

Translation and Direct Writing Methods on the Compositions of Grade 9 Students in the Northern Philippines

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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the composition writing skills of Grade 9 students in the Northern Philippines using translation and direct writing methods through the quasi-experimental research design. The questionnaire and four compositions were instruments of the study. Rubric, mean, Pearson product-moment correlation, and t-test were the statistical tools employed. Results show that the respondents performed better using the translation method than direct writing in the narrative, expository, descriptive, and argumentative compositions. The content, organization, and mechanics of those who translated their compositions from their mother tongue (Ilokano) to their second language (Filipino) were found more proficient than those who used direct writing. More so, they are proficient in descriptive compositions. Sex, educational resources, and leisure activities have significant relationships with the respondents who translated. Furthermore, a significant difference was found between the respondents who directly wrote and those who translated. Those who translated have compositions that are more substantial and more organized to generate ideas than those who used direct writing. Based on the results, it is recommended to use the first language to generate and conceptualize ideas and after which, translate it to the second language. Students should be trained more on Ilokano language use.

Keywords: Filipino language, Ilokano language, writing skills, components of writing, Kto12

Introduction

The field of education is currently facing globalization. Countries all over the world make connections with each other to address the needs of the fast-changing world. To make connections, individuals should have the ability and competence to use macro-communication skills. Thus, everyone should be equipped with the necessary communication skills such as listening, speaking, listening, and writing.

Schools serve as training grounds for learners to achieve the necessary communication skills and to foster competence in the field of work. However, it is still a challenge for schools in the Philippines to provide the average competence needed for learners to become responsible, productive, and self-fulfilling individuals (Unciano, 2020). And one of the 21st century skills that are expected for each learner to be

equipped and to become holistic is effective communication skills which is also the end- goal of the teaching of languages in the curriculum in the K12 Program.

Writing as a Language Macro Skill

Of the four macro-skills, writing is the last and most complex macro-skill because it entails the use of the brain and the hand to construct ideas (Gandeza, & Unciano, 2021). It includes cognitive, affective, physiological, and social processes that make this skill difficult to acquire (Genc-Ersoy & Gol-Dede, 2022). This serves as an extension of the language that the students have achieved in listening, speaking, and reading (Peck and Buckingham, 1976 as cited by Ulit, 2009). This is an expressive skill that requires a careful choice of words so that the receiver will be able to comprehend the message that the writer wants to convey (Arrogante, 2007). Concerning this, through writing, a person expresses their goals, aspirations, feelings, imagination, and opinions towards another (Royo, 2011, as cited by Jocson et al. 2005). It is one of the four macro skills that need to be developed by the students. This involves physical and mental activity because this requires hands and minds to formulate ideas (Bernales et al., 2002). This is a process that starts first in the mind as an idea before it is written which only humans can do (Arrogante & Garcia, 2004; Mendoza & Romero, 2007).

In the Philippines, in the teaching of English and Filipino, the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are still the focus in the learning of the language. Grammar, fluency and learning strategies were added domains in the curriculum of languages so that the ultimate goal of communication would be met- and that is to create Filipino who have functional literacy (Kto12 Curriculum Guide Filipino, 2016). Of the four macro skills, writing is the skill which the students performed least and one of the most neglected macro skills. Thus, this dilemma needs to be addressed and the inclusion of the mother tongue is eyed to be the solution to this problem.

In the classroom, writing offers pedagogical benefits because this involves skills such as critical, creative, and analytical thinking of the students. It increases the ability of individuals for the sharing of knowledge, giving inspiration, problem solving and reflection, and dissemination of information to the readers (Defazio et al. 2010; Kazemian, et al. 2021). It enables individuals to accomplish their goals in life and it can become beneficial to the intellect and emotions of individuals (Smith, 2010). Furthermore, it can lead to success in the workplace (Walsh, 2010).

Among the four macro skills, writing is challenging to teach students (Tumangan, 1977). Furthermore, Gentry (2017) pointed out that learners cannot write because teachers have little training in teaching writing and are not confident to teach the skill (Gentry 2017). Learners are hard up in writing because they lack vocabulary (Indrasari, 2018) and constructing their concepts (Du & List, 2020).

In other words, writing is challenging to teach for this skill needs organized ideas that widen the vocabulary of the students. This is a challenge to the language teachers to teach academic writing to the students. Most teachers have clamors regarding teaching writing to the students. Thus, it is picked as the focus of this research because this is empirically found to be tough to teach and to learn.

There are four discourses in writing a composition. Arrogante (2007) explains each of the discourses. Narrative discourse usually narrates an experience in the life of a person that is based on a true-to-life story or a story which is a product of imagination. In a descriptive discourse, the writer usually writes in a creatively about

what things trigger his/her senses. In the expository discourse, the writer shares and explains information regarding any event or issue that is happening in society. The argumentative discourse emphasizes the stand of the writer regarding a dispute and proves it true by providing facts and evidence that would support her claim.

Use of the Mother Tongue

So that a learner can write, the basic prerequisite skill is the knowledge of the language that he/she will be using. As far as this research is concerned, the researchers integrated the use of their mother tongue for the students to write their ideas in the first language. This is the essence of the translation method. The inclusion of mother tongue-based education or the usage of the first language is based on the Republic Act No. 10533 otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 in section 4 (<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15/republic-act-no-10533/>). The provision states that the mother tongue or first language is the first language that the learners have learned.

On the other law, Republic Act No. 10157 or the Kindergarten Act (<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2012/01/20/republic-act-no-10157/>) provides that “the state shall hereby adopt the mother tongue based-multilingual education (MTB-MLE) method. The mother tongue of the learner shall be the primary medium of instruction for teaching and learning at the kindergarten level.” (This provision of the Kindergarten Act served as the foundation of the inclusion of the first language in the curriculum particularly in the teaching of the four macro communication skills of the students. The implementation of the MTB-MLE started at the Kindergarten level and ended at the Grade three level. Thus, it is only for four academic years of the students in elementary and after the third grade, the mother tongue would disappear as the students shift to their second language (Filipino and English).

Though the limitation of the teaching of the first language is only up to Grade 3, the use of the mother tongue in the formulation of ideas is proven to be effective even at the secondary level. Torrijos (2009) analyzed the cross-linguistic influence of second language acquisition in writing. He investigated the importance of the first language of the students in writing in the second language. He found out that translation is a significant determinant in the process of acquiring a second language. Stapa & Majid (2012) found in their study that there was an improvement in the writing skills of the students who used their first language in the formulation of ideas in the second language. In another study, Wang & Wen (2002) and van Weijen et al (2009) found out that the students used their first language in writing the composition in the second language.

Limitations of Writing Methods

In addition, there are also research studies on the use of translation methods and direct writing methods. The studies proved that the formulation of ideas in the first language and then translating it to the second language is more effective than the direct writing of ideas in the second language (Lifang, 2008; Kobayashi & Rinert, 2008; Karim & Nassaji, 2013). Thus, translation is proven to be an effective method in the formulation of ideas in the second language.

However, the studies on translation and direct writing methods are limited only to foreign studies and in the English language. There is no study conducted on the use of translation and direct writing methods in the Philippines. This is the reason why the researchers conducted research to determine which of the two writing methods would be of great help in writing compositions. Another thing, it was also an attempt to use the Ilocano language as the first language (L1) to be used in the teaching of writing in high school and to fill in the research gap that the mother tongue is limited only to the Grade three level.

Among the four macro skills, students were found to have difficulties in writing and constructing sentences into paragraphs. This is observed in the Filipino language class of Grade 9 Junior High School students in a secondary school in Ilocos Sur, Philippines. Language teachers of the school where the study was conducted shared the same observations and experiences regarding the writing skill level of the students. In this research, the researchers compared the two methods of writing composition- translation and direct writing methods.

Significance of the Study

The result of the study would give ideas and understanding to the teachers, students, administrators, and researchers about the significance of the first language and second language. This could help also in the production of instructional materials under the K12 curriculum. Further, this would motivate school authorities and the Department of Education to give utmost importance to the usage of the first language or mother tongue in a multilingual country like the Philippines.

Objectives

This study aimed to analyze and compare the level of composition writing skills using the translation method (L1 to L2) and direct writing method (L2) of the Grade 9 Junior High School students in one secondary school in Ilocos Sur, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to answer the level of the writing skills of the students in writing narrative, expository, descriptive, and argumentative; the level of the writing skills of the students in writing in terms of content, organization, and mechanics using the translation and direct writing methods. Further, it investigated the factors that show a significant relationship in the level of composition writing skills of the students using the translation and direct writing method; and found a significant difference in the level of the composition writing skills of the students using the translation and direct writing methods.

Methodology

This study employed a correlational and quasi-experimental research design. In the correlational research design, the researchers determined the significant relationship between the variables and the level of writing skills of the respondents using the translation and direct writing methods. On the other hand, in the quasi-experimental, the researchers tested the two writing methods in writing compositions.

Correlational is a design in quantitative research that seeks to find the existence of a relationship between variables and determine the degree of the said relationship (Prieto, et al., 2017). On the other hand, quasi-experimental research design is a design that is used to test the relationship among the variables involved. It is a

design that examines the causal relationship among the variables (Rogers & Revesz, 2020).

The respondents of the study were Grade 9 students in one secondary school in the Northern Philippines. The total enumeration of the two sections was the respondents of the study. There were 112 respondents – 56 males and 56 females.

In the writing of the compositions, the students had the freedom to choose the topic they would want to write. The written compositions were evaluated. But before the evaluation, the rubric used was discussed by the teachers so that the students would be guided on the evaluation criteria of the composition.

To evaluate the written compositions of the students, a self-made rubric validated by the evaluators in the field of language was used. The written compositions of the respondents were evaluated through the rubrics which were based on the K-12 curriculum program in Filipino. The written composition of the students had undergone five evaluations- 1) self-rating wherein the respondents evaluated their own written compositions; 2) Peer rating, wherein the peers of the respondents evaluated their written compositions and; 3) three expert evaluators wherein the written compositions were evaluated by another three teachers. The result was correlated with the socio-demographic profile and attitude of the students in writing the composition.

Rubric, mean, t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation were utilized as statistical tools for the study. The rubric was utilized to determine the level of the composition writing skills of the students using the translation and direct writing methods. Mean was utilized the composition writing skill level of the students. The t-test was used to determine the difference between the level of composition writing skills of the students who used the translation method and the direct writing method. Lastly, Pearson Product correlation was used to analyze the relationship of factors to their writing skills using the translation method and direct writing method.

Results

This part presents the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data. The researchers used tables to present the data to facilitate comprehension and administer appropriate interpretation of the data.

Table 1

Level of the Composition Writing Skills of the Respondents through the Translation and Direct Writing Methods

Composition	Translation		Direct Writing	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Narrative	3.70	P	3.64	P
2. Expository	3.77	P	3.56	P
3. Descriptive	3.82	P	3.60	P
4. Argumentative	3.75	P	3.51	P
Total	3.76	P	3.55	P

Norm: 4.21 – 5.00	A	Advance
3.41- 4.20	P	Proficient
2.61-3.40	AP	Approaching Proficiency
1.81-2.60	D	Developing
1.00-1.80	B	Beginning

Table 1 shows the level of composition writing of the respondents. It can be gleaned from the table that the respondents are proficient both in translation and direct writing. However, the translation method got a higher score (3.76) than the direct writing method (3.55). This implies that the first language of the respondents which is Ilocano is effective in writing the second language which is Filipino.

Table 2

Mean Rating of the Respondents Based on the Components of Writing

Component	Translation	DR	Direct Writing	DR
Content	3.83	P	3.64	P
Organization	3.72	P	3.57	P
Mechanics	3.73	P	3.45	P
Total	3.76	P	3.55	P

Norm: 4.21 – 5.00	A	Advance
3.41- 4.20	P	Proficient
2.61-3.40	AP	Approaching Proficiency
1.81-2.60	D	Developing
1.00-1.80	B	Beginning

Table 2 shows the mean score of the respondents based on the three components of writing. Based on the table, all of the respondents are proficient in terms of content, organization, and mechanics using the translation and direct writing methods. However, it can be gleaned from the table that the writing components of the respondents using the translation method ($x=3.76$) are better than those using the direct writing method ($x=3.55$). This implies that using the mother tongue (Ilocano) as the base language could result in better performance in writing in terms of content, organization, and mechanics.

Table 3
Socio-demographic Factors of the Respondents

Socio-demographic factors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Sex		
Female	56	50
Male	56	50
2. Place of Residence		
Town Proper	22	20
Near the field	56	50
Near the sea	34	30
3. Educational resources		
	Mean	Description (Frequency of Use – Always, Sometimes, Never)
computer	2.27	Often
Radio	2.17	Often
Television	2.83	Always
Internet	2.39	Always
Books	2.38	Always
Newspaper	1.93	Often
magazines	1.98	Often
4. Leisure Activities		
	Mean	Description (Likelihood – very like, like, unlike)
listening to music	2.77	Very like
singing	2.29	Like
story telling	2.26	Like
watching movies	2.34	Like
browsing and reading social media	2.36	Very like
chatting with classmates	2.58	Very like
reflecting	1.99	Like

Table 3 (Continued)

Socio-demographic factors	Frequency	Percentage
Communicating through social media	2.24	Like
listening to news reports	2.33	Like
playing with peers	2.51	Very like
planting plants	2.16	Like
roaming	2.49	Very Like
drawing and designing	2.06	Like
dancing	2.07	Like
Problem-solving	2.08	Like

Table 3 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents which is composed of sex, place of residence, educational resources, and leisure activities.

It can be gathered from Table 3 that in terms of sex variables, there is an equal number of males (56) and females (56).

In terms of place of residence as a variable, it is shown in the table that 56 or 50% of respondents reside near the field, 34 or 30 % reside near the sea, and 22 or 20% reside in the town proper. This means that more respondents are residing in the rural areas than in the urban area.

In the educational resources, it is shown that the most frequent educational resources utilized by the respondents at home are television ($x=2.83$), internet ($x=2.39$), and books ($x=2.38$). This means that the respondents are more likely to watch television, browse the internet, and read books.

In the leisure activities, the table shows that listening to music ($x=2.77$), browsing and using social media ($x=2.36$), chatting with classmates ($x=2.58$), playing with peers ($x=2.51$), and roaming ($x=2.49$) are among the most leisure activities that are very like by the respondents.

Table 4

Factors Showing Significant Relationship to the Level of Writing Skills of the Respondents Using the Translation Method

Factors	Narrative	Expository	Descriptive	Argumentative	Total
Sex	-.349*	-.234	-.364*	-.267*	-.334*
Place of Residence	-.083	-.101	-.081	-.076	-.093
Educational Resources	.257	.347**	.345**	.390**	.372**

Table 4 (Continued)

Factors	Narrative	Expository	Descriptive	Argumentative	Total
Leisure Activities	.176	.241	.312*	.330*	.298*

Table 4 shows the relationship between sex and the three compositions (narrative, descriptive, and argumentative) that the respondents have written using the translation. Based on the table, sex has a significant relationship with the composition writing level of the students who used translation (-.344*). This implies that females favor more the translation method than males. Females are good at writing narrative, descriptive, and argumentative essays when using their first language which is Ilocano, and translating it to their second language which is Filipino.

Educational resources used by the respondents show a significant relationship also in writing expository (.347**), descriptive (.345**), and argumentative (.390**) compositions. Overall, educational resources (.372**) are a factor in writing compositions. Television, the internet, and books are among the educational resources that the students utilize. This further means that frequent use of educational resources results positive effect on the composition writing skills of the respondents.

Leisure activities of the respondents were found to be significantly related to the level of writing skills of the respondents in descriptive (.312*), and argumentative (.330*) compositions. Overall, leisure activities (.298*) are a factor so that the respondents can write in descriptive and argumentative compositions using the translation method. This implies that the experiences of the respondents in their leisure activities can be the source and content of their writing. This further means that respondents were able to write because of the activities that made them happy.

Table 5

Factors Showing a Significant Relationship to the Level of Writing Skills of the Respondents Using the Direct Writing Method

Factors	Narrative	Expository	Descriptive	Argumentative	Total
Sex	-.136	-.115	-.275*	-.261	-.226
Place of Residence	.107	.124	.107	.075	.110
Educational Resources	.129	.137	.195	.026	.125
Leisure Activities	.016	-.100	.009	.004	-.015

Table 5 shows the factors that have a significant relationship using the direct writing method. Based on the table, sex is significantly correlated to the descriptive composition of the respondents. This means that females are better writers than males when it comes to direct writing method.

Table 6

Difference between the Composition Writing Skill of the Respondents Using Translation a (L1-L2) and Direct Writing Methods

Composition	Translation	Direct Writing	Mean Difference	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Narrative	3.70	3.53	.170	1.836	p >.05	Do not Reject Ho
Expository	3.77	3.56	.207	2.386	p <.05	Reject Ho
Descriptive	3.75	3.51	.299	2.894	p <.05	Reject Ho
Argumentative	3.82	3.60	.237	1.926	p <.05	Reject Ho
Total	3.76	3.53	.228	2.476	p <.05	Reject Ho

Table 6 shows the difference between the composition writing skills of the respondents using the translation and direct writing methods. Based on the table, a significant difference has been found between the two methods of writing. Respondents write proficiently more using the translation method on the expository (t-value=2.386, p=<.05), descriptive (t-value= 2.894, p=<.05) and argumentative (t-value=1.926, p=<.05) compositions. In general, the translation method is more effective than the direct writing method. This implies that when the respondents used their mother tongue first and translated their thoughts later into the second language, it resulted in better writing elements (content, organization, and mechanics). Mother tongue plays a pivotal role in writing different compositions.

Discussion

Writing is a significant macro-communication skill that students need to learn. Equipping students the necessary writing skills will assist them not only academically but more so in the job that they will be taking someday. As such, writing is a fundamental skill at this time because of the lucrative benefits this skill would contribute to the different fields. Aside from the writing skills is the language that the students will use to express themselves more effectively and efficiently.

In the study, it was found that those who have translated their compositions using their mother tongue (Ilokano) to the second language (Filipino) are more proficient than those who directly write their thoughts in the second language. Gandeza & Unciano (2022) in their study on writing on personal narratives as a pedagogical intervention, found that personal narratives provide a smooth flow in the construction of concepts, develop learners' logical and critical thinking, and develop

the ability to reason. Horner and Tetreault (2016) highlighted in their research that the translation method can lead to the mastery of the target language of the learners.

Unciano (2020) in the Kto12 training program of teachers particularly on the performance of the Grade 9 learners found that the performance of the learners in the subject Filipino is higher than the other subjects.

Torrijos (2009) also supports the result of the study. It was found that translation is an important determinant in the acquisition of a second language. Walter and Dekker (2008) mentioned also that the mother tongue serves as the foundation of the students in acquiring another language. Further, Cummins (2000) believed that the first language can be used in the acquisition and learning of the second language. Hurley (2000) stressed that those learners who acquire two languages gain academic competence when they go to school.

As to the individual writing components which are content, organization, and mechanics, those who utilized translation were found to be more efficient than those who used direct writing methods. Karim and Nassaji (2013) found that the first language helps the learners in writing in the second language in terms of content and organization. Second language acquisition happens through communication of the persons who use the target language to express themselves. Ismail and Alsheikh (2012) and Tavakoli et al., (2014) found also that the students benefit from translation in the generation of ideas and better-writing organization. Most of the respondents preferred translation rather than direct writing. Murtisari (2016) emphasized in her study that translation as a method of writing, can increase the vocabulary and grammar skills of the learners.

In the study, sex is found to have a significant relationship with the writing skills of the respondents. The finding is supported by the study of Adeyemi (2008) which presents that females are more good writers than males. Weatherall (2002) emphasized that the language of females is direct, clear, and concise. The finding is supported by the study of Kamari et al. (2012). They found out that the writing skills of females are superior to males in terms of descriptive composition writing.

Educational resources are also found to have a significant relationship with writing skills. Hasby and Sugianto (2022) found that watching movies is effective in improving grammatical competence, vocabulary, sentence patterns, various languages, and motivation. In addition, Attiyat (2019) claimed that books through pleasure reading enhance the writing skills of the respondents by writing their own experiences, inspiring them, widening their vocabulary, and improving their grammar. Habibi et al. (2015) found out also in their study that the integration of reading books into writing improves the writing skills of the learners. Laila et al. (2021) found out that textbooks based on local wisdom improve the reading and writing skills of students. Rachman et al. (2020) also found in their research that internet usage produces and increases the quality of writing works because of its benefits to the writer. Additionally, Mohamed and Ayeche (2011) stressed that learning from the Internet can increase skills and knowledge and can assist in the development of writing skills.

Apart from the sex and educational resources, leisure was also found to be related to better writing skills because respondents can write proficiently. According to Thadani (2022) and Devi (n.d.), leisure activities relieve stress, boost concentration, improve reading and writing skills, and increase communication skills. In another finding, Mareque et al. (2019) in their research stressed that students participating in leisure activities are more creative than those who are not.

Clayton (2022) mentioned the benefits of leisure activities such as providing a sense of purpose, improving individual moods, increasing productivity, increasing a sense of empowerment and self-value, and providing different experiences.

Yerlisu et al. (2010) emphasized in their study that one of the benefits of leisure or recreational activities is working more efficiently. When learners are engaged in leisure activities or in activities that they like to do voluntarily, they become efficient in their other activities. Since writing is both a skill and an activity, the writing skills of the respondents become more efficient.

Cummins (2000) believes that children who learn their first language also learn the necessary skills to acquire the second language. Kobayashi & Rinnert (2008) mentioned that those students who composed first in their first language and translated later into their second language are better than those students who used the direct writing method.

Stapa & Majid (2012) and Karim & Nassaji (2013) found in their study that those students who used the translation improved their writing skills because they composed first using their first language.

Further, Krashen (1987) stressed in his natural order hypothesis that whatever language learners have acquired, it can help in the acquisition of a second language.

Ismail and Alsheikh (2012) found in their study that most of the respondents preferred translation rather than direct writing. Beiler & Dewilde (2020) found in their study that translation served as the key to aligning students' communicative resources to write in English as an additional language. In their study, they concluded that it could develop learners' competence in writing and prepare them to write in context. Horner and Tetreault (2016) highlighted in their research that the translation method can lead to the mastery of the target language of the learners.

In general, the result of the study highlights the importance of translation as a method in the generation of ideas for the content and better writing organization. The result can also address the dilemma of non-enrolment in the school because learners' first language is utilized, and it can aid them in writing.

Recommendations

Writing is a significant and fundamental skill that should be learned by everyone. Using the first language (Ilokano) facilitates the writing process to the second language (Filipino) through the translation method. Therefore, the translation method (use of the first language in writing and translating it to a second language) should be practiced. Mastery of this will help in writing compositions in other languages including the English Language.

Use the first language to generate ideas and translate them into the second language. Provide multiple topics for the students to write. Experiential learning may be an engagement to come out with authentic writing outputs.

Another is giving more exposure to students and practice to further academic activities and writing while keeping themselves healthy as they engage in meaningful and relevant co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Moreover, teachers of writing should attend seminars and workshops and engross themselves in different writing genres and styles that may help in the facilitation of the teaching of writing. Finally, administrators should encourage and support all sectors of society regarding the use of the mother tongue in communication and make a successful transition to a second language (as in the case of the Philippines and other countries with similar language situations to foreign languages, especially the English language.

Institutionalize the use of the local and national languages (Ilokano, Filipino, and English) either as a subject or a program at all levels. There should be a more comprehensive curriculum for the teaching of writing using the mother tongue and Filipino and other foreign languages for effective learning and to give a more productive way of life.

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