secrecy and anonymity. All information were held and treated with the utmost confidentiality in accordance with RA 10173, also known as Data Privacy Act, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality and avoid the potential for harm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview transcript, hospitality and tourism management students have negative attitudes towards writing. They hate writing because they believe that they don't need to write anything once they're in their field of work already, and they have no adequate knowledge or exposure to writing. As future industry workers, they think that writing is unimportant in their career; hence, most don't take subjects that require writing seriously. This is evident in the response of R10:

"Basically, writing is something I am not fond of because I am really not into it. As you see, I am a tourism student, and I don't think writing is immensely needed in my field. I believe that oral communication skills are more needed than writing...."

Another participant (R12) admitted that there were no academic writing tasks in their subjects:

"I hate academic writing because I am not good at writing. I haven't improved my writing skills, I guess, because most of my teachers' exams were objective, and our typical tasks are practical...."

This implies that hospitality and tourism management students believe that writing is not needed in their field because they do not have much exposure in the classroom in terms of writing. Alfaki (2015) stressed that the lack of free writing possibilities affects students' writing inventiveness. Still, sadly, most instructors do not exercise this habit in their classes, and thus the consequences are unfavorable for various learners growing their academic writing skills.

Some affirmed that they hate writing because they prefer speaking instead of writing. This is evident in the response of R1:

"I really hate writing due to the fact that I'm not really into it; at the same time, I always wanted to do oral as means of communication...."

Interestingly, five participants of the study recounted that being a tourism student does not require academic writing skills, as evident in the response of R15:

"Being a tourism student, I always think that we just need to be pleasing, our personality, and we have to be good in speaking. Academic writing is not usually prioritized in our field, maybe, because we've known the fact that, perhaps, in the future, our job will not really require us to write...."

This also indicates that most of the hospitality and

tourism students like oral communication better. This may be attributed to the findings shown in the study of Zare and Othman (2015) that students thought speaking was a good learning opportunity. Oral communication helped them develop their critical thinking and spoken skills. According to the students, other benefits of the discussions included comprehending the course subject, building confidence, overcoming stage fright, and enhancing teamwork abilities.

When asked about their writing difficulties, most students had little courage to spell words correctly. This denotes that they have little confidence in spelling words correctly. Students find spelling difficult, and they tend to avoid writing because they have trouble with spelling. This is evident in the response of R5:

“I hate writing because it takes a lot of time to express my thoughts for circumstances. Also, my handwriting is not that excellent and cannot be easily read. Writing does a lot of work compared to speaking out through your voice. You will write it and then raise it, and it will repeat. Lastly, I don’t have confidence in my spelling....”

Ahmed argued that spelling is seen as a critical component of reading and writing. Many academics believe that spellings aid in learning to read and write correctly; this practice is especially beneficial for young children. Spelling errors are also thought to be key issues for pupils learning writing skills, particularly at the school level. For Ahmed, most students cannot utilize appropriate words in their writing due to a lack of vocabulary, and these challenges impede their academic writing learning.

Hospitality and tourism management students also have little confidence to put their thoughts into writing and have much fear in writing a composition. What contribute to their fear of writing is the harsh feedback of their teachers on their outputs. Four participants of the study narrated that their afraid their teachers would judge their writing outputs:

“Usually, when our teachers give us writing tasks like essays, and we’re required to use English, I am unsure if I can write all my thoughts correctly. I can’t think clearly, and I can’t write everything I want to say because I am afraid that my grammar will be wrong and our teacher might announce in class that I can’t compose correct sentences. Sometimes, some teachers give tough criticisms, which hurt my feelings because it makes me think I am not doing well in class....”

This may be associated with the findings shown in the study of Ahmadi (2019), who revealed that, for many years, choosing the most prudent and effective method for providing corrective feedback to language learners has been one of the most pivotal concerns for language instructors. For many teachers, it has always been a question of whether to give or not to give corrective feedback to English language learners. If a positive response is supplied to such a question, the timing and place of such input should be provided. Furthermore, how and on what basis one can judge the success of approaches for corrective feedback is an

important problem to address. Giving language learners’ remedial feedback is thought to be both beneficial and ineffective. Given that learning grammar has proven to be more demanding and challenging than other aspects of learning English, teachers must present alternative ways to provide a more pleasurable and amusing environment for students. In this case, offering the most effective corrective feedback technique.

Writing can be difficult for some people since so many parts need to come together. This is evident in the response of R3 and R11:

“I hate writing because I can’t easily find the right word/s to use to convey a thought. It is challenging for me to organize the flow of thoughts, and putting them on paper is laborious....”

“As a student, I hate writing because it makes me think. Worse than that, you must organize and express those thoughts carefully. I hate writing because my thoughts and feelings are to be written there, and everyone will see....”

This indicates that students have a hard time constructing sentences and paragraphs to produce an output. This is evident in the response of R1:

“I also hate Writing because it makes me think, and I have a hard time recognizing thoughts and expressing them clearly to everyone, using the appropriate words or sentences so that everyone can easily understand....”

They make several grammatical errors in their exams and class assessments. This makes it difficult for them to write well and achieve good results on subjective tests. This is evident in the response of R5:

“I hate writing because it takes a lot of time to express my thoughts for particular circumstances, also, my handwritten is not that good and cannot be easily read. Writing does a lot of work compared to speaking out through your voice. You will write it, and then erase it, and it will repeat. Lastly, I don’t have confidence in my grammar....”

Moreover, based on documentary analysis, students struggle to organize and use mechanics of writing. Many students feel writing takes too long. This indicates that hospitality and tourism management students are not buoyant in their technical writing skills. They struggle with organization and writing mechanics. Many hospitality and tourism management students believe that writing takes an inordinate amount of time. Writing can be difficult for some because there are so many sub-components to consider. Students face several writing challenges involving the right application of grammatical principles. Inappropriate knowledge of grammatical rules has an impact on the effectiveness of learners’ writing. This can be linked with the findings of Sari (2014) who revealed 108 mechanics errors, including 28 punctuation errors, 65 capitalization errors, and 15 spelling errors. The percentages are: 25.9% punctuation issue, 60.2% capitalization issue, and 13.9% spelling issue. The most prevalent issue was, briefly, a capitalization issue. The author claimed that students in junior high or senior

high school as well as college students first created that difficulty in writing, namely in mechanics. Punctuation marks are thought to be particularly important in academic writing, according to Mohammad *et al.* (2020). Punctuation markings are thought to be particularly important in understanding the meanings of written text. Capital letters are used before the start of any essential topic, words, or even headings. However, many students struggle with employing capitalization correctly (2019). Similarly, students frequently have trouble using grammar rules correctly in their work. Lack of sufficient grammatical understanding impacts learners' ability to write effectively. In their examinations and class assignments, they frequently commit grammatical errors. This makes it more difficult for them to write well and to perform well on subjective assessments. Students also lack confidence in their ability to express themselves in writing. This may be attributed to the findings shown in the study of Novariana *et al.* (2018) who talked about the similar challenges that students face while writing in a second language. Students' grammatical and syntactical errors are immediately seen in their writing content at various levels in class. Sentence construction errors are also common errors that students make in their writing. For hospitality and tourism management students, writing in a second language and using acceptable terms appears to be quite difficult. This is consistent with the findings of Farooq *et al.* (2020), who revealed that students were having a lot of trouble writing in the English language because of a lack of vocabulary, poor spelling, interference from their native language, and poor comprehension of grammatical structure. Regarding writing in English, girls have it more complicated than boys. From the primary school level to higher levels of education, the strategy should be applied based on identification, inquiry, and answers to language-related real-life problems.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results indicated that hospitality and tourism management students performed poorly in writing because they had low self-efficacy toward writing and little exposure to academic writing. When asked about their writing difficulties, most students had little courage to spell words correctly, had little confidence to put thoughts into writing, and had much fear in writing a composition. Moreover, based on documentary analysis, students struggle to organize and use the mechanics of writing. Students encounter numerous writing problems regarding the correct use of grammatical rules, and they find essay in a second language quite tricky. The development of all writing skills should be prioritized because insufficient writing skills have been found to have an impact on the other factors that contribute to students' dread of writing compositions. Similarly, because students expressed tremendous difficulties in that domain, vocabulary enrichment should be a primary goal for teachers. Teachers must exercise caution when evaluating students' compositions because feedback can

elicit a range of emotions; emphasis must be placed on reading books as a means of helping students enrich their vocabulary and improve their skills; and teachers should educate both themselves and their students about writing apprehension and its consequences. Similar research involving students of other industrial courses, may be conducted by future researchers.

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