Semantic Mapping and Street Photography for the Teaching of Academic Writing for High School Students

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of using Semantic Mapping and Street Photography as writing prompts in teaching academic position paper writing to senior high school Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in a national high school in the Division of Iloilo during the school year 2018–2019. Two heterogeneous Grade 11 sections were pair-matched based on pretest scores and taught using either Semantic Mapping or Street Photography. Writing performance was measured through pretest and posttest position paper scores, analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-tests at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that both groups significantly improved their writing performance from pretest to posttest, with no significant difference between the two instructional methods. This suggests that both Semantic Mapping and Street Photography effectively engage students in the writing process by connecting to their prior knowledge and real-life experiences, promoting communicative and functional writing skills beyond traditional grammar and vocabulary practice. The study highlights the importance of relevant, motivating pre-writing activities and continuous feedback in boosting students' confidence and writing performance. Moreover, it emphasizes the role of teachers' grammatical knowledge and the use of well-structured, contextualized, and interesting prompts in easing students' anxiety around writing. These strategies are valuable tools in academic writing instruction, especially for ESL/EFL learners.

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1. Introduction

Academic writing is a general term that refers to all writing created for study. It is a more formal style of writing that requires the communication of ideas clearly and concisely. It is very different from everyday texting or email writing that we have been used to doing. According to the author in [20], academic writing differs from other types of writing in several key aspects: its purpose is to demonstrate knowledge of a topic; it considers a specific audience; it requires evidence to support claims; it follows a formal style; and it involves a structured writing process.

Two of the core subjects of the Enhanced K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) of the senior high school are Reading and Writing Skills and English for Academic and Professional Purposes. These subjects are prerequisites of all strands, may they be Academic, Technical Vocational and Livelihood (TVL), Sports, or Arts and Design Track. These subjects emphasize the development of students' writing skills with an emphasis on academic writing. The Key standard of the K to 12 in the SHS Curriculum aims that students should be able to integrate communication and language skills for creating meaning using oral and written texts, various genres, and discursive contexts for personal and professional purposes.

The development of academic writing skills is not only useful for college education but also for the students' future professions, which generally cover Communication Arts, Economics, Sociology, Education, and Psychology. Senior high school HUMSS students are evaluated largely based on their writing, so writing skills are essential for academic success.

Moreover, to address the needs of 21st-century learners, the current K to 12 curriculum framework highlights the fundamental importance of context in shaping the curriculum and, consequently, the teaching-learning process. This is anchored in the adherence of the Department of Education (DepEd) to the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10553), Sec. 5 .found in [23], of which encourages schools to localize, indigenize, and enhance their teaching and learning materials based on their respective educational and social contexts. According to DepEd, local stories can be used in the language learning area, and examples used in lessons can begin with those in the locality. Moreover, names, situations, and settings needed to give context to test questions or problem-solving exercises can use those of the immediate community. The features K to 12 BEC include: a) learner-centered, inclusive, and research-based; b) standards and competence-based, seamless, decongested; c) culture-responsive and culture sensitive, integrative and contextualized, relevant and responsive; and d) flexible, ICT-based, and global.

However, the real situation of the present curriculum, particularly in teaching and learning academic writing, specifically to grade 11 HUMSS students of a public school in the Division of Iloilo, is becoming rather challenging to both teachers and students. It is observed that HUMSS students perform poorly in academic writing, when it is one of the most essential skills needed to be developed. Students' outputs in their academic

papers show a disturbing number of errors. Moreover, considerably low scores in students' periodical exam in the subjects Academic Reading and Writing and English for Academic and Professional Purposes seem to imply their low content knowledge of the concepts in academic writing.

It is also noticeable that students lack attention and participation when it comes to writing subjects. Decline in student participation is evident as topics in academic writing become complex, as they find them quite hard or uninteresting. During class discussions, students' responses are limited to a word or a phrase. The lack of critical thinking or depth of analysis is apparent.

These occurrences can be attributed to the students' proficiency level in basic writing. During instruction on academic writing subjects, some students could not even construct grammatically correct sentences. Some students do not even know what to write or how to write, despite the repetitive and hands-on facilitation of the teacher. Likewise, there is apparent confusion in the organization of their ideas.

Academic writing is new to most of the students since their Junior High School English subject focused more on literature, specifically, poetry, fiction, and drama. Writing activities are limited to essay writing, poetry writing, narrative, and reflection papers- writing activities that require less strict structure and technicality. Only students who belong to the Special Programs have research subjects; thus, they already have familiarity and exposure to academic writing. This transition from junior high school to senior high school can be one of the reasons why students find it difficult to adjust and even simply adapt to the basic rules of technical writing. Most students find it difficult to simply think of what to write. This difficulty, most of the time, leads them to resort to plagiarism as the only means to survive academic writing.

Research related to writing has suggested that writing in a second or foreign language learning context is a complex, difficult, and demanding task. The author in [4] explained that this difficulty and complexity arise from the fact that writing includes discovering a thesis, developing support for it, organizing, revising, and finally editing it to ensure an effective, error-free piece of writing. Writing is considered a difficult skill to teach because it includes several components, for example, a) a comprehensive command of grammar, b) grasp on spelling and punctuation, c) use of appropriate vocabulary, d) suitable style to meet the expected readers' expectations and e) organizational skills [61].

In the context of the senior high school HUMSS students, there is a noticeable difficulty apparent in the content of their outputs in academic writing. When beginning to write, students are faced with difficulty in thinking of ideas on what to write or how to write. Because of time constraints and limited resources, the usual approach to teaching academic writing would revolve around the lecture method, and this would immediately lead to the individual writing properly. It can also be noted that there is an apparent difficulty in initiating writing. When confronted by a writing activity, students are observed to be left looking blank because they still contemplate what and how to write. Thus, effective pre-writing activities, which are often overlooked by educators, are necessary to motivate them. "One reason some students do not like to write is because they see it as a chore, as dreaded work, and as something to 'get done'; they do not perceive themselves as writers" [21].

The author in [87] noted that the most neglected stage is the prewriting stage. The author in [12] added that many pre-service teacher education students in a composition methods course confess they did not pre-write seriously in middle and high school, and that many did not pre-write at all. However, it is an important stage in the writing process frequently overlooked by beginning writers. The researcher in [86] argues that prewriting is the most important skill to emphasize and practice extensively in basic writing classes. She describes basic writers as almost universally neglecting prewriting activities.

Because of the need to fill this gap, this study attempted to explore the employment of semantic mapping and street photography as modes of teaching academic writing, particularly position paper writing. This research aimed to utilize an innovative way of teaching the senior high school Humanities and Social Studies (HUMSS) strand of a public national high school, Division of Iloilo, in academic writing, particularly in writing a position paper. Students benefit from finding personal associations with language as the language items tend to be more memorable [85].

Semantic mapping has been used in various ways to enhance the teaching and learning processes. Besides the application of mind mapping in the brainstorming stage for writing, the use of semantic mapping as a writing technique in the classroom is still lacking in exploration. According to the author in [90], the semantic mapping activity used as the prewriting phase of a lesson can activate the learners' schemata by introducing them to the relevant keywords. As a pre-writing activity, educators can use core questions to enhance the comprehension of key words. More importantly, the connection between the main ideas and the supporting details is based on a system of logic. This system describes logical thinking. It contains a notion representing propositions and rules of inference on how propositions are put together to form valid arguments. Thus, semantic mapping may improve the students' performance in academic writing.

Another mode of teaching that will be explored in this study is Street Photography as a pre-writing activity. In the study by the author in [69], stated that incorporating images in language instruction will appeal to digital native learners, those students who grew up in a world where using smartphones, laptops, and social media is part of everyday life. Images also hold the power to stimulate complex language use, pushing students to extend their abilities. In this regard, Street Photography is one of the authentic visual materials that can be used in the teaching and learning process, particularly in academic writing.

With the advent of the Digital Age, visual materials and gadgets such as videos, televisions, films, internet sites, and other multimedia presentations seemingly heighten the quality of learning. By utilizing Digital Street Photography, learning may easily take place and improve the students' way of thinking in real-life situations.

Supported by various studies relating to writing, it is, without a doubt, challenging for both teachers and students to teach and learn how to write, respectively. Aside from having to undergo a tedious process in learning how to write, students' "cognitive development, educational experiences, and overall proficiency in the second language were observed to problematize students' writing" (Hinkel,2004). Therefore, it is imperative to test interesting strategies on how to engage the learners in the writing process. In this study, Semantic Mapping and Street Photography in teaching writing are two of the strategies that were explored.

1.1 Communicative Language Teaching in Senior High School

With the advent of the Digital Age and the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, the Philippine education system underwent major reforms, including the addition of senior high school. This allows students to choose a specialized track and gain real-world experience through immersion. In English, teachers are guided by six language teaching principles, which include spiral progression, interaction, integration, learner-centeredness, contextualization, and construction, which must be reflected in lesson planning. Unlike in junior high, where the focus is on literary writing, senior high school students now concentrate on critical reading, academic writing, reasoning, and research to prepare them for professional and personal communication.

Academic writing is a particular style used in formal essays or papers. It requires formal language, a logical structure, and should be supported by evidence. It is a skill that students need to develop and learn as it is important for their college courses and future professions. Practicing academic writing seems to be discouraging and tedious for students nowadays, but with constant practice, high-interest activities, and tested approaches, this mastery can be achieved.

Along with the implementation of the K to 12 is the emphasis on the development of 21st-century skills. These skills generally refer to certain core competencies such as collaboration, technology literacy, initiative, critical thinking, and problem-solving, which are believed to help students thrive in today's world. With the dissemination of digital communication, popular culture and online networking have become an integral part of Generation Z. Teachers are urged to address this connectedness and focus on a curriculum based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where interactive activities are highlighted [71]. The financially and technologically savvy Generation Z-ers want to use a discourse they are familiar with and work with materials on popular culture.

According to the communicative approach, for learning to take place, emphasis must be put on the importance of these variables: a) communication: activities that involve real communication promote learning; b) tasks: activities in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks that support the learning process; and c) meaning: language that is meaningful and authentic to the learner and boosts learning. The author in [46] stated that the goal of language teaching was to develop, which he referred to as communicative competence.

Moreover, writing has to be taught in a warm and supportive atmosphere. Specialists, such as psychologists, linguists, or methodologists, consider that students must work with a partner or a group to simulate the real-life activity of writing relationships. Otherwise, the students write to an imaginary reader, but cooperative writing makes the tasks more realistic and interactive.

CLT has various pedagogical principles for language teaching. Finocchario and Brumfit discussed that CLT teaching is learner-centered and responsive to learners' needs and interests, the target language is acquired through interactive communicative use that encourages the negotiation of meaning, and genuinely meaningful language use is emphasized along with unpredictability, risk-taking, and choice-making. Furthermore, there is

not only exposure to examples of authentic language from the target language community but also the formal properties of language are never treated in isolation from use; language forms are always addressed within a communicative context, learners are encouraged to discover the forms and structures of language for themselves and lastly there is a whole-language approach in which the four traditional language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) are integrated.

The author in [55] identifies two main types of activities in Communicative Language Teaching: functional communicative activities, which involve tasks like comparing images, following directions, or problem-solving; and social interaction activities, such as discussions, role plays, and debates. In writing instruction, the author in [67] emphasizes that tasks should come from real-life contexts rather than abstract, inauthentic exercises. The author in [27] supports this by noting that communicative tasks should reflect real-world language use, engage learners in meaningful interaction, and promote the sharing and negotiation of information. His framework highlights the importance of designing tasks that support authentic communication over isolated language practice. Writing instruction, therefore, should move beyond traditional school compositions to include relevant and functional tasks that mirror real-world writing purposes and focus on specific writing skills, not just grammar and vocabulary reinforcement. The teaching of writing should be recognized as a special part of language teaching with its aims and techniques.

The author in [74] believes communicative competence should be the core of language teaching, with communicative approaches designed around communicative functions; not only should grammar be taken into account, but also language in use. He states that "classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible." Communicative language teaching promotes meaningful learning through a learner-centered pedagogy. The current curriculum encourages learners to work autonomously and be immersed in real-life learning even outside the classroom. In terms of academic writing, students should be taught with materials and learning tasks that are interesting, authentic, contextualized, and ICT-based to align with the expectations and needs of 21st-century learners.

1.2 Academic Writing with a Focus on Position Paper Writing

Writing instruction is seen as a fundamental part of the higher education process, and it is usually seen as something complementary to the process of liberal education, rather than a specific skill valuable primarily in its own right. The importance of writing for developing high-level thinking skills, such as synthesis and evaluation of materials, is often cited as a justification for writing instruction [13]. Moreover, effective writing has to do double duty: it is a learning aid and a communication tool at the same time. As the author in [11] puts it, "Writing is a process of doing critical thinking and a product that communicates the results of critical thinking" (p.4)

A position paper is a type of academic writing that presents a clearly articulated stance on a debatable issue. The primary goal is to persuade readers that the writer's viewpoint is valid and well-informed. Effective position papers require a thorough evaluation of the topic, the development of a structured and logical argument, and the inclusion of credible evidence. Writers must also address counterarguments to demonstrate a balanced

understanding of the issue. A strong position paper is not only persuasive but also respectful of opposing views, presenting the topic in a manner that is accessible and convincing to the target audience [88].

The development of academic writing skills is not only useful for college education but also for the students' future professions, which generally cover Communication Arts, Economics, Sociology, Education, and Psychology. Senior high school HUMSS students are evaluated largely based on their writing, so writing skills are essential for academic success. The author in [20] state that academic writing is different from other types of writing in several ways including (1) purpose: academic writing is mainly purposed to demonstrate knowledge of a topic; (2) audience: it refers to the reader of the writing; (3) evidence; (4) style; and (5) the process of writing.

Good academic writing is about using the right words in the right place to say the right thing; it is not about using lots of long words or presenting overly complicated ideas that your reader can't understand. Key features of good academic writing include: a.) logical presentation of content (beginning, middle, end); b.) clarity of thought including well-supported arguments or points; c.) objective and non-judgmental commentary; d.) accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation; e..) correctly presented referencing; f.) formal language and a varied vocabulary (without use of colloquial expressions and slang); and g.) originality and ownership – it 'belongs' to the person that writes it.

The author in [31] found that students struggled with academic writing due to limited and monotonous materials taken mostly from textbooks. Students reported boredom and a lack of engaging, challenging activities in class. The study suggests that combining relevant content with more stimulating tasks could help improve students' writing skills. In the study by the author in [45], study, cognitive development, educational experiences, and overall proficiency in the second language were observed to problematize students' writing. According to the author in [63], students find difficulty in writing, especially in expressing arguments. Many writers have called for conventions to be challenged, while others suggest that some conventions should be maintained. Such convention or unconventionality needs discussion of intersexuality in writing discourses.

Selection of materials for classroom use is a challenging task for English language teachers as they provide a strong platform through which students learn the English language, particularly in writing. This is the reason why the researcher came up with the idea of using Semantic Mapping and Street Photography as pre-writing activities in teaching position paper writing.

1.3 Use of Writing Prompts in Teaching Academic Writing

a)   Semantic Mapping

Writing is defined as a complex activity where students have to express their ideas, thoughts, or feelings in written form [53]. Researchers related to teaching writing mention the difficulties encountered by both students and teachers in learning and teaching the skill, respectively. Writing is one of the tools of communication used by people to communicate with each other. In the context of senior high school, students must be able to write academic papers, especially able to develop their academic writing skills.

Research has shown that the use of pre-reading activities, such as graphic or advanced organizers, can positively affect student acquisition of vocabulary and meaning when reading new concepts presented in text. One particularly effective strategy, Semantic Mapping, can significantly impact students who previously had a lack of prior knowledge on new content reading material by assisting them to better understand the vocabulary and content of the reading material before actually reading the material [54]. The strategy of Semantic Mapping, as with all advanced and graphic organizers, is based on the theory that a student's structure of prior knowledge and experiences (schemata) related to the acquisition of new concepts is a critical element in the student becoming a successful learner and reader.

A technique developed by the author in [47], Semantic Mapping is a visual representation of knowledge [5], a graphic arrangement showing the major ideas and relationships in text or among word meanings [77], or a categorical structuring of information in graphic form [40]. The author in [81] also defined a semantic map as the graphic display of information within categories related to central concepts and stimulating meaningful word associations. According to the author in [29], the first major activity that activates students' appropriate background knowledge of a given topic is the semantic map. The map is an organized arrangement of vocabulary concepts that reveals what students already know about the topic and provides them with a base upon which they can construct the new information learned from the text.
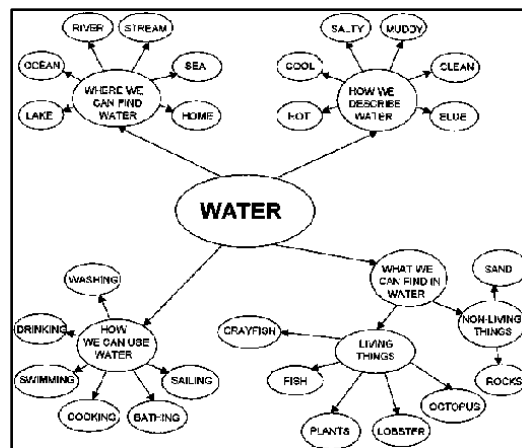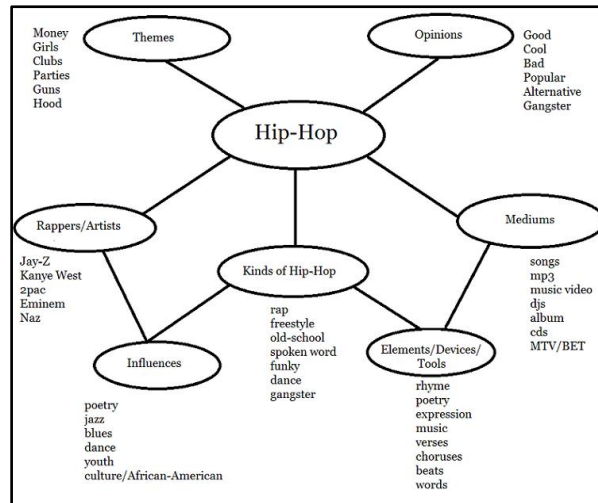

Figure 1

An example of semantic mapping on the topic "water". Retrieved from: New Approaches to Literacy Learning - A Guide for Teacher Educators (UNESCO, 2000, 33 p.

Figure 2

Semantic map used to get students thinking outside the box when it comes to poetry and music. Furthermore, it introduces students to the kinds of hip-hop that operate on a more intellectual level. The concept may be broad and complex, but it was simplified using the thinking map. Taken from: Mr. West's Guide to L.A., n.d., [https://mrwest-la.weebly.com/hip-hop--semantic-word-maps.html]. Copyright by Mr. West's Guide to L.A.

Semantic Mapping is a technique to represent graphical concepts. It is an effective diagnostic tool. It is also a visual and structured strategy for vocabulary development and knowledge expansion, displayed in categories of words about other words. It is opposed to an unstructured strategy, which shows the hierarchical relationship of ideas, such as brainstorming, in which students are free to generate ideas on paper randomly. Brainstorming is an application of the schema theory that explains how people incorporate new information with their existing knowledge. Schema theory hypothesizes that information is stored in the brain in the form of networks called "schemata". When a person receives new information, he or she will be likely to link this new information to his proper schemata [6]. Thus, prior knowledge can serve as the base to acquire new knowledge. The brainstorming phase of Semantic Mapping gives educators insight into their students' schemata. Thus, it can show interests, level of readiness, gaps, misconceptions, and errors [68]. Ideas from one student will trigger ideas from the other students, "in a chain reaction thought process" [47].

Semantic Mapping portrays the schematic relations that compose a concept. It assumes that there are multiple relations between a concept and the knowledge that is related to the concept. Thus, for any concept, there are at least three types of association such as association of class, the order of things that the concept falls into; association of property, the attributes that define the concept; and association of exemplars of the concept.

The author in [36] outlines the major steps to Semantic Mapping: (1) Write target topic on chalkboard; (2) Have students brainstorm words related to topic; (3) Write/list the words by categories in the form of a map; (4) Have the students provide labels for each category (optional); (5) Discuss the words on the semantic map; and (6) Revise map after discussion.

The author in [83] noted that the implication of Semantic Mapping in classroom instruction requires a variety of basic memory and comprehension techniques (such as marking associations, grouping, and using visual memory of the semantic map) that associate relevant previous knowledge with the new. Semantic map exercises help students work as a group to gather their resources simultaneously; they prepare students to understand, assimilate, and evaluate the information to be read [40]. Bringing this knowledge to the conscious level helps students make sense of the topic of an article to be read. The author in [2] mentions that pre-teaching vocabulary probably requires that the words be taught in semantically and topically related sets so that word meaning and background knowledge improve concurrently. The author in [92] also states that direct vocabulary instruction focusing on Semantic Mapping as an acquisition strategy is more effective than vocabulary acquisition activities that teach only words rather than strategies for acquiring words.

Semantic Mapping is a flexible strategy suitable for learners at any proficiency level. It involves visually organizing word relationships within a text to deepen understanding and build associative networks [79]. This collaborative process helps improve vocabulary retention and comprehension through techniques like grouping and elaboration. In guided mapping, teachers introduce target vocabulary and develop the map with students, who later use it for writing tasks [64]. Ultimately, teachers should adapt the framework based on their students' needs, learning styles, and task demands.

The author in [91] advocated the introduction of Semantic Mapping in reading classrooms, which had been proven to be a beneficial reading technique even for native speakers of all educational levels. It was found that learners had shown an impressive improvement in such areas as vocabulary development, written ability, and most importantly, reading comprehension. Considering the positive impact Semantic Mapping had on EFL readers, studies by Crow and Quigley (1985) and Brown and Perry (1991), as cited by the author in [91], confirmed the use of Semantic Mapping as a crucial vocabulary strategy. These statements are cited by the author in [19] Carrell's that found that EFL learning enhances their reading skills through schema theory and semantic processing.

Semantic Mapping is a categorical structuring of information in graphic form. It is an individualized content approach in that students are required to relate new words to their own experiences and prior knowledge [47]. Semantic Mapping has been used successfully by teachers at all levels to motivate and actively involve learners in the thinking, reading, and writing processes.

In writing, Semantic Mapping is usually used during the pre-writing activity. Semantic Mapping can be used to help students organize ideas before writing activities. As an aid to story and report writing, Semantic Mapping helps the student organize thoughts and information. A complete map may serve as a guide by which to structure a story, with the category headings serving as topic sentences or main ideas for the paragraphs and the underlying details serving as the content to be included [40].

It is not in the practice of ESL teachers to assign topics for which students do not have the vocabulary and grammatical structures at all. Therefore, an activating prewriting technique is required. The very purpose of Semantic Mapping is to activate known terms concerning a topic [57].

Overall, semantic Mapping helps students activate and expand their knowledge of specific topics and vocabulary by organizing information into labeled categories and showing relationships between concepts. This graphic structure aids comprehension, assimilation, and evaluation of new material. It has been widely used to enhance vocabulary building, reading comprehension, and study skills. Semantic Mapping is increasingly recognized for its potential in writing instruction, but its consistent use in classroom settings still needs to be strengthened.

b)   Street Photography

Another writing prompt for position paper writing used in this study is the employment of street photography as a pre-writing activity. According to the author in [66], four things need to be considered by educators in teaching writing. First, educators could understand the reasons that were raised by the students. Second, educators should provide opportunities for students to write. The third principle is to give good bait to help and to give meaningful aids in learning for the students. The fourth principle is determining the value of clarification that will be applied as a result of any writing by the learners.

The author in [66] adds that one principle for teaching writing effectively is to give good bait to help and to give meaningful aids in learning for the students. The author in [9] stated that it must be taken into account that visual literacy is the key to obtaining information, constructing knowledge, and building successful educational outcomes. She asserts that this is due to the increase in the number of images in the world. The use of visuals can enhance language teaching. As they help teachers to bring the real world into the classroom, they make learning more meaningful and more exciting [14].

The use of visuals, particularly photographs, has been proven to be an effective tool in language teaching by several researchers. A study by the author in [35] revealed that intervention with the picture series technique improved the overall growth of writing skills, specific to the areas of transition or logical sequence and idea exposure. Moreover, the author in [82] discovered that digital photographs had a significant effect on writing quality. Another study by the authors in [10] proved the effectiveness of using visuals in teaching academic writing, as a small increase in average student performance on the pre- and post-instruction is also noted. Also, feedback from students indicated an appreciation of visual teaching methods as a means to explain academic writing conventions.

It must be taken into account that visual literacy is the key to obtaining information, constructing knowledge, and building successful educational outcomes [9]. It is important to point out that students bring to the classroom their background, which nowadays is associated with images provided by mass media, video games, and so on.

Visual aids can be a helpful tool in the language classroom as the author in [56] points out, they 'help the teacher to clarify, establish, correlate and coordinate accurate concepts, interpretations and appreciations, and enable him to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, meaningful and vivid'. Visual material or anything used to help the student see an immediate meaning in the language may benefit the student

and the teacher by clarifying the message, if the visuals enhance or supplement the language point, as the author in [18] indicates in her work. These advantages suggest that visuals can help make a task or situation more authentic. The authors in [48] claim that visuals aid in motivation and maintaining attention by adding variety and making the lesson more interesting.

Similarly, the author in [80] stated that the picture for writing is a supplementary material for developing students' writing skills, a systematic building on writing skills (from sentence construction to paragraph composition), a wide variety of writing task makes a new vocabulary and makes writing fun, and a detailed content map of the writing skills. The author in [17] stated that writing provides variety in classroom activities, serving as a break from oral work (and is therefore a quieter and more relaxed time for both students and teacher). The standard classroom is one of the possible ways to target language learning [42]. He also added that the visuals have the advantages of being inexpensive, of being available in most situations; of being personal, that is, they are selected by the teacher, which leads to an automatic sympathy between teacher and materials, and consequently enthusiastic use; and of bringing images into the unnatural world of the language classroom.

Learning in or out of the classroom is a complex process, and it needs visual aids, especially pictures, which are a great help in stimulating the learning of a foreign language. The author in [89] considers that pictures have a major role to play in the development of students' skills. There are two reasons: 1) the meanings we derive from words are affected by the context they are in: pictures can represent or contribute much to the creation of contexts in the classroom; and 2.) it is often helpful if the students can respond to a text non – verbally: pictures provide an opportunity for non – verbal response.

The author in [24] confirms that pictures for use in conversation sessions may come from books, magazines, newspapers, or may be drawn by the teacher or students. It can also be some short narration about the pictures, where students can test themselves on the writing skills they have been learning. Pictures that show human situations often interest students at the elementary level [3].

Visual aids can be a helpful tool in the language classroom. As the author in [56] points out, they 'help the teacher to clarify, establish, correlate and coordinate accurate concepts, interpretations and appreciations, and enable him to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, meaningful and vivid' (p.108). Visuals can help make a task or situation more authentic [18]. Students benefit from finding personal associations with language as the language items tend to be more memorable 85].

Incorporating images in language instruction will appeal to digital native learners, those students who grew up in a world where using smartphones, laptops, and social media are part of everyday life [69]. Images also hold the power to stimulate complex language use, pushing students to extend their abilities. Indeed, cognitive research has shown that the human brain processes images quickly than it processes words, and images are more likely than text to remain in our long-term memory [52].

Based on this condition and needs, to fill the gap, this research aimed at designing a model of instructional task that utilizes the use of Street Photography. The tasks involved in this technique not only arouse the interest of

students in terms of academic writing but also expose them to authentic, real-life situations concerning their community. The learning tasks involved shall fit the level and needs of grade 11 HUMSS students since they need tasks that are learner-centered, authentic, and interesting at the same time. These tasks aim to improve the teaching and learning process, specifically in academic writing. Moreover, the materials and strategies that will be used in this study are related to scientific principles of instructional strategies. Instructions will allow students to do appropriate learning activities with the teacher's help, in control the learning activities that promote learning.

Figure 3

A sample image on Street Photography showing a street child sleeping on the sidewalk. Retrieved from: https://www.flickr.com/photos/ubo_pakes/6974620811/meta

Figure 4

A sample image on Street Photography showing four children playing Chinese garter. Retrieved from: https://photography.tutsplus.com/articles/street-photography-80-superb-examples-tips--photo-5626

In this age and time where viewing is considered an important skill, students, regardless of what level they belong to, always enjoy visuals such as those that are timely and something they can relate to. Academic writing

is a tedious subject to deal with, especially when students have limited familiarity with the subject. The use of digital Street Photography would enable them to pay attention, provide responses, enrich their understanding of the topic, strengthen their arguments, and serve as a springboard in academic paper writing.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

This study compared the effectiveness of Semantic Mapping and Street Photography in teaching academic writing to grade 11 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in a national high school in the Division of Iloilo for the school year 2018-2019.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the writing performance in the pretest and posttest of the group exposed to

a. Semantic Mapping?

b. Street Photography?

2. Is there a significant difference in the pretest and posttest of the group exposed to Semantic Mapping?

3. Is there a significant difference in the pretest and posttest of the group exposed to Street Photography?

4. Before intervention, is there a significant difference in the writing performance between the Semantic Mapping and Street Photography groups?

5. After intervention, is there a significant difference in the writing performance between the Semantic Mapping and Street Photography groups?

Hypothesis:

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference in the pretest mean scores between the group exposed to Semantic Mapping and the group exposed to Street Photography.

2. There is no significant difference in the posttest mean scores between the group exposed to Semantic Mapping and the group exposed to Street Photography.

This study offers valuable insights for various stakeholders in the education system by highlighting effective, authentic, and innovative strategies, namely, Semantic Mapping and Street Photography, for teaching academic writing. It may benefit senior high school students by enhancing their writing skills, increasing engagement through localized issues, and addressing common writing challenges. Teachers can apply these strategies across multiple writing forms, while elementary educators may use the findings to strengthen foundational literacy instruction. The results may inform curriculum developers, school administrators, and the Department of Education in designing contextualized programs that support long-term student development. Additionally, the study may guide parents in supporting their children's learning and inspire future research in academic writing pedagogy. Ultimately, it emphasizes the importance of strong writing skills for students, preparing them for higher education and professional success.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This study was confined to gathering data through pretest and posttest activities regarding the performance of senior high school students in academic writing, particularly in position paper writing. As a quasi-experimental research, the study involved two groups: one using Semantic Mapping and the other Street Photography. Semantic Mapping was chosen as a pre-writing activity because it is proven to actively involve learners in the thinking-reading-writing process. It is one of the pre-writing activities that can be contextualized as it involves brainstorming about the common issues in the learners' locality. On the other hand, Street Photography was chosen as it aligns with DepEd's goal of contextualization, localization, and ICT integration in the lesson. It is an interesting way for students to expose themselves to current issues in their locality, use ICT resources, and is expected to influence their position paper output. Both writing prompts are seen to be interesting modes of pre-writing activities that can enhance students' perception and performance in position paper writing. Each group was composed of 30 matched pairs of students based on their pretest scores on position paper writing. The study was implemented for six weeks to Grade 11 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in a national high school in the Division of Iloilo during the second semester of the school year 2018–2019.

However, this study has its limitations. Since it was conducted in only one public high school, focusing solely on HUMSS students, the findings may not apply to other strands, schools, or learners with different backgrounds. The six-week duration may not have been enough to capture the long-term impact of the pre-writing activities on students' writing skills. The study was also limited to the use of Semantic Mapping and Street Photography, leaving out other factors that might affect students' writing performance, such as their previous writing experiences, reading habits, or motivation. Moreover, the study assumed that the teaching methods used were delivered consistently, but slight differences in classroom dynamics may have affected the results. These limitations mean that while the findings provide meaningful insights, they may only hold for the group of students involved in this study and may not necessarily apply to other contexts or student populations. Further studies involving a larger and more diverse group of participants are recommended to build on the results of this research.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study may be profitable and beneficial to the students, teachers, and institutions, especially those who try to improve the way of teaching. Results of this study may be useful to certain people in the educational system, such as students, teachers, and other stakeholders of education who are interested in exploring strategies in teaching academic writing or writing as a language skill.

The findings of this study may help the students, especially in the senior high school, in Academic Writing and other related writing subjects. This study motivates students to become more aware of the issues in their locality through writing an academic paper. Their academic writing skills may be enhanced through the innovative approaches used as their interests are aroused. Through this study, the common problems encountered by senior high school students in academic writing or writing in general will be explored and given light.

Teachers may also utilize these prompts as a preliminary activity, not only in their academic writing classes but also in teaching other forms of writing as well.

This study may turn into a new perspective as a form of providing effective, authentic, and innovative strategies and feedback to senior high school students in academic writing subjects or subjects that require their academic

writing skills. With its focus on authentic instruction, interesting learning, and positive feedback, this may be considered a springboard to create more contextualized and localized preliminary and even writing proper activities.

The results of this study may also be useful to elementary school teachers to reflect on their strategies for teaching their pupils basic reading and writing skills and the long-term effects on the child's performance throughout his or her secondary and even tertiary level.

From the findings, school administrators and even the Department of Education may implement programs to strengthen the skills of students in writing, such as allotting additional time in initiating, conducting, and monitoring programs for reading and writing classes, especially at the elementary level.

This study may also be a reminder to parents about their roles in ensuring their child's development or learning through consistent monitoring or mentoring.

Curriculum planners and textbook writers who are interested in exploring strategies in teaching academic writing or writing as a language skill may also use this study as a reference.

Moreover, this may draw interest to other researchers who want to explore strategies or matters relating to academic writing or writing in general that may serve as the basis for their study.

Lastly, Humanities and Social Studies (HUMSS) students, as future frontiers of our society, can gain from this study since they primarily need to be competent in writing in their tertiary years and even in their future professions.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This quantitative research approach proposed a quasi-experimental design to determine the pretest and posttest scores in position paper writing among the respondents. The author in [76] stated that quasi-experiments share with all other experiments a similar purpose—to test descriptive causal hypotheses about manipulative causes, as well as many structural details, such as the frequent presence of control groups and pretest measures, to support a counterfactual inference about what would happen in the absence of a treatment. Quasi-experimental designs are the best design available to use in some field studies in which one wants to make a causal inference. These quasi-experimental tools can be extremely useful for finding out which mode of implementation works best.

Among the quasi-experimental designs, the non-randomized comparison group pretest-posttest design is one of the sound evaluation designs in assessing the efficacy of any program. In this design, random assignment is not conducted, and subjects in both the experimental and the control groups take both the pretest and the posttest.

The static-group pretest-posttest research design was employed. After administering the pretest in the form of a position paper writing, papers were checked and scored by three inter-raters using the criteria. Thirty (30) students belonging to the same class, whose pretest scores were approximately similar to or the same as another group of 30 students belonging to another class, were selected as subjects of the study.

After being identified and matched, both classes were exposed to two writing prompts for position paper writing. Group A was taught using Semantic Mapping as a writing prompt, while Group B employed Street Photography as a writing prompt.

The independent variables in the study were the writing prompts, namely Semantic Mapping and Street Photography, which were employed in position paper writing of Groups A and B, respectively, and the dependent variable was the performance of the grade 11 HUMSS students in position paper writing.

2.2 Participants

This quasi-experimental research was conducted from February to March in the second semester of the 2018-2019. To generate data, the respondents, through a random sampling, were composed of 50 Grade 11 HUMSS students exposed to Semantic Mapping and 50 exposed to Street Photography. The researcher considered 50 participants per group to provide room for the replacement of those who would frequently be absent in the duration of the writing process. Out of this number, only 30 participants per group were chosen for the data analysis.

The selection of the students was based on their pretest scores given at the initial phase of the study. Students in group A were match-paired with students in group B. Group A, composed of 30 students, was exposed to Semantic Mapping while Group B, with 30 students, was given the Street Photography prompt to enhance their academic writing proficiency. Group A and Group B were identified through a coin toss. To avoid bias in the scoring, the students are randomly assigned numbers that they wrote on their activity sheets instead of their names.

The respondents' demographic profiles, which include their names and addresses, were gathered. All information about the respondents' identity was held confidential, thus, only for the study.

Matching can be utilized to ensure that the control group and the experimental group are as similar as possible at the start of the experiment. Matching groups require that researchers match participants in each group on as many characteristics as possible to ensure that the control and the experimental groups are as similar as possible before the treatment is introduced (Shadish and his colleagues 2002).

Table 1: Profile of the Two Classes Grouped according to Writing Prompts

Writing Prompt	n	%
Semantic Mapping	30	50
Street Photography	30	50
Total	60	100

Position paper writing was chosen to be the output that the respondents were required to produce. The curriculum guide requires the grade 11 senior high school students to write five academic papers, namely: Book Review or Article Critique, Literature Review, Research Report, Project Proposal, and Position Paper. Among all these academic paper requirements, this research focused on Position Paper writing since topics like

Literature Review and Research Report are already elaborated in the students' Research 1 and Research 2 subjects. Moreover, Book Review or Article Critique are also familiar to the students since it is also one of their topics in their English for Academic and Professional Purposes subject, and they also had a background in it in their junior high school. Overall, Position Paper writing is emphasized for the reason that students have a limited background on what to write and how it is written. This research emphasized Position Paper writing among other genres for the reason that it could expose students to experiences in academic writing, argumentation, and social awareness, among others.

2.3 Instruments

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments, pilot testing was conducted. The respondents of the study were drawn from the first two sections, while the remaining two sections served as the respondents for the pilot testing. The pilot testing subjects were composed of 50 respondents for the Semantic Mapping activity and 50 for the Street Photography. Participants of the pilot testing were also selected through pairing.

Criteria for position paper writing were provided and explained to the students beforehand. The criteria included the following: Content- 35% , Organization- 25%, Style- 25%, Grammar and Mechanics- 15%, and standards: (Always [5], Often[4], Sometimes[3], Seldom[2], Rarely[1]). The same criteria were used for each group, which will be the basis of determining their performance in both the retest and posttest for the position paper writing.

2.4 Intervention

A validated researcher-made 5 E's lesson plan for position paper writing was followed during the conduct of the instruction. Such was aligned with the DepEd competencies, performance standards, and content standards, which reflected the topic. The format was anchored in the theory of Constructivism, specifically Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation, or commonly known as the 5 E's, a lesson plan format developed over the years by the authors in [16]. It also follows the Pre-Writing, Writing Proper, and Post-Writing process. The lesson plan utilized the use of Semantic Mapping and Street Photography as writing prompts.

One lesson plan was created for the conduct of instruction for Group A, and another lesson plan for Group B. Each lesson plan followed the 5 E's format and the writing process, except for the varying preliminary activities in the Exploration part. The Exploration part involved Semantic Mapping for Group A, while Street Photography was employed for Group B.

The 5 E's is an instructional model based on the constructivist approach to learning, which says that learners build or construct new ideas on top of their old ideas. Scholars such as Jean Piaget, Eleanor Duckworth, George Hein, and Howard Gardner have explored these ideas in-depth. Each of the 5 E's describes a phase of learning, and each phase begins with the letter "E": Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. The 5 E's allow students and teachers to experience common activities, to use and build on prior knowledge and experience, to construct meaning, and to continually assess their understanding of a concept.

To elaborate, the 5 E's follow this sequence: The Engagement phase starts the process. In this stage, an activity should make connections between past and present learning experiences. This phase anticipates activities and focuses students' thinking on the learning outcomes of current activities. Students should become mentally engaged in the concept, process, or skill to be learned. Next is the Exploration part. This phase provides students with a common base of experiences. They identify and develop concepts, processes, and skills. During this phase, students actively explore their environment or manipulate materials. Then, in the Explanation phase, students are helped to explain the concepts they have been exploring. They have opportunities to verbalize their conceptual understanding or to demonstrate new skills or behaviors. This phase also provides opportunities for teachers to introduce formal terms, definitions, and explanations for concepts, processes, skills, or behaviors. After this, students' conceptual understanding is extended in the Elaboration part. This phase allows them to practice skills and behaviors. Through new experiences, the learners develop a deeper and broader understanding of major concepts, obtain more information about areas of interest, and refine their skills. Finally, the last phase, the Evaluation phase, encourages learners to assess their understanding and abilities and lets teachers evaluate students' understanding of key concepts and skill development.

For a more comprehensive reference, an outline of the lesson plan for each pre-writing activity is presented on the next page. Note that all written activities during the writing process are written in the activity sheets provided by the teacher. During the Elaboration part, students were given the chance to critique each other's work. This is done every time they are done with the process of Drafting, Revising, and Editing. The author in [44] emphasized that peer review "is not just a course requirement: it is an essential part of the writing process that all successful writers engage in at some point". One of its benefits is that it allows students to learn how to write for an audience.

Students' written outputs were strictly done inside the classroom during the subject period.

Respondents were grouped according to the modes of teaching academic writing. Group A was exposed to Semantic Mapping while Group B was exposed to Street Photography, both as a pre-writing activity, specifically, done in the Elaboration part of the lesson plan. Both interventions served as the springboard of the entire writing process, which follows: Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising, and Editing.

The idea of following a writing process was first introduced by the author in [60], emphasizing "writing as a process, not a product". This idea was supported by the author in [37] advocating the movement "from written products to writing process". Thus, from these calls for focus on the writing process instead of the product or output emerged the development of the writing process (Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising, Editing, and Publishing), commonly used in teaching writing in the present. The process-based approach to writing, or process writing, has gained considerable attention and support from educators [7]. During the process of writing, writers are asked to repeatedly revise the drafts, and this recursiveness is the main characteristic of the approach.

To compare the performance of group A and group B towards the utilization of Street Photography, a pretest and a posttest were conducted. Pretest scores of group B were drawn from their first written outputs after the lesson on position paper writing, utilizing Street Photography, and undergoing the writing process. In this

process, the 5 E's lesson plan with the integration of Street Photography in the Elaboration part of the lesson was used.

The structure of the position paper followed the basic structure, namely, introduction, body, and conclusion. Each paper was limited to six paragraphs only. The introduction, which was the first paragraph, included the identification of the issue and the thesis statement or the stance of the writer. The body presented three arguments that supported the thesis statement in the introduction. Each argument, including its supporting evidence or facts, was composed of one paragraph. The fifth paragraph included the counterargument or the discussion of both sides of the issue. Lastly, in the sixth paragraph, students suggested a course or courses of action or possible solutions to the issue presented. This part also included the conclusion of the paper.

a.   *Pretest and Posttest*

Knowing the basic parts of any paper (introduction, body, and conclusion), students are tasked to write a position paper about issues or topics presented by the teacher. Students chose only one topic and wrote about it. Group A and Group B were given the same topics as the pretest. Topics include local and national issues of the country. This was done to both groups during a one-hour class period. Students' written outputs were gathered by the teacher and scored based on the criteria provided.

Each student chose only one topic and wrote a position paper about it. Each group followed the same writing process with the same time duration, minus the discussion on position paper writing. Respondents' written outputs were scored using the same criteria. Pretest and Posttest scores of each group were then compared.

The written outputs of both group A and group B for the pretest, lesson proper and posttest were evaluated using the following criteria which includes: Content 35%, Organization 25%, Style 25% and Grammar and Mechanics 15%; and standards: Always [5], Often[4], Sometimes[3], Seldom[2], Rarely[1].

b.   *Intervention: Semantic Mapping*

Activity sheets were used by the students in writing their position papers with the following parts: Part 1 for the demographic profile of the child (Assigned number, average grade in the 1st semester, and address); and Part 2 for the Activity Proper.

For group A, part 2: Activity Proper, included a box for their self-taken photograph, a space for their first written draft, while group B's activity sheet included a box for their semantic map, a space for their first written draft. To avoid bias in scoring, students were assigned numbers that they wrote on their activity sheets instead of their names.

Following the 5 E's lesson plan format, the class began by briefly reviewing the previous lesson and stating the objectives of the current lesson. During the engagement phase, the class identified three issues in their locality that were debatable and needed solutions, which were written on the board. These ideas were categorized into

bigger concepts like: problem, possible solutions, persons involved, and so on, and mapped out into several branches to create a semantic map.

Then, in the Exploration part, each student made his or her semantic map by identifying a local debatable issue and relating words around it through semantic mapping. The students were asked to randomly present their work, which was then briefly discussed by the class.

Once the students have identified their issues and mapped them semantically, the teacher introduced position paper writing through a PowerPoint presentation. A sample position paper was also given to them as supplementary material.

In the Elaboration phase, the students started to plan the structure and content of their position paper based on the photograph each of them chose (Planning); then, students wrote their first draft in the activity sheet provided by the teacher. The photograph was pasted on a separate paper (Drafting). The first draft was revised, applying the corrections made by the teacher on the content and grammar of their work. This was written in another activity sheet provided by the teacher (Revising).

Finally, in the Evaluation phase, the students edited their work applying the corrections by the teacher. All written activities during the writing process were written in the activity sheets provided by the teacher. Students' written outputs were strictly done inside the classroom during the subject period.

c.   Intervention: Street Photography

The intervention began after the class, before the conduct of the experiment, wherein students were given a handout on the basic principles of Street Photography. As an assignment, students were tasked to roam around the town of coverage. The photos should present serious, current, and important issues or problems in the community that need attention and a solution. The three different photos were printed on a long bond paper and brought to school the next day.

On the next day, following the lesson plan, the class began by reviewing the previous lesson and stating its objectives. Then, in the Exploration part, students were asked at random to give a brief description of the photo that they took. The class also gave their views regarding the issue presented in the photo. After this, the students were asked to choose one of the three photographs that they took. The chosen photo served as their topic for the position paper writing.

Once the students have identified their photographs, the teacher introduced position paper writing, which includes the definition, parts, and guidelines in position paper writing. A sample position paper was also given to the students as supplementary material.

In the Elaboration phase, the students started to plan the structure and content of their position paper based on the photograph each of them chose (Planning); then, they wrote their first draft in the activity sheet provided. The photograph was pasted on a separate paper (Drafting). The first draft was revised applying the corrections

made by the teacher on the content and grammar of the students' work. This was written in another activity sheet (Revising). Finally, in the Evaluation phase, the students edited their work applying the corrections by the teacher.

All written activities during the writing process were written in the activity sheets provided by the teacher. Students' written outputs were strictly done inside the classroom during the subject period.

In using photographs as prompts, the students were oriented on the ethical considerations when taking pictures around the town beforehand. Also, their self-taken photos were reviewed and screened to ensure their quality and appropriateness.

2.5 Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The researcher consulted the West Visayas State University, College of Education, Graduate School for approval of the conduct of the study. Upon approval, the researcher asked permission from the principal of a public high school in the Division of Iloilo through a formal letter.

Next, a letter of consent was sent to the parents of the participants of Group B who were employed in the treatment Street Photography in order to inform them that the activity in the Academic Reading and Writing Skills subject requires them to take pictures within their barangays. Also, the researcher coordinated with the Barangay Captains of the 18 barangays of Pavia to safeguard the students during the conduct of the study.

Results and identity of the respondents were treated with full confidentiality. Pretest and posttest scores were only used for the present study.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedure

After retrieving the pretest and posttest scores from the written outputs of both groups, the data were encoded, tallied, and subjected to statistical treatments.

Three scorers scored the performance of each group in the pretest and posttest using the inter-rater score sheet. The first rater was the researcher, and the two inter-raters were both senior high school English teachers who have experience teaching academic writing. The average score was drawn from the three inter-raters.

Pretest and posttest scores were interpreted through the following statistical tools:

Descriptive and inferential analyses were used to measure the performance of the students in position paper writing.

Mean was used to determine how well the students perform when grouped according to the two modes of teaching: Semantic Mapping and Street Photography.

The percentage was used to determine the number of acquired points on each criterion in the rubric, divided by the total number of scores multiplied by 100.

An independent sample t-test was used to determine the significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores between groups.

Repeated Measures ANOVA was utilized in determining the significant difference among the three processes in the writing performance of the groups.

3. Results, Interpretation, and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Data Analysis

This section shows and interprets the pretest and posttest results of two groups of students exposed to different writing prompts: Semantic Mapping (Group A) and Street Photography (Group B). The main goal was to assess and compare the effectiveness of each strategy in enhancing students' performance in position paper writing. The research utilized descriptive statistics, including mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD), to analyze the data.

Table 2 shows the mean performance in the pretest and the posttest of group A taught with Semantic Mapping as a writing prompt and group B taught with Street Photography as a writing prompt. The pretest mean performance of the students' scores in group A exposed to Semantic Mapping was rated low (M=34.37, SD=6.23). Similarly, the pretest mean performance of the students' scores in group B exposed to Street Photography as a writing prompt was also rated low (M=34.33, SD=6.35). The difference in pretest scores confirms that the two groups started at approximately the same level, which strengthens the internal validity. This indicates that the students in both groups were comparable or at the same level in terms of their writing performance before they were exposed to the treatment.

Following six weeks of instruction and guided writing practice using the interventions, both groups showed substantial improvement in their posttest scores. Group A (Semantic Mapping) achieved a mean score of M = 76.93 (SD = 6.24), while Group B (Street Photography) recorded a slightly lower mean score of M = 76.43 (SD = 5.21). Both were classified as "High" performance levels. This increase from "Low" to "High" for both groups suggests that the use of creative and structured writing prompts, whether conceptual like Semantic Mapping or visual like Street Photography, can significantly enhance students' academic writing skills.

Although Group A outperformed Group B by a small margin (Mean Difference = 0.50), this difference is at a minimum, and the SD of the difference = 1.03 indicates that the scores across both groups were closely distributed. Therefore, while Semantic Mapping may offer a slight edge in terms of grammar, organizational skills, content, and the concept of academic writing, both strategies were almost equally effective. It is possible that the shared process of drafting, revising, and editing in both groups played a more significant role in students' improvement than the type of prompt alone.

The result has affirmed the DepEd mission, stating that teachers should "provide quality work that is engaging, that results in students learning meaningful content, and challenges every student to learn more". The utilization of creative prompts encourages students to produce quality work and at the same time, engages them in the process, ensuring they are on track and developing their writing skills. Future research could explore whether combining both strategies or adapting them to different genres of writing might yield even stronger outcomes. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2: Writing Performance of both Groups before and after Exposure to Intervention

Writing Prompt	Test	Mean	Qualitative Description	*SD*
Semantic Mapping	Pretest	34.37	Low	6.23
	Posttest	76.93	High	6.24
Street Photography	Pretest	34.33	Low	6.35
	Posttest	76.43	High	5.21

Scale			*Description*
0	-	20	Very Low
20.01	-	40	Low
40.01	-	60	Average
60.01	-	80	High
80.01	-	100	Very High

The students' writing performance using Semantic Mapping as a writing prompt showed a significant improvement after six weeks of instruction, as evidenced by their increased mean scores from the pretest (M = 34.37) to the posttest (M = 76.93), shifting from a *low* to a *high* performance level. Likewise, students who were exposed to Street Photography as a writing prompt also demonstrated notable progress, with their mean scores improving from M = 34.33 in the pretest to M = 76.43 in the posttest. These findings highlight the effectiveness of both instructional strategies in enhancing students' academic writing skills.

In the study by the author in [45], cognitive development, educational experiences, and overall proficiency in the second language were observed to problematize students' writing. Similarly, according to the author in [63], students find difficulty in writing, especially in expressing arguments. While some scholars advocate for the reexamination of conventional writing norms, others argue for their retention. They emphasize the need for broader discourse on intertextuality and the evolving nature of academic writing.
 Supporting this, a study conducted by the author in [31] revealed that students come across difficulties in academic writing persistently. These difficulties were indicated by both the low writing performance scores, and were validated further by student interview data. Upon dissecting the data, it was revealed that there were two factors that contribute to these struggles. One is the use of traditional or monotonous instructional materials and

the second one is the lack of engaging classroom activities and strategies. As a solution, the author in [31] recommended the integration of more engaging and relevant content that combines both academic rigor and learner motivation.

The use of writing prompts has been found to encourage students to write effectively and articulate their ideas more confidently. Hence, it is imperative to provide effective strategies not only for teaching writing, but also for dostering positive attitudes towards the writing process. As highlighted by the author in [51], prompts must be carefully designed to allow students to demonstrate their true writing abilities accurately and meaningfully.

Both Semantic Mapping and Street Photography prompts are valuable pedagogical tools as stimuli for written instruction. Beyond the utilization of these prompts, however, it is imperative to acknowledge the role of the writing process itself that both groups underwent, particularly the drafting, revising and editing stages. This iterative process likely played a major role in the marked improvements observed from pretest to posttest. Nevertheless, the question of prompt difficulty remains unresolved. As noted by the author in [38], the distinction between what constitutes an "easy" or "difficult" prompt continues to challenge students, educators, and test developers alike.

3.2 Inferential Data Analysis

To confirm whether the differences in the data are statistically significant, inferential analyses are presented. Table 3 presents the difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the group exposed to semantic mapping. It is reflected in the table that the posttest score of the group exposed to semantic mapping (M=76.93) is higher by 42.57 than the pretest score (M=34.37). As shown in the result, the mean difference was found to be significant, t (58)=-26.45, p=.000. This means that there is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the students who are exposed to Semantic Mapping.

Table 3: Difference in the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Group Exposed to Semantic Mapping

	Semantic Mapping					
	M	*SD*	*Mean difference*	*df*	*t*	*P*
Pretest	34.37	6.23	-42.57	58	26.45	.000
Posttest	76.93	6.24				

Table 4 presents the difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the group exposed to Street Photography. It is reflected in the table that the posttest score of the group exposed to street photography (M=76.43) is higher by 42.10 than the pretest score (M=34.33). As shown in the result, the mean difference was found to be significant t(58)=-28.08, p=.000. This means that there is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the students who were exposed to street photography.

Table 4: Difference in the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Group Exposed to Street Photography

| | Street Photography | | | | | |
	M	*SD*	*Mean difference*	*df*	*t*	*P*
Pre–test	34.33	6.35	-42.10	58	28.08	.000
Posttest	76.43	5.21				

This section answered the hypothesis of whether or not significant differences existed between the group exposed to Semantic Mapping and the group exposed to Street Photography as writing prompts in teaching academic writing to senior high school students. The researcher used the t-test for independent means to determine the significant difference in the pretest and posttest treatment mean scores of the two classes, as well as the difference in their mean scores, and the t-test for related means for the pre-post treatment of each class.

To determine whether there was a significant difference in the pretest treatment of the two classes, the pretest scores were subjected to the test of significance at a .05 alpha level for independent samples.

Table 5 presents the difference in the pretest of the groups exposed to Street Photography and Semantic Mapping. It is reflected in the table that the pretest score of the group exposed to Street Photography (M=34.33) is lower by .03 than the pretest score of the group exposed to Semantic Mapping (M=34.37). As shown in the result, the mean difference was found to be not significant, t (58)=-02, p=.984. This means that there is no significant difference in the pretest score of the students who were exposed to Street Photography and Semantic Mapping. Suggestively, both groups have the same level of proficiency in academic writing before the intervention.

Table 5: Difference in the Pretest Scores of the Groups Exposed to Street Photography and Semantic Mapping

| | Street Photography and Semantic Mapping Pretest | | | | | |
	M	*SD*	*Mean difference*	*df*	*t*	*P*
Semantic Mapping	34.37	6.23	-.03	58	-.02	.984
Street Photography	34.33	6.35				

Table 6 presents the difference in the posttest score of the groups exposed to Street Photography and Semantic Mapping. It is reflected in the table that the posttest score of the group exposed to Street Photography (*M*=76.43) is lower by .50 than the posttest score of the group exposed to Semantic Mapping (*M*=76.93). As shown in the result, the mean difference was found not to be significant, *t* (58)=-.34, *p*=.737. This means that there is no significant difference in the posttest score of the students who were exposed to Street Photography and Semantic Mapping. This indicates that the two writing prompts had a comparable effect. The two groups increased in their posttest mean gain scores, showing the effectiveness of both prompts. Moreover, it appeared that the mean score performance of the group with Semantic Mapping as a writing prompt is significantly higher than that of the group with Street Photography as their writing prompt.

Table 6: Difference in the Posttest Scores of the Groups Exposed to Street Photography and Semantic Mapping

	Street Photography and Semantic Mapping Posttest Result					
	M	*SD*	*Mean difference*	*df*	*t*	*P*
Semantic Mapping	76.93	6.24	-.50	58	-.34	.737
Street Photography	76.43	5.21				

These findings align with the meta-analysis conducted by the author in [34], which examined a range of instructional practices aimed at improving writing skills among elementary students. The study concluded that strategies such as explicit strategy instruction, text structure teaching, and the process approach significantly enhanced writing quality. This reinforces the value of pedagogical approaches that not only teach essential writing skills but also actively engage students, fostering both appreciation and enjoyment of the writing process, factors that are crucial in developing effective writers across academic disciplines.

The author in [33] further emphasizes that teaching writing extends beyond the implementation of strategies; it necessitates an understanding of students' unique learning needs. Their application of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model illustrates how structured and responsive support systems can simultaneously cultivate writing proficiency and student confidence. This perspective highlights the need for thoughtful and adaptive instruction in the writing classroom.

During the implementation of the interventions in this study, each group was tasked with writing a position paper as their final performance output. Following the use of Semantic Mapping or Street Photography as pre-writing strategies, all students engaged in the core stages of the writing process: drafting, revising, and editing. Their scores across these stages were documented and analyzed to evaluate their progress. Additionally, this writing process allowed for the identification and diagnosis of specific writing difficulties, particularly in grammar, content development, and text organization.

As research has shown, students who are encouraged to engage in diverse and meaningful prewriting experiences tend to achieve higher writing outcomes than those who begin writing without such preparation [22]. Therefore, prewriting, plays a critical role in immersing learners in the writing task and guiding them to discover personally relevant insights about the subject. In this light, it becomes imperative to provide engaging and thoughtfully designed pre-writing activities that stimulate interest, generate ideas, and lay a strong foundation for more coherent and expressive writing.

3.3 . Findings

The descriptive statistics employed were the means and standard deviations. The t-test for independent samples and the t-test for related samples were the inferential tools used, and the alpha level was set at 0.5.

The findings of the present study were the following:

1. The performance of the pretest and posttest of the class taught using Semantic Mapping and the class using Street Photography as prompts for Position Paper writing are comparable. Both group A and group B attained low scores in the pretest and high scores in the posttest.
2. There is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the group exposed to semantic mapping.
3. There is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the group exposed to street photography.
4. Before intervention, there was no significant difference in the students' writing performance scores between the group taught using Semantic Mapping and the group taught using Street Photography.
5. Finally, after intervention, there was no significant difference in the students' writing performance scores between the group taught using Semantic Mapping and the group taught using Street Photography.

4. Conclusion

The comparable increase in the students' pretest and posttest scores from low to high reveals that both prompts may be effective in aiding the students in academic writing. Both writing prompts- Semantic Mapping and Street Photography indicate that they may be effective in teaching writing. Academic writing may be perceived by many students as less interesting. Some may not understand its purpose. Many students perceive writing as boring or do not understand its purpose. These writing prompts may become the solution to the major problem experienced by the students of "what to write," and the activity sheets were their answer to the query "how to write". One principle for teaching writing effectively is to give good bait to help and to give meaningful aids in learning for the students [66]. For students who do not view it as their favorite, these two prompts encouraged them to give writing a chance. During the conduct of the writing prompts, the students were enthusiastic since they had the freedom to choose their topic and to take photos or connect ideas.

One of the factors that contributes to students' lack of interest in writing is that they might commit grammatical errors. Utilizing these writing prompts helped refresh students' minds and put them at ease before the start of the writing process. Thus, the use of Semantic Mapping and Street Photography as prompts in teaching academic writing to senior high school students seems to enhance effective teaching in learning. According to the author in [8], strategies like using graphic organizers and mapping techniques support writing instruction by helping students visualize and organize ideas. These tools reduce cognitive load and lead to clearer, more coherent writing.

It is assumed that both writing prompts have the same level of influence on students, although the group exposed to the use of Semantic Mapping has a slightly higher mean. Therefore, Semantic Mapping as a prompt may provide additional strategy and innovation in the efficacy of teaching academic writing. These writing

prompts appear to be effective since the mean scores of both groups increased progressively during the writing process.

It is necessary to use writing prompts such as Semantic Mapping and Street Photography as a springboard to improve students' writing skills in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics. These approaches were seen as unique and interesting. Moreover, using authentic materials as prompts for writing brings students closer to their reality. This makes their learning more contextualized and maintains their interest in dealing with the topic that they are writing about. Visuals such as photographs and semantic webs are very important in gaining language knowledge; thus, the teachers and learners can use these media in the learning and teaching process. Having provided the stimulus, the students are frequently happy to take initiative, discuss, and write about the image among themselves.

It is important to stress that aside from the writing prompts, the students' writing process was one of the biggest factors that contributed to the increase of their mean scores in the posttest. Accordingly, it is believed that the writing process should be undergone by students to specifically address problems with students' content, grammar, punctuation, and organization in writing. Teachers need to allot time and effort to checking students' work, no matter how tedious, for this would make way for significant improvements in students' written outputs.

However, this contradicts the demands of the K to 12 curriculum, which stresses that a vast array of topics must be covered in a span of a short time. This dilemma is faced not only by English teachers teaching elementary and secondary schools but also by teachers teaching other subject areas. Because of this predicament, teachers tend to resort to mile-wide, inch-deep teaching, trying their best to catch up with the topics, sacrificing the actual skill or competency that students need to attain in a particular quarter.

A positive feedback mechanism is essential. Positive feedback through extensive checking of written outputs may provide significant improvements to students' writing performance. It seems that writing is the most neglected skill in secondary schools. That is why it must be given favorable attention by language teachers. Teachers ought not only to know about the use of effective strategies and procedures in teaching writing but also to be sensitive enough when dealing with individuals of different needs and capacities. Comments and remarks during the writing process boost students' confidence as they feel that their opinions are valued and their views are appreciated. Teachers need to be considerate, compassionate, and patient in dealing with students having difficulties in writing.

During the conduct of the study, it was observed that students' grade level does not immediately equate to his or her writing skill. This is mostly observable during the administration of the pretest to the respondents. If not unfinished, some, if not most, contain basic grammatical errors and an apparent lack of vocabulary skills. In most instances, especially in public schools, grade 11 students' proficiency level in writing is only comparable to that of a grade 7 or grade 8 student. This problem adds to the writing teachers' dilemma of having to check almost 50 papers while trying to facilitate and remediate those who are left behind. This could be the reason why the quality of teaching writing becomes poor. Helping a student become a skilled writer would take a lot of

time, hard work, reading, and practice. However, in the case of a public school in the Division of Iloilo, which, the researcher believes is true with other secondary schools as well, writing subjects in the senior high school may not effectively deliver, considering the number of students in a class, more teaching loads, paper works, limited time, as well as the type of writing task given to students for practice.

Upon checking the students' written outputs during the writing process, specific problems and patterns of errors were observed. These findings reflect the extent of students' competency in the said areas. These errors usually revolved around numerous errors in grammar, content, and organization, which the researcher believes stem from students' limited vocabulary. The limitations in their vocabulary may have been because of their lack of sufficient reading comprehension practice, which could make them acquire and familiarize themselves with vocabulary terms. Studies have shown that individuals with larger vocabularies are better equipped during the writing process to deal with the cognitive demands on the writer because they have stronger representations of words in memory [28,58], and [84]. When students have access to a wide range of words, they are more equipped to manage the demands of academic writing. Consequently, vocabulary knowledge is not only a reflection of language proficiency, but a major component in writing fluency and quality.

Also, competencies such as mastery of the basic rules of subject-verb agreement must have already been acquired by students in their junior high school. Topics in the senior high school English curriculum no longer include grammar lessons. However, the teacher has to insert grammar instruction into the lesson, going back to the basics, only to remind students of what they need to do. This could have stemmed from their earlier years in school, say, elementary, where they should already have mastered basic writing skills.

Additionally, it was realized that aside from effective and innovative writing prompts, the use of activity sheets in writing is very useful. Teachers may modify or create their own modules or activity sheets that would facilitate and suit the level of their students in writing. The lack of English books in the senior high school department in every public school is a huge obstacle for both students and teachers. Also, teachers must not always rely on the activities provided in textbooks, for they are not always at with same level as the students. This makes teaching the five macro skills even more difficult and costly at times. To facilitate this problem, at the same time address the needs of the learners, teachers opt to make their activity sheets, which would bring ease to the step-by-step process of writing for students, at the same time, spare the teacher from giving repeated instructions to students. Activity sheets in this study were proven to be very efficient and effective in facilitating students' progress during the writing process.

Active and frequent revision is a requisite for good academic writing, and the writing process takes time. There is no way around it. Even if students are extremely talented writers, they will need significant time for revision to do their best work and continue to improve. Teachers ought to give positive feedback to students so that they will perform well. Effective interventions and feedback result in better written outputs. Positive feedback leads to students relaxing and improving writing in what they feel is a safe environment to play with language" [4]. The students who were monitored extensively during the writing process were seen to have strived for their written outputs to become better. Monitoring students' progress is a responsibility that teachers must not take for granted.

Additionally, since the participants belong to the Humanities and Social Studies strand, the use of Digital Photography is relevant in their field of specialization. The use of Street Photography would enable them to be aware of the issues and concerns of their locality, stimulate their interest, generally encourages collaboration, serves as an authentic learning material, raises social awareness, strengthens their arguments and provides them a sense of ownership while serving as a springboard in the development of their academic writing skills. Moreover, Street Photography is inexpensive and is readily available to the students. Most importantly, the use of Street Photography in academic writing is integrative and contextualized, relevant and responsive, and ICT-based; therefore fits the goals of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum.

Though this study claims that the incorporation of Semantic Mapping and Street Photography as writing prompts was a useful pedagogic tool within academic writing instruction, the limitations of this study are also acknowledged. Specifically, aside from their proficiency levels in writing, students may have struggled to produce quality written outputs due to the disturbances in their physical environment. During the conduct of the classes, both groups were situated in the makeshift classrooms. These classrooms are made of steel foundations, with plywood as the only wall that serves as a divider. Noise coming from the nearby construction of a new building, together with noise coming from each neighboring classroom, lack of proper ventilation due to large numbers of students and building materials, and time constraints may have affected the performance of both groups.

The researcher ensures that both groups have experienced the learning condition. Their classrooms are adjacent to each other. Consequently, despite the slight non-conduciveness of the classrooms, students still managed to try their best during the conduct of the study, as the scores elevated from low to high.

Overall, the use of innovative, contextualized, and interesting writing prompts such as Semantic Mapping and Street Photography in academic writing or any form of writing can be an effective means of capturing the students' attention in writing and in keeping them interested in the topic that they are writing. These writing prompts respond to students' dilemma of "what to write" since these strategies focus on topic brainstorming and topic development. Moreover, Street Photography and Semantic Mapping prompts bring ease to the students' writing content development since they start with what they already know.

Additionally, the use of activity sheets and the mandatory undergoing of the writing process is the answer to students' problem of "how to write". Through these activity sheets, students organize their content and understand how a particular writing form is structured. Additionally, the writing process must not be overlooked. Tedious checking and consistent feedback during the writing process from the teacher would refine the content and correct the errors committed by students at every stage.

Finally, positive feedback and a friendly environment would also significantly contribute to the students' sense of achievement, no matter how small his or her accomplishments are in the writing process. By using writing prompts, following the writing process using appropriate, modified activity sheets, and creating a welcoming class environment, the students' writing skills would surely improve.

4.1. Implications

4.2 Implications for Theory

Writing is a difficult yet crucial literacy component. To elicit quality written outputs from students, pre-writing activities are necessary. According to the authors in [21], "One reason some students do not like to write is because they see it as a chore, as dreaded work, and as something to 'get done'; they do not perceive themselves as writers" (p. 322). Thus, to address this difficulty, this study finds it relevant to employ interesting and relevant pre-writing activities such as Semantic Mapping and Street Photography.

The author in [67] framed the three aims in teaching English writing for communicative purposes: a) The scope of writing should be widened to go beyond the artificial, unrealistic school-type composition of traditional teaching to more genuine, practical and relevant kinds of writing; b) Writing should be as communicative, or functional as possible; and c) It should go beyond merely reinforcing grammar and vocabulary lessons and deal quite specifically with those skills that are required for effective writing.

This study was anchored in Communicative Language Teaching. With the use of communicative strategies such as the employment of Street Photography and Semantic Mapping as writing prompts, students are engaged in real-life tasks that they do by themselves instead of the usual lecture method. This allows students to practice the functional aspect of language as used in writing. Moreover, the process of writing went beyond merely reinforcing grammar and vocabulary. The exchange of meaning and other skills required for effective writing were practiced while subtly correcting grammatical and vocabulary errors.

The findings of this study support the view of the efficacy of the prompts on the quality of writing, which has been held by some experts in the field. The authors in [70] believe that the discourse mode or the purpose of writing associated with the prompts affects scores on writing tests. The author in [15] claims that the degree of the rhetorical specification presented in the writing prompts can exert significant effects on the quality of the writer's performance.

If students are unaware of how writing relates to their own lives and how they can benefit from the knowledge of the written language, they might be less likely to learn. Teachers need to model a love for writing and embrace writing as a fun activity [21]. By allowing students to see the teacher engaged in their thoughts and opinions while writing, the process might become more real to them. In many instances, students put less value on writing. They force themselves to undergo it to be completed for a grade, due to some schools putting writing behind reading instruction. Therefore, engaging, motivating, and interesting pre-writing activities should be employed.

4.3 Implications for Practice

Starting class with a writing prompt helps students get ready to focus. They write, think, and sometimes talk about the prompt, which makes them more alert and interested when class begins. Also, writing prompts connect

with what students care about and what motivates them. Even if students don't see a reason to write at first, the teacher can help them find their reasons and interests for writing.

Students can effectively write when the instruction "considers what the students know, uses that to engage them in more complex procedures, provides support of various kinds, and allows them to become active learners"[43]. Thus, Semantic Mapping, which starts from the students' prior knowledge, and Street Photography, which gives them freedom to choose from issues of their locality, engage the students in learning and allow them to become active learners. In addition, connecting to students' prior knowledge is key to learning [75].

According to the author in [72], pictures can bring the outside world into the classroom. In other words, the student can imagine something on the outside and write it in a written form. Photographs can also encourage students to brainstorm words and ideas before they write in more detail. This means that from the photograph, the students will have the sense to think critically about the interpretation of the image and write about it.

Indeed, based on the need for educators to bring into the classroom the contextualized, localized, and ICT-based approaches with which learners are most familiar, this research argues that Semantic Mapping and Street Photography are two of the more effective methods of engaging today's generation of students. According to the author in [49], 'writing is itself a form of visual communication'; therefore, we suggest that film is a legitimate (and currently underused) supplementary pedagogical tool for the teaching of writing skills. Moreover, aside from unique and interesting writing prompts in teaching academic writing, extensive monitoring and feedback of students' written outputs should not be overlooked. Creating modules and activity sheets that would facilitate the students' writing practice at par with their proficiency levels is also necessary.

During the conduct of the study, it was observed that the students were too concerned about their spelling and asked the teacher several times to translate Hiligaynon words into English. Students' anxiety about committing grammatical errors or content mistakes is what contributes to their lack of interest in writing. Hence, the "lazy students". The author in [26] argues that people in general view their relationship to the process of writing as one of "helplessness".

The author in [74] notes that learning to write in either a first or a second language is one of the most difficult tasks students encounter and one that few people can be said to fully master. The author in [50] also observes that writing is a complex process that involves the mastery of multiple skills that contribute to the overall difficulty of writing for any language user. Thus, it is a challenging skill for both native and nonnative speakers to acquire. Often, students—no matter their writing level—have a fear of writing [26] or fear high-stakes memorization and testing that does not allow for creative assignments to be graded [39].

According to the author in [72], even adult native speakers find it difficult to write. The author in [30] explains that, "If we can help students rediscover words as a creative medium, a means to pleasure and a tool for original expression, they may come to see that writing is fun and that it matters" (p. 284). Thus, effective feedback and a welcoming classroom environment are necessary. The author in [59] suggested that to work effectively with

adult beginning readers, teachers will need a structured, explicit curriculum, without needing to reinvent the wheel. It was suggested they research the existing programs to find a way to provide this kind of instruction, such as looking for programs that are scientifically based.

Discoveries on students' struggles in writing during the conduct of the study, especially with word choice, sentence pattern, and redundancy, seem to stem from the students' limited vocabulary and basic grammar knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge has been linked to intelligence, academic success, and identified as one of the five essential components of reading [65]. Studies have shown that individuals with larger vocabularies are better equipped during the writing process to deal with the cognitive demands on the writer because they have stronger representations of words in memory [28].

The authors in [62] emphasize the significance of teachers' grammatical knowledge in effectively teaching writing, highlighting that pedagogical content knowledge in grammar is crucial for supporting students' writing development. Thus, the success of students in writing is significantly influenced by teachers' competence in the subject matter.

The study by the author in [32] at Sultan Qaboos University indicates that foundation program students consider the level of writing skills and learning outcomes challenging for them. The authors in [25] explain that creating context, references, and connections of messages is important in written language, and it requires grammar competencies, a greater amount of vocabulary, and the use of grammatical structure of written language. Those are the reasons why one has to have an adequate vocabulary and grammar mastery so that the distortion of the transferred ideas can be avoided.

The authors in [64] and [78] say that vocabulary choice is a sign that the writer has adopted the discourse of a certain community, and a good piece of writing depends on the writer's vocabulary choices. Thus, one will be able to produce a good piece of writing when he or she can use vocabulary appropriately. It means that one should recognize what words he or she is supposed to use in a certain context, which requires a great amount of vocabulary.

It is important to note that many ESL students view writing as difficult and become apprehensive when presented with a writing task, and thus, often refuse to spend time on writing [73]. The problems of writing difficulty can become more intense at the tertiary level, whereby students are expected to write with more maturity and sophistication to match their perceived level of intellect. The authors in [1] note that learning to master writing skills can help students to deal successfully with their academic demands and to perform effectively in their disciplines and professional contexts.

As language teachers, we can talk about what it means to write and write well, but in the end, we must rely on our students' ability to actively engage and use our writing assignments as the space in which they do writing. Overall, writing prompts that interest learners, together with positive feedback and reinforcement from the teacher, are proven as valuable tools in the teaching of writing.

Acknowledgment

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