

UNP BSN STUDENTS AS COMMUNICATORS OF ENGLISH IN WRITTEN FORM

Norma Ilaban-Cachola

ABSTRACT

This study looks into the competence levels, difficulties and types of errors of an 'elite' group of college students in the University of Northern Philippines.

The group is composed of first year and second year BSN students who qualified in two sets of screening requirements for the BSN program in the university.

Command of the language (English) is very-real-possibly the most difficult of all the students' problems in writing. Both the first year and second year BSN students can not use the language productively ("above average") even in ordinary writing situation. No significant differentials exist between the two groups in their writing performance.

INTRODUCTION

Every institution of higher learning in the country today, seems to have a share of stories on the quality of English that the present crop of students speak or write. Vergara (1987:10) avers that aside from crippled writing, students in general, suffer from weak reading and speaking. Language deficiency, particularly in written English, is even cited as a comfortable reason why an enormous proportion of takers in government examinations flunk.

It is said that a second language is never really learned until a person can use it to communicate his ideas, either orally or in written form. Lado (1964:248) says that writing a foreign language means the ability to use the language and its graphic representation productively in ordinary writing situation. More specifically, Trimmer and Sommers (1986:8) say, it means the ability to use vocabulary structure, and their conventional representation in normal situations. That makes writing as one of the skill areas in learning a language which is hard to master.

Realizing that the ability to write the English language is fundamental to language growth, an improved program of instruction in written lan-

guage is needed. Said program of instruction, however, must necessarily be based on the language difficulties and needs of the students, which basically, are the identified concerns of this research investigation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to look into the competence levels, difficulties and types of errors in written English of the first year and second year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students of the University of Northern Philippines with the end in view of documenting hard facts that would serve as basis in improving the program of instruction in written language.

In particular, the study ventured to assess the levels of performance of the students along the specific skill indicators on content, organization and mechanics, which basically constitute the elements of a written composition. It tried to determine, if a year advancement in learning can cause a significant difference in the students' competencies in written English. It also tried to typify the difficulties and errors committed by the second year students in written composition vis-a-vis those committed by their counterparts in the first year

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several studies have presented results of investigations conducted on the written composition of college students in English.

One study conducted at the Philippine Women's University in 1969 reported that forty-six percent (46%) of the fourth year college students were inadequate in the four major aspects of written English, namely: diction, grammar, sentence structure and mechanics (Laxamana, 1969). Fifty-four percent (54%) were considered adequate because they committed less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the errors.

The studies that identified common errors found in the written composition of college students for the purpose of determining their causes were those of Florendo (1972), Leonin (1975) and Baird (1981). A common denominator in these researches was the classification of errors in three major types, namely: grammar, structure and mechanics. Florendo used the term "difficulties" for "errors". She also added "rhetorical difficulties" as the fourth type of difficulty or error.

In discussing the inability of the students to express themselves in written composition, Chambers and Brigham (1989:63) listed down four major problems affecting the students' composition. They reported that: 1) students are taught habits usually with typical techniques; 2) students are equipped with little generalizability; 3) teachers do not distinguish the various sub-skills; and 4) no graded practice is employed in the teaching.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study went beyond the sphere of measurement. It took the form of an evaluation of written compositions, which as defined is the

making of judgments about the value, for some purpose, of ideas, organizational technique mechanics and style. It involved the use of criteria for appraising the extent to which particulars relative to communicative skills accurate, effective or satisfying. The judgment was made both on a quantitative and a qualitative basis. Quantification was not taken as an end itself; it was employed because it allows information to be communicated and interpreted with less ambiguity and less subjectivity than would otherwise be.

Gleason (1973:425) reports that a written language is basically a representation of a system of spoken language. It is, however, a very seldom and exact reflection. Writing, despite its resemblance to speech make peculiar demands. In oral communication, one can go beyond words conveying messages. In written communication one has to rely upon the mechanics of writing structure, content and style in order to be completely understood.

The written compositions of first year and second year Bachelor of Science in Nursing students provided the subject for assessment in the study. As pointed out by Lado (1964:248) writing a foreign language means the ability use the language and its graphic representation productively in ordinary writing situation.

In the words of Shane (1962: 308-346), there are three major elements which are involved in written composition: an idea to be expressed in written form; the words needed to express it; and the mechanical skill with which to record it on paper.

The study tried to build its assessment essentially on the aforementioned elements. (Figure 1) The assessment looked into the levels of performance on specific skills and the communicative difficulties or errors of students relative to three components in composition writing, namely: content, organization and mechanics.

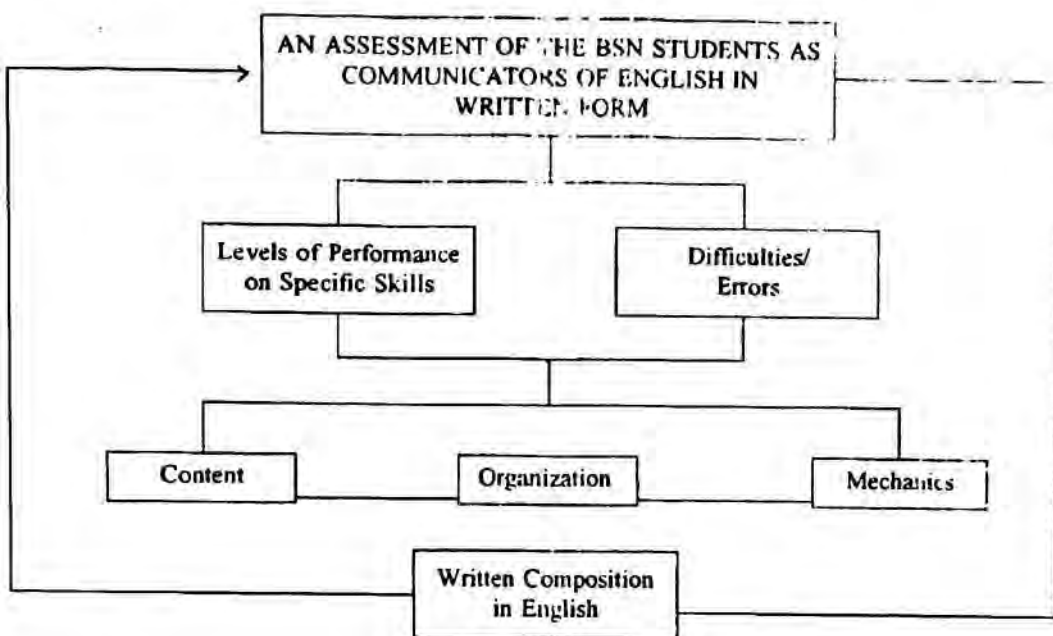


FIG. 1. The Research Paradigm

Hypothesis

The study sought to determine the validity of the following hypotheses:

1. Between groups, levels of writing performance differ on the aspects of content, organization and mechanics.

2. One-year advancement in college creates a significant difference on levels of performance in written English of the first year and second year BSN students.

Population and Sample

The first year and second year students of the UNP Institute of Nursing during the School Year 1988-1989 provided the sampling frame of the study. Under the institutional policies of the University of Northern Philippines, the BSN students were admitted on the basis of rigid academic tests and entrance requirements. At the time of the study, the BSN students were considered the intellectual elites in the UNP studentry.

The study groups involved eighty-five (85) sample subjects from the first year and thirty-six (36) from the second year. Such figures constituted over thirty-two percent each of the total group population: thirty-two percent (32%), first year; and thirty-nine percent (39%), second year. The sample subjects were chosen through simple random sampling.

The bigger percentage of samples allotted for the second year group was made in consideration of the smaller size of its sampling frame of ninety-three (93) students, as compared to the two hundred sixty-eight (268) students of the first year group.

Methodology

The study made use of the descriptive method of research. Aquino (1971:7) says that descriptive research is fact-finding with adequate interpretation.

Investigations conducted to produce the desired data provided for the administration of a one-

hour composition writing test on the topic, "Is Early Marriage Advisable?" The test was administered simultaneously to the two groups of students.

The interactional approach to writing was used in the assessment of the writing skills levels of performance and also, in the determination of the common difficulties, or errors of the two groups of students. In this type of approach to writing, emphasis was placed on meeting students' needs both in gaining control over the conventions of written English and in obtaining opportunities for self-expression. Its key components included provision of extensive writing.

Five students, who were in their senior year in college in UNP, served as evaluators, but were

closely monitored by the researcher. The student-evaluators were chosen on the basis of their performance both in spoken and written English. They were properly instructed on what to do and observe in individually evaluating the written composition of the students.

Evaluation Instrument

A teacher-constructed instrument that had already passed content validity was used in the evaluation of the students' written compositions. The instrument was called, "Rating Criteria for an Interactional Approach to Writing" (Cachola, 1987).

The performance indicators as contained the rating criteria are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the Performance Indicators in the Rating Criteria by Aspect, Code and Performance Indicator

Aspect	Code	Performance Indicator
Content	PI ₁	* Clear presentation of subject/topic
	PI ₂	* Careful finishing of each part of the material
	PI ₃	* Use of appropriate supporting materials (e.g., arguments, reasons or examples)
	PI ₄	* Logical togetherness of ideas
	PI ₅	* Faithful adherence to facts
	PI ₆	* Correct choice of words
	PI ₇	* Use of new and interesting information
	PI ₈	* Use of information gained from readings
	PI ₉	* Clarity of material from deadwood sentences
	PI ₁₀	* Practical ability to express ideas/thoughts
Organization	PI ₁₁	* Fidelity to subject/topic (followed up through the whole composition)
	PI ₁₂	* Planned movement of ideas toward a clear goal
	PI ₁₃	* Proper word order in sentences
	PI ₁₄	* Unity on type and length of sentences
	PI ₁₅	* Proper positioning of ideas/details with respect to one another
	PI ₁₆	* Logical building up of text in blocks of interrelated paragraphs
	PI ₁₇	* Proper allocation of space with respect to the salience of ideas
Mechanics	PI ₁₈	* Correct spelling of words
	PI ₁₉	* Conformity to stylistic decorum/rules
	PI ₂₀	* Correct use of punctuation
	PI ₂₁	* Proper use of capitalization
	PI ₂₂	* Observance of the conventions of grammar
	PI ₂₃	* Proper indention

The instrument provided a five-point continuum upon which the assessment of the materials (written compositions) was based. It also provided quantitative and qualitative difficulty indices of the specific performance indicators relative to content, organization and mechanics. The difficulty indices were as follows:

- 5 - Very easily
- 4 - Easily
- 3 - With optimum difficulty
- 2 - With difficulty
- 1 - With great difficulty

The students' levels of performance were reported and interpreted as follows:

- 5.0 - Excellent
- 4.0 - 4.9 - Very Good
- 3.0 - 3.9 - Average
- 2.0 - 2.9 - Fair
- 1.0 - 1.9 - Poor

Statistical Treatment of Data

The difficulty index of each specific writing skill indicator was computed in order to determine students' levels of writing performance along specific writing skills and also along the writing components looked into, namely: content, organization and mechanics.

The writing skills wherein the students encountered varying indices of difficulty were analyzed in terms of percentages.

Differences on writing skills levels of performance, between the two groups and also, within groups were computed using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Tests of significance in differences were set at .05 level.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Results of the study are presented and analyzed in this report under three sub-headings:

Levels of Writing Performance; (2) Writing

Skills Differentials: First Year Versus Second Year; and (3) Communicative Difficulties/Errors Committed.

LEVELS OF WRITING PERFORMANCE

For points of clarity, the difficulty indices obtained for specific writing skills relative to content, organization and mechanics served as bases in determining the levels of writing performance of the first year and second year BSN students.

On Content

On the basis of the evaluation made on content, the levels of performance of both the first year and second year students belonged to the "average" category. The weighted mean scores (\bar{x}) obtained (first year, 3.51; second year, 3.66), reported a point difference of 0.15 with the second year students exhibiting the minimal lead. (Table 2).

A close scrutiny of the difficulty indices obtained by the two groups of BSN students tends to reveal very identical performance levels. Both groups performed "easily" in 3 out of 10 performance indicators; "with optimum difficulty" in 5; and "with difficulty" in 2. The performance indicators referred to are the same for both the first year and second year students.

At first blush, the data in Table 2 would show that the BSN students, whether first year or second year, can "easily" make a clear presentation of the subject or topic (PI_1); use appropriate supporting materials (e.g., arguments, examples or reasons) - (PI_2); and write compositions hardly committing sentences that do not make sense (deadwood) - (PI_3). A closer scrutiny of the data, however, would reveal that the two groups find it "with optimum difficulty" to make a careful finishing of each part of the composition, either for completion or for checking purposes (PI_4); make the ideas hang together (PI_5); adhere faithfully to facts (PI_6); reflect information gained from readings (PI_7); and manifest a practical ability to express their ideas or thoughts (PI_{10}). Both groups

Table 2. Levels of Performance of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspect of Content By Performance Indicator and Difficulty Index

Performance Indicator (PI)	Level of Performance			
	First Year		Second Year	
	Diff. Index	Description	Diff. Index	Description
1. clear presentation of subject/topic	4.62	Easily	4.89	Easily
2. careful finishing of each part of the material (composition)	3.36	w/ optimum difficulty	3.54	w/ optimum difficulty
3. use of appropriate supporting materials (e.g. arguments, reasons or examples)	4.02	Easily	4.26	Easily
4. logical togetherness of ideas	3.46	w/ optimum difficulty	3.87	w/ optimum difficulty
5. faithful adherence to facts	3.68	w/ optimum difficulty	3.64	w/ optimum difficulty
6. correct choice of words	2.81	w/ difficulty	2.89	w/ difficulty
7. use of new and interesting information	2.26	w/ difficulty	2.36	w/ difficulty
8. use of information gained from readings	3.22	w/ optimum difficulty	3.31	w/ optimum difficulty
9. clarity of material from deadwood sentences	4.13	easily	4.26	easily
10. practical ability to express ideas/thoughts	3.52	w/ optimum difficulty	3.64	w/ optimum difficulty
Total	36.00		36.66	
Weighted Mean	3.51		3.66	
Level of Performance	Average		Average	

found it "with difficulty" to use the appropriate words (PI₆) and to provide new and interesting information in their composition materials (PI₇). The difficulty levels indicated were equivalent to a below average or "fair" level of performance.

The first year and second year students seem to be less capable of doing the many more complex performance indicators along content in composition writing. The ratio of performance indicators found with higher difficulty levels to performance indicators with lower levels was 2:8. For every eight (8) performance indicators found "with optimum difficulty," or "with difficulty" indices, there would be only two (2) such indicators found with "easy" difficulty index.

As found out, the students' compositions were hardly reflective of new and interesting

information gained from readings. The difficulty to include new and interesting information could be due to the technical inability of most students to convey the new information in an interesting manner, or simply due to the lack of new information to convey. The difficulty of the students to use the appropriate words also limited their ability to make interesting the presentation information or ideas in their composition. Readers may not find it so easy to read the students' compositions in view of the inappropriateness of some words used.

On Organization

Organizing the composition did not seem to be as difficult as the two other aspects of composition writing. The mean difficulty indices obtained on this aspect, 3.05 for first year and 3.25 for second year

(Table 3) were relatively lower than those obtained content (Table 2) and mechanics (Table 4). The arithmetic differences, however, tend to lose their individual worth when the equivalent qualitative ratings come into play. On the whole aspect of organization, the levels of performance of both the first year and the second year BSN students belonged the "average" category.

The second year students performed fairly-well, or "with optimum difficulty," in observing: (1) unity on type and length of sentences (PI_{14}); proper positioning of ideas/ details with respect to one another (PI_{15}); logical building up of the text in blocks interrelated paragraphs (PI_{16}); and proper allocation of space with respect to salience of ideas (PI_{17}). The ability of said group, however, to follow up the subject or topic through the whole composition (PI_{11}) did not prove to be as well. Control was not so observed in presenting some supporting ideas, thereby generating from readers an impression of deviation

from the subject or topic. A clear grasp of the topic was weakened as a result of the inability of the students to outline or plan the movement of their ideas toward a clear goal (PI_{12}).

The first year students performed fairly-well or "with optimum difficulty" in observing: (1) unity on type and length of sentences (PI_{14}); (2) proper positioning of ideas or details with respect to one another (PI_{15}); and (3) logical building up of the text in blocks of interrelated paragraphs (PI_{16}). Just like the second year students, the first year found it difficult to have a good follow-up of the subject through the whole composition. As reasoned out earlier, such difficulty could be due to the inability of the students to outline or plan the movement of their ideas toward a clear goal (PI_{12}). This group of students also found it difficult to observe proper word order in sentences (PI_{13}) and to properly allocate space or provide adequate emphasis with respect to salience of ideas (PI_{17}).

Table 3. Levels of Performance of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspect of Organization, By Performance Indicator and Difficulty Index

Performance Indicator (PI)	Level of Performance			
	First Year		Second Year	
	Diff. Index	Description	Diff. Index	Description
1. fidelity to subject/topic (followed up through the whole compositions)	2.74	difficulty	2.92	difficulty
2. planned movement of ideas toward a clear goal	2.76	w/ difficulty	2.72	w/ difficulty
3. proper word order in sentences	2.88	w/ difficulty	3.15	w/ optimum difficulty
14. unity on type and length of sentences	3.48	w/ optimum difficulty	3.49	w/ optimum difficulty
15. proper positioning of ideas/details with respect to one another	3.4	w/ optimum difficulty	3.59	w/ optimum difficulty
16. logical building up of text in blocks of interrelated paragraphs	3.42	w/ optimum difficulty	3.51	w/ optimum difficulty
proper allocation of space with respect to salience of ideas	2.68	w/ difficulty	3.67	w/ optimum difficulty
Total	21.36		26.3	
Weighted Mean	3.05		3.25	
Level of Performance	Average		Average	

Table 4. Levels of Performance of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspect Mechanics, By Performance Indicator and Difficulty Index

Performance Indicator (PI)	Level of Performance			
	First Year		Second Year	
	Diff. Index	Description	Diff. Index	Description
18. correct spelling of words		w/ optimum difficulty		w/ optimum difficulty
	3.92		3.92	
19. conformity to stylistic decorum/rules		w/ optimum difficulty		w/ optimum difficulty
	3.94		3.92	
20. correct use of punctuation		w/optimum difficulty		w/ optimum difficulty
	3.62		3.59	
21. proper use of capitalization		w/ optimum difficulty		w/ optimum difficulty
	3.31		3.13	
22. observance of the conventions of grammar		w/ difficulty		w/ difficulty
	2.75		2.02	
23. proper Indention		w/ optimum difficulty		w/ optimum difficulty
	3.95		3.92	
Total	21.49		21.3	
Weighted Mean	3.58		3.55	
Level of Performance	Average		Average	

On Mechanics

The first year and second year students exhibited an "average" performance on the aspect of mechanics. The mean difficulty indices, 3.58 for first year and 3.55 for second year, belonged to the "optimum difficulty" category.

The students, whether first year or second year, found it with average or "optimum difficulty" to observe correct spelling (PI_{18}), conform to stylistic rules (PI_{19}), use proper punctuation (PI_{20}), and observe indention (PI_{21}). The misspelled words were not so obscure or unintelligible and the punctuation improprieties committed were mostly on the use of the comma.

Both groups found it difficult to closely observe the conventions or rules of grammar (PI_{22}). On the whole aspect of mechanics, the indicator on grammar occupied the second highest difficulty level to both the first year and second year students.

WRITING SKILLS DIFFERENTIALS: FIRST YEAR VERSUS SECOND YEAR BSN STUDENTS

The line indicators of performance as reflected in Figures 2, 3 and 4 did not report significant disparities between the first year and the second year students in any of the three aspects of writing. There were, however, two isolated cases of disparities and these were observed along content and organization. In PI_6 (Figure 2), which was on logical togetherness of ideas, the second year students incurred point difference of +0.41 over their first year counterparts. Likewise, in PI_{17} (Figure 3), which was on allocation of space as to salience of ideas, the older group (the second year) again reported an advantage of +0.99 over that of the first year.

ANOVA results attested to the lack of significant differences in the writing performance

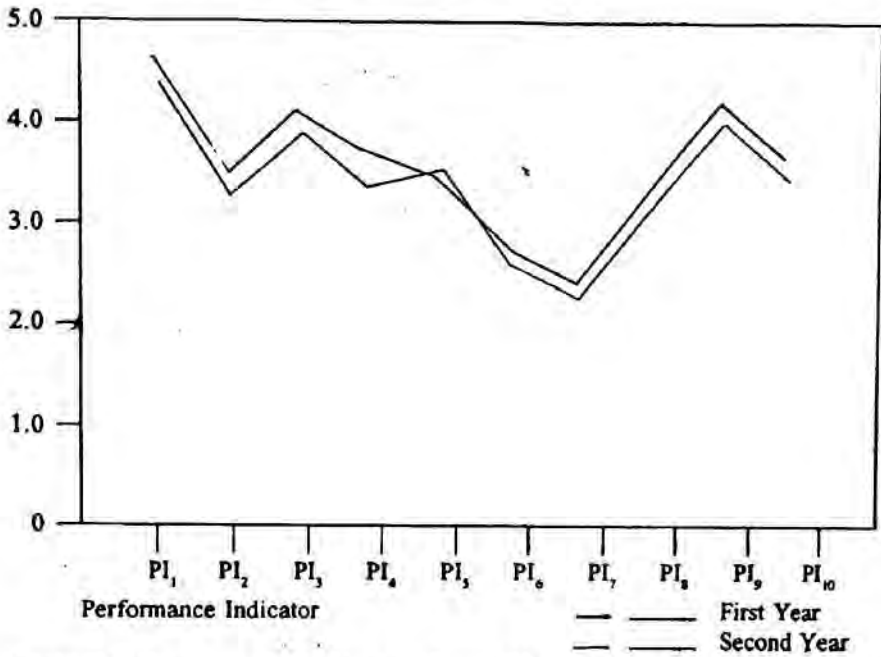


FIG. 2. Levels of Performance of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspect of Content

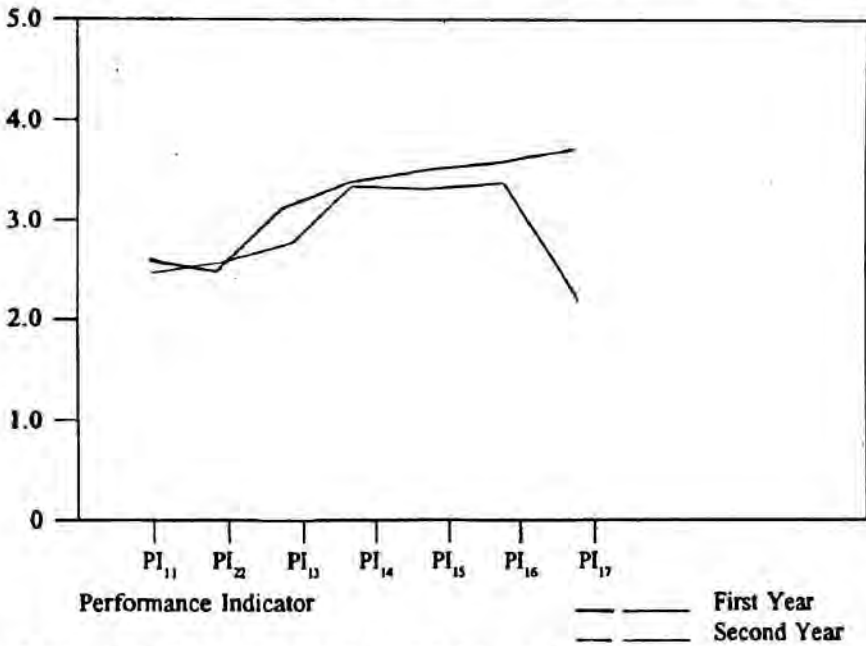


FIG. 3. Levels of Performance of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspect of Organization

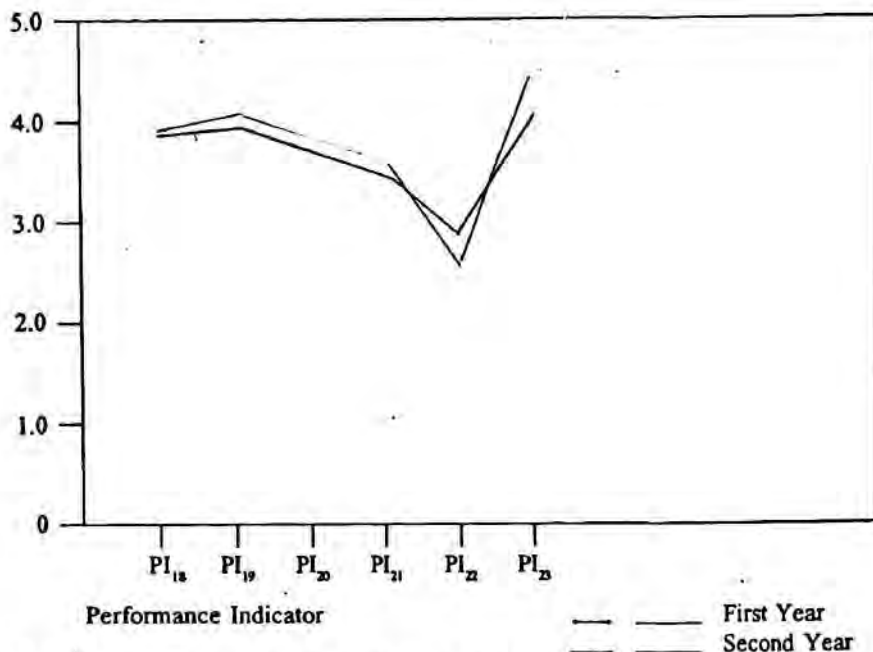


FIG. 4. Levels of Performance of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspect Mechanics

Table 5. Summary on Analysis of Variance on the Aspect of Content

Source of Variation	SS	df	MSS	CFV (0.05)
Between Column	21160	1	21160	1.87
Within Column	90688	8	11336	
Total	111848	9		

TFV:

.05 - 5.32 NS
.01 - 11.26 NS

Decision: NS

Table 6. Summary on Analysis of Variance on the Aspect of Organization

Source of Variation	SS	df	MSS	CFV (0.05)
Between Column	17280.67	1	17280.67	3.98
Within Column	26080.67	4	4346.67	
Total	43361.34	9		

TFV:

.05 - 7.71 NS
.01 - 21.20 NS

Decision: NS

between groups along the three writing aspects and also in the overall performance. The computed F-value on content was 1.87 (Table 5), on organization, 3.98 (Table 6), and on mechanics, .96 (Table 7). These values are way below the tabular F-value at .05 significance level, or even .01 level and are constitutory of a basis for not concurring with the first hypothesis that between groups, the students differ on the aspects of content, organization and mechanics.

On the overall performance of the first year and second year students, the computed F-value was 1.40 at .05 level, which was also lower than the tabular F-value of 5.32 (Table 8). Such results also avert the acceptance of the second hypothesis the study. One year advancement in college or learning the language did not create a significant difference on performance in written English between the first year and second year BSN students.

One can thus deduce from the foregoing results that under the same learning conditions experienced by the subject students, a year advancement of learning English in college at the UNP Institute of Nursing can not effect a significant difference in the written communicative skills of the students. It can be inferred that with some changes, interventions or innovations introduced into the Communication Arts, (English) learning system or conditions in said academic unit (e.g., exposure to more efficient mentors of Communication Arts English in the second year, or to more challenging learning exercises and requirements in written English), significant changes may well be achieved in the higher level of learning.

On the whole, the qualitative evaluation made reports an "average" level of performance in written English for both the first year and second year Nursing students.

Table 7. Summary on Analysis of Variance on the Aspect of Mechanics

Source of Variation	SS	df	MSS	CFV (0.05)
Between Column	9522	1	9522	
Within Column	59324	6	9887.33	0.96
Total	68846	7		

Decision: NS

TFV:

.05	-	5.59	NS
.01	-	13.74	NS

Table 8. Summary on Analysis of Variance in the Overall Performance of the First Year and Second Year BSN Students in Written English

Source of Variation	SS	df	MSS	CFV (0.05)
Between Column	111936.4	1	111936.4	1.40
Within Column	638605.2	8	79825.65	
Total	750541.6	9		

Decision: NS

TFV:

.05	-	5.32	NS
.01	-	11.26	NS

COMMUNICATIVE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE FIRST YEAR AND SECOND YEAR STUDENTS

The absence of a significant difference in the writing skills levels of performance between the first year and second year BSN students as attested in previous tables leads one to think that differences on difficulties and errors committed by the two groups may not be significant, either.

A summary presentation reporting the communicative difficulties on the three aspects and the proportion of students that incurred such difficulties is done in Table 9.

The writing difficulties that reported proportions of first year BSN students inversely ranging from "very substantial" (.90 to >.90) to "substantial" (.75 to <.90) were as follows:

On Content: (1) use of information gained from readings (PI_8); (2) use of new and interesting information (PI_9); and (3) clarity of material from deadwood sentences (PI_9).

On Organization: (1) proper word order in sentences (PI_{13}); (2) proper allocation of space with respect to salience of ideas (PI_{17}); (3) fidelity to subject (PI_{11}); and (4) planned movement of ideas toward a clear goal (PI_{12}).

On Mechanics: (1) observance of the conventions of grammar (PI_{22}).

Following the same inverse arrangement of student proportions (.90 down to .75), the writing difficulties of the second year BSN students were as follows:

On Content: (1) use of information gained from readings (PI_8); (2) use of new and interesting information (PI_9); and (3) clarity of material from deadwood sentences (PI_9).

On Organization: (1) fidelity to subject (PI_{11}); (2) planned movement of ideas toward clear goal (PI_{12}); and (3) proper word order sentences (PI_{13}).

On Mechanics: (1) observance of conventions of grammar (PI_{22}).

A careful study of the foregoing students' difficulties would boil down said difficulties into three types: linguistic difficulty, technical difficulty and organizational difficulty.

Linguistic Difficulties of the First Year and Second Year BSN Students

Linguistic difficulties were determined on the basis of the students' ability to handle effectively and expertly the language component of the material - that is, grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure.

Grammar was not so much looked upon as textbook maxims to torment or punish students with. It was more of the criteria of appropriateness to communicative contexts and the possibility of ambiguity that entered into judgments about grammaticality. It was clearly instructive that an instance of communication can run the risk of being either inappropriate or ambiguous.

On account of that criteria used, only about five percent of the first year students and nobody among the second year students were reported as hardly equipped with the practical ability to express their ideas or thoughts (Table 10 - Appendix A.1). On observance of the conventions of grammar, however, less than ninety percent of the students (84.71%, first year; 82.31%, second year) exhibited difficulty levels that ranged from "with optimum difficulty" to "with difficulty." (Table 12 - Appendix A.3).

Table 9. Communicative Writing Difficulties By Performance Indicator (PI) and Proportion of First Year and Second Year BSN Students on the Aspects of Content (PI₁-PI₁₀) Organization (PI₁₁-PI₁₇) and Mechanics (PI₁₈-PI₂₃)

Performance Indicator/Aspect	Proportion	Description	Proportion	Description
Content				
PI ₁	<.10	NS		
PI ₂	>.50	MS	>.30	SS
PI ₃	<.50	SS	<.30	NS
PI ₄	>.10	NS	>.10	NS
PI ₅	<.50	S	>.25	NS
PI ₆	<.30	NS	<.30	NS
PI ₇	<.90	S	<.90	S
PI ₈	>.90	VS	>.90	VS
PI ₉	<.90	S	>.75	MS
PI ₁₀	<.10	NS		
Organization				
PI ₁₁	<.90	S	<.90	S
PI ₁₂	<.90	S	<.90	S
PI ₁₃	>.90	VS	>.75	S
PI ₁₄	<.50	SS	<.50	SS
PI ₁₅	<.50	SS	>.30	NS
PI ₁₆	<.50	SS	<.50	SS
PI ₁₇	>.90	VS	>.30	NS
Mechanics				
PI ₁₈	<.10	NS	<.10	NS
PI ₁₉	<.10	NS	<.10	NS
PI ₂₀	<.50	SS	<.50	SS
PI ₂₁	>.50	MS	<.75	MS
PI ₂₂	<.90	S	>.90	VS
PI ₂₃	>.30	NS	>.10	NS

*Percent converted into hundredths for the norm points.

Only the difficulty levels 1, 2 and 3 were included.

Norm Points

10 - <.30 = not substantial

.75 - <.90 = substantial

.30 - <.50 = slightly substantial

.90 - >.90 = very substantial

.50 - <.75 = moderately substantial

Technical Difficulties

Some writing difficulties of the students were also examined as technical in nature. The report that more than ninety percent of the students (first year and second year) either "easily" or "very easily" made a clear presentation of the subject matter could not be so conclusive in view of their reported difficulty in analyzing ideas into intelligible segments for efficient presentation and easy comprehension ($PI_2, PI_{11}, PI_{12}, PI_{16}$). Singh and Chacko (1986:25)

describe said difficulty as "programming data."

As reflected in Table 11 (Appendix A.2), less than ninety percent of the first year and second year students (89.41%, first year: 84.62 second year) exhibited difficulty in observing fidelity to subject (PI_{11}). About the same proportion (89.41%, first year: 89.74%, second year) were hardly capable of attaining a smooth movement of ideas toward a clear goal (PI_{16}). An analysis of the sample errors and corrections

Table 13. Sample Errors Committed by the First Year BSN Students and the Corrections Made

Wrong	Right
1. With their small salary they can hardly meet both ends considering the prices of commodities here.	1. With their low salary and the high prices of commodities, the young couples are unable to make both ends meet.
2. Early marriage can happen because of influenced, for greener pasture.	2. Early marriage can happen because of various influences. (Early marriage is seen a way of escaping to a better life).
3. Abortion has been very rampant pregnancy to women who are young to marry.	3. Abortion is rampant among women who marry young.
4. Abortion defines as any interruptions of pregnancy or expulsion of the contents of the pregnant uterus before the fetus is viable which means this takes up to 20 weeks and the interruption between the 20 to 28 weeks is called miscarried.	4. Refer to the technical definition of abortion.
5. Why do try the pleasure if not yet ready.	5. Why marry if you are not yet ready?
6. Does anybody after graduation of high school don't have any idea of what might be the gift of that act?	6. Anyone who has graduated from high school should understand the consequences of pre-marital sex.
7. Those who are married now, stated their experienced regarding on this matter.	7. The young couples shared their experiences on early marriage.
8. If you are there, no body can think the good sides on both partners; you are both in love, so that's it.	8. It is difficult for people who are involved to judge what is best for them.
9. They must explore the risk more specially now a days that our new generation are more open-minded on pre-marital sex.	9. There is a greater responsibility to understand pre-marital sex, especially now that the new generation is more liberal-minded on the subject.
10. What do the young girl do when she has been raped and the man offered marriage?	10. How should a rape victim react to an offer of marriage from the rapist?

Table 14. Sample Errors Committed by the First Year BSN Students and the Corrections Made

Wrong	Right
Every nurses must be the role model in all aspect of life.	1. Every nurse must play a role model in all aspects of life.
Nurses must be a leader in the sense of leadership in health promotion and delayed marriage.	2. Nurses must be leaders in the promotion of health and delayed marriage.
Much factual knowledge and many techniques used to promote delayed marriage are shared among all types of health practitioners.	3. Knowledge and techniques used to promote delayed marriage are shared by all health practitioners.
A nurse becomes the patients advocate also as she plans his total health care in the married life.	4. A nurse also becomes the patient's advocate as she (the former) plans the latter's total health care.
An educated nurse that is so diligent and humane to render humanitarian service, a help mate of doctors attending to sickly persons must also prove advocacy to delayed marriage.	5. As assistants of physicians in attending to sick persons, nurses must also advocate delayed marriage.
Modernization, not delayed marriage brings in itself some hazards to the living condition of peoples.	6. Modernization also poses its own hazards to the living conditions of people.
As young citizens, we should campaign for the combat of early marriage.	7. As young citizens, we should campaign against early marriage.
I guess the primary reason is the first mentioned one.	8. I feel the primary reason is (specify).
Practicality of delayed marriage? Yes we all think of ways to live our lives better.	9. Delayed marriage is a practical solution to improving the quality of our lives.
This is again a clear manifestation that nurses value is vanishing.	10. This is a clear manifestation of the shifting of priorities and values among nurses.

ide as presented in Tables 13-14 would provide planations to these writing difficulties.

Apparently explicit in the aforecited findings was the difficulty of the students to observe see clearly the connections, correspondence, or similarities among numerous ideas that med the conceptual base of their writing. findings created an impression that most of students (whether first year or second year) not make an outline of the ideas or thoughts fore writing their compositions.

Organizational Difficulties

The technical difficulties of the students intersect with another type of difficulty exhibited which was organizational in nature.

The compositions of a very substantial proportion of the first year and second year BSN students (proportions ranging from .90 to >.90), were reported as deficient of information gained from readings, or of new and interesting information.

A general observation made by the evaluators was that the students had a clear understanding of the subject or topic, but had no clear command of the language. The students may find little difficulty with the structure of English at the sentence level (that is, with grammar not looked upon as textbook maxims), but may be incapable of writing a single paragraph properly. (Sample writing errors committed by the first year and second year BSN students are reported in Tables 13-14. The corrections to the errors are presented in the same tables.)

The two groups of BSN students also had difficulty in observing relevant relationships between the elements of contiguous sentences. In many cases, there were contiguous sentences contained in the same paragraph that were mutually irrelevant. In the absence of clear relevance, most readers interpret contiguous sentences in a way that appears relevant to them.

On the basis of the reported lack of clear command of the language and the substantial proportion of students (84.71%, first year; 82.31%, second year) that failed to observe the conventions of grammar, two things may be inferred. It seems that most of the students are deficient, not only from lack of clear understanding of the rhetorical principles that underlie English discourse, but from a deficiency in two areas, namely: (1) ability to write long sentences that require various coordinating and subordinating tools; and (2) knowledge of the meaning and proper use of linking devices, especially those needed to establish intersentential relationships.

The longest sentence presented was composed of two coordinated simple sentences, or of a complex sentence made up of one main and one subordinate clause. Although essential and useful, such sentences cannot convey the sophisticated ideas that maturing students want to express and that they actually do express in their mother tongue. At the academic levels of the students, what is required is the type of

sentence made up of different types independent and dependent clauses. This is what the two groups of BSN students, less than ninety percent of them, find as beyond their ability construct.

On the students' difficulty in using linking devices or coordinating conjunctions, this was evident both inside the one long sentence, and intersententially in a paragraph. More than ninety percent of the students do not have sufficient knowledge on the proper use of the linking devices in writing.

CONCLUSIONS

Command of the language is very-real-possibly the most difficult of all the students problems in writing. Both the first year and second year BSN students can not use the language productively ("above average") even in ordinary writing situation.

No significant changes can emerge in the writing skills' performance of the second year students, if by force of circumstances, they are exposed to the same Communication Arts (English) teaching-learning systems, e.g., same teaching techniques and strategies, same learning resources, same learning experiences and same difficulty levels of subject requirements as in the lower curriculum year.

The two groups of BSN students (first year and second year) are weak in: a) giving interesting and well-organized ideas; b) in the manner in which central idea and evidence are integrated into a logically convincing piece extended exposition or argumentation; and c) the style of presentation involving choice words and sentence structures appropriate getting a favorable response from a reader-evaluator. A weakness in any of such components weakened persuasiveness of their written work.

The students' mental make-up in writing, being a function of an awareness of the central

or purpose of the writing, of a planned movement of ideas toward a clear goal, and of a hasty evaluation of available details and facts, also deficient. The students are deficient in organizing their ideas for presentation and easy comprehension.

The students are deficient in: a) their ability to write long sentences that require various coordinating and subordinating tools; and b) in knowledge of the meaning and proper use of linking devices, especially those needed to establish intersentential relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In an attempt to improve the levels of performance of the students in written English, an improved program of instruction in written language is needed. The writing component of Communication Arts teaching should be given as much concern, or even greater concern than the speech component.

Innovative teaching-learning techniques and strategies must be introduced to improve the students' levels of performance in written English. The researcher recommends that the following approaches to writing instruction be adopted and employed.

- a) **A Models Approach.** A models approach has for its emphasis the students' exposure to written sentences, paragraphs and essays of capable writers, whether emphasizing on grammar rules or rhetorical patterns.
- b) **A Process Approach.** It focuses on the writer's potential for self-correction as a means of achieving success in writing. In this approach, concern is focused on the students' need to become aware of their purposes, their audience and their need to communicate meanings. Teachers give their students opportunities to review, clarify

and reorganize what they have written on their own, away from their teacher's well-meaning but often intrusive intervention. Under the direction of a conscientious and responsive teacher, this approach will provide students with some amount of feedback regarding their work.

- c) **An Interactional Approach.** In an interactional approach, emphasis is placed on meeting students' needs both in gaining control over the conventions of written English and in obtaining opportunities for self-expression. Its key components include provision of extensive written input and feedback to student's writing and the use of student's own work to serve as imperfect models for stimulating hypotheses about target-language rhetorical and grammatical structures.

On the third approach mentioned, the researcher recommends the use of the criteria utilized in the study in getting feedback to the student's written work.

Difficulty levels of students' learning experiences, learning resources and subject requirements in Communication Arts classes must be given careful study and consideration. These aspects should well be attuned to any advancement in year level.

Lessons and learning exercises both on sentence and paragraph construction or development must be significantly undertaken in Communication Arts classes. The sentence is considered the minimal unit of analysis, but for larger pieces of writing, the teacher should take the paragraph to be the building block. The notion of relevant relationship between the elements of contiguous sentences must be considered. English employs a great variety of linking devices both inside the one long sentence and intersententially in addition to those used to link paragraphs together.

Teachers of Communication Arts should take greater responsibilities to the writing needs of their students. Students also expect to receive from their teachers the same kind of written communication that the latter require from them. The teacher's feedback to the students' writing should reflect what they really want to see in the latter's written work.

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APPENDIX A.1

Table 10. Distribution of First Year and Second Year Students in their Writing Skills Performance the Aspect of Content, By Skill Indicator and Level of Performance

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		%	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
1. clear presentation of subject/topic						
5 - Very easily	60	35	300	175	70.59	89.74
4 - Easily	18	4	72	16	21.17	10.26
3 - With optimum difficulty	7		21		8.24	
2 - With difficulty						
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			393	191	100	100
careful finishing of each part of the material (composition)						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	40	24	160	96	47.06	61.54
3 - With optimum difficulty	36	12	108	36	42.35	30.77
2 - With difficulty	9	3	18	6	10.59	7.69
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			286	138	100	100
3. use of appropriate supporting materials e.g., arguments, reasons or examples)						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	51	28	204	112	60.00	71.79
3 - With optimum difficulty	27	8	81	24	31.76	20.5
2 - With difficulty	7	3	14	6	8.24	7.70
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			299	142	100	100
4. logical togetherness of ideas						
5 - Very easily	31	14	155	70	36.47	35.90
4 - Easily	40	21	160	84	47.06	53.85
3 - With optimum difficulty	9	4	27	12	10.59	10.25
2 - With difficulty	5				5.88	
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			342	166	100	100

(Table 10. continued)

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		%	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
5. faithful adherence to facts						
5 - Very easily	4	5	20	25	4.71	12.82
4 - Easily	45	24	180	96	52.94	61.54
3 - With optimum difficulty	22	10	66	30	25.88	25.64
2 - With difficulty	14		28		16.47	
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			294	151	100	100
6. correct choice of words						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	67	30	268	120	78.82	76.92
3 - With optimum difficulty	9	4	27	12	10.59	10.26
2 - With difficulty	9	5	18	10	10.59	12.82
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			313	142	100	100
use of new and interesting information						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	4	3	16	12	4.71	7.69
3 - With optimum difficulty	63	30	189	32	74.12	76.92
2 - With difficulty	16	4	32	8	18.82	10.26
1 - With great difficulty	2	2	2	2	2.35	5.13
Total			237	52	97.65	94.87
use of information gained from readings						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	2	3	8	12	2.35	7.69
3 - With optimum difficulty	18	8	54	24	21.18	20.51
2 - With difficulty	65	28	130	56	76.47	71.8
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			192	92	100	100

(Table 10. continued)

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		%	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
9. clarity of material from deadwood sentences						
5 - Very easily	2	3	10	15	2.35	7.69
4 - Easily	15	6	60	24	17.65	15.39
3 - With optimum difficulty	68	30	204	90	80.00	76.92
2 - With difficulty						
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			274	129	100	100
10. practical ability to express idead/thoughts						
5 - Very easily	15	10	75	50	17.65	25.64
4 - Easily	66	29	264	116	77.65	74.36
3 - With optimum difficulty	4		12		4.70	
2 - With difficulty						
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			351	166	100	100

APPENDIX A. 2

Table 11. Distribution of First Year and Second Year Students in their Writing Skills Performance on the Aspect of Organization, By Skill Indicator and Level of Performance

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		% _e	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
1. fidelity to subject/topic (followed up through the whole composition)						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	9	6	36	24	10.59	15.38
3 - With optimum difficulty	45	24	135	72	52.94	61.54
2 - With difficulty	31	9	62	18	36.477	23.08
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			233	114	100	100
12. planned movement of idea toward a clear goal						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	9		36	16	10.59	10.26
3 - With optimum difficulty	47	20	141	60	55.29	51.28
2 - With difficulty	29	15	58	30	34.12	38.46
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			235	106	100	100
3. proper word order in sentences						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	4	7	16	25	4.71	17.95
3 - With optimum difficulty	67	31	201	93	78.82	79.49
2 - With difficulty	14	1	28	2	16.47	2.56
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			245	120	100	100
14. unity on type and length of sentences						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	45	20	180	80	52.94	51.28
3 - With optimum difficulty	36	18	108	54	42.35	46.15
2 - With difficulty	4	1	8	2	4.71	2.57
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			296	136	100	100

(Table 11. continued)

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		%	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
15. proper positioning of ideas or details with respect to one another						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	42	25	180	100	52.94	64.
3 - With optimum difficulty	29	12	87	36	34.12	30.
2 - With difficulty	11	2	22	4	12.94	5.
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			289	140	100	100
16. logical building up of text in blocks of interrelated paragraphs						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	45	22	180	88	52.94	56.4
3 - With optimum difficulty	31	15	93	45	36.47	38.46
2 - With difficulty	9	2	18	4	10.59	5.
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			291	137	100	100
17. proper allocation of space as to salience of idea						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily		26		104		66.67
3 - With optimum difficulty	58	13	174	39	68.24	33.33
2 - With difficulty	27	54	31.76			
1 - With great difficulty	2	2	2	2	2.35	5.
Total			228	143	100	100

APPENDIX A. 3

ble 12. Distribution of First Year and Second Year Students in their Writing Skills Performance on the Aspect of Mechanics, By Skill Indicator and Level of Performance

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		%	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
correct spelling of words						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	78	36	312	144	91.76	92.31
3 - With optimum difficulty	7	3	21	9	8.24	7.69
2 - With difficulty						
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			333	153	100	100
conformity to stylistic decorum/rules						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	80	36	320	144	94.12	92.31
3 - With optimum difficulty	5	3	15	9	5.88	7.69
2 - With difficulty						
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			335	153	100	100
correct use of punctuation						
5 - Very easily	4	3	20	15	4.71	7.69
4 - Easily	45	17	180	68	52.94	43.59
3 - With optimum difficulty	36	19	108	57	42.35	48.72
2 - With difficulty						
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			308	140	100	100
proper use of capitalization						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	34	10	136	40	40.00	25.64
3 - With optimum difficulty	43	24	129	72	50.59	61.54
2 - With difficulty	8	5	16	10	9.41	12.82
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			281	122	100	100

(Table 12. continued)

Skill Indicator	No. of Student		Summation		%	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
22. observance of the conventions of grammar						
5 - Very easily						
4 - Easily	13	3	52	12	15.29	
3 - With optimum difficulty	38	26	114	78	44.71	
2 - With difficulty	34	10	68	20	40.00	
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			234	110	100	100
33. proper indention						
5 - Very easily	5	5	25	30	5.88	
4 - Easily	49	26	196	104	57.65	
3 - With optimum difficulty	22	5	66	15	25.88	
2 - With difficulty	9	2	18	4	10.59	
1 - With great difficulty						
Total			305	153	100	100