



When Writing Gets Rough: Writing Assistance Towards the Transformation of Educational Landscape

Liriolyn B. Pacursa¹ & Analyn D. Almoite²

^{1,2}Quirino State University-Maddela Campus, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the skills that has been harmed throughout these tough times of pandemics since students have been unable to strengthen their writing skills. The purpose of this study was to see how well BTLED students could write the various elements of an argumentative essay in the (Pre-Test) and (Post-Test) phases. The pre-test and post-test essay scores of the 65 BTLED students were analyzed using a mixed-method technique. The students' degree of competence in writing the various elements of the argumentative essay in their pre-test was described as progressively competent, according to the findings. However, the students' post-test performance improved after they completed their virtual writing intervention. Furthermore, it was noted that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performance of the respondents. Students' competency in writing must be continuously monitored and evaluated in order to improve their skills in writing argumentative essays.

Corresponding Author: Analyn D. Almoite, PhD, Assistant Professor, Quirino State University-Maddela Campus, analynalmoite@yahoo.com



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1. Introduction

Due to the proliferation of COVID-19, millions of students and teachers have been required to switch their curricula and no longer provides face-to-face education. As a result, Flexible learning is one of the learning modes developed by the Department of Education and state universities and colleges to solve the problem. With the adaption of the new approach to teaching, facing the pitfalls of online learning may be discouraging and frustrating for both teachers and students (Ayithey et al., 2020). In connection to this, one of most important and significant goals of education which is to help and improve students on how to think and write critically through the five macro skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing has been affected. The disadvantages of Flexible learning may be disheartening and unpleasant for both teachers and students as they adapt to a new way to teaching. In relation to this, one of most essential and major purposes of education is to assist and enhance students' critical thinking and writing abilities through the five macro skills : listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. Among these skills writing is the most commonly used and vital tool, but it is also one of the most affected since students are unable to improve and grow their writing abilities at this moment owing to the learning style that is being employed.

Writing is a talent that is necessary in various situations throughout life, Bowker (2007) because it encompasses more than just syntactic abilities like punctuation and grammar. It's also a difficult intellectual task that necessitates critical thinking from students. One does not just exhibit his language ability and expertise in writing by using correct grammar. Writing not only demonstrates a writer's linguistic competency and expertise through correct grammar, punctuation, and other elements, but it also demonstrates the writer's intellectual flexibility, maturity, and personality. Jones (2011) backed up this concept, noting that pupils should be able to write well.

The ability to compose an argumentative essay is one sort of essay that may help students think critically and write critically. According to Hacker (1999), students may create powerful and sophisticated arguments in their heads that bring together compelling and unique ideas, but they are unable to articulate these arguments and ideas clearly, precisely, and effectively in their writing. This means that in developing the competence in writing an argumentative essay, students can constitute the formation of their thoughts for practical purposes. In so doing, it can improve the practice of self-consciousness, self-reliance, and even the speed of learners in writing.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 Pandemic's stricter constraints have put students in a vulnerable position, forcing them to struggle to conceive and articulate their ideas, even in a brief paragraph. As a result, the researchers devised an intervention strategy to address the issue of students' lack of skills in writing argumentative essays. The findings of this study would primarily help students, but they could also serve as baseline data for training that may be extended to both students and language instructors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Studies on Argumentative essay

A principled search for research-based instructional approaches that may support adolescent English language learners (ELL) from diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds in the attainment of academic English language proficiency and advanced literacy practices motivated this current investigation. A growing body of research suggests that genre pedagogy may offer a promising pathway to advanced literacy development for diverse learners (Christie, 2012; Rose & Martin, 2012).

Learning to successfully write academic genres that are valued in schools represent a specific difficulty for adolescent English Language Learners (Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). Yet academically valued writing is an essential language and literacy skill that must be attained in order for adolescent ELLs to gain access to post-secondary educational and career opportunities (Colombi & Schleppegrell, 2002).

Argumentative essays present knowledge in a special format unlike narrative and expository essays. In these essays, knowledge is structured through high-level thinking skills which include choosing one option among different options, comparing benefits and drawbacks of the options, presenting the most effective option based on justifications. Since argument can be maintained within different points of view, not only the supported view but also alternative views are presented and refuted and essay is completed which emphasizes the point of view at the beginning. Toulmin's Argument Model (1958) is often used for teaching (Tengberg & Olin-Scheller, 2016; Qin, 2013) and analyzing (Du, 2017; Lam, Hew & Chiu, 2018; Midgette & Haria, 2016) this structure. According to this model, argumentative essays are composed of six elements. Data, claim and warrant are main elements among these. Backing, qualifiers and rebuttal are supportive elements (Toulmin, Reike & Janik, 1984). In Toulmin's model, data are the main facts on which subject of argument is based. Claim is expression, idea or opinion which represents the point of view adopted. The data in argument are supposed to ease understanding of claim. Warrant is the connection through expressions between claim and data. Backings are general conditions supporting acceptability and authority of warrant. Qualifiers present the conditions in which claim is valid. Words such as 'for example, usually, often, absolutely, probably, rarely' state strength of probability of reality. Rebuttals are expressions defining conditions and situations in which claim and warrant are invalid (Toulmin, 1958). A student's creating an argument step by step is possible by means of teaching of argument elements. The first step in writing argument is to present data. Foreknowledge's which will help readers make sense of the argument are presented in this section. These knowledges include facts which both sides accept without discussion. In data section, necessary knowledge, in other words problem, is explained so that the argument can be understood better by readers. Thus, author provides a basis for his claim. At the second step, the view author supports, claim, is presented. Claim is also the main idea of the essay. "The claim holds the top position of an argument schema because all other elements of the argument are presented to either support or oppose this main proposition" (Larson, Britt & Larson, 2004, 2006). The third step is to offer justifications for claim backing. Because the author's aim is to persuade, the claim is supported through explanations or proves which reinforce the claim (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007). The fourth step is to submit counter-claim. Submitting counter-claim is important in that essay is more persuasive (Nussbaum & Schraw, 2007). While submitting counter-claim, the reason why supported view can be opposed, in other words justification for counter-claim is revealed, too. If counter-claim is acceptable under certain conditions, author can state partial acceptance conditions. Then, why counter-claim and backings of counter-claim are wrong, in other words refuting justification, is submitted and counter-claim is invalidated. Refuting counterclaim is important in terms of approaching readers to the view author supports. By this way, possible objections against the claim in readers' mind are removed. The last step is to complete the essay with a conclusion in accordance with the claim.

Furthermore, critical thinking and argumentative writing resemble each other in terms of many ways. According to Willingham (2007) "Critical thinking consists of seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems and so forth". Jamaludin, Caroline and Sun (2007) states that argument can be employed as a mean to teach critical thinking. Çakmak and Civelek (2013) revealed that education of argumentative writing influences students' critical thinking skills in a positive way. Tiryaki (2011) found out a statistically reasonable and positive relation between students' critical thinking skills and writing argumentative text skills. These results show that the argumentative texts develop critical thinking, and it is necessary to think critically on writing this kind of texts as well.

2.2 Studies on Flexible Learning

According to Shurville et al. (2008) "Flexible Learning is a set of educational philosophies and systems, concerned with RESEARCH PAPERS i-manager's Journal on School Educational Technology, Vol. 9|No. 11 June - August 2013 37, providing learners with increased choice, convenience, and personalisation to suit the learner. In particular, flexible learning provides learners with choices about where, when, and how learning occurs". Flexible learning approaches are often designed using a full range of teaching and learning theories, philosophies and methods to provide students with opportunities to access information and expertise, contribute ideas and opinions, and correspond with other learners and mentors. This may occur through the use of internet-based tools such as Virtual Learning Environments or Learning Management Systems, discussion boards or chat rooms; and may be designed as a "blended" approach, with content available electronically and remotely, as well as "face-to-face" classroom tutorials and lectures.

Therefore, students should equip themselves with profound knowledge of technology in order to develop their interest and make their learning easy and effective. Flexible learning molds the learners to plan their activities according to their interest and enthusiasm. It also keeps their mind in pleasant situation and out of external fear.

Furthermore, since Flexible learning was the mode of instruction now a days the instructional relationship between the teacher and the students becomes quite different. The role of the teacher becomes more complex as it involves the management of the learning environment, providing instruction and scaffolding learning activities, monitoring feedback and progress of the learner, and assessing learners' performance. Students, on the other hand, play (Mapuva, 2010) active part and assume more responsibility for their own learning. They seek information and construct knowledge on their own based on their previous experience and interact actively with their peers, teachers and learning materials to enhance their learning process. The technology used plays the role of an enabler, providing sufficient resources to ensure successful establishment of the learning environment (Siemens, 2005; Mapuva, 2010). Thus, technology plays a big role in this study.

This research is noteworthy because it was conducted while Flexible Learning Approach was implemented. Also, it examines whether there is a relationship between students' ability to write an argumentative essay and their demographic profile. Also, it evaluates if there is a substantial difference between the respondents' Pre-Test and Post-Test essay results. Furthermore, it can serve as a baseline data for any enhancement activities that could be designed for incoming Freshmen college students, particularly in developing the students' competencies in writing argumentative; thus, it would serve as an eye opener for language instructors in the area to heighten the desire to improve pedagogical skills as well as content mastery in writing argumentative; thus, it would serve as a realization for language instructors in the locale to heighten the desire to improve pedagogical skills as well as content mastery in writing argumentative.

In addition, it can serve as a baseline data for any enhancement activities that could be crafted for incoming Freshmen college students, especially in developing the students' competencies in writing argumentative; Hence, it would serve as an eye opener for language instructors in the locale to heighten the desire to improve pedagogical skills as well as content mastery in writing argumentative essays – so that they too, could develop or hone the Freshmen college students competencies in writing argumentative essays.

The Freshmen students in the locale of the study was subjected to an argumentative essay test to determine their competence in writing. They were graded based on the Gustilo's Argumentative rubrics. The essay-topic that was given was a reflective of Philippine contexts. The scoring was done by two instructors acting as inter-raters. The highest score is 4 while the lowest is 1. These scores were added and using the mean percent scaling (Not competent 1.00-1.74; Progressively Competent 1.75-2.49; Competent 2.50-3.24; Highly Competent 3.25-4.00) their competence levels were determined. Thus, in order to know their demographic profile, google form was floated through online. Furthermore, 6-week intervention period was given to those students who have access on internet connection. Meanwhile, after finishing the intervention activity, students were subjected again for Post-Test in writing an Argumentative Essay.

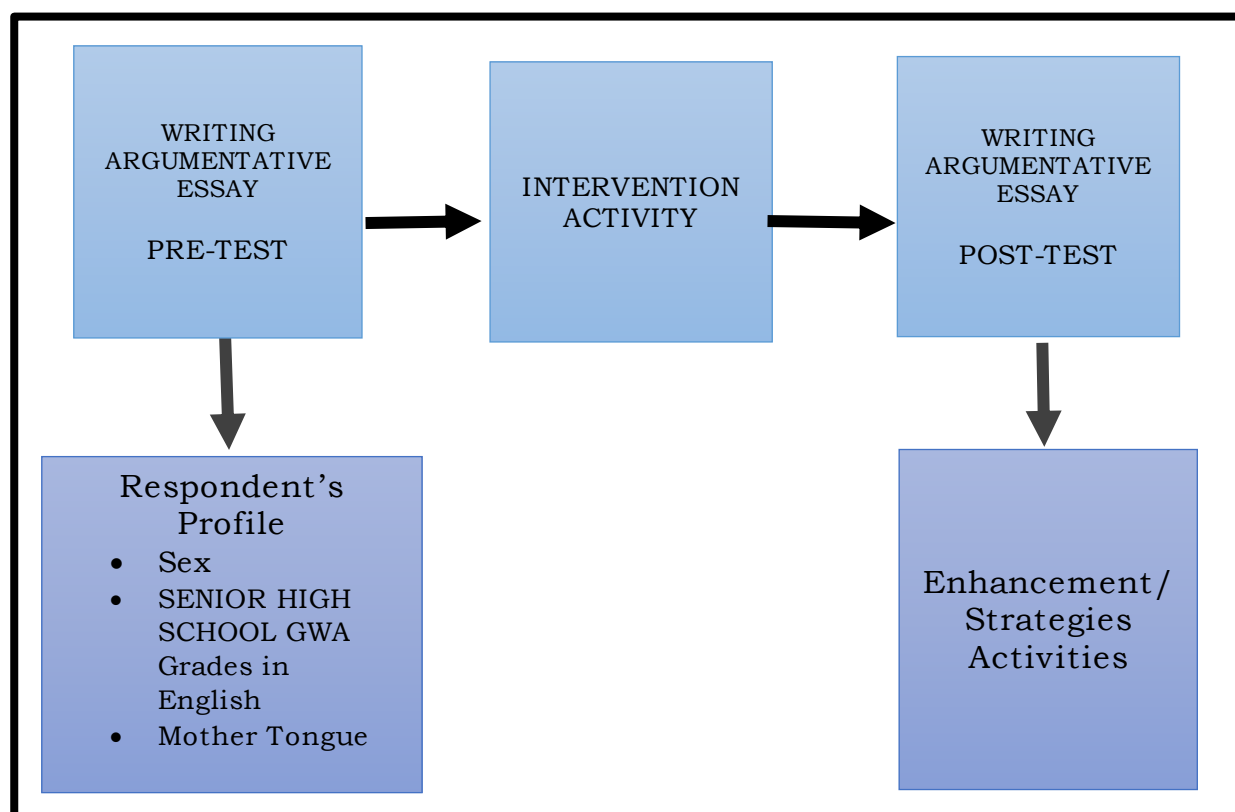


Figure 1. Shows the conceptual Framework

The outcomes of the argumentative (PRE-TEST) essay test were compared to their Demographic Profile to see whether there was any correlation. It also evaluates if there is a substantial difference between the respondents' pre-test and post-test performance. The purpose of this study is to suggest improvement activities to help students improve their ability to write argumentative essays.

Further, the following were the objectives of the study:

- 1) To identify the respondent's profile.
- 2) To determine the level of competence of the respondents in their pre-test and
- 3) Post-Test in writing the different parts of argumentative essay in terms of claim, reasons, evidence, warrants, anticipated objections or rebuttals and drawing conclusion;
- 4) To determine the significant relationship between the demographic profile in terms of their grade in English and sex, in their level of writing competence in argumentative essay;
- 5) To assess whether there is a significant difference in the respondents' pre-test and post-test performances;
- 6) To recommend an enhancement activity to improve the writing skills of the students in the writing discipline.

Hypotheses of the Study:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between the demographic profile in terms of their grade in English and sex, in their level of writing competence in argumentative essay.
- 2) There is no significant difference in their pre-test and post-test performance of the respondents.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study aimed to examine the impact of the writing assistance provided for the students who have internet connectivity. Mixed-method design was used to determine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performance of the respondents. To test the relative effectiveness of the intervention activity made, choosing the most suitable design for this study was the primary step.

This design is a blueprint of the procedure that enables the researchers to test the hypotheses by reaching valid conclusions about the differences between independent and dependent variables. One of the method design used in the study is the quasi experimental design aim to evaluate interventions but do not use randomization, and it demonstrate causality between an intervention and an outcome even without any control group (Cook and Campbell, 1979). Meanwhile, the descriptive-correlational design was also used to gather information on the relationship of the significant relationship between the demographic profile in terms of their Grade in English and Sex, in their level of writing competence in argumentative essay. As a result, the most practical design for this study being considered is the mixed method where two research design were utilized.

3.2 Population and Sample

This study aimed to investigate the relative effectiveness of the Intervention Activity used in the study to improve the writing competence in Argumentative Essay of the Freshmen Students who are enrolled in the Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLED) in Purposive Communication (GE 5) subject. Therefore, students studying Purposive Communication who have an access on internet connection constituted the population of the study. Representative students comprised of 65 students who were taken to undergo for an intervention activity.

3.3. Research Instruments

Writing Proficiency Diagnostic Essay (Argumentative). The students' writing ability were tested by asking them to write an argumentative essay regarding some prevailing issues in the Philippines, given a minimum of 300 words and maximum of 400 words. Using Gustillos' (2013) six-point essay scoring guide, the essays were rated by two raters (the researcher and other instructor) who have licensed in teaching, master's holders and have units in Doctorate Degree. The scoring guide followed a rubric (domain) which were used to rate the different parts of argumentative essay, namely claim, reasons and evidence, warrants, anticipated objections/rebuttals, and drawing conclusions.

During the experiment, the three units were taught to both groups and were intended to measure the learning outcomes. The experiment lasted for six weeks.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of Test

In order to have an accurate and valid data the researchers asked a copy of grades particularly on the GWA on the English subject of the respondents during their Senior High School year from the Campus Guidance Counsellor. In addition, all activities taken in their intervention activities were recorded and all essays were checked from cover to cover to see the improvement of the students. Furthermore, the essays were subjected in an online plagiarism checker to ensure the originality of their submitted essay.

3.5 Analysis of Data

Raw scores obtained from pre-test and post-test were presented in tabular form for interpretation. The means, standard deviations, and differences of means were computed for each group for manipulating data. The significance of the difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups on the variable of pre-test scores and post-test scores, respectively, was tested at 0.05 level by applying independent samples t-test. Meanwhile, in analyzing the categorical variables such as, mother tongue, and one ratio (their GWA in their English Subject), Spearman's rho was used.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 below presents the frequency and percent distribution of the respondents. It can be gleaned from the table that out of the 65 respondents, 48 or 76% are female and 17 or 24 % are male. Meanwhile, their GWA in their English subject during Senior High School were presented using the university's grading system norms, which show that the majority of the respondents had an Academic Grade in English subject of 83-85, which has a frequency of 22 or 33.8 percent, followed by 80-82, which has a frequency of 17 or 26.2 percent, 14 or 21.5 percent of the respondents had a GWA of 77-79, 4 or 6.2 percent of the students had a GWA of 92. As a result, the remaining respondents had a GWA of 3 or 4.6 percent on their preceding English topic during their Senior High School.

In addition, majority of the respondents are using Ilokano as their mother tongue with a frequency of 40 or 61.5%, 14 or 21.5 % of the respondents are using Ifugao as their mother tongue meanwhile 6 or 9.2 % are using Igorot as their mother tongue, lastly 5 or 7.7 % are using Ilongot as their mother tongue.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percent Distribution of the Respondents*

Profile	Specifics	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	17	24.0
	Female	48	76.0
	Total	65	100
GWA Grades in ENGLISH Subject	92-94	4	6.2
	89-91	2	3.1
	86-88	3	4.6
	83-85	22	33.8
	80-82	17	26.2
	77-79	14	21.5
	75-76	3	4.6
	Total	65	100.0
Mother Tongue	ilokano	40	61.5
	ifugao	14	21.5
	ilongot	5	7.7
	igorot	6	9.2
	Total	65	100

Table 2. shows the results of the students' level of competence in writing the different parts of argumentative essay with focus on the following domain-rubrics namely: claim, reason and evidence, warrant, anticipated objection and drawing conclusion. The scores were total scores gathered from the argumentative essay written by the respondents rated by two teacher acted as inter-raters. It was evident from the computed mean percentages that the students' levels in all domain-rubrics were 2.49 as shown: claim (2.18); reason and evidence (2.20); warrant (1.94); anticipated objection (2.17); and drawing conclusions (2.18). The computed overall mean percent was 2.13 which is described as at Progressively Competent. It was also apparent that all the students most of the students were at the Progressively Competent in terms of writing argumentative essays. The results indicated that the students were found to be lacking skills in writing argumentative essays. Much had to be done to improve their skills and that development activities in the various subjects, especially in the English courses be done to hone the students' argumentative skills in writing.

Table 2. *Level of Competence in Writing Argumentative (PRE-TEST)*

	Claim	Reasons & Evidence	Warrant	Anticipated Objection	Drawing Conclusions	Overall	QD
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Mean	2.18	2.20	1.94	2.17	2.18	2.13	Progressively Competent
QD	Prog. Competent	Prog. Competent	Prog. Competent	Prog. Competent	Prog. Competent	Prog. Competent	

Note: Two raters Not competent 1.00-1.74; Progressively Competent 1.75-2.49; Competent 2.50-3.24; Highly Competent 3.25-4.00

Sample verbatim extracts from the students' essay are presented to support the writing competence of students, focusing on the different parts of argumentative essay.

In Extract A, student 1 wrote the following about the impact of Blended Learning Approach to the College Students

Extract A

Blended learning is the strategy that the CHED implemented in region 2. To me as a student I don't know if it is a good strategy in learning, but I think it is not good because I cannot answer my activity since it is hard to answer because I am the only one to answer it and no one will guide me, even if sometimes I am asking the help of friends they cannot help me because they too has difficulty in answering and we both don't know the answer of it. But we just messaged our instructors and they are giving examples.

Same experience from my classmates because they too cannot really answer their activity alone because it is really hard to answer it in your own. But sometimes it is also good because I can have time to work and the like. In fact, blended learning strategy cannot really help us in developing our skills because we have difficulty in learning today because we cannot understand all the lesson we just search on the internet. But there are also some good effect of this because we can answer our activity in the time that we want and we can also work in the morning and do our activity at night if we do not have online class that day.

We students may not really like the blended learning, but we do not have a choice because to avoid the large number of covid positive. We are all praying that this covid will just end.

On the whole, the inter-raters agreed that the student was not in favor of the implementation of Blended Learning Approach in the learning pedagogy. In terms of claim, the claims were well written but may use more information. Meanwhile a score of 2 meant that the claim was not quite clear and further needs improvement in the line *"I think it is not good because I cannot answer my activity since it is hard to answer because I am the only one to answer it and no one will guide me"* it is not clear enough by adding supporting details or data to support the claim like giving exact information on her based on her experiences. This is an example of a sweeping claim as no data were used to strengthen the claim. Overall, the mean score is 2.18, which means that the quality of the claims was at the progressively competent.

In terms of reason and evidence, the sample essay showed one or two reasons with weak or missing arguments such as in the line, *"In fact, blended learning strategy cannot really help us in developing our skills because we have difficulty in learning today because we cannot understand all the lesson we just search on the internet."*

In terms of warrant, which refers to rules or principles that explain how the data can be viewed as supporting the claim, this essay has a warrant that is clearly identifiable, but still could use more explication like in the line, *"Same experience from my classmates because they too cannot really answer their activity alone because it is really hard to answer it in your own."* This line was not able connect the claim to the ground or it was not readily identifiable because of the absence of information or data.

In terms of anticipated objections or rebuttals, they were present in the essay but they needed further developing. This was seen in the statement *"But there are also some good effect of this because we can answer our activity in the time that we want and we can also work in the morning and do our activity at night if we do not have online class that day."* Several rebuttals can be made on this statement like establishing connection between the positive side of it.

In terms of drawing conclusion, the final statement to the reader was either unclear or weak such as in the line, *"We students may not really like the blended learning but we do not have a choice because to avoid the large number of covid positive. We are all praying that this covid will just end."*

These ratings, which were based on the prepared rubric, given by the inter-raters were common to all the student-respondents in writing their argumentative essays on the topic. This explained the reason for getting a mean of 2.13%, described as progressively competent.

Kaur (2014) explained this through his own documented research. Accordingly, the most consistent problems were the students' inability to produce a clear thesis statement, because of their lack of familiarity with this genre. He found that students faced the problem of insufficient knowledge of argumentative features. Moreover, their students encountered difficulties in putting together organized ideas and producing solid evidence necessary to write a well-organized essay. This was also affirmed by Hirvela (2017) in his study on argumentation and second language writing. He argued that the capacity to write effective argumentative essays is an important marker of writing ability, as argumentation is at the heart of writing assessment. In other words, writing an argumentative essay requires fluency in using the target language and accuracy in giving their ideas including the organization of their contents.

Table 3. Level of Competence in Writing Argumentative Essay (POST-TEST)

	Claim	Reasons & Evidence	Warrant	Anticipated Objection	Drawing Conclusions	Overall	QD
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Mean	3.00	3.28	1.86	2.82	3.02	2.79	Competent
QD	Competent	Competent	Progressively Competent	Competent	Competent	Competent	

Note: Two raters Not competent 1.00-1.74; Progressively Competent 1.75-2.49; Competent 2.50-3.24; Highly Competent 3.25-4.00

Table 3. shows the results of the students' level of competence in writing the different parts of argumentative essay with focus on reason and evidence, warrant, anticipated objection and drawing conclusion upon

employing the intervention activity in writing an Argumentative Essay. The scores were total scores gathered from the (Post-Test) argumentative essay written by the respondents rated by two teacher acted as inter-raters. It was evident from the computed mean percentages that the students' levels in all domain-rubrics were 2.79 as shown: claim (3.00); reason and evidence (3.28); warrant (1.86); anticipated objection (2.82); and drawing conclusions (3.02). The computed overall mean percent was 2.79 which is described as at Competent level. It was also apparent that all the students most of the students were at the Competent in terms of writing argumentative essays. The results indicated that the students were found to enhance their writing skills upon engaging on the intervention activity in writing an argumentative essay. Much had to be done to enhance and enrich their developed skills in expressing their thoughts and ideas in writing.

Sample verbatim extracts from the students' essay are presented to support the writing competence of students, focusing on the different parts of argumentative essay.

In Extract A, (same student) wrote the implementation of Blended Learning Approach in State Universities and College

The Implementation of blended learning to State University's has a negative effect because there are a lot students who are suffering to adjust or how they can adapt this new normal way of studying which is very hard because they can't cope up easily to their studies. Some of the students experiencing difficulties and they are not in capable to achieve their dreams because of this pandemic. Some of them decided to stop studying and ruined their future. Many students have been expecting this blended learning to be implemented but I strongly believe that we can learn more if they will bring back the implementation of Face-to-face class, problems like these are very evident in the situations of students like me who are enrolled in a state university.

But upon finishing the intervention activity provided by our instructor I came to an idea that blended learning has also a positive effect since it combines online learning with traditional instructions to guide students along a set learning path. In other words, it means using an online tool that gives students some extra control over their learning in their classes. The goal is to create more engaging, effective, and customizable experience for each student. Blended learning is an easy and effective way for teachers to break down the standard factory, based approach to education, and teach to every student learning style.

In addition, blended learning approaches allow using electronic capabilities whether computer-based or internet-based, in lecturing and training sessions typically undertaken in virtual classrooms enabled with information technology and capabilities (Orhan, 2008; Shehab, 2007). The review of the previous definitions of blended learning clearly shows that blended learning combines key elements of both traditional learning such as teacher-students interaction in classrooms with the key feature of online learning as represented by the use of modern technology like computer, internet, chatting and emails to improve the learning teaching process. Gulbahar and Madran (2009) agreed with the literature that there are four major areas including numerous factors that should be taken into account when developing a blended learning environment, including technology, teachers, students, and pedagogy. As in traditional teaching, blended learning requires structuring content so that to be decessible to achieve effective learning by assosciating new knowledge with the previous one (Altun, Gulbahar, and Madran 2008; Zubi and Bary, 2012).

The idea of blended learning is that some of the students can benefit from doing part of their learning in a digital environment and part of it face to face. The benefits of blended learning to students specially for those tertiary students like me include the facts that may students can learn best independently on their own time frame, and via interface with digital technology. In many ways, blended learning combines the best of both worlds.

In terms of **claim**, this essay got a score of 3-3. The teacher inter-raters claimed that the position or thesis argued was readily distinguishable, but for improvement, the writer could still use some clarifying idea. For example the line: *"The Implementation of blended learning to State University's has a negative effect because there are a lot students who are suffering to adjust or how they can adapt this new normal way of studying which is very hard because they can't cope up easily to their studies."* This was actually factual and there is also truth that such is experienced in the community, among neighbors, friends and at home. Hence, the total mean of 3.0 which can put the student at the competent level.

In terms of **reason and evidence**, this essay got the scores 3-3. The inter-raters believed that the essay had three or more justifications that were stated with good support. In the line: *"Some of the students experiencing difficulties and they are not in capable to achieve their dreams because of this pandemic. Some of them decided to stop studying and ruined their future. Many students have been expecting this blended learning to be implemented but I strongly believe that we can learn more if they will bring back the implementation of Face-to-face class, problems like these are very evident in the situations of students like*

me who are enrolled in a state university.” The reasoning was realistic and had factual basis in the Philippines. This was a strong reason or evidence in that lot of students would talk about these factors the reasons why students do not like the Blended learning to be implemented. Hence, the total mean of 3.28 put the student at the competent level.

In terms of **warrant**, this essay got the scores of 2.3. The inter-raters believed that the essay was well-written compared to his/her previous essay, that the warrant was easily identifiable, and that it connected to the claim and ground of the argument efficiently. Hence, the total mean of 1.86 placed the student at still on the progressively competent.

In terms of **anticipated objections or rebuttals**, this essay got 3-3 scores from the teachers. They believed that the rebuttals were well written but could still use some clarifying. The following statement is presented as example: *“But upon finishing the intervention activity provided by our instructor I came to an idea that blended learning has also a positive effect since it combines online learning with traditional instructions to guide students along a set learning path. In other words, it means using an online tool that gives students some extra control over their learning in their classes. The goal is to create more engaging, effective, and customizable experience for each student. Blended learning is an easy and effective way for teachers to break down the standard factory, based approach to education, and teach to every student learning style.”* On the whole though, the essay was meaningfully crafted, hence the total score of 6 or 75%, which was at the developing stage. This was the domain where the teachers believed that the student could improve.

In terms of **drawing conclusion**, the following essay got the same scores of 4-4. The inter-raters believed that the essay contained statements that were effective and convincing to the readers. The concluding lines were a testament to this: *“The idea of blended learning is that some of the students can benefit from doing part of their learning in a digital environment and part of it face to face. The benefits of blended learning to students specially for those tertiary students like me include the facts that may students can learn best independently on their own time frame, and via interface with digital technology. In many ways, blended learning combines the best of both worlds.”*

This was a very powerful conclusion. The messages on claim and then on reason and warrant were carried over in this conclusion. Overall, the two teacher inter-raters put the student at the competent level since the claim, reason and evidence, and conclusion were quite clear, easily identifiable, and strong.

This might have something to do with the implementation of the intervention activity on writing an Argumentative Essay which is instructional designed to enhance writing competencies of the students. It was designed to attain the three major goals, as follows: to help students develop the knowledge and skills needed to manage the writing skills involved in the writing processes in writing the parts of the Argumentative Essay (i.e claim, reasons and evidence, warrant, objectives and conclusion. Furthermore, this intervention activity helps the students to monitor and manage their own writing and finally to help students develop positive attitudes and beliefs about themselves as writers. In fact, when students perceive themselves as self-efficacious in writing, they are likely to exhibit good writing quality and invest effort while carrying out a writing task.

And this idea was supported by the meta-analysis by Graham et al. (2012) analyzed the impact of an intervention activity on students’ writing and found that it can really improve the overall writing quality of typical developing writers and, in most cases, of struggling writers. Based on the extant evidence which supports the role of stories to promote intervention activities.

Table 4. *Significant Relationship Between the Demographic Profile in Terms of Their Grade in English and Sex, in Their Level of Writing Competence in Argumentative Essay*

Demographic Profile	Claim	Reasons and Evidences	Warrants	Anticipated Objection	Conclusion
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sex	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003
Mother Tongue	.000	.000	.000	.002	.004
Academic Grade in English	.000	.000	.000	.004	.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Table 4 shows the relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the students writing competence in their Argumentative Essay (Pre-Test) in the different parts of Argumentative Essay. In terms of claim, reasons and evidence, warrants, anticipated objections and Conclusion ; sex mother tongue and their academic grade in English is significant at 0.05 level, with a p-value of 0.000-0.004. As a result, the null hypothesis,“ there is no significant relationship was rejected and which suggest significance.

This implies that student’s writing competence in argumentative essay related to their Demographic Profile. This is similar on the study of Gurus (2015) that there are students who have difficulty in writing an essay using the target language because they are more acquainted with the language.

Table 5. *Significant Difference Between the Pre-Test and Post-Test Performance of the Respondents*

		Paired Differences	t	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Mean		
Pair 1	Claim-Post claim	-.81538	-11.268	.000
Pair 2	Reason and evidence-Post reason and evidences	-1.07692	-8.922	.000
Pair 3	Warrants-Post warrant	.07692	.546	.587
Pair 4	Anticipated Objections-Post Anticipated Objections	-.64615	-7.058	.000
Pair 5	Drawing conclusions-Post drawing conclusion	-.83077	-17.725	.000

Table 5. shows that the difference between mean scores of the respondents Argumentative Essay pre-test and post-test was significant at 0.05 level, with a p-value of 0.000. As a result, the null hypothesis,“ there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the respondents in terms of writing claim, reasons and evidence, warrants, and drawing conclusion of argumentative Essay in their pre-test and post-test,” meanwhile on the part of warrants null-hypothesis was accepted with a p-value of (.587). The post-test result of the respondents was better than their pre-test results which supports the idea that the intervention activity made in the study is productive and effective. These results support the concept of Castillo A. (2013) that the Intervention Activity builds interest among learners, and they demonstrated significantly higher achievements than having no intervention activity at all.

Adams (2015) investigated that conducting an intervention activity helped motivate the students, benefiting the students most especially during this time that we are in a new educational landscape. Overall, it appears that after conducting an intervention activity the respondents perform significantly better compared than their first try in conceptualizing an Argumentative Essay. This highlights the idea that even in times of pandemic teachers can provide alternative ways to enrich our student’s competence most especially on improving their macro skills. Let’s all encouraged positive changes in the new normal. The study's positive results can be examined further by conducting this research using experimental design, having a control group and prolonging the implementation of the Intervention activity.

This research was deficient in respect of content covered and the time used. The quality could be enhanced if more materials were present. Nevertheless, the results of the study are enough for the generalization of the said study.

5. Conclusions and Future Works

The students' level of competence in writing the different elements of the argumentative essay in their (Pre-Test) was classified as progressively competent based on the findings that were shown. Meanwhile, their ability to write an argumentative essay improves after participating in the intervention activity. In addition, the level of competence of the respondents is significantly related to their demographic profile which include sex, mother tongue, and academic grades in English. Thus, it was concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performance of the respondents. It can be subsumed the respondents have inadequate knowledge and competence in writing the different parts of argumentative essay but upon attending and finishing the intervention activity provided the respondents writing competence had a positive impact.

In order to enhance the students’ competence in writing an essay, there must be a sustained monitoring and evaluation of students’ competence in writing especially on the genre of argumentative essay. This should be considered by teachers and a variety of teaching pedagogues to support students’ writing competence. Also, school administrators should also monitor and augment the competence of their language teachers by

providing them relevant trainings and capacitation activities. In addition, useful and relevant instructional materials also help in motivating students to develop their writing skills. Moreover, there is a need to develop the writing skills of students in the different disciplines by exposing them to a variety of texts and practical writing tasks to enhance their critical thinking skills. Likewise, same activities as mentioned above can be done to enhance the students' writing skills. Lastly, further studies may help contribute to the literature on academic writing. For this reason, exploration of other techniques or methods may be done in future studies. Thus, other variables are worth investigating to strengthen the claim that students' writing competence may be affected by internal and external factors.

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