

Language learning strategies and writing aptitude of the international students

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Abstract

This is a descriptive quantitative study that determined the language learning strategies (LLS) and writing aptitude of 30 college international students in La Trinidad, Benguet and Baguio City, Philippines. The data were gathered using survey-questionnaire and guided expository essay writing with rubrics subjected to treatment of data. The findings revealed that : (1) Social Strategies are always used however Metacognitive, Cognitive, Compensatory, Memory and Affective Strategies are often used by the international students; (2) the international students' level of writing aptitude is generally good and they could write meaningful and organized essays along : content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary; (3) the extent of use of language learning strategies does not directly affect the level of writing aptitude; and (4) exposure to reading materials does not guarantee significant impact on the international students' writing aptitude level and exposure to writing activities does not significantly affect their writing aptitude level. Based on the conclusions, the following are recommended: (1) Language Learning Strategies (LLS) Workshops may be conducted to students to help improve their LLS used and exposure; (2) teachers must provide interactive guided reading and writing activities to help enhance students' writing aptitude; (3) studies must be conducted to determine the relationship between extent of use of LLS and level of writing aptitude to validate the study's findings; and (4) curriculum planners and developers may add more guided interactive writing courses to ensure exposure to reading and writing activities in the planning, development and construction of instructional materials for quality instruction.

Keywords: language learning strategies, writing aptitude, international students, reading materials, writing activities

Language learning strategies and writing aptitude of the international students

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

For effective language learning and expression-particularly written aptitude, the use of strategies is necessary. Language learning strategies are among the factors that help determine how well students learn and use a second or foreign language – may it be spoken or written. According to Oxford (1996) as cited by Al-Natour (2012) language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques used by students to enhance their own learning. In a classroom where students of diverse nationalities are found, it is quite unlikely that the language learning strategies used are the same nor is their language aptitude the same.

A number of researchers have arrived at the premise that the language learning strategies of international students vary in the same manner that their writing aptitude levels differ. These researches showed that there exists direct relationship between the two variables. The language aptitude as indicated by spoken and written tasks of 25 international students of a University in Mexico were revealed by Dumbuya (2000) as cited by Carullo (2007) as related with various factors.

Lu (2007) investigated on the relationship of learning strategies in reading and language achievement of Chinese non-English majors. The study revealed that memory and metacognitive strategies significantly predicted the language achievement of the learners. However, Liao (2009) explored the role of writing translation among Taiwanese students' learning in terms of beliefs and learning strategies and they showed a moderately high level of use of writing translation as a learning strategy and used a wide variety of strategies in writing translation including cognitive, memory, compensatory and affective strategies. In addition, foreign language majors and more proficient students exposed negative beliefs about writing translation and less use of it as compared to their non-foreign language major and less proficient peers in language learning and writing aptitude. Moreover, Beckham (2000) as cited by Carullo (2007) posits that international students are becoming rapidly a stronghold in the growing demand for a citizenry which thinks and with multi-cultural training to achieve this.

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) 2018 thru CMO No. 1 series of 2000 issued a policy to internationalize higher education in order to facilitate the development of a human resource base that will be responsive to the demands of the twenty-first century to foster a vibrant exchange of cultures to peaceful living within the global community: Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese and other nationalities alike. It is in this light that Basilio (2010) conducted the study with a training on Cognitive Learning Strategies (CLS) of Filipino students. The CLS training was directed to the improvement of students' writing proficiency along content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics based on the CLS used – summarizing, translating and repeating. Moreover, this present study on the language learning strategies and writing aptitude of international students in higher educational institutions in Baguio and Benguet is likewise conducted.

1.2 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Language learning strategies - Language learning strategies (LLS) according to Williams and Burden (1997) as cited by Capistrano (2009) are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning. When students are involved in a learning task, they have several resources which they use in different ways to finish or solve the task–referred to as process of learning strategy. This is also called learning skills, learning-to-learn skills, thinking skills, problem skills or the methods which learners use to intake, store and retrieve during the learning process. Further, Williams and Burden (1997) as cited by Waelateh and Peramal

(2014) emphasize that LLS perform significant functions in language learning. Moreover, these LLS are cognitive, metacognitive, memory, compensatory, affective and social strategies.

Writing aptitude - Writing Aptitude is the ability to use written language and the general language ability of vocabulary and grammar (Bachman, 1990 as cited by Bayanes, 2016).

Factors affecting writing aptitude

Exposure to Reading Materials. Reid (1993) as cited by Mede (2014) on exposure to reading materials posits that the research shows correlations existing between effective readers and effective writers. It is how often learners are exposed to reading materials.

Exposure to Writing Activities. Writing activities include paragraph, essay, written speech, book report/review, business letter or research paper students are exposed to every now and then in college. Moreover, these writing activities are in line with the language learning task in school as requirement, basis for performance and evaluation of students.

2. Methodology

Research Design - This is a descriptive quantitative study on the language learning strategies and writing aptitude of the international students.

Population and Locale of the Study - The study was conducted to 30 international students enrolled in the undergraduate degree programs of Benguet State University (BSU), King’s College of the Philippines (KCP), and Philippine Nazarene College (PNC) of La Trinidad, Benguet and the University of the Cordilleras (UC) in Baguio City, Philippines. Total enumeration was used due to the limited number of students.

Table 1
Profile of international students

Country	Nationality	University College	No. of Students
South Korea	<i>Korean</i>	BSU, UC, KCP	5
Timor-Leste	<i>Timorese</i>	BSU	4
China	<i>Chinese</i>	UC	3
Equatorial Guinea	<i>Equatorial Guinean</i>	BSU, UC	3
Myanmar	<i>Burmese</i>	BSU, PNC, KCP	3
Ghana	<i>Ghanaian</i>	UC	2
Yemen	<i>Yemeni</i>	UC	2
Nigeria	<i>Nigerian</i>	BSU, UC	2
Japan	<i>Japanese</i>	UC	1
Pakistan	<i>Pakistani</i>	UC	1
Rwanda	<i>Rwandese</i>	UC	1
Somalia	<i>Somalian</i>	UC	1
Chad	<i>Chadian</i>	UC	1
United States of America	<i>American</i>	BSU	1
Total		30	

Data Gathering Instruments - The Survey–Questionnaire is composed of 2 parts and answered problems 1, 2 and 4. Part I is a Survey on the exposure to reading materials and exposure to writing activities of the international students to determine if these 2 make a difference in their writing aptitude level. Moreover, Part II is a Questionnaire on Language Learning Strategies (LLS)(SILL,1990) and Song’s (2005) List of LLS to identify the language learning strategies used by international students, their extent of use in relation to their writing aptitude level and if the extent of use of the language learning strategies has relationship with the writing aptitude level of the international students.

Also, the 3 Guided–Essay Writing tasks on definition, (“Educational Technology”), cause and effect (“Global Warming”) and process (“Combatting Global Terrorism”) with Essay Writing Rubrics adapted and

modified from Longwood's (2007) University Essay Writing Rubrics for evaluation determined problem 2 on the writing aptitude level of the international students along: content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary.

Data Gathering Procedure - Data were collected, tallied, tabulated and subjected to treatment of data. The Survey-Questionnaire underwent statistical treatment by the researcher's statistician and the 3 essay writing outputs by the international students were evaluated by 3 English Writing Professors using Longwood's (2007) University Essay Writing Rubrics.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Extent of Use of the Language Learning Strategies by the International Students

Table 2 shows the overall summary of the extent of use of language learning strategies (LLS) of the international students. Findings revealed that the highest extent of use of LLS by the international students were Social Strategies (LLS 6,12,18,24,30) with a total of 649, mean of 4.322, extent of use 'always' and described as 'very high' followed by Metacognitive Strategies (LLS 2,8,14,20,26) with a total of 624, mean of 4.156 'often' used and described 'high', second, then Cognitive Strategies (LLS 1,7,13,19,25) third, with a total of 615, mean of 4.098, 'often' used and described 'high', Compensatory Strategies (LLS 4,10,16,22,28) fourth, with a total of 552, mean of 3.678, 'sometimes' used and 'high' followed by Memory Strategies (LLS 3,9,15,21,27) with a total of 528, mean of 3.518, 'often' used then finally Affective Strategies (LLS 5,11,17,23,29) with a total of 519, mean of 3.458, extent of use as 'often' and described 'high', respectively. The total of LLS used by the international students is 3,487 with the general weighted mean (GWM) of 3.871, extent of use 'often' and described 'high.'

Table 2

Extent of use of language learning strategies (LLS) summary

Language Learning Strategies	Total	Mean	EU	D
Social strategies	649	4.322	A	VH
Metacognitive strategies	624	4.156	O	H
Cognitive strategies	615	4.098	O	H
Compensatory strategies	552	3.678	O	H
Memory strategies	528	3.518	O	H
Affective strategies	519	3.458	O	H
Total	3,487	3.871	O	H

The findings of this study corroborate with Murcia (2006) as cited by Florague (2010) affirms that language learning strategies are useful when the learners employ them effectively and link them with other relevant strategies that fulfill the conditions to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, self-directed, effective and transferable to new situations. Moreover, Williams and Burden (1997) as reported by Capistrano (2009) attest that language learning strategies are in use when students are involved in a learning task, have several resources which they use in different ways to accomplish or solve the learning task. These may be learning skills, learning-to-learn skills, thinking skills and problem skills. Add to this, Zhu (2010) emphasizes that the foremost priority of today's college educators should be to mold lifelong learners provided with the ability to readily acquire new skills necessary and compatible to meet the challenges and demands of the changing times.

3.2 Level of Writing Aptitude of the International Students

Level of writing aptitude of the international students along content

Table 3 shows the writing aptitude of the international students along content. Findings revealed that the international students had an overall 'good' writing aptitude along content with an equivalent of 3.27 on the 3 essays (Essay A, B, C) written with at least 350 words. In Essay A, ("Educational Technology") the international students had a total of 97.57 GWA equivalent score 3.25, 'good' while Essay B ("Global Warming: Its Causes

and Effects”) had a total of 99.58, equivalent to 3.31, ‘good’ and Essay C (“Combatting Global Warming”) with a total of 97.57 with GWA score equivalent of 3.25 ‘good.’ The writing aptitude of the international students along content had the mean of 3.27 ‘good.’ This means that the students had knowledge on the topics “Educational Technology” (Essay A), “Global Warming: Its Causes and Effects” (Essay B) and “Combatting Global Terrorism” (Essay C) asked of them to write about.

Table 3

Level of writing aptitude of the international students along content

Student	Essay A	Essay B	Essay C	Total	E	DE
1	3.66	3	4	10.66	3.55	VG
2	3.66	3.33	2.33	9.32	3.10	G
3	3.66	3.33	3.33	10.32	3.44	G
4	4	3	3	10	3.33	G
5	4.66	4	4.66	13.32	4.44	VG
6	5	5	5	15	5	E
7	4.66	4.33	5	13.99	4.66	E
8	3.66	3.33	4	10.99	3.66	VG
9	2.66	4.66	4	11.32	3.77	VG
10	3.33	3.33	2.66	9.32	3.10	G
11	3	3.33	2.66	8.99	2.99	G
12	3	3.66	3.33	9.99	3.33	G
13	3.33	2.66	3.33	9.32	3.10	G
14	3	3.66	3.33	9.99	3.33	G
15	3.33	3.33	3.33	9.99	3.33	G
16	2	3	2.33	7.33	2.44	F
17	2	1.66	2	5.66	1.88	F
18	2.66	2	2.66	7.32	2.44	F
19	3	3.33	2.66	8.99	2.99	G
20	3.66	4.33	4	11.99	3.99	VG
21	2.33	3	2.66	7.99	2.66	G
22	2	3	3.33	8.33	2.77	G
23	3	3	3	9	3	G
24	2.33	2.33	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
25	3.33	3.33	3.66	10.32	3.44	G
26	3	2.66	1.66	7.32	2.44	F
27	2.66	2.66	3	8.32	2.77	G
28	3.33	2.33	3	8.66	2.88	G
29	5	5	4.66	14.66	4.88	E
30	2.66	4	2.66	9.32	3.10	G
Total	97.57	99.58	97.57	294.72	98.10	Good
	3.25	3.31	3.25	9.81	3.27	

The findings imply that the international students had knowledge, understanding, mastery, awareness, exposure and experience in the three essay topics written about indicated by the mean of 3.27. These were Essay A : “Educational Technology” on Definition; Essay B : “Global Warming :Its Causes and Effects on Cause and Effect; and Essay C: “Combatting Global Terrorism” Process. Regardless of countries in the world the international students came from, they were generally better than ‘good’ along content.

Level of writing aptitude of the international students along organization

Table 4 shows the writing aptitude of the international students along organization. The findings disclosed that the international students had an overall total of 313.68 with general weighted average (GWA)score of 3.48 and descriptive equivalent of ‘good’ in the 3 essays (A,B,C) written. For Essay A, (“Educational Technology”), the international students had a total score of 123.54 and GWA score of 4.118 equivalent to ‘very good’, for Essay B (“Global Warming: Its Causes and Effects”), the students had a total of 94.56 with GWA score of 3.152, ‘good’ and Essay C (“Combatting Global Warming”), the students had a total score of 95.58, GWA score of 3.186, ‘good.’ Moreover, the mean of 4.118, indicates that students are more organized in essay A which tackled on “Educational Technology” because this is their generation, they are exposed to it everyday and experience its impact everywhere.

Table 4*Level of writing aptitude of international students along organization*

Student	Essay A	Essay B	Essay C	Total	E	DE
1	3.66	3.33	4	10.99	3.66	VG
2	3.33	3.33	2.33	8.99	2.99	G
3	4	3	3.33	10.33	3.44	G
4	4	2.33	3	9.33	3.11	G
5	4.66	4	4.66	13.32	4.44	VG
6	4.66	4.66	5	14.32	4.77	E
7	5	4.33	4.66	13.99	4.66	E
8	3.66	3	4	10.66	3.55	VG
9	2.66	4.66	4	11.32	3.77	VG
10	2.66	3	2.33	7.99	2.66	G
11	2.66	3	2.66	8.32	2.77	G
12	3	3.66	3.33	9.99	3.33	G
13	3.33	2.66	3	8.99	2.99	G
14	3	3.66	3.33	9.99	3.33	G
15	3.33	3	3	9.33	3.11	G
16	2.33	2.66	2	6.99	2.33	F
17	2.33	1.66	2	5.99	1.99	F
18	2.66	2.33	2.66	7.65	2.55	G
19	2.66	2.66	2.66	7.98	2.66	G
20	3.33	4.33	4	11.66	3.88	VG
21	2	2.66	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
22	2	3	3.66	8.99	2.99	G
23	2.33	3.33	3	8.66	2.88	G
24	2.33	1.66	2.33	6.32	2.10	F
25	3	3	3.66	9.66	3.22	G
26	2.33	2.66	1.66	6.65	2.21	F
27	3	2.66	3	8.66	2.88	G
28	2.66	2.33	3	7.99	2.66	G
29	5	5	4.66	14.66	4.88	E
30	2.33	3	2.33	7.66	2.55	G
Total	123.54	94.56	95.580	313.68	104.4	Good
	4.118	3.152	3.186	10.456	3.48	

The results of this study corroborate with the study of Tuginay (2014) that ESL/EFL learners' have difficulties in essay writing along organization, specifically in writing the introductory, body and concluding paragraphs. He dwelt on essay writing organization difficulties instead since the study sought to discover the teaching strategies used by ESL teachers to resolve these organization essay writing difficulties.

Along grammar and mechanics

Table 5 shows the level of writing aptitude of the international students along grammar and mechanics. The international students had an overall total of 253.11, equivalent to the general weighted average (GWA) score of 2.81 and descriptive equivalent of 'good' in grammar and mechanics in essays A, B and C. For Essay A ("Educational Technology"), the international students had a total score of 83.93 with a GWA of 2.797, 'good' on Essay B ("Global Warming: Its Causes and Effects") the students had a total score of 84.92 with GWA equivalent of 2.88 'good' and for Essay C ("Combating Global Terrorism") the students had a total score of 84.55, equivalent to GWA of 2.81 'good'.

The results of this study affirm both international and local studies showing low writing performance of students. These persistent errors in composition are evident along sentence structure, spelling and subject-verb agreement observed among the international students. This study is similar with Sildon (2013) and Bayanes (2016) among others. Also, in consonance with Reid (1993), the writing class is a context for consolidating students' command of English for practicing grammar in her language-Based Writing Approach. Thus, the goals are centered around grammatical accuracy and correctness while the focus is on the ability of students to grammatical items as verb tenses, articles and coordinating conjunctions.

Table 5*Level of writing aptitude of international students along grammar and mechanics*

Student	Essay A	Essay B	Essay C	Total	E	DE
1	3.33	3	3	9.33	3.11	G
2	3.33	3	2.66	8.99	2.99	G
3	3.33	2.33	2.66	8.32	2.77	G
4	3	2.33	2.33	7.66	2.55	G
5	4.33	3.66	3.66	11.65	3.88	VG
6	5	4.66	4.33	13.99	4.66	E
7	4	4	3.66	11.66	3.88	VG
8	3.33	2.66	3.66	9.65	3.21	G
9	3	4	3	10	3.33	G
10	2	2.66	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
11	2	2.66	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
12	2.33	3.33	3	8.66	2.88	G
13	2.33	2	2.66	6.99	2.33	F
14	3	3	2.66	8.66	2.88	G
15	3.33	2.33	2.33	7.99	2.66	G
16	2	2.33	2	6.33	2.11	F
17	1.66	2	2	5.66	1.88	F
18	2.33	2	2.33	6.66	2.22	F
19	2.66	3	2.66	8.32	2.77	G
20	2.33	3	2.66	8.66	2.88	G
21	2	3	3.33	7.66	2.55	G
22	2	2.33	3.66	7.99	2.66	G
23	2.66	2.66	2.33	7.65	2.55	G
24	2	1.66	1.66	5.32	1.77	F
25	3	3	3.33	9.33	3.11	G
26	2.33	2.33	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
27	2.33	2.33	3	7.66	2.55	G
28	2.33	2.33	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
29	4.66	4.33	4.33	13.32	4.44	VG
30	2	3	2.33	7.33	2.44	F
Total	83.93	84.92	84.55	253.11	84.30	Good
	2.797	2.88	2.81	8.437	2.81	

Level of writing aptitude of the international students along vocabulary

Table 6 shows the level of writing aptitude of the international students along vocabulary. The findings reveal that the international students had an overall total 3.132 and descriptive equivalent of 'good' in essays A,B and C. In Essay A ("Educational Technology"), the students had a total score of 87.24, GWA equivalent of 2.908 'good', Essay B ("Global Warming: Its Causes and Effects") with a total score of 103.79 equivalent to 3.45 'good' and Essay C ("Combatting Global Terrorism") with a total score of 91.21 equivalent to 2.81 'good'.

The findings of the study corroborate with Tran (2007) that Vietnamese university students vary and use a wide variety of strategies to learn English vocabulary. These are understanding the main idea of the text by highlighting and guessing unknown words in the first reading, consulting the dictionary, jotting newly learned words into vocabulary notebook and reading the text second time. Consequently, these vocabulary strategies could help students improve their limited vocabulary in essay writing

In like manner, Lepago's (2014) study revealed that the freshman college students' level of writing proficiency along vocabulary is 'fair'. Further, she emphasized that most of the students have great ideas to share but lack proper words to express them. Moreover, Davis (1971), Anderson and Freebody (1981), Johnston (1981) as cited by Lepago (2014) also reported that there is a strong relationship between vocabulary and ability of students to construct meaning. Add to this, in the study conducted by Gustilo and Magno (2012) as likewise noted by Lepago (2014) revealed that word choice is one of the problems/factors that significantly decreases essay scores of the students likewise proven to be true in the findings of this present study.

Table 6*Level of writing aptitude of international students along vocabulary*

Student	Essay A	Essay B	Essay C	Total	E	DE
1	3.33	2.66	3.33	9.32	3.10	G
2	3.33	3.33	2.66	9.32	3.10	G
3	3.33	3	2.33	8.66	2.88	G
4	3.33	2.66	2.66	8.65	2.88	G
5	4.33	4.33	4.33	12.99	4.33	VG
6	5	4.33	4.33	13.66	4.55	E
7	4.66	4.66	4.33	13.65	4.55	E
8	3.33	3.33	3.66	10.32	3.44	G
9	3	4.33	3.66	10.99	3.66	VG
10	2.33	2.33	2	6.66	2.22	F
11	2	2.66	2.33	6.99	2.33	F
12	2.33	2.33	3	8.66	2.88	G
13	3	3	2.66	7.99	2.66	G
14	3	3	3	9	3	G
15	3.33	2.66	2.66	8.65	2.88	G
16	2	2.33	2	6.33	2.11	F
17	2	1.66	2	5.66	1.88	F
18	2.33	2	2.33	6.66	2.22	F
19	2.66	2.66	2.66	7.98	2.66	G
20	3	3.66	3.66	10.32	3.44	G
21	1.66	2.66	3.66	6.65	2.21	F
22	1.66	2.66	3.66	7.98	2.66	G
23	2.66	2.33	2.33	7.32	2.44	F
24	2	1.66	1.66	5.32	1.77	F
25	3	2.33	3	8.33	2.77	G
26	2.66	2.33	2.33	7.32	2.44	F
27	2.33	2.66	3	7.99	2.66	G
28	2.66	2	2.66	7.32	2.44	F
29	4.66	4.6	4.66	13.92	4.64	E
30	2.33	3.33	2.66	8.32	2.77	G
Total	87.24	103.79	91.21	281.94	93.96	Good
	2.908	3.45	2.81	9.398	3.132	

3.3 Relationship between the extent of use of the language learning strategies and the level of writing aptitude

Table 7 presents the obtained correlation coefficients between the extent of use of the language learning strategies (LLS) and the level of writing aptitude of the international students along content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary. The findings revealed that the overall obtained correlation coefficient between the extent of use of LLS and the 4 writing aptitude criteria is .089 with a significance level of .089 at .05 level of significance. This means that the overall obtained correlation coefficient is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the extent of use of language learning strategies and the level of writing aptitude is rejected.

Table 7*Correlation between the extent of use of language learning strategies and the level of writing aptitude*

Writing Aptitude	Extent of Use of Language Learning Strategies		
	Correlation Coefficient(r)	Significance Level	Description
Content	.135	.477; p> .05	Not significant
Organization	.115	.544; p> .05	Not significant
Grammar and Mechanics	.021	.911; p> .05	Not significant
Vocabulary	.081	.669; p> .05	Not significant
Overall	.089	.089; p> .05	Not significant

The findings of this present study are similar with Liao's (2009) study that the role of writing translation among Taiwanese students' learning in terms of beliefs and learning strategies. The international students showed a moderately high level of use of writing translation as a learning strategy and used a wide variety of strategies in writing translation including cognitive, memory, compensatory and affective strategies. However, foreign language majors and 1 more proficient students showed negative beliefs about writing translation and

less use of it as compared to their non-foreign language major counterpart and less proficient peers in language learning and writing aptitude.

However, the results of this study contrast with Lu's (2007) study that there is a strong relationship between the use of learning strategies in reading and language achievement or proficiency of Chinese non-English majors. The study further revealed that memory and metacognitive strategies significantly predicted the language achievement of the learners. Consequently, the active use of learning strategies helps attain higher language achievement. Also, since the respondents of Lu (2007) are of the same nationality and of the same school, they somehow demonstrate commonality in how they were trained and this manifests similar results unlike in the present study where respondents come from different countries representing diverse training among others. Further, Oxford (2017) reported that other international studies conducted on the correlation of language learning strategies (LLS) and writing aptitude revealed that major differences lie in writing aptitude (Skehan, 1998) and learning strategies (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995; Wen & Johnson, 1997). Moreover, Rozario (2017) revealed that high proficiency freshman college students of Bangladesh employ more language learning strategies (LLS) than low proficiency students in relation to their far better English academic performance along grammar, spelling and vocabulary.

3.4 *Difference in the level of writing aptitude of the international students according to exposure to reading materials and exposure to writing activities*

Difference in the level of writing aptitude of the international students according to exposure to reading materials

Table 8 shows the comparison of the overall mean scores of the writing aptitude of the international students along content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary when grouped according to level of exposure to reading materials. Findings revealed that 18 students are with moderate level of exposure who obtained the highest mean of 3.0811, followed by 8 students with low exposure with a mean of 3.0388 and 4 students with high level of exposure obtained the lowest mean of 2.8600. Moreover, to test if there is a significant difference among the mean values, one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used. Moreover, the computed F-value is .140 with a significance level of .870 at .05 level of significance. This means that the computed F-value is not significant. The hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the level of writing aptitude of international students according to exposure to reading materials is rejected.

Table 8

Difference in the level of writing aptitude along content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary of the international students when grouped according to level of exposure to reading materials

Difference in the Level of Exposure to Reading Materials					
Statistics		Low (n=8)	Moderate (n=18)	High (n=4)	
Mean Overall Writing Aptitude		3.0388	3.0811	2.8600	
Standard Deviation		.81063	.78694	.30649	
Analysis of Variance					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.160	2	.080	.140	.870; p>.05
Within Groups	15.409	27	.571		
Total	15.569	29			

This finding is supported by Tomlinson (2001) as noted by Mede (2014) that in order to facilitate the gradual process of learning/acquiring a language, ample exposure to the instructed language features in communicative use frequently is important. In this study, exposure to printed reading materials: books, magazines, newspapers, journals and komiks and internet sources: Wikipedia, Google, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram could have significantly increased their level of vocabulary if these materials were used by teachers as springboard in their teaching reading and writing to the students.

In like manner, Rico's (2014) study revealed the common rhetorical patterns found in the reading material-Engineering textbooks that college students in this course are commonly and regularly exposed to. These common rhetorical patterns were definition, description of process and mechanism, partition and classification. However, Mede's (2014) study showed that the reading preferences, attitude and grammatical competence level of the senior high school students in essay writing. Results showed that the students' reading material preferences are English and subject textbooks while their attitude towards writing is positive

Difference in the level of writing aptitude of the international students according to exposure to writing activities

Table 9 presents the comparison on the level of writing aptitude of the international students along, content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary when grouped according to level of exposure to writing activities. The findings reveal that among the 30 international students, 3 students with high level of exposure obtained the highest mean of 3.4467, followed by 14 students with low exposure with a mean of 3.1107 and 13 students with moderate level of exposure obtained the lowest mean of 2.8715, respectively. To test if there is a significant difference among the mean values, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The computed F-value is .867 with a significance level of .432 at .05 level of significance. This implies that the computed F-value is not significant. The hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the level of writing aptitude of international students according to exposure to writing activities is rejected.

Table 9

Difference in the level of writing aptitude along content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary of the international students when grouped according to level of exposure to writing activities

Difference in the Level of Exposure to Writing Activities					
Statistics	Low (n=14)	Moderate (n=13)	High (n=3)		
Mean Overall Writing Aptitude	3.1107	2.8715	3.4467		
Standard Deviation	.78531	.65616	.83008		
Analysis of Variance					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.935	2	468	.867	.432; >.05
Within Groups	14.562	27	571		
Total	15.497	29	.539		

The results corroborate with Rico (2014) who developed and constructed task-based writing materials for engineering students to further enhance and increase the exposure of the students to writing as their learning needs are addressed. These materials helped improve the students' writing aptitude and evaluated as very useful by both English and content teachers with no significant differences noted on the usefulness of the writing materials. Furthermore, Nardo (2012) affirmed that the writing needs of college students in technical writing, developed modules based on the writing needs of the students and determined the evaluation of the modules along subject matter, vocabulary and structures, exercises, illustrations and physical make-up. However, the findings of this present study contrast with Waguey's (2012) study that the low level of competence in writing the 4 types of texts and in the skill areas of Forestry students since in this study, the overall level of writing aptitude of the international students is good.

Based on the findings of this present study, a Writing Strategy Module was developed by the researcher to enhance the writing aptitude of the college students along content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary. The said Module uses a combination of the Task-Based Model of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Language-Based Model of Reid (1993). Moreover, different reading topics with writing activities/tasks are prepared for the students to enhance their LLS and to improve their writing aptitude.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions - The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings: 1) Social strategies are always used however Metacognitive Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensatory Strategies, Memory Strategies and

Affective Strategies are often used in language learning by the international students; 2) the international students' level of writing aptitude is generally good and they could write meaningful and organized essays with correct grammar and mechanics. Specifically: a) along content, the international students are good on the topics related to global issues and technology; b) along organization, the international students' are good as marked by logically connected ideas supported by accurate and related information; c) along grammar and mechanics, the international students are good but they lack knowledge on correct sentence construction, spelling, subject-verb agreement and punctuations; d) along vocabulary, the international students are good with English words and idioms necessary to build their ideas on certain topics; 3) the extent of use of language learning strategies does not directly affect the level of writing aptitude; 4a) exposure to reading materials does not guarantee a significant impact on the level of writing aptitude of international students; and 4b) exposure to writing activities does not significantly affect the level of writing aptitude of international students.

Recommendations - Based on the conclusions of the study, the following are recommended: 1) the extent of use of language learning strategies does not significantly influence the writing aptitude of students along content, organization, grammar and mechanics and vocabulary thus Language Learning Strategy Workshops may be conducted and its interpretation be given to students at the beginning of a semester to help the students improve their language learning strategies' used and exposure; 2) teachers must provide with guided reading and writing activities that are not just varied in terms of content and organization but are interactive to help further enhance the writing aptitude of students, most specially grammar and mechanics to help overcome this weakness; 3) studies should be conducted to determine the relationship between the extent of use of language learning strategies and level of writing aptitude to validate the findings of this study using other research methodology and data gathering instruments; and 4) curriculum planners and developers may add more guided interactive writing courses to ensure more than enough exposure to reading and writing activities in the planning, development and construction of instructional materials for quality instruction.

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