

## Engaging Writing Activities and the Writing Competence of Grade 12 HUMSS Students

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**ABSTRACT:** This quasi-experimental study investigates the effectiveness of engaging writing activities in enhancing the writing competence of Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students at Malvar Senior High School, Batangas, during the current academic year 2024–2025. Two experimental groups participated in different sets of writing activities: Group 1 engaged in comic strip creation and photographic writing prompts, while Group 2 worked with vocabulary challenges and Mad Libs. Writing competence was assessed through vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, grammar usage, and essay construction. A pre-assessment and post-assessment were conducted to measure progress, with statistical analyses using t-tests for dependent and independent means to determine significance.

Findings revealed that both groups exhibited improvements across all writing competence indicators. However, Group 1 demonstrated greater progress in comprehension, grammar usage, and essay construction, while Group 2 showed more substantial gains in vocabulary acquisition. The post-test scores of Group 1 were significantly higher than those of Group 2, highlighting the effectiveness of comic strips and photographic prompts in enhancing overall writing competence.

The study concludes that engaging writing activities play a crucial role in improving students' writing skills, with different activities yielding varying benefits. It is recommended that educators integrate a mix of these strategies to target specific writing skill areas. Future research should explore the long-term effects of such activities on literacy and their impact on other cognitive skills. Continuous innovation in writing instruction is essential to maintaining student engagement and fostering overall writing competence.

**KEYWORDS:** Writing Competence, Vocabulary Acquisition, Comprehension, Grammar Usage, Essay Construction

### I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill essential for effective communication, critical thinking, and academic success. It serves as a crucial medium for expressing ideas, conveying information, and demonstrating knowledge in various academic disciplines. Across educational levels, writing competence is recognized as a vital component of literacy, which directly influences students' ability to participate meaningfully in academic and professional environments. However, despite the emphasis on writing in curricula worldwide, many students struggle with writing competence, particularly in senior high school, where advanced literacy skills are expected.

In the context of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand in senior high school, writing is even more critical. The HUMSS curriculum is designed to develop students' analytical and expressive skills, preparing them for careers in communication, research, education, and social sciences. Given this, it is imperative to explore strategies and pedagogical interventions that enhance students' writing competence. Engaging writing activities have been widely advocated as effective tools for improving students' writing skills by fostering creativity, motivation, and a deeper understanding of language structures.

The importance of developing students' writing competence is supported by various legal and educational policies. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Section 1, mandates that "the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels." Furthermore, the Department of Education (DepEd) has reinforced this through the K-12 Basic Education Program, implemented under Republic Act No. 10533, which emphasizes the need for a curriculum that enhances students' communication skills, particularly in reading and writing.

This study aligns with national and international research priorities on literacy and education. Writing competence remains a crucial area of focus in educational research, as it significantly affects students' academic performance and future opportunities. The research seeks to examine how engaging writing activities influence the writing competence of Grade 12 HUMSS students, contributing to the ongoing discourse on best practices in literacy instruction.

By identifying effective strategies for enhancing writing skills, the study supports the broader goals of educational institutions,

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policymakers, and teachers in fostering a culture of literacy and communication excellence among students. Furthermore, the research findings can provide valuable insights for curriculum developers in refining instructional approaches that cater to the needs of senior high school students.

The ability to write competently is a fundamental academic skill that significantly influences students' success in higher education and future careers. Engaging writing activities offer a promising approach to enhancing students' writing competence, particularly in the HUMSS strand, where communication skills are essential. Grounded in legal mandates, educational priorities, personal experiences, and theoretical frameworks, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on effective writing instruction. By examining the impact of engaging writing activities on Grade 12 HUMSS students' writing competence, the research aims to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers in fostering a more dynamic and effective writing pedagogy.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to compare the effectiveness of engaging writing activities - specifically comic strip and photographic writing prompts, as well as vocabulary challenges and Mad Libs, in enhancing the student writing competence of Grade 12 HUMSS students.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, utilizing pretest and posttest assessments to measure the impact of the intervention.

According to Babbie (2016), quasi-experimental designs "attempt to approximate the conditions under which true experiments are conducted" (p. 165), thus allowing researchers to draw causal inferences while considering practical constraints.

To yield reliable and accurate results, the researcher solicited the approval of the Division Supervisor of the DepEd - Division of Batangas Province to allow the researcher to conduct the study. After the approval and endorsement of the School Division Supervisor, the researcher then asked for the approval of the principal of the specific school. The researcher also consulted her statistician on coming up with the number of respondents together with the number of sections that she needs to conduct surveys with. The study involved thirty-seven (37) students from two classrooms or sections, namely HUMSS 121 and HUMSS 124, and divided them into experimental group 1 and experimental group 2. The experimental group 1 (HUMSS 121) participated in various engaging writing activities, such as comic strips and photographic writing prompts, while experimental group 2 (HUMSS 124) engaged in vocabulary challenges and Mad Libs over a specified period. Pre-assessment and post-assessment were administered to both groups to measure any changes in writing competence. Statistical analyses, such as T-test, were utilized for dependent and independent means.

For Experimental Group 1 (HUMSS 121), the primary research instrument utilized in the data gathering implementation was a self-made pre-assessment and post-assessment designed specifically to measure students' writing proficiency. Following the intervention phase, where experimental group 1 participated in engaging writing activities like Comic Strip Creation and Photographic Writing Prompts, the post-assessment was administered.

For Experimental Group 2 (HUMSS 124), the research instrument used during data gathering was identical to that of Experimental Group 1. The 37 heterogeneous students first underwent the self-made pre-assessment before any intervention activities. After experimental group 2 utilized engaging writing activities such as Vocabulary Challenge, and Mad Libs—the post-assessment was administered.

To structure the intervention, a series of lesson exemplars were also developed and employed over a four- week period. A total of eight lesson exemplars were created, with four specifically designed for Experimental Group 1 (HUMSS 121) and another four for Experimental Group 2 (HUMSS 124).

Furthermore, an independent t-test was utilized to compare the means of these two groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in their performance. This test is appropriate as it assesses whether the two groups, which are not related, have different mean values on the dependent variable. Additionally, a dependent t-test, also known as a paired t-test, may be applied if the study involves measuring the same participants within each group at different points, such as before and after an intervention. This allows for the assessment of within-group changes over time, evaluating the effectiveness of the treatment administered. These statistical analyses will help determine the impact of the interventions on each experimental group and whether any observed differences are statistically significant.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Pre-Assessment Scores of Experimental Groups 1 and 2

| Pre Assessment         | Experimental Group 1 |      |            | Experimental Group 2 |      |            |
|------------------------|----------------------|------|------------|----------------------|------|------------|
|                        | Mean                 | SD   | VI         | Mean                 | SD   | VI         |
| Vocabulary Acquisition | 2.32                 | 0.47 | Developing | 1.86                 | 0.54 | Developing |
| Comprehension          | 2.27                 | 0.61 | Developing | 1.97                 | 0.50 | Developing |
| Grammar Usage          | 2.19                 | 0.62 | Developing | 1.65                 | 0.68 | Developing |
| Essay Construction     | 2.35                 | 0.68 | Developing | 1.70                 | 0.62 | Developing |

Table 1 presents the pre-assessment scores of Experimental Groups 1 and 2 across four writing competencies, namely, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, grammar usage, and essay construction.

Starting with Vocabulary Acquisition, both Experimental Groups 1 and 2 were classified under the "Developing" category. The higher mean of Group 1 suggests a relatively better initial grasp of vocabulary compared to Group 2. Meanwhile, the lower SD in Group 1 indicates a slightly more consistent performance among its members, whereas Group 2 showed more variation in vocabulary skills.

For Comprehension, both groups also remained within the "Developing" stage. Despite the higher mean of Group 1, suggesting better comprehension skills, the slightly higher standard deviation hints at a wider spread of scores within this group compared to Group 2, where the scores were a bit more clustered around the mean.

For Grammar Usage, Group 1 achieved a mean of 2.19 with an SD of 0.62, whereas Group 2 scored a mean of 1.65 with a comparable SD of 0.68. Both groups are still in the "Developing" range. The data imply that Experimental Group 1 demonstrated stronger initial grammar skills than Group 2. The similar standard deviations suggest that both groups exhibited comparable levels of variability in grammar usage performance among their members.

Lastly, for Essay Construction, Experimental Group 1 recorded the highest mean among all the sub-variables at 2.35 with a standard deviation of 0.68. In contrast, Experimental Group 2 had a mean of 1.70 and an SD of 0.62. Again, both groups were classified as "Developing." Group 1's higher mean indicates a relatively stronger ability in organizing and writing essays before any interventions were applied. The standard deviations for both groups were close, suggesting similar ranges of scores despite the difference in mean performance.

Data presents that across all sub-variables, Experimental Group 1 consistently outperformed Experimental Group 2 in terms of mean scores, while both groups remained within the "Developing" level of proficiency. The standard deviations across sub-variables show that both groups experienced moderate variations in individual performances, indicating that while Group 1 performed better overall, there was still room for significant improvement in both groups.

**Table 2.** Post-Assessment Scores of Experimental Groups 1 and 2

| Post Assessment        | Experimental Group 1 |      |            | Experimental Group 2 |      |            |
|------------------------|----------------------|------|------------|----------------------|------|------------|
|                        | Mean                 | SD   | VI         | Mean                 | SD   | VI         |
| Vocabulary Acquisition | 2.46                 | 0.51 | Developing | 2.19                 | 0.57 | Developing |
| Comprehension          | 2.65                 | 0.59 | Developing | 2.35                 | 0.59 | Developing |
| Grammar Usage          | 2.43                 | 0.50 | Developing | 2.05                 | 0.66 | Developing |
| Essay Construction     | 2.62                 | 0.68 | Proficient | 2.16                 | 0.60 | Developing |

Table 2 presents the post-assessment scores of Experimental Groups 1 and 2 across four language skill areas: Vocabulary Acquisition, Comprehension, Grammar Usage, and Essay Construction.

For Vocabulary Acquisition, Experimental Group 1 attained a mean score of 2.46 with a standard deviation of 0.51, resulting in a verbal interpretation of "Developing." Similarly, Experimental Group 2 recorded a slightly lower mean of 2.19 and a higher standard deviation of 0.57, also interpreted as "Developing." Although both groups are classified within the same developmental level, Group 1 outperformed Group 2, suggesting a stronger grasp of vocabulary, albeit still within the mid-range proficiency.

For Comprehension, Experimental Group 1 demonstrated stronger performance with a mean score of 2.65 and a standard deviation of 0.59, earning a "Proficient" level. In contrast, Experimental Group 2 achieved a mean of 2.35, matching Group 1's standard deviation of 0.59 but falling into the "Developing" category. This notable difference indicates that Group 1 had a better

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understanding of texts and could comprehend material more effectively post-assessment compared to Group 2.

Regarding Grammar Usage, both groups remained at the "Developing" level. Experimental Group 1 had a mean of 2.43 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.50, suggesting consistent performance among its members. Experimental Group 2, however, scored a mean of 2.05 with a higher standard deviation of 0.66, indicating not only a lower average performance but also greater variability in students' grammar proficiency. In the area of Essay Construction, the results again favored Experimental Group 1. They achieved a mean score of 2.62 with a standard deviation of 0.68, classifying them as "Proficient." Meanwhile, Experimental Group 2 posted a mean of 2.16 with a standard deviation of 0.60, interpreted as "Developing." These results suggest that students in Group 1 were more capable of organizing ideas, structuring essays, and presenting coherent written outputs compared to those in Group 2.

Data reveals that Experimental Group 1 consistently outperformed Experimental Group 2 across all sub-variables. While both groups were still developing in Vocabulary Acquisition and Grammar Usage, Group 1 reached the "Proficient" level in both Comprehension and Essay Construction, highlighting the relative effectiveness of the instructional approach used with this group. The results also emphasize the need for further support and targeted interventions, particularly for Experimental Group 2, to elevate their performance to higher proficiency levels.

**Table 3.** Test of Difference Between the Pretest Writing Competence of Group 1 and 2

| Writing Competence     | Group 1 |      | Group 2 |      | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|-------|----|-----------------|
|                        | Mean    | SD   | Mean    | SD   |       |    |                 |
| Vocabulary Acquisition | 2.46    | 0.51 | 1.86    | 0.54 | 3.906 | 72 | .000            |
| Comprehension          | 2.65    | 0.59 | 1.97    | 0.50 | 2.299 | 72 | .024            |
| Grammar Usage          | 2.43    | 0.50 | 1.65    | 0.68 | 3.595 | 72 | .001            |
| Essay Construction     | 2.62    | 0.68 | 1.70    | 0.62 | 4.311 | 72 | .000            |

Table 3 presents the test of difference between the pretest writing competence of Group 1 and Group 2 across four sub-variables: Vocabulary Acquisition, Comprehension, Grammar Usage, and Essay Construction. For Vocabulary Acquisition, Group 1 achieved a higher mean score of 2.46 (SD = 0.51) compared to Group 2's mean of 1.86 (SD = 0.54). The t-value of 3.906 and a significance level of .000 indicate a highly significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that Group 1 had a notably stronger command of vocabulary at the pretest stage.

In terms of Comprehension, Group 1 again outperformed Group 2, with a mean of 2.65 (SD = 0.59) versus 1.97 (SD = 0.50). The computed t-value was 2.299 with a significance level of .024, revealing that the difference between the groups was statistically significant, although less pronounced than in Vocabulary Acquisition.

Moving to Grammar Usage, Group 1's mean score was 2.43 (SD = 0.50), while Group 2 had a lower mean of 1.65 (SD = 0.68). The t-test yielded a value of 3.595 with a significance level of .001, confirming a significant difference and highlighting Group 1's better grammatical competence at the onset.

Finally, in Essay Construction, Group 1 recorded a mean of 2.62 (SD = 0.68) compared to Group 2's mean of 1.70 (SD = 0.62). The t-value was notably high at 4.311, with a significance level of .000, indicating a very strong and significant difference favoring Group 1.

Overall, the findings across all sub-variables demonstrate that Group 1 exhibited significantly higher levels of writing competence in the pretest than Group 2, as evidenced by consistently higher mean scores and statistically significant p-values.

**Table 4.** Test of Difference Between the Pretest and Posttest Writing Competence

| Writing Competence     | Pretest |      | Posttest |      | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|---------|------|----------|------|-------|----|-----------------|
|                        | Mean    | SD   | Mean     | SD   |       |    |                 |
| Vocabulary Acquisition | 2.32    | 0.47 | 2.46     | 0.51 | 1.535 | 36 | .134            |
| Comprehension          | 2.27    | 0.61 | 2.65     | 0.59 | 3.875 | 36 | .000            |
| Grammar Usage          | 2.19    | 0.62 | 2.43     | 0.50 | 2.307 | 36 | .027            |
| Essay Construction     | 2.35    | 0.68 | 2.62     | 0.68 | 2.522 | 36 | .016            |

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Table 4 presents the test of difference between the pretest and posttest scores in writing competence, specifically analyzing four sub-variables: vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, grammar usage, and essay construction.

For vocabulary acquisition, the pretest mean score was 2.32 with a standard deviation of 0.47, while the posttest mean was slightly higher at 2.46 with a standard deviation of 0.51. However, the computed t-value of

1.535 and significance level of 0.134 indicate that the improvement was not statistically significant. This suggests that although there was a minor increase in vocabulary skills after the intervention, it was not enough to confirm a meaningful difference.

In terms of comprehension, a significant improvement was observed. The mean increased from 2.27 (SD = 0.61) in the pretest to 2.65 (SD = 0.59) in the posttest. The t-value of 3.875 and a significance level of 0.000 demonstrate a highly significant difference, indicating that the students' ability to understand and interpret written content greatly improved after the intervention.

For grammar usage, the pretest mean was 2.19 (SD = 0.62) and rose to 2.43 (SD = 0.50) in the posttest. The t-value of 2.307 with a significance level of 0.027 shows a statistically significant improvement, suggesting that the intervention was effective in enhancing students' grammar skills.

Lastly, in essay construction, the pretest mean score of 2.35 (SD = 0.68) increased to 2.62 (SD = 0.68) in the posttest. The t-value of 2.522 and a significance level of 0.016 indicate a significant difference, implying that the students developed better skills in organizing and presenting their ideas in written essays.

Overall, the findings reveal that while vocabulary acquisition did not significantly improve, the intervention had a positive and significant effect on students' comprehension, grammar usage, and essay construction competencies.

This result is supported by the study of Apriani (2021) which emphasizes that effective intervention in writing activities significantly enhances students' comprehension, grammar usage, and overall essay construction skills. Through structured guidance and strategic approaches, students develop their ability to generate and organize ideas more effectively. The study highlights that engaging writing tasks, coupled with targeted feedback, foster a deeper understanding of language structures and coherence in writing. By implementing these interventions, educators can support students in overcoming common writing challenges, ultimately improving their academic writing proficiency (Apriani, 2021).

**Table 5.** Test of Difference Between the Pretest and Posttest Writing Competence

| Writing Competence     | Pretest |      | Posttest |      | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|---------|------|----------|------|-------|----|-----------------|
|                        | Mean    | SD   | Mean     | SD   |       |    |                 |
| Vocabulary Acquisition | 1.86    | 0.54 | 2.19     | 0.57 | 3.151 | 36 | .003            |
| Comprehension          | 1.97    | 0.50 | 2.35     | 0.59 | 3.379 | 36 | .002            |
| Grammar Usage          | 1.65    | 0.68 | 2.05     | 0.66 | 3.597 | 36 | .001            |
| Essay Construction     | 1.70    | 0.62 | 2.16     | 0.60 | 4.045 | 36 | .000            |

Table 5 presents the test of difference between the pretest and posttest scores in writing competence, analyzed through four sub-variables: vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, grammar usage, and essay construction.

For vocabulary acquisition, the pretest mean score was 1.86 (SD = 0.54), while the posttest mean increased to 2.19 (SD = 0.57). The computed t-value was 3.151 with 36 degrees of freedom, and the significance level was .003. This indicates a statistically significant improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition after the intervention.

For comprehension, the pretest mean was 1.97 (SD = 0.50), and the posttest mean rose to 2.35 (SD = 0.59). The t-value of 3.379 and a significance level of .002 confirm that the improvement in comprehension was also statistically significant.

For grammar usage, there was an increase from a pretest mean of 1.65 (SD = 0.68) to a posttest mean of 2.05 (SD = 0.66). The t-value of 3.597 and a significance value of .001 show that the improvement in grammar usage was highly significant.

Lastly, essay construction exhibited the most considerable difference, with the pretest mean at 1.70 (SD = 0.62) and the posttest mean at 2.16 (SD = 0.60). The t-value of 4.045 and a significance level of .000 indicate a very strong statistically significant improvement in essay construction.

Data clearly reveals that across all areas of writing competence, students demonstrated significant progress from the pretest to the posttest.



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**Table 6.** Test of Difference Between the Posttest Writing Competence of Group 1 and 2

| Writing Competence     | Group 1 |      | Group 2 |      | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|-------|----|-----------------|
|                        | Mean    | SD   | Mean    | SD   |       |    |                 |
| Vocabulary Acquisition | 2.46    | 0.51 | 2.19    | 0.57 | 2.159 | 72 | .034            |
| Comprehension          | 2.65    | 0.59 | 2.35    | 0.59 | 2.176 | 72 | .033            |
| Grammar Usage          | 2.43    | 0.50 | 2.05    | 0.66 | 2.763 | 72 | .007            |
| Essay Construction     | 2.62    | 0.68 | 2.16    | 0.60 | 3.075 | 72 | .003            |

Table 6 presents the test of difference between the posttest writing competence scores of Group 1 and Group 2, analyzed across four sub-variables: Vocabulary Acquisition, Comprehension, Grammar Usage, and Essay Construction. Each sub-variable shows comparative data including the mean scores, standard deviations, t-values, degrees of freedom, and significance levels.

In terms of Vocabulary Acquisition, Group 1 achieved a mean score of 2.46 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.51, while Group 2 posted a slightly lower mean of 2.19 with an SD of 0.57. The t-test revealed a t-value of 2.159 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.034, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This result suggests that Group 1 demonstrated a better acquisition of vocabulary skills compared to Group 2 after the intervention.

For Comprehension, Group 1 again outperformed Group 2, obtaining a mean score of 2.65 (SD = 0.59) as opposed to Group 2's mean of 2.35 (SD = 0.59). The computed t-value was 2.176, with a p-value of 0.033. Since this significance level is below the conventional 0.05 threshold, it indicates that the difference in comprehension skills between the two groups is statistically significant, favoring Group 1.

Moving to Grammar Usage, Group 1 registered a mean score of 2.43 (SD = 0.50), while Group 2 lagged behind with a mean of 2.05 (SD = 0.66). The t-value of 2.763 and the p-value of 0.007 reveal a highly significant difference. This finding implies that Group 1 exhibited stronger grammatical competence compared to Group 2, suggesting the effectiveness of the intervention or approach used with Group 1.

Lastly, regarding Essay Construction, Group 1 achieved a mean score of 2.62 with an SD of 0.68, whereas Group 2 attained a mean of 2.16 with an SD of 0.60. The t-test analysis yielded a t-value of 3.075 and a significance level of 0.003, marking the most significant difference among all sub-variables. This result strongly indicates that Group 1 had superior skills in organizing and constructing essays compared to Group 2.

Overall, the results across all sub-variables show consistent and statistically significant advantages for Group 1 in posttest writing competence, suggesting that the strategies, methods, or interventions applied to Group 1 were more effective in enhancing writing skills.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results showed significant differences across all assessed areas of writing competence: vocabulary acquisition ( $t = 2.159$ ,  $p = .034$ ), comprehension ( $t = 2.176$ ,  $p = .033$ ), grammar usage ( $t = 2.763$ ,  $p = .007$ ), and essay construction ( $t = 3.075$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Since all p-values were below the standard significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the differences between the two groups were statistically significant. These results highlight that the type of engaging writing activities used contributed to measurable improvements in writing competence. Specifically, Group 1, which utilized more visually stimulating and creative prompts like comic strips and photographs, achieved higher mean scores across all categories compared to Group 2. Thus, the findings validate the hypothesis and demonstrate that certain types of engaging writing activities, particularly those involving visual stimuli and narrative creativity, are more effective in enhancing the writing competence of Grade 12 HUMSS students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For allowing the researcher an opportunity to find accommodations at the university, we thank the deans, research heads, staff, faculty, and employees. Additionally, thank you for the helpful advice you provided and for helping to make this job a success.

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