Electronic learning as an alternative delivery of English writing tutorials for the improvement of Capitol University's students' writing skills

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Abstract

The study is quasi-experimental which aimed to compare the writing skills of students in the traditional face-to-face tutorial using appropriate reference materials (control group) and the students in the online CD-ROM tutorial (experimental group) using the module developed by the researcher. It attempted to answer the following questions: 1) What are the levels of writing skills of the students in the traditional face-to-face tutorials and the CD-ROM tutorials during the pretest and posttest periods? and 2) How do the students in the two groups differ in their pretest and posttest mean scores?

The posttest mean scores showed that the students in the online CD-ROM mode of tutorial yielded better results in terms of writing skills achievement than the students in the traditional face-to-face tutorial.

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the students in the experimental group have improved their writing skills from poor level in grammar to a very good level and from good in vocabulary and mechanics to excellent level, after they were exposed to the online CD-ROM Mode of tutorial.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher recommended that: the CD-ROM Module be used as remedial lessons; students should be exposed to the use of technologies such as software, courseware and word processor focusing on writing skills development; and English professors should develop more CD-ROM modules on writing, listening, speaking, reading and study skills that consider the needs of the students.

Keywords: Electronic learning, CD-ROM module, English writing tutorial, Writing skills

Introduction

This study aimed to compare the writing skills achievement levels of two groups of subjects: the control and experimental groups who were exposed to two different modes of tutorial, namely, the traditional face-to-face tutorial using appropriate reference materials and the e-learning CD-ROM tutorial using the module, which was designed and developed by the researchers. The respondents of the study were sixty (60) freshman college students (30 belonged to the control group and 30 belonged to the experimental group) of Capitol University, in Cagayan de Oro City. The study was anchored on the Transformational Model of Rapatan (1999), which used the Cognitive Approach. Specifically, it attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of writing skills of the students in the traditional face-to-face tutorials and CD-ROM tutorials during the pretest and posttest periods, considering the following writing components, to wit:

    1.1 relevance and adequacy of content
    1.2 compositional organization and cohesion
    1.3 referential adequacy (vocabulary)
    1.4 grammatical accuracy
    1.5 mechanical accuracy

2. How do the students in the two groups differ in the following:

    2.1 Means of the pretest scores of the control and the experimental groups
    2.2 Means of the pretest and posttest scores of the control group
    2.3 Means of the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group
   2.4 Means of the posttest scores of the control and experimental groups

Hypotheses

Based on problem number 2, it is hypothesized that:

HO_1 There is no significant difference between the means of the pretest scores of the control group and the experimental group.

HO_2 There is no significant difference between the means of the pretest scores and posttest scores of the control group.

HO_3 There is significant difference between the means of the pretest scores and posttest scores of the experimental group.

HO_4 There is significant difference between the means of posttest scores of the control and experimental groups in the areas of content, organization and grammar.

Methodology

This research made use of the Non-equivalent Control Group Design, specifically, the Untreated Control Group Design with pretest and posttest. The design was quasi-experimental, where it involved sixty college freshman students who were enrolled in English 2A (Writing in the Discipline) in Capitol University. The study underwent three stages: the pre-experimental, experimental and post experimental stages. The pre-experimental stage involved the development of the CD-ROM Module, which was evaluated by English professors of the University and experts of the field. Another activity was the administration of the standardized pretest in writing to both the control and experimental groups to find out if they have equal initial performance. During the experimental stage, each group of students was exposed to different modes of tutorial delivery to improve their writing skills. The control group was given tutorial lessons through the traditional face-to-face method in the University Writing Laboratory for a total of fifteen hours using appropriate reference materials. The experimental group, on the other hand, was tutored through e-learning mode of tutorial delivery for a total of fifteen hours in the CISCO Laboratory using the CD-ROM Module. Said module served as the experimental treatment of the study. Finally, during the post-experimental stage, the researcher administered a posttest, which used the same standardized writing test to find out if there was an improvement in the writing skills of the students. The interval between the pretest and the posttest was forty-five school days. The diagram below illustrated the flow of the study:

| **Pre-experimental Stage** | **Experimental Stage** | **Post experimental Stage** |
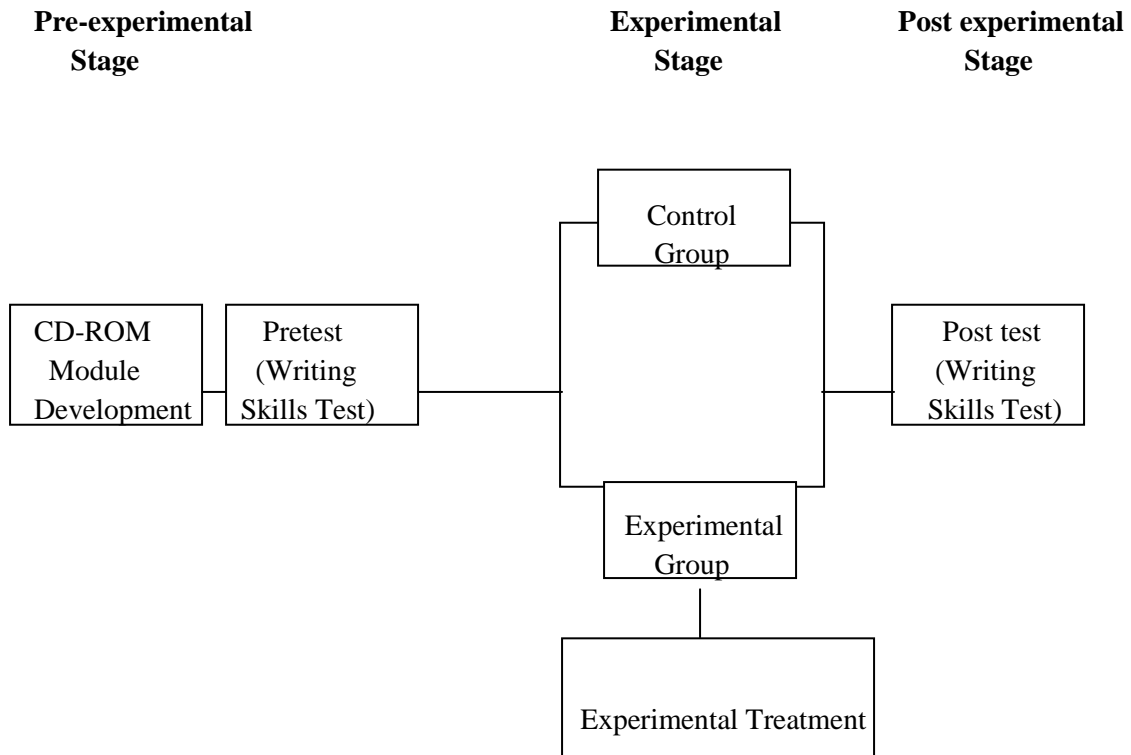
The diagram shows the operational framework of the study.

In the analysis of data, simple percentages, weighted mean averages and t-test were used as statistical tools. Specifically, t-test for independent groups was used to determine the difference between the means of the pretest and the posttest of the two groups, while t-test for correlated matched groups was used to test the difference of the means of the pretest and the posttest between the control and experimental groups.

A standardized achievement test adapted from the book, Communicative Language Testing by Cyril J. Weir (1999) was used. The five writing skills components included in the study were content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. Moreover, the students had to write an essay which was assessed according to the relevance and adequacy of content, organization and cohesion, referential adequacy, grammatical accuracy, and mechanical accuracy. The criteria were based on English as a Second Language (ESL) Composition Profile. The table below showed the composition scoring profile:

Writing Skill Component	Mean Score	Level	Criteria	Comments
Relevance and Adequacy of Content	20-17	Excellent	Very knowledgeable; substantive; and excellent development of thesis. Very relevant to assigned topic	
	16.99-	Very	Knowledgeable; substantive; thorough development	

Writing Skill Component	Mean Score	Level	Criteria	Comments
	13	good	of thesis; relevant to assigned topic	
	12.99-9	Good	Some knowledge of subject; adequate range; limited development of thesis; mostly relevant to topic but lacks detail	
	8.99-5	Poor	Limited knowledge of subject; little substance; inadequate development of topic	
	4.99-1	Very Poor	Does not show knowledge of subject; non-substantive ; irrelevant and inadequate; not enough to evaluate	
Organization and Cohesion	20-17	Excellent	Very fluent expression, ideas so appropriately and clearly stated and supported; very succinct, effectively organized, very logical sequencing, very cohesive	
	16.99-13	Very good	Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated, well-organized; logical sequencing; cohesive	
	12.99-9	Good	Somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support; logical but incomplete sequencing	
	8.99-5	Poor	Non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lacks logical sequencing and development	
	4.99-1	Very Poor	Does not communicate, no organization or not enough to evaluate	
Referential Adequacy	20-17	Excellent	Very sophisticated range of vocabulary. Has a thorough mastery of appropriate and concise English	
	16.99-13	Very good	Very adequate range, effective word/idiom choice and usage, word from mastery, appropriate register	
	12.99-9	Good	Just adequate range, occasional errors of word/ idiom choice and usage, but meaning not obscured	
	8.99-5	Poor	Limited range, frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured	

Writing Skill Component	Mean Score	Level	Criteria	Comments
	4.99-1	Very Poor	Essentially a translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, idiom word and form, or not enough to evaluate	
Grammatical Accuracy	25-21	Excellent	Very effective complex constructions; no errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, function/ articles, pronouns, prepositions; conveys bilingual competence	
	20.99-16	Very good	Effective simple constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, functions, article, pronouns, prepositions	
	15.99-11	Good	Simple constructions; several errors of agreement in tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured	
	10.99-6	Poor	Major problems in simple/complex construction, agreement, tense, number, word/order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons deletions, meaning confused or obscured	
	5.99-1	Very Poor	Virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, or not enough to evaluate	

Mechanical Accuracy	15 – 13	Excellent	Demonstrates effective mastery of convention; no error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization	
	12.99-10	Very good	Mastery of convention, very few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paraphrasing	
	9.99-7	Good	Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paraphrasing but meaning not obscured	
	6.99-4	Poor	Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paraphrasing, poor handwriting, meaning confused or obscured	
	3.99-1	Very Poor	No mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paraphrasing, handwriting illegible, or not enough to evaluate	

Summary of Findings

1.1 On the Levels of Writing Skills of the Control Group During the Pretest
The pretest mean scores of the students in the control group (traditional face-to-face tutorial) described them to be "poor" in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary and grammar; and "good" in mechanics. On the whole, the control group was described to be "poor" in their writing skills.

1.2 On the Levels of Writing Skills of the Experimental Group During the Pretest
The pretest mean scores of the students in the experimental group (CD-ROM Mode of tutorial) described them to be "poor" in the areas of content, organization and grammar; and "good" in vocabulary and mechanics. On the whole, the experimental group was described to be "poor" in their writing skills.

1.3 On the Levels of Writing Skills of the Control group During the Posttest
The posttest mean scores of the students in the control group described them to be "very good" in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary and grammar; and "excellent" in mechanics.

1.4 On the Levels of Writing Skills of the Experimental Group During the Posttest
The posttest mean scores of the experimental group described them to be "very good" in grammar and "excellent" in content, organization, vocabulary and mechanics.

2.1 On the Significant Difference Between the Pretest Means of the Control and experimental Groups
When the means of the pretest scores in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics of the two groups were compared, the difference was "not significant"; but when the means of the two groups in the area of grammar was compared, the difference was significant". On the whole, there was "no significant difference" between the means of the pretest scores of the control and the experimental groups.

2.2 On the Difference Between the Means of the Pretest and Posttest of The Control Group
When the means of the pretest and posttest scores in the five writing skill areas of the control group were compared, the difference was "significant".

2.3 On the Difference between the Means of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Experimental Group
When the means of the pretest and posttest scores in the five Writing skill components of the experimental group were compared, the difference was significant."

2.4 On the Difference Between the Posttest means of the Control and Experimental Groups
When the means of the posttest scores in the areas of vocabulary and Mechanics of the two groups were compared; the difference was "not significant"; but when the means of the two groups in the areas of content, organization and grammar were compared, the difference was "significant".

On the Effect of the CD-ROM Module on the Students' Writing Skills
The CD-ROM Module was instrumental in the improvement of the students' writing skills, most specifically in the areas of content, organization and grammar.

Conclusion
1. The online CD-ROM Module is a good alternative mode of delivering English writing tutorial lessons to students for it helps in the improvement of students' writing skills, considering the five writing components, most specifically in the areas of content, organization and grammar.

2. The students in the control group have improved their writing skills from poor in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary and grammar to very good level; and from a good level in mechanics to excellent level, after they were exposed to the traditional face-to-face mode of tutorials.

3. The students in the experimental group have improved in their writing skills from poor level in grammar to a very good level, and from a poor level in content and organization to excellent level, and from good level in vocabulary and mechanics to excellent level after they were exposed to the online CD-ROM mode of tutorial.

4. The online CD-ROM mode of tutorial using the module developed by the researcher yielded better results in terms of writing skills achievement than the traditional face-to-face mode of tutorials using any appropriate reference materials, based on the posttest mean scores of the students in the five writing skill components.

Recommendations
1. Since the findings show the effectiveness of the use of the e-learning CD-ROM Module for the improvement of students' writing skills, it is recommended that it be used by the Writing Laboratory staff of Capitol University as remedial lessons to students who need assistance in the improvement of their writing skills.

2. The Capitol University Administration should provide more computers with CD-ROM in the Writing Laboratory to give opportunity to students to access the module and learn writing skills concepts.

3. Students should be exposed to the use of technologies such as software, courseware and word processors focusing on writing skills development.

4. Professors should serve as role models on the use of technology in instruction to encourage and motivate students to do the same.

5. Professors should be trained on how to design and develop self-instructional materials like CD-ROM modules that consider the needs of the students, as well as the culture of the community.

6. English professors should design and develop more CD-ROM modules, not only on writing skills but also on the other basic areas of communication skills such as listening, speaking and reading as well as study skills.

7. Considering that there is also a significant increase in writing skills of students who were exposed to the traditional face-to-face method of tutorials, staffs and tutors of Capitol University Writing Laboratory may use a judicious blend of the CD-ROM mode of tutorial and face-to-face tutorial delivery when necessary.

8. Other researchers can look into another empirical research focusing on pure online writing tutorials.

9. Researchers of other disciplines using online mode of tutorial delivery can also conduct similar studies.

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