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Task-Based Approach in the Development of Supplementary Instructional Materials for Enhanced Writing Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to develop task-based supplementary instructional materials for Grade 7 writing and composition. A developmental method of research was utilized to draw pertinent data needed to develop instructional materials for writing. A survey questionnaire was constructed to determine the students' need for materials. The data-gathering procedure involved 210 Grade 7 learners and 10 English teachers. The development of materials followed Jolly and Bolitho's material development framework, which involves six steps: (1) identifying the needs for the materials, (2) exploration of the results, (3) contextual realization of the materials, (4) pedagogical realization of the materials, (5) production of the materials, and (6) evaluation of the materials. The contents of the materials were based on the results of the needs analysis. The results suggest that composing anecdotes, capsule biographies, travelogues, and biographical sketches must be given focus in the proposed materials. Through careful contextual and pedagogical considerations, an instructional package was produced which includes the following: (1) More Ways to Write Printed Worktext, (2) More Ways to Write Interactive Online Worktext, (3) Teacher's Guide, (4) Reproducible Worksheets, and (5) Skill Building Video Materials. The materials were evaluated and given an overall rating of 4.99 which is interpreted as "highly acceptable." Comments on the materials' salient features in terms of (1) balance in blending conventional knowledge, innovations, and technology, (2) potent and engaging activities, and (3) commendable physical and visual features and cognitive load suggest that the materials are highly commendable and ready for use.

KEYWORDS – task-based approach, materials development, writing proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Writing, particularly at the secondary level, can be daunting; it involves acquiring and developing competence in other skills, making it more difficult. English as Second Language (ESL) learners are not only expected to produce written texts; they also need to make conscious efforts to organize ideas and observe grammatical structures, correct spelling, and proper punctuation. ESL learners are also expected to produce a logical, coherent, and creative output. This implies that writing has intricacies with various component skills, and if students lack mastery thereof, it may lead to unsatisfactory performance. Jose (2020) provided support in his study, which revealed that the respondents' written English language skill is seriously lacking. According to the overall findings, the majority of respondents are at risk for learning problems or failure as a result of what is known as Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

The researcher discovered that writing is taught in English classes in rather traditional ways based on interviews with junior high school students. Writing is used as a form of assessment to assess students' comprehension of the lesson. Writing tasks lack a development process; after the lesson is introduced, students work on the tasks without adequate preparation or guidance. The writing steps students are taught are as direct as writing what you want to write, proofreading, and finalizing your work. Because writing is frequently used as part of an assessment, the emphasis is on the product rather than the process. A study conducted by Jaca (2019) that investigated the teaching of reading and writing in the Philippines provides support for these responses. According to the study's teacher respondents, having too many topics to discuss forces teachers to oversimplify concepts, with the possibility of simply defining terms rather than having an in-depth discussion of writing lessons. When teachers assign written tasks without guiding students through a systematic process of producing write-ups and do not hold conferences with students to discuss how they can improve, this may endanger the teaching and learning of writing, according to Jaca.

With how intricate learning writing is and how traditionally it is taught, students' low proficiency in writing remains a challenge. The Department of Education suggests that in order for students to gain mastery of writing competencies and improve their proficiency, learning gaps must be addressed comprehensively through appropriate developmental and remediation activities that develop not only academic writing skills but also informative, narrative, and personal writing skills. To accomplish this, DepEd prescribed lessons and topics in the Curriculum Guide for Grade 7 English (K-12 Basic Education Curriculum, 2012) that are geared

toward teaching students how to construct written personal discourse formats such as letters, blogs, electronic mail, and basic mass media materials such as print ads, campaigns, and broadcast commercials.

The Department of Education's attempt to broaden the scope of written English with a more communicative approach to assist students in developing their writing skills necessitates providing learners with sufficient learning experiences. However, engaging ESL learners in writing activities to give them enough practice may lead to anxiety about writing. This is due to the fact that writing, as a productive skill, requires second language learners to produce the second language themselves, making it a demanding process.

To help students cope with the demands of writing, learners must be engaged with the entire writing process. This includes employing creative strategies and providing materials that support instruction and motivate students. Tan Jr. (2016) emphasized that instructional materials are of vital importance in a successful learning process. He went on to say that effective instructional materials meet the needs of learners, make them feel stimulated and eager to learn, and help them focus on the formal aspects of language. Learning materials help students develop and improve their writing skills. However, DepEd's writing instructional materials are limited to textbooks, modules, and other traditional print materials, which may not be enough to provide students with authentic experiences of learning writing in the target language.

Traditional instructional materials that focus on content and lack authentic sources may cause students to experience writing anxiety rather than assisting them in learning the skill. Kara (2013) discovered that one of the reasons second language learners are anxious to write is because they are using a coursebook. They believe that the coursebook will be a source of failure because it lacks sufficient examples and exercises and does not explain enough to them. According to Zhang (2019), while textbooks are essential tools for students to expand their knowledge, their content frequently falls short of providing teachers with enough information and practice to help students confidently engage in writing tasks.

Furthermore, insufficient and subpar learning materials indicate serious issues in language teaching. According to Chiu (2019) in the Daily Inquirer, the Commission on Audit (COA) discovered error-filled learning materials that were not reviewed and evaluated by relevant bureaus prior to mass production. Due to the poor quality of the learning materials, teachers have opted to use older reference textbooks that were in accordance with the previous curriculum, according to COA, while others have used internet-sourced materials and supplemental resources from private schools.

As explained previously, poor writing skills among language learners, traditional methods employed in teaching writing, and lack of authentic-based and quality instructional materials pose major concerns in language teaching and learning. In light of this, the researcher intended to develop instructional materials to assist both students and teachers in addressing the issues raised. Also, the demands for instructional materials have grown more pressing in the time of the pandemic as teachers greatly rely on modular and remote teaching. This led the researcher to produce materials that range from print, online, and digital formats. The teaching and learning process assumed a new shape with the abrupt shift from face-to-face classes to remote learning modalities during the pandemic. It is critical that instructional materials also take on new forms.

Based on the given points of interest, the researcher proposed using a task-based approach in developing instructional materials for the purpose of engaging the learners in enjoyable tasks prior to, during, and after the writing process rather than simply providing them with traditional writing activities. By doing this, students may experience less writing anxiety, increasing their likelihood of improving their writing abilities.

The task-based approach (TBA) in language teaching was popularized by N. S. Prabhu, an Indian professor, in the 1980s to teach language more communicatively. Prabhu first introduced the idea of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in his Bangalore project that centered on communication through the participation of students in doing a task. He viewed a task as a piece of work that requires processes in order to arrive at a specific result, with the teacher acting as the facilitator. According to the proponent, the approach focuses on asking students to

complete meaningful tasks in the target language to prepare them for real-life situations (Sholeh, 2021).

Developing instructional materials that use task-based approach to supplement existing instructional materials for Grade 7 writing and composition may help learners contextualize language learning as they can draw a direct relationship between language in the classroom and language in the real world. As learners perform tasks, they engage in communicative writing experiences which are meaningful and less demanding, thus, providing an opportunity for them to enhance their skills and proficiency in writing.

Enhancing writing proficiency entails more than simply ensuring students learn the linguistic structures and grammar rules. Writing proficiency is achieved when a learner can spontaneously express information, analysis, and persuasive viewpoints in writing without fear of making mistakes. The task-based approach is thought to be an effective method for ensuring improved writing proficiency by exposing students to various writing styles and genres through learning activities that mimic real-life situations. Prabhu, the proponent of the approach himself, believed that students might learn more effectively if their minds are focused on the task at hand rather than the language they are using.

Ajoke (2017) affirms that the importance of instructional materials for both teaching and learning cannot be overstated. The significance of materials in curriculum implementation has been demonstrated in a great deal of writing. Learning becomes more engaging, practical, realistic, and appealing, attributable to instructional materials. Ajoke suggests that teachers look into ways to supplement textbooks with necessary and appropriate materials for instruction in order to broaden concepts and pique learners' interest in the subject. This emphasizes the significance of this study and its primary goal, which is to develop supplementary instructional materials that provide opportunities for learners to improve their writing skills and help language teachers present appealing and engaging lessons using the task-based approach.

METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the study is to develop supplementary task-based instructional materials for Grade 7 writing and composition. The study utilized a developmental method of research which required product design, development technique, and evaluation. The materials were developed following Jolly and Bolitho's material development framework, which involves: (1) identifying the needs for the materials, (2) exploration of the results, (3) contextual realization of the materials, (4) pedagogical realization of the materials, (5) production of the materials, and (6) evaluation of the materials.

Identification of the need for materials

Prior to planning and production of materials, basic aspects had to be considered, one of which is the identification of needs. Since the need for the materials is determined by the learners' needs in writing, the researcher constructed a survey questionnaire and conducted a needs analysis.

Exploration of the results

The needs analysis results were explored and used as the basis for the types, context, and number of materials to develop. Seven competencies were identified as writing needs based on their perceived level of difficulty and were considered in the development of the materials. The number of lessons prepared was based on the competencies' difficulty level; three lessons were allotted for competencies viewed as difficult and one lesson for moderately difficult ones.

Table 1.
Summary of Students' Needs Analysis

Writing Competencies	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	No. of Materials
1. Composing a simple narrative text	2.67	Moderate	1
2. Composing a simple informative text	2.70	Moderate	1
3. Composing a series of journal entries	2.74	Moderate	1
4. Composing an anecdote on a significant personal experience	3.51	Difficult	3
5. Composing a capsule biography of a person interviewed	3.55	Difficult	3
6. Composing a travelogue	3.57	Difficult	3
7. Composing a biographical sketch based on a personal interview and background research	3.62	Difficult	3
Total no. of materials			15

Contextual realization of materials

The contextual realization of materials phase involved the preparation and selection of topics and their contexts, reading texts, and themes suitable for the learners' level, background, and needs. Texts were taken from resources prescribed by DepEd to ensure they align with the curriculum for Grade 7 English, focusing on Philippine Literature. Lessons were also localized by adding local stories and resources.

Pedagogical realization of materials

The researcher considered appropriate methods, techniques, and strategies to use in presenting the lessons and tasks to include in the materials. The task-based approach was applied in designing the exercises and activities with careful attention to the writing of instructions, the nature and complexity of tasks, the presentation of activities, and teaching techniques. The presentation of the lessons focused on developing skills in narrative and personal writing and informative writing in three phases: (1) pre-writing, (2) writing, and (3) post-writing.

Production of materials

The researcher worked on the actual and physical construction of the materials and developed an instructional package called More Ways to Write which includes the following: (1) More Ways to Write Printed Worktext, (2) More Ways to Write Interactive Online Worktext, (3) Teacher's Guide, (4) Reproducible Worksheets and (5) Skill Building Video Materials.

The Printed Worktext and the Interactive Online Worktext both contain lessons, exercises, and activities that develop the learners' competencies in writing and composition. More Ways to Write Worktext is organized into 15 thematic lessons. Each lesson has four main components that correspond to the different phases of the lesson: (1) Overview, (2) Let's Prepare (3) Let's Do It, and (4) Let's Wrap It Up.

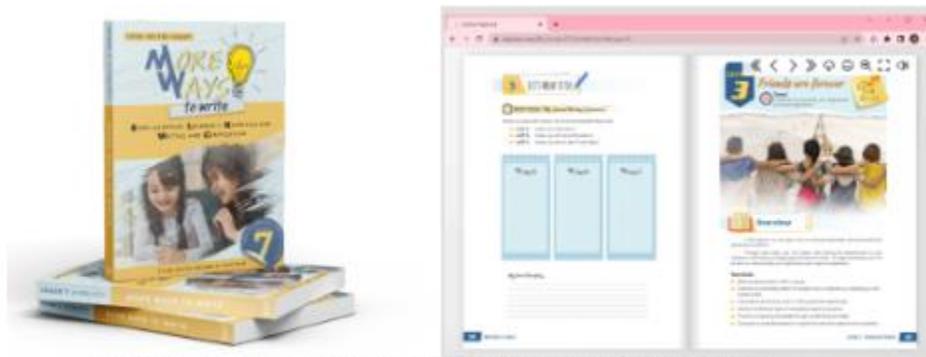


Figure 1. More Ways to Write Printed and Interactive Online Worktext

Table 2 presents the Instructional Materials Matrix, which shows how the materials developed are arranged and organized into various parts of the lesson.

Table 2.
Instructional Materials Matrix

Lesson Phase	Worktext Component	Section	Nature of Tasks
Pre-Writing Phase	Let's Prepare	Warm-up	Motivational tasks
		Discover	Reading, listening and viewing tasks to introduce the target text
		Gear-up	Grammar enhancing tasks; viewing tasks for writing tips and techniques
		Practice	Practice tasks similar to the main task
Writing Phase	Let's Do It	Main Task	Actual writing task
		Peer Evaluation	Pointing out weak points and strong points
Post-Writing Phase	Let's Wrap It Up	Checklists	Creating list tasks for areas learners improved in, areas learners still have difficulties in, and areas learners plan to learn more about
		Reflection	Metacognitive task

The Teacher's Guide (TG) gives specific pointers on the use of the worktext. It includes instructions for exercises and answer keys for the objective-type questions. The TG contains guidelines for supporting lesson planning, including sample lesson plans. The researcher designed the layout with spaces for notes and other teacher inputs. This will allow the teacher to customize and modify instruction.



Figure 2. More Ways to Write Teacher's Guide

The Reproducible Worksheets (RWs) allow the teacher to use specific activities as independent supplementary exercises for other related topics across English courses. Teachers will find them helpful and more convenient to use as reinforcement instructional materials. Likewise, students may be provided with copies of their desired activities from the RW to work on at home. The RWs are available in print and digital copies as shown in the figure below.



Figure 11. More Ways to Write Reproducible Worksheets

The **Skill-Building Video Materials** allow learners to discover new techniques and strategies in writing anywhere from their devices: laptops, tablets, or smartphones. With video lectures, they can learn at their own individual pace, which will maximize the results of e-Learning.

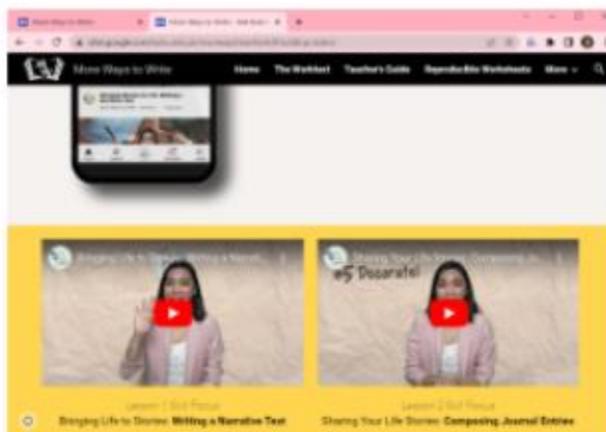


Figure 12. More Ways Skill-Building Video Materials

The researcher created a website that functions as a teacher's portal, as shown in Figure 13, for easier access to the instructional material package. The interactive online worktext and the teacher's guide are available in the portal as e-books. The reproducible worksheets are uploaded as pdf files which teacher users can download, print, and reproduce for their

students. The skill-building videos are also available in the portal as YouTube links for easy sharing.



Figure 13. More Ways to Write Teacher's Portal

The researcher also considered how the materials can easily be distributed to students and collected afterward if physical copies will not be available and delivery of instruction can only be done online. The researcher uploaded the worksheets in Microsoft Teams through its class notebook feature. Teachers can give assignments with the worksheets as attachments which students can write on and turn in directly without downloading the assignment and using third-party applications.

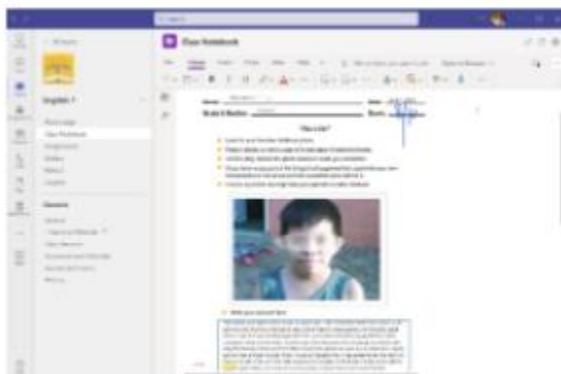


Figure 14. Microsoft Teams Integration

Evaluation of materials

A research instrument was constructed and validated for the evaluation of materials. The criteria for evaluation are (1) objectives, (2) contents, (3) organization and presentation, (4) learning activities, (5) authentic assessment procedures, and (6) design and technical aspects.

The researcher sought the help of five experts in English language education and materials development in evaluating the proposed materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experts evaluated the instructional materials using a set of criteria to determine their validity and acceptability. The ratings of English language and materials development experts were gathered, interpreted, and analyzed. Their comments and suggestions were considered for revision and enhancement of the prepared materials.

Objectives

The objectives used in the materials were rated “highly acceptable” with a mean of 5.0 in each of the sub-criteria. The result indicates that the objectives are clear, specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant to what the students need to achieve, appropriate, and directed towards enhancing students’ writing skills.

Contents

The learning contents of the materials were given a rating of “highly acceptable” with a mean of 5.00 in all five sub-criteria. The materials are current and aligned with the curriculum guide of English for Grade 7 and cover the competencies intended for Grade 7 English learners. The materials are appropriate for the learners’ age, emotional and social development, and ability level. The contents are accurate and well-written and have enough depth to enhance students’ writing skills.

Organization and presentation

The organization and presentation of materials were rated “highly acceptable” in terms of clear and understandable directions and other wordings, organization of lessons according to lower order skills/needs and higher order skills/needs, and completeness of instructions, contents, activities, and assessments. The materials’ presentation was also rated “highly acceptable” in terms of layout, typography, organization of contents, and appropriate combination of text and illustrations learning activities.

Learning activities

The learning activities in the materials were rated “highly acceptable” with a 5.00 mean score. The activities meet the objectives and target writing skills required for Grade 7 English. They are culturally relevant, aligned with prior background knowledge, and differentiated by skill level, language ability, cognitive capability, and learning style. The activities are engaging and provide support and encouragement to discover relevant knowledge and skills.

Authentic assessment procedures

The authentic assessment procedures used in the materials received an average score of 4.92 which is interpreted as highly acceptable. Providing clear gradations of quality in the performance descriptors and guidance for interpreting learning and/or performance needed minor improvement.

Design and technical aspects

The design and technical aspects of the instructional materials were rated highly acceptable in terms of the overall design, physical format, suitability for their intended use, flexibility in various media presentation modes, intuitiveness, and ease of use for teachers and learners.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Investigating students’ perception of the competencies in Grade 7 writing and composition was crucial in determining the scope and focus of the materials to develop. The

result of the need analysis was not only helpful during the production process, but it also opened insights that can be used as a basis for future studies.

2. Following the framework proposed by Jolly and Bolitho for the development of instructional materials entails a time-consuming process of assessing and analyzing needs, careful planning for context and use of pedagogies, production, innovation, and evaluation. Although the process was complicated, it assisted the researcher in producing high-quality materials for their intended purposes. Moreover, the use of a task-based approach opened up opportunities for authentic and real-life learning experiences.

3. The results of the experts' evaluation helped determine the proposed materials' potential success in being published and widely used in the future. The overall rating of 4.99 (Highly Acceptable) and the comments on the materials' salient features in terms of (1) balance in blending conventional knowledge, innovations, and technology, (2) potent and engaging activities, and (3) commendable physical and visual features and cognitive load imply that the materials are highly commendable and ready for use.

4. The comments and recommendations were useful in improving the different components of the materials in terms of instruction, content, and design prior to implementation.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following suggestions are hereby presented:

1. The researcher recommends forming a consortium with DepEd schools to assess students' writing needs on a larger scale, based on the conclusion that the results of the needs analysis were critical in determining the scope and focus of the materials to develop. Redesigning the materials based on the findings from the assessment of a larger population of learners will improve the materials in terms of content and instructional components.

2. Given that the time-consuming process involved in Jolly and Bolitho's framework for materials writing may aid in producing high-quality instructional tools, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted using the same approach in developing materials to improve other language skills.

3. With a rating of 4.99 (Highly Acceptable), the researcher suggests that teachers use the materials in actual language classes and evaluate them to assess their effectiveness and identify

areas for improvement. Teachers are also encouraged to provide suggestions for the next steps in designing, selecting, distributing, and implementing instructional materials.

4. Following the experts' comments and suggestions for improving the materials' instruction, content, and design, it is still recommended that the materials be constantly reviewed, revised, and updated to adapt to changing trends and innovations in language teaching.

5. In future studies, the researcher suggests broadening the scope of the study to investigate the effects of a task-based approach on students' writing proficiency.

6. Since the proposed instructional materials for Grade 7 were well received, the researcher suggests expanding the package's range by offering a complete set for all grade levels after a year of implementation, re-evaluation, revision, and improvement.

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