



Performance And Assessment Of Undergraduate Students In Effective English Writing Skills

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Abstract

English is an essential language to learn because most of the science and technological education in India has based on English medium. Thus, the undergraduate students should have good English writing skills for their carrier development in global environment. The paper investigated a qualitative study of the thoughtful essays written by 60 undergraduate engineering students at various engineering colleges from Andhra Pradesh region to identify their problems in English writing skills. This paper focused on the challenges they face while doing so and endeavored to calculate the intensity of the problem areas. It is determined through this investigation that the undergraduate students need to enhance their writing skills. The samples of the research were the first and second semester students of English education department of various colleges of JNTU that produced undergraduate students in Andhra Pradesh region. The researcher divided the students into two groups based on the treatments, namely Merrill' sprinciples of instruction (MPI) for an experimental group and direct instruction (DI) for the con trol group, respectively. Finally, experiments are conducted on these two groups with respect to the various English skills. The researcher observed the performance from the students and based on cumulative results, the use of Instructional model and specifically MPI improves the English Writing skills effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: English language teaching, Writing skills, Merrill's principles of instruction, direct instruction.

I. Introduction

As a communication tool, language must be mastered well in order to communicate well with others. Good language mastery is something that should be sought and learned well. Moreover, the language learned is a foreign language especially English which is the most used language in many countries like India either as foreign or second language in education system [1]. Therefore, the demands of English mastery writing skills are increasing massively, along with the advances in science, technology, information, and other fields for undergraduate students. The AICTE said that language education aims to equip undergraduates to be able to communicate using language as a tool to communicate on the international scene. In the other hand, the AICTE has paid special attention to the improvement of English writing skills [2] with the target of communication skills. Moreover, at undergraduate level, English becomes one of the compulsory subjects that must be learnt by the students in any field of education. The purpose of English writing is to develop students' language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing so that the students can communicate well using English either spoken or written. Moreover, there are many books/references to support students' lecturing written in

English. Thus, the students should have good English mastery. In the undergraduate level [3], English should be learnt by the students in every field of first or second semester which only has 2 classes in a week. Whereas, to have good English writing skills it needs much practice and exposure which spend a lot of time. Therefore, the students have a big responsibility to manage the time and to select appropriate Writing model to be applied while writing in English. Essentially, student's competence will be affected by the improper selection of writing model. To make good writing skills, it should meet students' needs, be innovative, utilize contemporary technologies, use writing skills experience and good resources to support good practice, and evaluate writing skills results to maintain the quality of it [4]. Therefore, the UG student should improve writing quality to make skill being good. Moreover, in India education system effects on the process and outcome of education, so the student's role and obligation are bigger than before.

Acquiring Knowledge and its Transformation improves various styles [5] of effective writing. It is the major problem of the L2 learners come across in their regular academic writing for UG students. They naturally struggle incorporate the information acquired through their study into their own style of academic writing. In this context, Acquiring Knowledge displays their ability to understand of what they read and Transformation of such knowledge into documentation shows their skill in using source information. Both are widely accepted as cognitive tasks which require a good snatch of understanding the information. The major writing skills found which help L2 learners to display their Acquired knowledge and its transformation is summarizing. There are many investigations made on this area, it is expressed a need to further investigate from the learners' point of view.



Figure 1: Photograph taken during international conference on Advances in English Studies at KL University

The present paper investigated a qualitative study of the contemplative essays written by 60 undergraduate engineering students at various engineering colleges from Andhra Pradesh region and to identify their problems when they were asked to summarize the source material. This paper focused on the challenges they face while doing so and endeavored to calculate the intensity of the problem areas. It is determined through this investigation that the L2 learners need to enhance their writing skills. At this juncture, the role of teacher takes on how they encourage and assist the learners to improve them in exact projection of reflecting from what they read in source context.

II. Literature Review

2.1. First principles of instruction

In [6] suggests the main principles about writing. These principles should encourage more effective, efficient, and interesting writing skills. If the principles have been the subject of rigorous research, it should be supported by research that is generally applicable so that it can be applied to any writing skills system. The principles proposed by Merrill are oriented to principles about writing that have direct relevance to analyzing that are designed to enhance writing skills activities, not just activities that students can use when they are writing skills. They must be able to identify and create a writing skills environment rather than merely describing how students acquire knowledge and skills in writing skills. The problem-centered principle shows that the most effective writing in the context of writing skills is solving real world problems or doing real-world tasks. Below is a brief explanation of the five principles by [6]:

- **Problem-Centered:** Writing skills is promoted when learners acquire skill in the context of real-world problems.
- **Activation:** Writing skills is promoted when learners activate existing knowledge and skill as a foundation for new skills.
- **Demonstration:** Writing skills is promoted when learners observe a demonstration of the skill to be learned.
- **Application:** Writing skills is promoted when learners apply their newly acquired skill to solve problems.
- **Integration:** Writing skills is promoted when learners reflect on, discuss, and defend their newly acquired skill.

Merrill puts the problem at the center of writing skills[7-8]. That means that in writing skills implementation process, real life problems are introduced earlier to students as the basis for gaining new knowledge. Problem-centered writing skills can increase stimulus and focus on writing skills activities [9]. Furthermore, in [10] states that writing in the context of real-world problems invites students to solve the complex tasks.

Next, 'activation' phase means activating the student's prior knowledge about the real-world problems that have been given. Students use their cognitive in gaining new knowledge that is learned. Thus, they connect between their prior knowledge and new knowledge in writing skills. The third phase is 'demonstration'. The students are asked to describe the knowledge that has been taught and obtained based on real world problems. In [10] implemented this phase by asking students to watch various examples or models provided by the teacher, then students practice by demonstrating their abilities, so the students can practice their skills. The fourth phase is 'application' which is applying the new knowledge taught and obtained after receiving feedback from the writing skills process. Furthermore, in [10] applies this phase by providing activities to students related to real problem-solving. Thus, the students can practice the acquired new knowledge. The final phase is 'integration', which is creating individual integration between new knowledge and skills into the context of their lives. That is the main goal of effective writing, likewise, reflecting on the writing skills experience that they obtained [11].

There are several studies about Merrill's principles of instruction [12]-[13]. In [12] have applied Merrill's principles of instruction in designing the flipped classroom approach. The pilot study was conducted twice at 2 Engineering colleges, with 382 students and 5 teachers from the fields of mathematics, physics, Technology and English. The research design was conducted with a quasi-experimental design. The results showed that students' achievement in the three subject areas improved after being taught with the flipped classroom approach designed with the Merrill's principles of instruction phases.

In [13], authors conducted a research on the impact of instructional design based on the Merrill's principles and team-based writing skills on achieving students' memory levels. The method used is an experiment with a pretest and posttest design in the control group and the experimental group. The results showed that the score of the experimental group increased significantly compared to the score of the control group. Therefore, this research used Merrill's principles of instruction with five phases in learning and writing skills. It aims to measure the extent of the effectiveness of Merrill's principles of instruction in writing the English productive skills.

2.2. Writing skills

Writing is a productive skill [14-15]. In addition, Writing is interpreted as a tool to compile and develop ideas according to the needs of the students. The ability to writing in English includes several components, namely the accuracy of grammar, vocabulary, and presentation. Besides, the Punctuations is also one of the components of writing skill. Presentation is concerned with the way to produce English phonemes in words, phrases or sentences [16-17]. It also includes intonation that gives a picture to the way of the voice is risen and fallen in speech [18]. Similarly, grammar skills are also important in presentation practice. It is a perfection of words or sentences. The use of intonation in the correct words can determine the word classes in the sentence. Further, grammar is a matter that strongly supports Writing ability [19].

Then, in [20], grammar is concerned with the words which are combined to form sentences. Thus, grammar contains a set of rules for combining the correct sentences in written and oral forms [21]. Besides, vocabulary is also very important in writing skills a language. Increasing vocabulary is a good step in improving writing skill. This can be done by reading many English books. In [22] states that in oral form of the language, vocabulary should be familiar with us, meaning that the vocabulary used is related to everyday conversation. Vocabulary is a core of language in writing skills, so that the students should know the words with their meanings for usage in writing, spellings, and presentations. Thus, in writing vocabulary, the teachers have to facilitate the students to learn and understand the new words and the other units of a language.

These units include the English phrases, clauses, and sentences. The other English productive skill is writing. It is a series of activities that someone expresses his thoughts through written language to be read or understood by others. The thoughts can be in the form of experience, opinions, knowledge and feelings. Writing aims to express the facts, feelings, attitudes, and contents of the mind clearly and effectively to the readers. By writing we can increase intelligence, develop the creative and critical thinking, encourage willingness and the ability to gather information. In [23] stated that writing skills were scored using those features of assessment as essay length, style, grammar, usage, mechanics, vocabulary, and word length. Besides, mechanics that consists of the sentence structure, punctuation, spelling and organization is also the elements of writing skills. Therefore, the writing tasks should require all conventions in order that a good writing will be produced.

Summarizing is a writing skill which requires L2 learners to understand and express the same in their own writing. In [24] authors states "summery is a significantly condensed version of a longer original text achieved by capturing in the writers' own words" but in [25] authors says "Summarizing is a standalone task which needs the students first able to read thoroughly and understand the source text before they start rewriting it". The challenge of decision making in this context processes two essential reading skills i.e., to identify between the main and minor ideas in a source text. It also makes a differentiation between relevant and irrelevant information. In [26] authors states, good summaries project the learners' mastery of manipulating the structures, restructuring the ideas of discourse made in the source text. Thus, the quality of summery depends on how well the learner understands and identifies the major areas of the content. However, such skill is to be utilized after clearly understanding the

meaning of the information found in the actual text. Similarly, Summarizing demands the learners to have full knowledge of understanding various components of reading and reproduce them exactly in their own writing without making any deviation from the content of the original text. In [27], authors argued this ability is attributed to L2 learners' poor understanding of the key ideas and inability to rewrite them in a systematic order.

2.3 Questionnaires

Exactly what play a key role in summarizing help in an academic writing? As discussed above, both the skills of demonstrate UG students' abilities to understand and rewrite what they read and enhance their own style of argument ideas from actual text. All the previous studies focused on correlate with their academic success, inferential thinking, and promoting dialectical thinking with the source texts. Though they give importance to these skills at various levels, the academic context of writing both Low and High order exposition is to be grammarskilled in the context of engineering undergraduate students. Most of them are with poor social, economic, and cultural background and previous knowledge acquired through minimum facilities. To make it very clear through this paper, the researchers contribute to the on-going discussion on its pedagogical implications on L2 learners' difficulties and what they assume would help them enhance their writing skills. Majorly, the paper attempts answer to the TWO following questions:

1. What are challenges do L2 learners face in summarizing?
2. How can L2 learners overcome them in improving writing skills?

III. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The research used a true-experimental type with pretest-posttest control group design [24]. Each group was formed by a random technique and given pretest. The two groups received different treatments, namely Merrill's Principles of Instruction (MPI) for an experimental group and Direct Instruction (DI) for the control one. At the end of meeting, the two groups were given posttest of Writing and writing skills.

3.2. Population and sample

The samples of the research were the First and second semester students of English Education Department of Various colleges of JNTU University that produced Undergraduate students in Andhra Pradesh region. Proportional random sampling technique was used to form the two groups. Therefore, there were 120 students from several populations (300 students). Students were placed in two classes. There were 30 students who were in the experimental group (EG) and 30 students in the control group (CG). The students in the experimental group were taught learning and writing in integrated way using MPI, while those in the control group were taught learning and writing separately through the use of DI. The treatments in EG and CG were conducted for one semester (16 meetings); two meetings were conducted for the pre-test and post-test. The aims of tests were to measure the writing achievement after implementing the DI and the MPI. The variables of writing achievement were the accuracy of English content development, sentence formulation, and the vocabulary usage. Besides, the Punctuations of Writing (the capacity to produce pieces of sentences with the appropriate pause in Writing) was also measured, while in writing achievement, the measurement dealt with the essay length, ideas presented, grammar, mechanics, vocabulary usage, clarity, and relevance to the topic and purpose.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The procedures of collecting data of writing test were that the students chose one of the five topics to be told for five minutes in front of the class, the researcher recorded the utterances produced by the students. To collect data for writing achievement, the students also chose one of the five provided topics to be written by the students for 90 minutes, in which the essay length was at least 3 paragraphs. Writing scores for each student were obtained by using rubric for writing skills [25], [15], and then tabulated and analyzed by using statistical analysis to find out whether the two groups were significantly different. The results of data analysis showed the impact of the treatments on the EG and CG.

Generally, in engineering colleges of India in Andhra Pradesh region, the strength of the class is minimum 45-60. All these 60 students selected for this purpose are given four meetings in a week for 90 minutes per meeting over two sessions. They are provided no particular syllabus book for the course, but the teacher gives unexpected passages with explanation to prepare the gist of their reading. At the end of the meeting all the scripts are critically evaluated with all the required academic inputs like definition, argument, major issues reflected in the reading passage and projection of the theme in a systematic order. All the principles of summarizing are put together while evaluating a writing task. Teacher and taught interaction is also taken into consideration for pointing out the problems they face while summarizing. Naturally, students are expected to adopt various theatrical approaches in exposing the theme of the passage that they read for the summarizing. All the parameters as discussed with the teacher are considered in their writing.

60 students were randomly selected from 6 sections of engineering undergraduates 10 from each section. They started acquiring skill in L2 for the last semester. 17 of them studied in their vernacular, 20 students completed their 10th and +2 in English medium, 18 students studied purely in rural Government School and college staying in locally provided welfare hostels, 5 students from different mother tongue. The objective of this selection of students is to identify the reasons for their poor summarizing skills. They have given 15 days of practice after pretest with instructions, practice exercises.

IV. Results and Discussion

The results of statistical analysis to test and then answer the research questions have been presented in this section. The research questions revolve around the examination of the MPI phases against DI. The researcher applied MPI on experimental group based on 30 observations in the case of English writing skills while the control group was treated with DI. In this regard, the statistical technique was utilized to answer the formulated research questions is an independent sample t-test. It has been applied in both cases (learning and written English) for comparing both experimental and control groups. In addition, average skills have been further used for writing skills to compare pre-test and post-test results of both instructional designs. Concerning this aspect, the researcher of the study has used paired-sample t-test and the results of this test have been further discussed in this section.

4.1. Comparison of MPI and DI for Pre-test and Post-Test

In order to examine whether MPI is effective, independent t-test has been used whose results have been presented obtained from statistical technique (SPSS). However, first the comparison of means has been made between the experimental and control groups using pre-test data. Therefore, the following results have been discussed.

In light of the results produced following the analysis on SPSS, it can be deemed that pertaining to the case of relevance of the topics; the mean score is insignificantly different between control and experimental groups. Moreover, each category is homoscedastic on the basis of Levene's test. Another category can be seen as easy length which is also visibly the same in terms of mean score between experimental group and control group. The observation is similar in the category

of ideas expressed. This asserts that the mean difference between the experimental group and the control group is not significantly different. Also, both groups stand in a similar position prior to the use of any instruction. This inference has been made on the basis of other categories as well that are grammar and vocabulary. Aggregately, the outcome is illustrating that the mean difference in the score is of only 0.033 which is insignificant. In accordance with the research conducted by [29], writing skill can be learned with an instructional design which can lead to a stable academic position while communication skills further get enhanced. Conclusively, pretest results of the control and experimental groups are the same in the context of English writing skill. However, the researcher has treated the participants with MPI and DI even in the case of English writing skill and then the scores were recorded.

Table 1: Group statistics of pre-test results.

Treatment		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Accuracy of Vocabulary	DI (CG)	30	62.03	3.653	0.667
	MPI (EG)	30	74.33	6.530	1.192
Accuracy of Punctuation marks	DI (CG)	30	59.83	3.592	0.656
	MPI (EG)	30	73.83	6.783	1.238
Accuracy of Line Structure	DI (CG)	30	61.33	4.901	0.895
	MPI (EG)	30	78.33	4.221	0.771
Accuracy of Meaning	DI (CG)	30	59.67	3.198	0.584
	MPI (EG)	30	74.00	4.235	0.773
Average	DI (CG)	30	60.73	2.803	0.512
	MPI (EG)	30	75.17	4.268	0.779

From the Table 1, the mean in each category is evidently higher of MPI than that of DI. This asserts that MPI has a better impact on productive skills in the case of Writing English. The results in each category: accuracy of presentation, accuracy of vocabulary, accuracy of structure and Punctuations are found to produce better results under the treatment of MPI in the case of writing skill pertaining to English language specifically. The research conducted by [28] also asserted that ID models help in writing skills and enhance the skills by improving the memory as well for long-term retention of information. Therefore, the results proved MPI as a better instruction relatively in the case of writing skill.

Table 2: Group statistics of post-test results.

Treatment		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Relevance to the topics	DI (CG)	30	65.50	5.469	0.999
	MPI (EG)	30	80.83	6.303	1.151

Essay Length	DI (CG)	30	64.67 80.57	3.925	0.717
	MPI (EG)	30		5.315	0.970
Ideas Expressed	DI (CG)	30	60.33 77.00	3.198	0.584
	MPI (EG)	30		6.772	1.236
Grammar	DI (CG)	30	59.17 75.00	2.960	0.541
	MPI (EG)	30		5.724	1.045
Vocabulary Usage	DI (CG)	30	61.83 79.0	2.780	0.508
	MPI (EG)	30		5.632	1.028
Average	DI (CG)	30	62.30 78.48	2.409	0.440
	MPI (EG)	30		3.809	0.695

The mean score according to group statistics is found to be greater of MPI which means that MPI helps in improving relevancy in a better manner than what DI does. The category of essay length is also asserting the same that MPI performed better. Concerning the category of ideas expressed in the English writing skill, the mean score is greater of the MPI while the category of grammar also produced better results with MPI. The outcome of vocabulary usage is also not different. Therefore, it can be inferred that on an average, the mean score of the participants treated with MPI performed better than those who were treated with DI. The results in the category of relevance to the topics, each group is significantly different in terms of the score while the difference is of 15.33 units. However, some categories are found to heteroskedastic while others are homoscedastic. If the sig value of f-stats is greater than 0.05 then such data streams are homoscedastic while others are heteroskedastic. Pertaining to the category of essay length, the mean difference is found to be 15.9 units which are significantly different. Moreover, the category of ideas expressed has a mean difference of 16.667 units which is also significantly different in the case of MPI and DI. In addition, the case of grammar is also found to be significantly different in the case of experimental and control groups with a mean difference value of 15.833. The vocabulary usages of the experimental and control groups are also discovered to be different in terms of mean scores with a difference value of 17.167 units. On the other hand, the average of English writing skill is also found to have a significantly different mean score between experimental and control groups with a value of 16.180 units. The findings in this context are supported by the study of [30] who deduced that modifications in the writing practices enhance the writing skill. In addition, to analyze which of the instruction performed better, the following group statistics have been presented.

4.2. Comparison of pre-treatment and post-treatment

The researchers have already compared experimental and control groups to identify which method has performed better. However, to analyze whether the use of instructional model regardless of its design (MPI or DI) has the results of the participants improved or not, the researchers have used paired t-test as the subjects of the research are same for pretest and post-test. In this regard, the results have been presented as follows with specific to the case of English Writing skill.

Table 3: Paired sample correlation.

Treatment	N	Correlation	significant
Average (EWS-Pre) &	60	.355	.005

Average (EWS-Post)			
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The correlation between the mean score of participants prior to treatment and post treatment is found to be significant at 5% with specific to English Writing skill. However, regarding the magnitude, the correlation is weak but positive which asserts that a better score in pre-test will lead to better score post-test. The research of [31] also asserted that for English writing language and related skills, the use of instructional design models is efficient and effective. Moreover, further results of the analysis is follows.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of writingskill score paired samples statistics.

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Average (EWS-Pre)	60	58.52	4.512	0.582
Pair 1 Average (EWS- Post)	60	67.95	8.110	1.047

The score of post-treatment can be seen as higher on the basis of mean value in comparison with the pre-test value. However, the deviation in the case of post-treatment is quite higher. This asserts that with the instruction, some performed better while others performed relatively lesser. In accordance with the statistics, the mean difference between the pair is found to be 10.573 where post-test results have a higher mean score. In addition, the results are significant which means that the difference between the mean score regarding English writing skill is significantly different for pre-test and post-test. Conclusively, it can be inferred on the basis of cumulative results that use of Instructional model and specifically MPI improves English productive skills efficiently and effectively.

V. Conclusion

The research type is an experimental design by involving experimental and control groups. The researcher has treated the participants of experimental group with MPI and those of control group with DI. The comparison has been made for testing both models in developing the English productive skills. On the basis of cumulative results, the use of Instructional model and specifically MPI improves the English Writing skills effectively and efficiently. In this regard, however, the results of statistical analysis of the productive skills for both experimental and control groups show the significant improvement. Based on the group statistics, the mean score is found to be greater of MPI, meaning that MPI helps improve relevancy in a better manner than what DI does. Thus, the difference between the impact of MPI and DI on the participants is significant.

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