

Writing Performance and Instructional Competencies: Proposed Writing Activities for Senior High School Students in the Division of Quezon

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Abstract. Writing proficiency remains a persistent concern among Filipino senior high school learners despite curricular reforms that emphasize communication as a core twenty-first century competence. This mixed-methods descriptive study examined the writing performance of senior high school students and the extent to which five instructional competencies for teaching writing are manifested in classrooms in the Division of Quezon, Philippines, as an empirical basis for developing a set of writing activities. Using a mixed-methods descriptive research design combining quantitative and qualitative components, data were gathered from a sample of 377 senior high school students and 286 English teachers, selected through simple random sampling from a population of 58,288 students across the STEM, HUMSS, ABM, and TVL tracks. A researcher-made writing performance rubric, a validated survey questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha = .89), and a semi-structured interview guide served as data-gathering instruments. Results showed that students achieved a "Very Satisfactory" level of writing performance across all seven competencies assessed, with organization and structure rated highest and grammar and language accuracy rated lowest. Teachers and students likewise assessed all five instructional competencies as manifested to a "Moderate Extent." Independent samples t-tests revealed no significant difference in three domains but highly significant differences in supporting academic and professional writing and encouraging inclusivity, ethics, and cultural sensitivity, with teachers consistently rating both higher than students. Spearman rho correlation analysis showed significant, positive relationships between all instructional competencies and all writing performance indicators. Thematic analysis of teacher interviews identified low motivation, affective barriers, technological dependence, mechanical difficulties, linguistic barriers, and cognitive-structural challenges as the major obstacles to writing instruction. These findings informed the development of Compose & Connect, a theoretically anchored, scaffolded-learning instructional workbook designed to strengthen grammatical accuracy, sustained idea development, and purposeful multimodal composition among senior high school learners.

Keywords: Instructional Competencies; Senior High School; Writing Activities; Writing Instruction; Writing Performance

Introduction

Communication is widely regarded as a foundational competence for learners in the twenty-first century, and writing occupies a particularly demanding position among the language macro-skills because it requires students to construct arguments, synthesize information, and demonstrate understanding for an audience (Hyland, 2019). International assessments and research syntheses consistently report that secondary-level writing proficiency remains a persistent concern: while learners can often produce basic responses, they continue to struggle with higher-order features such as coherence, cohesion, audience awareness, and critical engagement with content (OECD, 2019).

The Philippine context mirrors this global trend while presenting distinct local challenges. Despite the K to 12 curriculum's explicit emphasis on communication and learner-centered pedagogy, students continue to experience difficulty with grammar, sentence construction, paragraph development, and the sustained coherence of longer texts, particularly in divisions where large class sizes, limited instructional time, and heavy administrative workloads constrain individualized, process-oriented writing instruction. Writing is still

frequently treated as a one-time graded product rather than a recursive process of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and reflecting.

Although a substantial body of literature addresses process writing, writing pedagogy, and adolescent literacy, a gap remains in practical, context-specific instructional design that is empirically grounded in actual student performance and classroom practice, particularly at the senior high school level in the Philippine setting. Few studies provide a fine-grained, disaggregated profile of student writing performance alongside a matched assessment of instructional competencies from both teacher and student perspectives, and fewer still translate these findings directly into a usable set of classroom writing activities. This study addresses that gap by describing senior high school students' writing performance and the extent to which key instructional competencies are manifested in classroom writing instruction in the Division of Quezon, comparing teacher and student assessments, examining the relationship between performance and instructional practice, identifying teachers' instructional challenges, and using these findings as the empirical basis for proposed writing activities.

Research Questions

This study aimed to propose writing activities for teaching English Writing to Senior High School Students in the Division of Quezon

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of students' performance in writing competencies in terms of grammar and language accuracy, organization and structure, cohesion and coherence, audience and purpose awareness, content and idea development, mechanics, and use of multimodal elements?
2. To what extent are five instructional competencies, as assessed by English teachers and students, manifested in teaching writing?
3. Is there a significant difference between teachers' and students' assessments of these competencies?
4. Is there a significant relationship between students' writing performance and the extent of manifestation of the instructional competencies?
5. What issues and challenges do teachers encounter in teaching English writing?
6. What writing activities may be proposed based on the findings?

Scope and Delimitations

This study assessed the writing performance of senior high school students and the instructional competencies of English teachers in the Division of Quezon during the conduct of the research. It focused on writing competencies such as grammar and language accuracy, organization and structure, cohesion and coherence, audience and purpose awareness, content and idea development, mechanics, and multimodal use, as well as teachers' competencies in developing clarity and coherence, audience awareness, multimodal integration, academic and professional writing, and inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. The study covered selected large and accessible public senior high schools within the Division, using classroom-based writing outputs produced during the research period, and excluded other macro skills, creative and technical writing, and outputs from other subjects or extracurricular activities.

Literature Review

Writing at the upper-secondary level involves more than the accurate production of sentences; it requires mastering disciplinary genres, managing rhetorical structure, and making linguistic choices aligned with communicative purpose (Hyland, 2019). A synthesis of writing-instruction research commissioned by the United States Institute of Education Sciences identified explicit strategy instruction, summarization, sentence combining, specific product goals, and collaborative writing as practices with the strongest evidence of improving adolescent writing quality, underscoring that guided, strategically focused instruction outperforms unguided practice alone (Graham et al., 2016). Complementary work reviewing evidence-based writing instruction for students in Grades 1 to 12 similarly emphasizes explicit modeling, frequent practice with feedback, and the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student as mechanisms for internalizing effective writing strategies (Graham, Harris, & Chambers, 2016). At the sentence level, a recent meta-analysis of written corrective feedback confirmed that targeted, sustained feedback produces durable gains in learners' grammatical accuracy, reinforcing the view that grammar develops best through guided practice embedded in authentic writing tasks rather than isolated drills (Brown, Liu, & Norouzian, 2023).

Beyond linguistic accuracy, writing is increasingly understood as a multimodal and collaborative practice. Bezemer and Kress (2016) frame writing within a social semiotic perspective in which meaning is constructed through the combined use of text, image, and layout, a view that has direct implications for how

digital and multimodal composition should be taught rather than treated as decorative. A systematic review of digital multimodal composition in secondary classrooms similarly found that purposeful multimodal tasks strengthen students' meaning-making and engagement when teachers provide explicit scaffolding rather than incidental exposure to technology (Smith, Pacheco, & Khorosheva, 2021). Consistent with this view, collaborative writing paired with explicit vocabulary instruction has been shown to strengthen both language accuracy and student engagement in secondary EFL classrooms (Amalia et al., 2021), while digital tools have been found to support writing development when access and pedagogical scaffolding are carefully balanced (Trust, 2018).

In the Philippine setting, locally developed instructional models have targeted specific stages of the writing process; for instance, a two-phase model for senior high school academic writing demonstrated gains in structure and coherence when planning and revision were made explicit, scaffolded stages of instruction (Roxas, 2020). Affective and motivational barriers further complicate this picture: a study of senior high school students in the Philippines found that writing apprehension, rooted in limited self-efficacy and fear of evaluation, constrains students' willingness to engage in sustained writing tasks (Bastida & Saysi, 2023). At the same time, regional and international policy bodies note that digital literacy and technology integration in writing instruction remain unevenly implemented across Southeast Asian classrooms, pointing to persistent gaps between curricular intent and classroom practice (UNESCO, 2020, 2023).

Taken together, the literature converges on several implications for senior high school writing instruction in under-resourced, high-enrollment contexts: (a) explicit, strategy-focused instruction produces stronger gains than unguided practice; (b) writing should be scaffolded as a recursive process rather than assessed as a single product; (c) multimodal and digital composition require deliberate pedagogical integration rather than incidental exposure; and (d) locally grounded instructional materials are needed to translate these principles into activities that are feasible within large classes and limited instructional time. These implications directly informed the design of the present study and its resulting instructional output.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods descriptive research design, which is widely used in educational research to systematically describe existing conditions, practices, and relationships as they occur naturally, without manipulating variables (Cohen et al., 2018). Within this mixed-methods descriptive framework, a quantitative component measured writing performance and the extent of instructional practices, while a qualitative component, through open-ended interview responses, provided deeper insight into teachers' classroom experiences. This concurrent mixing of quantitative and qualitative data allowed the study to capture authentic instructional practices and learner outcomes as a basis for the proposed writing activities.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among public senior high schools in the Schools Division of Quezon, Philippines. This setting was selected because preliminary school reports and classroom observations suggested persistent, locally specific difficulties in idea generation, coherence, audience awareness, and revision among senior high school writers, alongside teachers' expressed need for structured, contextually relevant writing activities that do not add unsustainable workload.

Research Participants

Participants comprised two groups: senior high school students, whose writing outputs and perceptions of instruction were assessed, and English teachers, who assessed both students' written outputs and the extent to which instructional competencies were manifested in their own classroom practice. Both groups were drawn from the same participating schools to allow meaningful comparison between learner performance and instructional competency.

Research Instrument

Three instruments were used. A researcher-made Writing Performance Assessment Rubric evaluated students' actual written outputs, produced in response to prompts aligned with senior high school English competencies, across seven components: grammar and language accuracy, organization and structure, cohesion and coherence, audience and purpose awareness, content and idea development, mechanics, and use of multimodal elements. A structured questionnaire, using a four-point extent-of-manifestation scale, measured teachers' and students' perceptions of five instructional competency domains. The questionnaire was reviewed by the research adviser, content-validated by experts in English education, and pilot-tested prior

to use; it yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .89, indicating strong internal consistency. A semi-structured interview guide, validated through the same expert-review process, gathered qualitative data from teachers on instructional difficulties, effective strategies, and suggestions for improving writing instruction.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection began only after securing approval from the Schools Division Office of Quezon and the principals of participating schools. The researcher personally administered the validated questionnaires and coordinated the writing performance assessment, which was facilitated by students' own English teachers. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online, depending on teacher availability, with notes and, where consented, audio recordings taken only after informed consent was secured. Completed instruments were checked for completeness, and questionnaires with incomplete or invalid responses were excluded from analysis.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the level of students' performance in writing competencies in terms of grammar and language accuracy, organization and structure, cohesion and coherence, audience and purpose awareness, content and idea development, mechanics, and use of multimodal elements?

Table 1 summarizes students' performance across the seven writing competencies assessed through the documentary analysis of their written outputs.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Writing Performance Across Seven Competencies

Competency	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Grammar and language accuracy	3.59	Very Satisfactory
2. Organization and structure	3.82	Very Satisfactory
3. Cohesion and coherence	3.76	Very Satisfactory
4. Audience and purpose awareness	3.75	Very Satisfactory
5. Content and idea development	3.77	Very Satisfactory
6. Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)	3.72	Very Satisfactory
7. Use of multimodal elements	3.70	Very Satisfactory

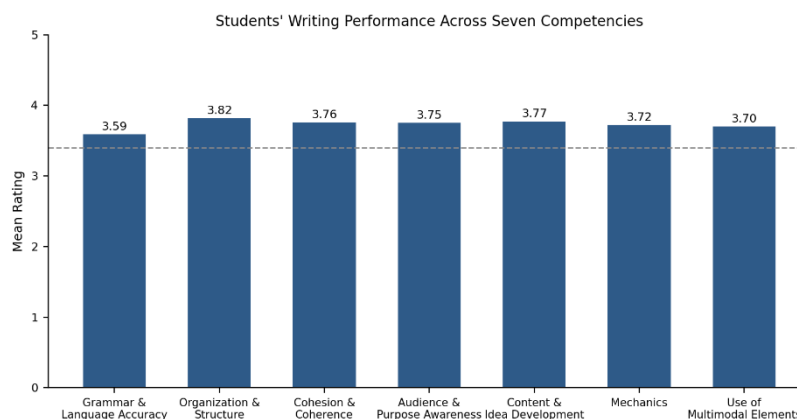


Figure 1. Students' writing performance across seven competencies.

Students achieved a "Very Satisfactory" level of writing performance in all seven competencies, with organization and structure obtaining the highest mean (3.82) and grammar and language accuracy the lowest (3.59). This pattern indicates that learners are generally able to organize ideas logically, structure paragraphs effectively, and follow recognizable text patterns, consistent with evidence that explicit instruction in outlining and paragraphing helps learners manage extended writing tasks with greater confidence (Graham et al., 2016). At the same time, the comparatively lower performance in grammar and language accuracy suggests that sentence-level control remains the area most in need of continued, guided practice, supporting the view that grammatical accuracy develops best when integrated into the drafting and revision stages of meaningful writing tasks rather than taught in isolation (Graham, Harris, & Chambers, 2016; Brown, Liu, & Norouzian, 2023).

Research Question 2: To what extent are five instructional competencies, as assessed by English teachers and students, manifested in teaching writing?

Table 2 compares teachers' and students' assessments of the extent to which five instructional competencies are manifested in classroom writing instruction.

Table 2. Extent of Manifestation of Instructional Competencies in Teaching Writing, as Assessed by Teachers and Students

Instructional Competency	Teachers WM	Teachers VI	Students WM	Students VI
1. Developing clarity, structure, and coherence in writing	3.37	ME	3.38	ME
2. Enhancing audience awareness and purposeful writing	3.42	ME	3.37	ME
3. Integrating multimodal and digital writing	3.34	ME	3.30	ME
4. Supporting writing in academic and professional contexts	3.46	ME	3.30	ME
5. Encouraging inclusivity, ethics, and cultural sensitivity in writing	3.49	ME	3.33	ME

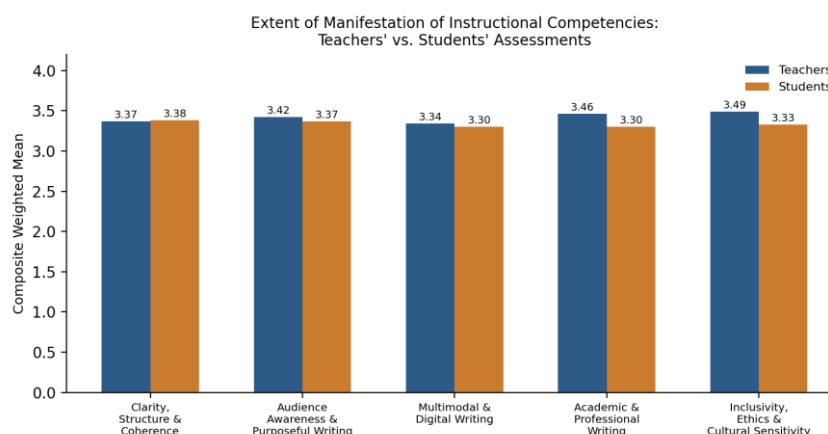


Figure 2. Comparison of teachers' and students' composite assessments across five instructional competency domains.

Both teachers and students rated all five instructional competencies as manifested to a "Moderate Extent," indicating that writing instruction in the Division of Quezon is structurally present but not yet consistently implemented at a high level across all classroom practices. Teachers rated encouraging inclusivity, ethics, and cultural sensitivity highest (3.49), while integrating multimodal and digital writing received the lowest rating from both groups (3.34 and 3.30, respectively), suggesting that technology-supported writing tasks remain the least consistently implemented practice despite growing curricular emphasis on digital composition (Smith et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between teachers' and students' assessments of these competencies?

Table 3. Test of Significant Difference Between Teachers' and Students' Assessments of Instructional Competencies

Instructional Competency	t	df	p	Interpretation
1. Developing clarity, structure, and coherence	0.36	661	.718	Not Significant
2. Enhancing audience awareness and purposeful writing	1.63	661	.103	Not Significant
3. Integrating multimodal and digital writing	1.06	661	.290	Not Significant
4. Supporting academic and professional writing	4.90	661	.001	Highly Significant
5. Encouraging inclusivity, ethics, and cultural sensitivity	4.81	661	.001	Highly Significant

No significant differences were found in three domains, indicating that teachers and students share a common understanding of how consistently these practices are manifested. In contrast, teachers rated supporting academic and professional writing and encouraging inclusivity, ethics, and cultural sensitivity significantly higher than students did, revealing a perception gap between instructional intent and students' classroom experience of these higher-order, socially oriented competencies. This finding is consistent with the broader view of writing as a socially situated practice whose more complex dimensions require more explicit, visible instruction before students recognize them as consistently taught (Hyland, 2019).

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between students' writing performance and the extent of manifestation of the instructional competencies?

Relationship Between Writing Performance and Instructional Competencies

Spearman rho correlation analysis showed that the level of students' writing performance was significantly and positively related to the extent of manifestation of all five instructional competencies ($p < .001$ in all cases), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis across all domains. Moderate to strong relationships were consistently observed between instructional competencies and audience and purpose awareness (rho ranging from .42 to .48), content and idea development (rho ranging from .37 to .41), and use of multimodal elements, while mechanics and cohesion showed comparatively weaker, though still significant, correlations. Integrating multimodal and digital writing emerged as the instructional domain most strongly associated with multiple performance indicators, underscoring the value of purposeful, technology-supported writing instruction (Smith et al., 2021; Trust, 2018).

Research Question 5: What issues and challenges do teachers encounter in teaching English writing?

Issues and Challenges in Teaching English Writing

Thematic analysis of teacher interviews, following the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework, identified six recurring themes: low student motivation and engagement, affective barriers such as fear of making mistakes and anxiety in using English, technological dependence and concerns over the authenticity of AI-assisted writing, persistent difficulties with writing mechanics, linguistic barriers including limited vocabulary and first-language interference, and cognitive-structural challenges in organizing and presenting ideas logically. These findings indicate that the challenges of teaching English writing are multifaceted, spanning linguistic, cognitive, affective, and technological dimensions within broader instructional constraints such as large class sizes and limited instructional time.

Research Question 6: What writing activities may be proposed based on the findings?

The Proposed Writing Activities Workbook

The diagnostic findings directly informed the development of Compose & Connect: Writing Activities for Senior High School Students, a sequenced and scaffolded instructional workbook anchored in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of scaffolding, Flower and Hayes's (1981) cognitive process model of writing, and Zimmerman's (2000) theory of self-regulated learning, and aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). The workbook targets the specific weaknesses identified in this study, namely grammar accuracy, sustained idea development, and purposeful multimodal use, while reinforcing students' existing strengths in organization and audience awareness. It incorporates diagnostic assessment, explicit strategy instruction, collaborative prewriting, iterative feedback, targeted sentence-level workshops, ethically guided multimodal composition tasks, and portfolio reflection. Differentiated tasks, analytic rubrics, and low-technology alternatives address contextual constraints such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and unequal access to technology, offering a practical, research-aligned approach to improving senior high school students' writing outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical standards in educational research. Formal permission was obtained from the Schools Division Office of Quezon and the principals of participating schools prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from all teacher-participants, while parental consent and student assent were obtained for student participants, who are considered a vulnerable group. Participation was strictly voluntary, and all participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty; students were assured that their responses and writing outputs would not affect their grades or academic standing. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout by excluding identifying information from research instruments and reports, and by storing data securely in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Ethical writing practices, including proper citation and responsible use of digital and AI-assisted tools, were emphasized in both instructional analysis and data interpretation, consistent with the study's emphasis on inclusive and responsible writing instruction.

Conclusion

Senior high school students in the Division of Quezon demonstrate a "Very Satisfactory" level of writing performance overall, with organization and structure as their strongest competency and grammar and language accuracy as their area of greatest need. Instructional competencies in teaching writing are manifested to a "Moderate Extent" across all five domains, indicating that writing instruction is structurally sound but requires more consistent, high-level implementation, particularly in academic, professional, ethical, and culturally responsive dimensions where teacher and student perceptions diverge significantly. The significant, positive relationship between writing performance and instructional competency across all domains confirms that stronger, more consistent instructional implementation is directly linked to better student writing outcomes. Persistent challenges, chiefly low student motivation and linguistic barriers, continue to constrain writing instruction. These findings collectively support the development of Compose & Connect, a theoretically anchored, scaffolded workbook designed to translate diagnostic evidence into classroom-ready writing activities suited to real instructional constraints.

Recommendations

The proposed Compose & Connect workbook may be submitted to master teachers and school heads for systematic review, pilot implementation, and further validation before wider classroom use. English teachers are encouraged to gradually integrate the proposed writing activities into regular classroom instruction, with particular attention to grammar accuracy, sustained idea development, and purposeful multimodal composition. School leaders may prioritize professional development that strengthens the explicitness and visibility of academic, professional, ethical, and culturally responsive writing instruction to narrow the perception gap identified between teachers and students. Future researchers may replicate and extend this study in larger, more diverse, or multi-site educational settings, and may evaluate the actual classroom impact of the Compose & Connect workbook on student writing outcomes.

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