

Efficiency of MTDP in Teaching Writing to Senior High School Students

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(Received: January 02, 2019; Revised: February 16, 2019; Accepted: May 29, 2019)

Abstract

In the context of the Philippines, English is the predominant language used in the field of education. Inside the English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms, language teachers can attest to the difficulties that the Filipino youth experience in terms of using the language orally or in crafting a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing. This trend may be solved through the application of new possible approaches in teaching writing. Consequently, this quantitative study aims to analyze the effectiveness on the use of Model Text Deconstruction Processor MTDP in the teaching of writing in Grade 11 senior high school students. Fifty learners from two different schools: Muntinlupa Science High School (Control group) and St. Augustine School (Experimental group) were randomly selected. The scores of the groups in the pretest and posttest were used to determine the common errors committed by the student-participants in letter-writing to establish significant relationship between the use of MTDP approach and the student-participants' writing skills. The written outputs of the students were diagnosed using a modified checklist from Erel and Bulut (2007). The findings of the study revealed that the use of MTDP significantly improved the written outputs of the students in different areas of writing. The result fosters the idea that language teachers should consider more profoundly on how MTDP can be applied in ESL classrooms. It is recommended that the procedures stated herein be tested in other written exercises and the results be the basis of further diagnosis with MTDP.

Keywords: English as Second Language, Model text deconstruction process, Teaching writing, Diagnosis of writing

1. Background of the Study

The use of English as a language in a global community is bringing us all much closer together, thus, it is the responsibility of English language teachers to help students communicate effectively with each other. In the Philippines, English is the predominant language used in the field of education. English is stressed by the Department of Education as one of the prevailing languages used in various countries all over the world (Akinwamide, 2012). With over 1.5 billion speakers all over the globe, Genc and Bada (2010) detailed how the English language can be viewed as a “world language” and a turning point in terms of writing academically. This phenomenon, therefore, puts emphasis on the importance of teaching

appropriate writing skills to the students so that they may develop into a critical, fluent, and proficient writer of the second language.

Writing in a second language can be a difficult and complex task (Bowen & Jonathan, 1994; Kroll, 1990). In English as a second language (ESL) classrooms, language teachers can attest to the difficulties that the Filipino youth are experiencing in terms of using the language orally or in crafting a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing. Similar to Nunan (1999), the researchers believe that the most difficult component to teach in the English subject is writing and undoubtedly, there is a plethora of evidence which shows the poor writing skills of the 21st century students from lexico-grammatical areas to the basic spellings and use of punctuation marks (Perin & Lauterbach, 2018; Ahmed, 2018; Haskins, 2017; Ibrahim, Yunus, & Khairi, 2017). Akinwamide (as cited in Thulasi, Ismail, & Salam, 2015) observed that “teachers find teaching of writing more difficult than teaching other language skills such as speaking, listening and reading” (p. 56). As a result, the students cannot possess the writing knowledge and skills they needed to grasp. Due to this concern, various teaching approaches in writing emerged (i.e. Prose Model Approach, Experiential Approach, Rhetorical Approach, Epistemic Approach, Linguistic System Approach, Controlled-to-Free Approach, Free writing Approach, Pattern-Paragraph Approach, Grammar-syntax, organization Approach, Communicative Approach, and Process Approach).

Gharabally (2015) recognized an important factor as to why second language learners are having a hard time coping with the subject- L2 learners are easily overwhelmed when asked to complete a writing task. One common technique the second language learners apply when writing in English is the use of translation. Filipino students merely construct their ideas in their native language and translates into English. On light of that idea, it has resulted in unsatisfactory written samples.

One of the most controversial topics about language teaching is the tension between the popular teaching techniques in writing: process approach and product approach. Gabrielatos (as cited by Hasan and Akhand, 2010) defined the Product-Based Approach as a “traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text” (p. 78). This approach utilizes a text at the beginning of the lesson for an analysis of its content and features which will aid the students in writing through the model text. On the other hand, the process approach focuses on the actual step by step process (usually through pre-writing, drafting, and revising) rather than the finished product. This paper will make use of the modeling-in-writing approach which is the combination of the two aforementioned techniques.

Table 1 Major differences between the process, product and MTDP approach

Process Approach	Product Approach	MTDP Approach
Use of more than one draft	One draft	No draft
Feedback is given after each draft	Students are expected to imitate the model text	Students are expected to analyze, imitate the model text and receive feedback
Collaborative	Individual	Individual and collaborative
Starts from an idea	Starts from a sample product	Starts from a model text then to an idea
The teacher reads	The teacher marks	The teacher reads, guides, and marks
Emphasis is on the creative process	Emphasis is on the final product	Emphasis is on the final product

Throughout the years, different approaches took center stage and was applied to ESL classrooms in the hopes of improving the skills of the learners. However, recent studies show that the second language learners are still left behind when it comes to producing a piece of English text, thus, this paper aimed to check the efficiency of one of the approaches in teaching writing- the Model Text Deconstruction Process of MTDP approach.

Basyal (2009) described the Model Text Deconstructing Process (MTDP) as a resource of teachers “for comparison and inferring insights about the appropriate form of the text” (p. 16). On this form of approach, the students will deconstruct the modeled texts in terms of styles, organization, grammar, words, and other distinctive features of a text. Due to the acquisition of learning in the text’s components, the students will compose a text. Basyal (2009) believed that this approach “is good scaffolding that the learners need to step on to develop a necessary level of accuracy and satisfaction in writing” (p. 16). Basyal concluded that “if writing is taught systematically, it can be less daunting and difficult than many students believed” (p. 18).

Thulasi, Ismail, & Salam (2015) supported the study conducted by Wingate (2012) that “students found the model texts very useful in providing information prior to their writing activities.” They concluded that the use of model texts in the teaching of writing can be effective, since it may serve as a starting point for students to learn how to write.

Various researches and authors (Gray-Rosendale, 2018; Li, 2018, Ovando & Combs, 2018; Nordin& Mohammad, 2017; Roen, 2001) seek to tackle on the issue about the teaching of writing. However, these studies failed to recognize its effects on the writing skills of Filipino senior high school students. Hence, additional studies are needed to prove the efficacy of MTDP in harnessing the skills on

the students' use of the second language. The study on its effectiveness in senior high school classrooms can become a learning paradigm in the field of teaching writing to enhance the students' overall writing skills.

The outcomes of this research will redound to the benefit of the field of education considering that the subject English plays an important role in Philippine's curricula. The proponents believe that there is a great demand for senior high school graduates with superb English writing background, thus, justifying the need for a more effective, quality tested teaching approach. Moreover, the language teachers who seek to apply this scaffolding approach in the classroom will already have the basic idea on how it works and on how it affects the students' basic skills writing level. Administrators will be guided on what should be emphasized in teaching senior high school subjects: Reading and Writing, 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World, Practical Research, English for academic and professional purposes and Creative writing.

2. Research Objectives

The teaching of writing is an ongoing process and is part of an ever-changing field. Language teachers in various areas in the Philippines employed different techniques in writing instruction in the hopes of helping the students achieve unity, coherence, support, and strong sentence crafting skills. However, recent studies show that second language learners are still left behind. Several studies have addressed writing difficulties in the development of second language learners (L2) writing skills, but the challenges that the Filipino senior high school students encounter have not been discussed in depth. Similar to Fontenot, Carney, and Hansen (2015) the researchers view that the problem still exists because previous studies usually dwell only on finding out quantitative data about students' writing rather than focusing on the actual practices which can improve it. In the light of the above, the present research generally aimed to analyze the effectiveness of the MTPD in relation to writing progress of the selected grade 11 senior high school student-participants. Specifically, the research targets to achieve the following objectives:

- 2.1 To identify the common errors committed by the student-participants in letter-writing.
- 2.2 To establish significant relationship between the use of MTDP approach and the student-participants' writing skills through the use of a modified diagnostic checklist.

3. Research Methodology

This chapter highlights the research design, strategy, and the statistical tools used extensively in this paper.

3.1 Research design

This research utilized the pretest-posttest experimental research design to assess the causal hypothesis of using MTPD as a teaching intervention in English writing.

3.2 Participants

A total of fifty (50) grade 11 student-participants were randomly selected from two senior high schools: Muntinlupa Science High School (MSHS) and St. Augustine School (SAS), where the researchers are affiliated. The control group comprised twenty-five (25) students from MSHS, while the experimental group composed of the other twenty-five (25) students came from SAS. The age of student-participants ranges between 16 to 18 years old. The research was guided by the University's ethical

guidelines on the use of humans as research respondents. Verbal informed consent of student-participants was sought prior to participation and it was emphasized that their involvement was on voluntary arrangement.

3.3 Procedure

To initiate the study, the experimental and control group was asked to brainstorm on about formal letter writing. After five minutes, each student was tasked to take the role of a senior high school student who is about to submit a formal college application letter with the use of English language within an hour. The written works of the students were collected and diagnosed by the raters with the use of the modified checklist. The experimental group were given daily exercises and drills through the use of the MTDP. On the other hand, the control group were continuously taught in a traditional manner. After three sessions, the groups were then tasked to write a letter to demonstrate what they have learned from the sessions which was subsequently analyzed using a modified diagnostic checklist from Erel and Bulut (2007).

Lastly, the ratings of the researchers were tested through an inter-rater reliability check. Some of the participants from the experimental group was also invited to take part on an informal interview about their experiences on the MTDP. The process for the experimental group were as follows:

Day one: Pre-test

The students were tasked to exhibit their understanding on how to write a formal letter. The outputs were collected and checked by two language teachers.

Day two: Familiarizing with the model text

The students were given assigned groups where they will be tasked to read, discuss, their observations about the formal letter as a model text given by the teacher. Their observations regarding the sentence structure, word choice, and format will be written on a sheet of paper and will be presented to class.

Day three: Imitating the model text

Using the same groupings from the second session, each group will be tasked to imitate the model provided to them in a different context. For instance, the teacher gave a job application-model text but the students will be tasked to write an internship application letter.

Day four: Individual modelling

Individually, the participants of the study will craft their own letter based on the new model text presented by the teacher. Each student will have three different models with different scenarios to imitate and transform.

Day five: Posttest

The students were tasked to exhibit what they have learned from the modeling by writing a formal letter for college application individually.

3.4 Statistical treatment and data collection

Data extracted from pre and posttests include common errors in English writing that were identified using the diagnostic checklist focusing on simple punctuation, capitalization, spelling, singular-plural form, complex subject-verb agreement, tenses, article usage, missing words, propositions, pronouns, inappropriate words, and format. To check the consistency between the researchers' ability to check the error types, an inter-rater reliability method was used. The basic model for percent agreement was used for calculating the reliability, wherein the mean of the rate of ratings that are in agreement was divided into the number of total ratings.

Descriptive statistics denoted by the concept of mean was utilized to compute the average error committed by the student-participants from control group and experimental group during the pre-posttest's administration. Further, inferential statistics such as the t-test was used to either reject or accept the research hypothesis and verify significant difference of the student-participants' scores at 5% significant level respectively.

4. Results

4.1 Inter-rater reliability

The percent agreement between the two raters is at 88% which indicates a high positive relationship between the scores given to the output of the students. Whenever R1 and R2 gives the same rating, 1 is automatically given to the "agreement" portion (A).

4.2 Pre and post tests

The results of the pretests and post tests administered to the student participants were assessed using the diagnostic checklist. The table below presents a summary of the mean errors obtained by the student-participants per error category.

Table 2 Summarized mean number errors of student-participants per error category from the control group and experimental groups during pre and post tests

Error Category	Control Group			Experimental Group		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
Punctuation	1.08	1.12	0.04	1.92	0.88	1.04
Capitalization	0.16	0.16	0.00	0.76	0.40	0.36
Spelling	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.32	0.28	0.04
Singular-plural form	0.04	0.16	0.12	0.56	0.36	0.20
Subject-verb agreement	0.00	0.56	0.56	0.96	0.64	0.32
Tenses	0.12	0.40	0.28	1.20	0.76	0.44
Missing words	0.24	0.40	0.16	0.84	0.56	0.28
Article usage	0.00	0.12	0.12	0.32	0.20	0.12

Table 2 (continue)

Error Category	Control Group			Experimental Group		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
Preposition	0.12	0.20	0.08	1.20	0.72	0.48
Pronouns	0.16	0.16	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.20
Inappropriate word	1.40	1.64	0.24	5.32	1.36	3.96
Format	3.32	1.04	2.28	4.32	0.28	4.04
Total	6.84	6.16		18.12		6.64

It can be seen from the table that the participants of the study lack knowledge in formal writing, more specifically in the formatting area. The results also reveal similarity of both the control and experimental groups in terms of their weaknesses in writing since both groups committed a handful of mistakes in three specific error categories: format, inappropriate word, and punctuation.

The results from the experimental group indicates a moderately significant decrease in the number of writing mistakes. This implies that the use of MTDP approach to the teaching of English writing increases the writing accuracy of the student-participants. The foregoing finding appeared to be similar to that of Pasand and Haghi's (2013) suggesting that writing teachers may make use of model essays in order to improve some specific aspects of writing.

In addition, since the MTDP seeks to give students a model text as a guide for learning, the experimental group significantly improved on areas like word choice, punctuation, and most importantly, in format. Based on the result, it is almost certain that the use of MTDP to teach basic writing technicalities will greatly improve the students' writing ability. With the help of this approach, the students will be introduced to different writing concepts, structures, and grammar rules without realizing that they are actually teaching themselves while deconstructing the model text. Based on the result, it is almost certain that the use of MTDP to teach basic writing technicalities will greatly improve the students' writing ability.

4.3 T-Test

The scores of the student-participants were subjected to a t-test analysis as shown in the table below.

Table 3 Summarized t-values computed from control and experimental groups after the administration of the pre and post tests

Group	Test	Mean Error*	Standard Deviation	t-value**	Degree of Freedom
Control Group	Pre-test	6.84	3.18	0.82	24
	Post-test	6.16	2.64	0.82	24
Experimental Group	Pre-test	18.12	6.99	9.33*	24
	Post-test	6.64	3.43	9.33*	24

* Mean error of students regardless of the error category

** Significant at $p < .05$

For the experimental group, it can be seen that the mean score of the students' writing errors significantly decreased in the posttest with the presence of the MTDP approach. It can be deduced from the table that the difference is significant as the t-value at 9.33 exceeded the T-critical two tail value at 2.06. In light of this result, the use of MTDP as an approach in the teaching of writing proves to be an effective tool in developing certain aspects in writing accuracy.

On the other hand, the results of the control group did not show enough improvement on the writing skills with the traditional approach in teaching, rather some components had an increase of errors such as punctuation, singular-plural form, subject – verb agreement, tenses, missing words, article usage, preposition, and inappropriate word.

5. Discussion

Based on the results, it was found that the error type the students consistently commit are the following: format, use of inappropriate word, and punctuation marks. With the rise of technology, the students tend to imitate the way they write online and unconsciously apply it in academic writing. In addition, most of the participants seem to do away with the importance of checking for spelling mistakes as they mostly rely on modern-day spell checkers. In the last session, the errors committed by the experimental group reduced significantly with application of the MTDP approach.

The hypothesis of the research which suggests a positive correlation between student-participants' writing skill and utilization of MTPD as an intervention to develop writing accuracy proves to be correct as the t-test indicates a significant difference in the overall writing performance.

The results of the study therefore suggest that language teachers should consider more profoundly on how the MTDP approach can be applied in Philippine ESL classrooms. The researchers conclude that applying such method can positively and significantly improve the writing accuracy and develop the writing style of the Filipino senior high school students. Lastly, this study, which builds on previous findings and relevant theories and methods on what an effective language teacher should use to

improve the overall writing skills of the students, could jump-start subsequent research on the teachers' evaluation on their general use of the MTDP approach.

It is also important the following observations:

1. MTDP starts from a model text. Unlike other approaches, the students are expected to analyze and imitate the text given to them, therefore limiting the creative process on their part.
2. Using model text can improve accuracy in some aspects but not all aspects in writing.
3. MTDP approach is best used for comparison and inferring insights about the appropriate form of text.

6. Suggestions

Due to the apparent success of using MTDP, the researchers recommend that writing teachers apply the MTDP approach in their classes given a settled time and day for the concentration of the students in their day task. In relation to the findings of this study, the school administration may also adopt this approach if they will redesign the curriculum. This approach will help facilitate learner-centered classroom interaction in a writing class as well foster students' familiarity of the different writing styles. Lastly, the researchers recommend that a similar study must be initiated in the elementary, secondary, and tertiary level in order to further test and improve the effectiveness of MTDP approach.

7. References

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