Strategies in Teaching Academic Essay Writing, Level of Effectiveness, and Instructional Barriers: The Case of Filipino Learners

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Abstract

This study about academic essay writing strategies was conducted in order to propose teachers' lesson guide based on the effective strategies that were ascertained after the investigation. The study used the descriptive-quantitative method of research. The University-approved questionnaire was used to identify the frequency of use of the strategies utilized in students' essay writing activities. There were 126 students and 20 English teachers in Cebu City, Philippines, used as the respondents of the study. It was discovered that the three academic essay writing strategies investigated in the study were always used in both argumentative and informative essay writing, as perceived by the respondents. The first two strategies, traffic light color coding, and planning using informal outline, were found to be very effective in both writing the argumentative and informative essays, while the third strategy, framed paragraph, was also effective to use in both writing the two types of essays. The strategies used, and the students' performance showed a significant relationship. The top barriers in teaching academic essay writing were as follows: teaching essay writing to second language learners, lack of time for explicit instruction, no strategies in place for the part of the students, lack of parental support, and lack of essay structures on the part of the teachers. It was concluded that there were various effective pedagogical strategies that teachers could utilize in teaching academic essay writing. Based on the findings, this study further presents its recommendations.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, academic essay writing strategies, barriers in teaching essay writing, descriptive-quantitative

1. Introduction

Writing is believed to be one of the most complex macro skills of communication, and it takes time to master it (Sharma, 2018). Just like the other macro skills, one's ability to write is improved through practice and the enthusiasm to improve the craft. Likewise, it would not happen overnight as it requires a systematic and sometimes lengthy process. West et al. (2019) emphasized that while being able to write an effective essay is crucial for academic success, developing transferable skills and traits is just as crucial for success in the workforce after graduation. Arina (2010) concurred that writing is one of the central pillars of language learning and should be of major interest and concern to teachers, students, and researchers.

There are four major types of essay writing, namely: informative, explanatory, argumentative, and narrative (Auman, 2015; Caulfield, 2019; University of Sydney, 2019). However, only informative and argumentative are focused on the study. Informative writing persuades ideas and elucidates pieces of information, and argumentative writing stipulates a claim on a certain subject or issue and proves that claim in a way that is clear with logical reasons and relevant facts and pieces of evidence. Having said that, teachers should not stop learning additional strategies and must update themselves with new pedagogical trends in teaching academic essay writing. Auman, in his book, has mentioned systematic teaching strategies in teaching academic essay writing. These strategies are currently being used in many

states of the United States of America. Briefly, there were three strategies that were utilized in the study, namely: traffic light color coding, planning using the informal outline, and framed paragraph.

As described by Auman (2015), to utilize the traffic light color coding strategy, the parts of an essay are associated with different colors, like in the traffic light. For instance, green for the thesis statement, yellow for key details or big ideas, red for evidence, explanation, and examples, and green for the concluding statement or paragraph. This is applicable to the examples and the students' outputs, and of course, without forgetting that discussion of how each part of the paragraph is crafted. By remembering the colors, the students can easily recall the parts of the essay when they write. To utilize the planning using an informal outline strategy, the teacher has to present an example or a template of the informal outline, which indicates the parts of the essay and model the process of filling it in. The details that are included in the outline are the major pieces of information that the students have to include when writing their essays. Also, to master the skill of using this informal outline, the teacher could ask the students to complete the outline template using the information from the given informative or argumentative essay. To use the framed paragraph strategy, the teacher will provide a template with sentence stems or starters that students will just have to continue. These sentence stems are evident in the beginning, middle, and end part of the essay. This strategy is like providing the students with some free thoughts before they start writing their essays.

The written language skills of high school students in the Philippines were examined by Cabansag (2013). It was found that the majority of students struggled with capitalization and punctuation, and they made the most mistakes in their compositions when using verb tenses and capitalization rules. It was suggested that beginning the school year with composition writing assignments would help identify which students need extra help. Which can be used to select methods and strategies that are appropriate for the students' level of written language proficiency.

The study of Hikmah and Buffe (2019) on the writing skills of junior high school students in the Philippines revealed that the students had more errors in grammar areas such as the usage of subject and verb agreement, verb tenses, thoughts organization, contracted words, distribution of ideas per sentence, and on mechanics of writing such as proper nouns capitalization, proper indention of the paragraph, punctuation, and sentence breaks. It was recommended that supplementary learning material must be crafted to improve the students' writing skills.

Chien (2010) found that students' higher awareness of writing skills was related to their higher writing performance. The student data gave teachers insightful information that helped them consider how to better meet the needs of their students and improve teaching writing. Education research played a significant role in informing practitioners and helping teachers better understand how their students used writing strategies so that they could adapt their instruction to better meet the learning needs of their students.

Furthermore, in the department of education- Cebu City division, the students are heterogeneously capacitated in terms of their English writing proficiency. When the present teachers were interviewed, they revealed that there are still many students who do not know how to write good essays, and some of them do not even know the basics of writing an essay. Indeed, many senior high school teachers have expressed their willingness to learn new pedagogical concepts as they aim to attain instructional progression in teaching academic essay writing. Hence, with these existing conditions, the study on the academic essay writing strategies for teachers' lesson guide was pursued.

2. Literature Review

This chapter presents the converged related literature and studies to fortify the present study in general.

2.1 Related Literature

This section presents the related literature that strengthens the study.

Certainly, secondary and tertiary students will write various academic essays throughout their school journey (Heller, 2019). Two of the many types of essays that are ventured into the study are argumentative and informative essays. Students are expected to choose a topic for their argumentative essay, develop a compelling argument for it, and then address any arguments against it. Students may be required to read published studies and articles on the subject or conduct their own research by way of surveys, experiments, and interviews in order to gather resources for this kind of essay. An argumentative essay's structure can vary. Argumentative essays occasionally have five paragraphs, which include an introduction, three body paragraphs that discuss the main argument and any counterarguments, and a conclusion. Longer essays allow students to discuss the context of the topic at hand, as well as to defend their claims.

Students must make sure their topic is actually debatable in order to write an argumentative essay successfully, according to Heller (2019). They should consider whether others can refute their arguments and think of ways the opposition might respond. Furthermore, a topic must be supported by academic research in order for it to be considered debatable; it cannot be based on one's own morality or on cultural or religious norms. On the other hand, an expository essay, also referred to as an informative essay, can be used for a variety of purposes. This style of essay contrasts divergent points of view on a subject. They do not, however, include the authors' points of view; instead, they analyze the data in a cause-and-effect manner to inform their audience. An informative essay may also

Having the capacity to write is a competence that has been taught (Nixon, 2018). In fact, one can write a letter to his peer or post something on Facebook, but there are various types of writing. Academic writing is a skill that individuals have to learn seriously. Even if you were to write multiple essays, it does not guarantee you to become an academic writer. Before one can identify with how to write an academic piece, he needs to better comprehend what it is. The evidence of becoming an academic writer lies in the proper structuring, referencing, and overall quality of one's writing. Urbano et al. (2021) discovered that the main writing obstacles of their study's informants were the

absence of topic-relevant background knowledge and topic-specific paper on texts, inadequate knowledge and practice on writing with proper citation, improper grammar, limited vocabulary, and use of different patterns of development when writing. The study recommended explicit teaching, usage of a text-based approach, and inclusion of real-life and collaborative tasks in teaching Writing and Reading in the Philippines. The writing strategies that were investigated in the present study were aligned with text-based approach.

Hikmah and Buffe (2019) found out in their study that the students had more errors in grammar aspects such as the utilization of subject and verb agreement, proper utilization of verb tenses, thoughts organization, contracted words, distribution of ideas per sentence, and on mechanics of writing, particularly on the punctuation marks, proper nouns capitalization, proper paragraph indention, and sentence breaks. It was recommended that supplementary learning material must be crafted to improve the students' writing skills. Chien (2010) found that students' higher awareness of writing skills was related to their higher writing performance. The student data gave teachers insightful information that helped them consider how to better meet the needs of their students and improve teaching writing. Education research played a significant role in informing practitioners and helping teachers better understand how their students used writing strategies so that they could adapt their instruction to better meet the needs of their students.

Pablo and Lasaten (2018) concluded in their study that the students had difficulties in writing academic essays, such as a lack of ideas variation in terms of content, lack of connectors in terms of organization, improper word choice in terms of vocabulary, poor sentence structures in terms of language utilization, use of the first- person pronouns in the areas of formality, and lack of citations. The overall quality of the students' academic essay performance ranged from poor to fair. Mabuan (2015) also noted the most prevalent errors committed by the participants were tenses, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, morphology, articles, verbs, and pronouns. Pedagogical implications for teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers, and text developers were offered on the basis of these results.

Huy (2015) revealed that many students are not aware of the importance of studying writing skills. They even spent a little investment in this skill. This leads to the low quality of studying writing skills in many high schools. By observation and data analysis, the researcher described the reality of students' learning writing skills, and the main problems were pointed out. Firstly, students were in a shortage of vocabulary because their ways of learning were not really effective. Secondly, students met a lot of difficulties when faced with grammar structures because they spent a little time studying as well as approaching necessary materials for grammar skills. Thirdly, students did not show interest in writing topics. Fourthly, students did not have enough opportunities to be corrected. Fifthly, students' sources of materials were not varied. Lastly, the time for writing skills in high school was not enough for students to practice.

According to Nyasimi et al. (2009), inadequate content mastery, improper grammar use, first language interference, a small vocabulary, and a lack of teaching and learning resources are the main obstacles students face when learning how to write essays. The findings revealed that most of the students did not consistently use interactive learning techniques. According to these findings, it was established that the teaching strategies and learning approaches used by teachers and students alike had an impact on the acquisition of second language writing skills. The study's findings were used to create recommendations that will help teachers, policymakers, and curriculum designers develop solutions to the challenges that students encounter when learning how to write in a second language.

Based on the aforementioned literature, they explicitly mean that problems in academic writing still exist in recent times, not only in local classrooms but also in the global setting. Gaps like a lack of students' interest in learning academic writing skills, poor knowledge and mastery of the content and structure, and ineffective students' ways of learning the skill are also observed and evident. In addition, the implication of those studies is more on the improvement of teaching pedagogical styles in teaching the skills to the students. In this connection, it is in good timing that the present study deals with academic essay writing strategies, and research findings are the bases for proposing teachers' lesson guide. Hence, it was also aimed, through the present study, that some of the gaps in the academic writing performance of our Filipino students, if not all, are filled in and are going to be improved, especially if these strategies can significantly give positive impact to the performance of the student respondents.

2.2 Related Studies

This section presents some related studies to corroborate the present study.

Garing (2014) conducted a study on Coherence in the Argumentative Essays of First-Year College of Liberal Arts Students at De La Salle University. The study investigated five textual characteristics of coherence in the students' argument essays for text comprehensibility and overall writing quality. The conventional feature that consists of capitalization, command in spelling, punctuation, grammar usage, and sentence structure got the highest rating among the students' argumentative essays. On the other hand, the Support and Elaboration textual feature, which consists of the thoughtful presentation of ideas received the lowest grade among the argumentative essays of the first-year college of Liberal Arts students. Overall, the students' argumentative essays' holistic rating was considered Moderately Comprehensible. Since textual features of coherence can impact the comprehensibility of students' essays, the English program shall consider the areas of improvement in order to exhibit higher comprehensibility among student writers.

The study that was previously mentioned and the current study are comparable in that they both focus on argumentative writing. On the other hand, they are different in that the current study determines the strategies used in teaching argumentative and informative writing, whereas the prior study only addressed the effectiveness of the students' argumentative essay writing.

Another study was conducted by Gustillo and Magno (2012) at De La Salle University on Filipino Learners' Writing Errors and their Evaluation. One hundred fifty essays written by freshmen college students on their first week of classes in five private schools in Metro

Manila (30 for each participating school) were collected, word-processed, and subjected to rating and coding or errors. Most of the findings revealed that sentence-level errors have a significant role in essay scores. Because both studies focus on academic essay writing, they are somewhat comparable to the one that was just mentioned. However, they differ in that the current study focuses on teaching academic writing strategies while the previous one dealt with the essay writing abilities of the student respondents.

Alameddine and Mirza (2016) had their research on Teaching Essay Writing for Advanced Level Grade 10 English in Lebanon. During the study, an essay template was crafted for the students to follow in order to teach them academic essay writing. The results revealed that following the designed essay template did improve the learners' academic writing, and therefore, the researchers recommend using the template.

This study and the current study are related in that the related study taught academic writing to the student respondents using a designed essay template. The Cloze/Framed Essay, the fourth strategy mentioned in the current study, is a reference to the same strategy in the related study mentioned above. However, they differ in that the current study does not only concentrate on one strategy but also includes three additional strategies.

Torrance and Robinson (2014) examined the writing strategies of graduate research students with the objective of analyzing the relationship between writing strategy and success at thesis writing. The results of this study suggest that strategies characterized by minimal rewriting and, perhaps, the production of a written outline may be more effective than strategies centered on multiple drafting without planning. The finding also revealed that more than 20% of the research students were worried that their difficulties with writing might jeopardize the completion of their doctorate degree. The above-mentioned study is similar to the current study in that both studies deal with outlining, drafting, and planning as strategies for teaching academic writing. On the contrary, they differ in that this related study also focused on the relationship between writing strategies and graduate students' success in thesis writing.

The previously presented studies have shown that some of the strategies used in the present study were found to be effective in global classroom settings. Thus, the present study on academic essay writing strategies for teachers' guide is pursued to ascertain which ones are effective and can significantly have a positive impact on the students' performance in writing academic essays.

3. Method

This section presents the design, environment, respondents, instrument, statistical treatment, and scoring procedures.

3.1 Design

The descriptive-quantitative method was used in this study, which focused on the teaching strategies used by grade 11 senior high school English teachers in their classes. The survey questionnaire was created to ascertain the extent to which these strategies were perceived by student respondents. Similarly, English teachers were to use the strategies in their English classes to assess students' performance, the level of effectiveness of these strategies, and the significant relationship between the strategies used and the students' performance. A survey questionnaire was also distributed to English experts in order to identify the challenges or barriers to teaching academic essay writing.

3.2 Environment

This study was conducted at the department of education- Cebu City Division. Cebu City Don Carlos A. Gothong Memorial National High School (CCDCAGMNHS) and Basak Community High School are two of the senior high schools in the division that offer the subject English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) in which the academic essay writing strategies involved in the study were to be utilized by the English teachers in this subject. CCDCAGMNHS is located at C. Padilla Street, Cebu City. The school offers a K-12 basic education program that has both junior and senior high school in day and night sessions with around 6000 students. On the other hand, Basak Community High School is a k-12 accredited secondary school located at Rizal Avenue, Cebu City. Both senior high school departments of the said locales have offered academic track.

3.3 Respondents

The study was based on two locales. The senior high school grade-11 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and HUMMS (Humanities and Social Sciences) students of each school were used as respondents. STEM and HUMMS are two of the academic strands that both their senior high school program has offered. The purposive sampling method was utilized in the study in which all the identified grade-11 STEM and HUMMS students of both locales were used. Specifically, there were 69 student-respondents from Cebu City Don Carlos A Gothong Memorial National High School and 57 from Basak Community National High School. Twenty English teachers from both schools were also the informants of this study. It had a total of 146 respondents, as indicated in tables 1 and 2. They were given a survey questionnaire to determine the extent to which they had used those strategies over the previous two school years. Then, in their English classes, the English teachers used academic essay writing strategies with the students. Furthermore, the twenty English teachers were to identify the difficulties or barriers in teaching academic essay writing. The respondents' collaborative participation could significantly contribute to the achievement of the research objectives.

Table 1. Distribution of Student Respondents

SCHOOLS	SUBJECT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	Percentage
Cebu City Don Carlos A Gothong Memorial National High School	English for Academic and Professional Purposes	69	55
Basak Community High School		57	45
SUBTOTAL		126	100

Table 2. Distribution of Teacher Respondents

SCHOOLS	SUBJECTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	Percentage
Cebu City Don Carlos A Gothong Memorial National High School	English for Academic and Professional Purposes and English Writing	10	50
Basak Community High School		10	50
SUBTOTAL		20	100
GRAND TOTAL		146	100

3.4 Instrument

A descriptive researcher-made questionnaire based on the book of Maureen Auman's 'Step Up to Writing' was utilized in this research. The strategies in the questionnaire were systematically described for the respondents to accurately tell the extent of use of those strategies. It consisted of the frequency with which each strategy was used during their essay writing activities. The rating scale was as follows: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = frequently, and 4 = always. A rating scale based on Lopres (2020) was used to assess the effectiveness of the strategies, with 1 being ineffective, 2 being less effective, 3 being effective, and 4 being very effective. The students' activities included in the assessments were also based on and adapted from Maureen Auman's Step Up to Writing, a writing strategy module that is used in New Mexico. For the experts to ascertain the challenges or barriers in teaching academic essay writing, there were ten (10) challenges or barriers that would be adjudged using the rating scale (Level of Judgment): Highly Agree, Agree, Highly Disagree, and Disagree.

3.5 Data Treatment

The information was totaled, tabulated, and statistically analyzed. In the analysis and interpretation of data, the following statistical tools were used:

The Simple Weighted Mean was used to determine the extent to which the strategies were used. The use of the four (4) strategies is indicated by four indicators: Never, Seldom, Often, and Always, or 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. The Frequency Distribution Table was used to display the distribution of students' scores in various competencies using various strategies. The Chi-square test was operated to distinguish whether or not there was a significant relationship between the strategies used and the students' performance.

3.6 Scoring Procedure

The following rating scales were used to determine and give meaning to the extent of use of each strategy:

RANGE	SCALE	FREQUENCY	DESCRIPTIONS
3.25-4.00	4	always	always utilized by the teacher in every academic essay writing activity
2.50-3.24	3	often	utilized by the teacher most of the time
1.75-2.49	2	seldom	sometimes by the teacher but it depends on the topic
1.0-1.74	1	never	never utilized by the teacher in any academic essay writing activity

To rate the performance of the student respondents in their argumentative and informative essay writing, a scoring rubric was utilized based on Auman's book, Step Up to Writing.

To ascertain the challenges or barriers in teaching academic essay writing, the following levels of judgment were utilized:

LEVELS OF JUDGMENT	VERBAL DESCRIPTIONS
Highly Agree	The challenge or barrier always happens in teaching academic essay writing
Somewhat Agree	The challenge or barrier sometimes happens in teaching academic essay writing
Somewhat Disagree	The challenge or barrier rarely happens in teaching academic essay writing
Highly Disagree	The challenge or barrier never happens in teaching academic essay writing

To identify the level of effectiveness of each strategy used, the following rating scales were utilized:

Level of Effectiveness	Performance Descriptions
VERY EFFECTIVE	During the test, 90-100% of the informants get a grade of ADVANCED.
EFFECTIVE	During the test, 51-89% of the informants get a grade of PROFICIENT.
LESS EFFECTIVE	During the test, only 20-50% of the informants get a grade of BASIC.
NOT EFFECTIVE	During the test, 19% of the informants and/or below get a grade of BELOW BASIC.

4. Results and Discussions

The information gathered on the recognized academic essay writing strategies is presented in this chapter. The extent to which academic essay writing strategies are employed, student performance when using those strategies to write argumentative and informative essays, levels of effectiveness, a significant relationship between those strategies and the students' performance, and difficulties or barriers in academic essay writing as determined by relevant literature and the opinions of experts are all included in the data. In order to ensure an explicit illustration of the results, these are presented in a tabular format.

4.1 Extent of Use of the Academic Essay Writing Strategies as Perceived by the Student Respondents

This section presents the data in relation to the respondents' perceptions of the respondents' actual use of the identified academic essay writing strategies. The descriptive equivalent of each strategy was calculated from the responses using the weighted mean of each strategy.

Table 3. Academic Essay Writing Strategies' Extent of Use

n=126

TYPES OF ESSAY	STRATEGIES	WEIGHTED MEAN	DESCRIPTIVE EQUIVALENT
I. *Argumentative Essay*			
	1.1 Traffic Light Color Coding	3.74	ALWAYS
	1.2 Planning Using Informal Outline	3.63	ALWAYS
	1.3 Framed Paragraph	3.63	ALWAYS
2. *Informative Essay*	2.1 Traffic Light Color Coding	3.76	ALWAYS
	2.2 Planning Using Informal Outline	3.63	ALWAYS
	2.3 Framed Paragraph	3.68	ALWAYS

It is shown in table 3 the academic essay writing strategies in writing argumentative and informative essays. The three strategies utilized in writing both types of essays are *traffic light color coding, planning using an informal outline, and framed paragraphs*. For the argumentative essay, the first strategy, *traffic light color coding*, got a weighted mean of 3.74, which means "always". The second strategy, *planning using informal outline*, got a weighted mean of 3.63, which means "always". The third and last strategy, *framed paragraph*, got a weighted mean of 3.63, which also means "always". This connotes that all three strategies utilized in writing an argumentative essay were always used in the teaching-learning process during the duration of the research as perceived by the respondents.

Furthermore, for informative essay, the first strategy, *traffic light color coding*, got a weighted mean of 3.76, which means "always". The second strategy, *planning using informal outline*, got a weighted mean of 3.63, which means "always". The third and last strategy, *framed paragraph*, got a weighted mean of 3.68, which likewise means "always." Similar with the three strategies utilized in argumentative writing, this also clearly shows that all three strategies utilized in writing an informative essay were always used in the teaching-learning process during the duration of the research as perceived by the respondents.

Although they differ in rank and even the weighted mean has a small variation in numbers, they have the same descriptive equivalent in terms of the extent of use. Therefore, the teacher could not use the same pedagogical approach with every student. However, before using a more effective teaching strategy, a teacher should evaluate the resources available to them and the learning styles of their students. In the ESL classroom and elsewhere, teachers must constantly come up with new, creative approaches to teaching writing (Rahmat, 2018).

4.2 Students' Performance

The results of the students' use of the three academic essay writing strategies are shown in this section. Based on the percentage of their scores, their performance is evaluated.

Table 4. Students' Performance in both Argumentative and Informative Essay Writing

n=126

TYPES OF ESSAY	STRATEGIES	SCORE/ PERFORMANCE INTERPRETATION (%)
1. Argumentative Essay	1.1 Traffic Light Color Coding	119 or 94 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED
	1.2 Planning Using Informal Outline	113 or 90 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED
	1.3 Framed Paragraph	107 or 85 % of the student-respondents got a rating of PROFICIENT
2. Informative Essay	2.1 Traffic Light Color Coding	112 or 89 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED
	2.2 Planning Using Informal Outline	114 or 91 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED
	2.3 Framed Paragraph	108 or 86% of the student-respondents got a rating of PROFICIENT

Table 4 uses the rating scale to display the students' performance following the use of the strategies. The student respondents were given a performance rating ranging from No Credit (0), Below Basic (1), Basic (2), Proficient (3), and Advanced (4).

There are two types of essays presented in the table: argumentative and informative essays. The first strategy, *planning using informal outline*, indicates that 94 percent of the respondents got a rating of advanced in writing an argumentative essay, and 89 percent of the respondents got a rating of advanced too in writing an informative essay. The performance rating of advanced means that there is a strong introduction that includes a topic sentence that states the claim (for argumentative essay) or main idea or topic (for informative essay) in a highly interesting way; the paragraphs are logically arranged; there are clear and appropriate number of reasons and pieces of evidence that support the claim or main idea; the transitional words used are appropriate; the conclusion is convincing; there are varied sentence structures that enhance purpose, and lastly the text or essay communicates explicitly with almost no mistakes in capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling, and paraphrasing.

The second strategy used, *planning using informal outline*, shows that 90 % of the student-respondents got a rating of advanced in writing an argumentative essay, and 91 % of the student-respondents got a rating of advanced too in writing an informative essay. This likewise tells that there is a strong introduction that includes a topic sentence that states the claim (for argumentative essay) or main idea or topic (for informative essay) in an interesting way; the paragraphs are logically arranged; there are clear and appropriate number of reasons and pieces of evidence that support the claim or main idea; the transitional words used are appropriate; the conclusion is convincing; there are varied sentence structures that enhance purpose, and lastly the text or essay communicates explicitly with almost no misktakes in capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling, and paraphrasing.

On the other hand, the third strategy, *framed paragraph,* revealed that 85 % of the student-respondents got a rating of proficient in writing an argumentative essay, and 86% of the student-respondents got a rating of proficient too. A performance rating of proficient means that the introduction includes topic sentence clearly states the claim; body paragraphs support the claim with logical reasons and evidence; transition topic sentences connect claim, reasons, and evidence; a solid conclusion follows from and supports the claim, some academic words were used, and text or essay is clearly understood due to few errors in capitalization usage punctuation spelling paragraphing.

4.3 Academic Essay Writing Strategies' Level of Effectiveness

Table 5. Strategies' Level of Effectiveness

n=126

TYPES OF ESSAY	STRATEGIES	SCORE INTERPRETATION (%)	STRATEGIES' LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS
1.Argumentative Essay	1.1 Traffic Light Color Coding	119 or 94 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED	VERY EFFECTIVE
	1.2 Planning Using Informal Outline	113 or 90 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED	VERY EFFECTIVE
	1.3 Framed Paragraph	107 or 85 % of the student-respondents got a rating of PROFICIENT	EFFECTIVE
2. Informative Essay	2.1 Traffic Light Color Coding	112 or 89 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED	VERY EFFECTIVE
	2.2 Planning Using Informal Outline	114 or 91 % of the student-respondents got a rating of ADVANCED	VERY EFFECTIVE
	2.3 Framed Paragraph	108 or 86% of the student-respondents got a rating of PROFICIENT	EFFECTIVE

This section presents the level of effectiveness of the academic essay writing strategies as they were used in writing argumentative and informative essays.

Table 5 displays the effectiveness of each academic essay writing strategy used in the study using the rating scale. The strategies were classified as Very Effective, Effective, Less Effective, and Not Effective based on the students' performance. The two types of essays presented in the table both used the same strategies. For the argumentative essay, the student-respondents both got the performance rating of advanced in using the *traffic light color coding* and *planning using informal outline,* which means that both strategies were very effective. However, for the third strategy used, *framed paragraph,* in writing an argumentative essay, the student-respondents got a performance rating of proficient, which means that the strategy was effective.

For writing an informative essay, like the argumentative essay, the student-respondents both got the performance rating of advanced in using the *traffic light color coding* and *planning using informal outline,* which means that both writing strategies were very effective. On the other side, for the framed-paragraph, the student- respondents got a performance rating of proficient, which means that the strategy was effective.

This recent research also depicts the same success when Auman (2015) had utilized these strategies in her classroom. In her book, *Step Up to Writing,* she mentioned that there were improvements in the students' test scores. The students were on task and willing to write. They liked the clear and simple instructions that provided an explicit structure and encouraged them to share their ideas. Sianipar (2012) discovered that employing the outline technique enhanced students' proficiency in producing descriptive paragraphs.

4.4 Relationship between the Strategies Used and the Students' Performance

The significant correlation between the strategies employed and the students' performance is shown in this section.

Table 6. Significant Relationship

n=126

COMPETENCIES	STRATEGIES	STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE	df	Computed p-value	Interpretation
Writing an Argumentative Essay	Traffic Light Color Coding	Advanced	3	0.0054	There is a significant Relationship
	Planning Using an Informal Outline	Advanced	3	0.0273	There is a significant Relationship
	Framed Paragraph	Proficient	3	0.0108	There is a significant Relationship
Writing an Informative Essay	Traffic Light Color Coding	Advanced	3	0.0283	There is a significant Relationship
	Planning Using an Informal Outline	Advanced	3	0.0273	There is a significant Relationship
	Framed Paragraph	Proficient	3	0.0183	There is a significant Relationship

Table 6 shows two competencies: writing an argument essay and writing an informative essay, with the three strategies used for each: traffic light color coding, planning using an informal outline, and framed paragraph. The students' performance in using the traffic light color coding and planning using an informal outline strategy was advanced in writing both argumentative and informative essays. Additionally, the students' performance in using the framed paragraph strategy in both argumentative and informative essay writing was proficient.

The first competency, writing an argumentative essay, utilizing the traffic light color coding strategy, has a computed p-value of 0.0054 with 3 degrees of freedom. The second strategy, planning using an informal outline, has a computed p-value of 0.0273 with 3 degrees of freedom. The third strategy, framed paragraph, has a computed p-value of 0.0108 with 3 degrees of freedom. The research hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the strategies used and the performance of the students was confirmed by the above-mentioned computed p-values for the three strategies being less than 0.05. This suggests that the methods employed have an impact on how well the students perform.

Geigle (2014) confirmed that color-coding writing promotes academic success and is the first step toward achieving writing mastery. According to Maldonado-Otto and Ormsbee (2019), color-coding schemes play a vital role in the effectiveness of conveying written information by enhancing and adding interest to the written text through the selection and combination of colors in relation to function. Information can be highlighted with color to create visual cues that make it easier to follow and comprehend the organization of the text. Kartawijaya (2018) found that giving students writing assignments with an outline improved their writing abilities. Brown et al. (2019) discovered that scripts or paragraph frames are useful in the transition to academic language skill development, keeping in mind that scripts, even for speech, provide scaffolding.

The implication of this research is that teachers and educators can use these strategies in teaching writing skills to enhance students' performance in writing essays. These strategies can be incorporated into writing curricula to help students improve their writing skills and achieve better results. If these strategies are also used consistently and in the right way, they will certainly yield greater results.

The three above-mentioned strategies should be utilized in this way. Use the traffic light color coding strategy to organize your essay by assigning each section a different color, just like the traffic light. For instance, use GREEN for the thesis statement, YELLOW for important details or big ideas, RED for justifications, justifications, and examples, and GREEN for the final sentence or paragraph. This is relevant to the examples and the work produced by the students, not to mention the discussion of how each paragraph's component parts are constructed. The students can quickly recall the elements of the essay when they write by keeping in mind the colors. To utilize the planning using an informal outline strategy, the teacher has to present an example or a template of the informal outline, which indicates the parts of the essay and model the process of filling it in. The details that are included in the outline are the major pieces of information that the students have to include when writing their essays. Also, to master the skill of using this informal outline, the teacher could ask the students to complete the outline template using the information from the given informative or argumentative essay. To use the framed paragraph strategy, the teacher will provide a template with sentence stems or starters that students will just have to continue. These sentence stems are evident in the beginning, middle, and end part of the essay. This strategy is like providing the students with some free thoughts before they start writing their essays.

Moreover, the findings provide insights into the effectiveness of different teaching strategies in writing instruction. It shows that using different approaches can have varying degrees of impact on students' writing abilities. This emphasizes the importance of teachers having a diverse range of strategies to teach writing effectively, and the need to continually assess the effectiveness of different teaching strategies. Considering that learning how to write essays is true to global classrooms, it is imperative for English teachers to have a portfolio of

effective pedagogical strategies.

The second competency, writing an informative essay, using the traffic light color coding strategy, has a computed p-value of 0.0283 with 3 degrees of freedom. The second strategy, planning using an informal outline, has a computed p-value of 0.0273 with 3 degrees of freedom. The third strategy, framed paragraph, has a computed p-value of 0.0183 with 3 degrees of freedom. The research hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the strategies used and the performance of the students was confirmed by the above-mentioned computed p-values for the three strategies being less than 0.05. This implies that the methods employed have a favorable influence on the results of the students' performance. Evidently, the three strategies: traffic light color coding, planning using an informal outline, and framed paragraphs have significantly impacted in teaching the academic essay writing as observed in the students' performance.

Nurdiansyah & Parmawati (2019) concurred that students with learning disabilities can benefit from color-coded graphic organizers when learning to write. Li & Liu (2019) found that a good way to assist English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in improving their essay writing is to teach them how to use outlining in their English essays. Salija (2017) highlighted that pre-writing or outlining strategy was crucial to the development of high-quality ideas.

These findings have important implications for educators and students alike. For educators, the results suggest that incorporating these specific strategies into writing instruction may lead to improved student outcomes. Specifically, teachers could consider using traffic light color coding as a method for helping students identify areas of their essays that need improvement, using informal outlines to help students plan and organize their ideas, and using framed paragraphs to guide students in writing focused and coherent paragraphs.

For students, the findings suggest that utilizing these strategies may be beneficial for improving their writing skills. Students could potentially benefit from incorporating traffic light color coding, informal outlines, and framed paragraphs into their writing process to improve the clarity and organization of their essays.

In summary, the research findings suggest that the writing strategies of writing both argumentative and informative essays with the traffic light color coding strategy, planning using an informal outline, and framed paragraphs are effective in improving students' writing skills. The insights gained from the findings can be used by educators to design effective teaching materials and methods, and by students to improve their essay writing skills. Based on the suitability of teachers, students, subjects, and situations, the model of training of learning strategies in essay writing should be applied and developed (Winarto, 2015).

4.5 Barriers in Academic Essay Writing Based on Related Literature and Experts' Judgment

This section presents the challenges or barriers in academic essay writing based on related literature and experts' judgment.

Table 7. Barriers in Academic Essay Writing Based on Related Literature

Challenges/Barriers	Description	Reference/ Source	Findings
Teaching academic essay writing for advanced-level grade 10 English (sciencedirect.com)	Teachers need to take on research-based methods of second-language teaching since research-based methods have been successful in helping second-language students produce writing that has a satisfactory level of linguistic competence and mastery of academic writing. Furthermore, teachers should modify their classes according to their learners' specific needs. Strategies vary, and what works for one learner does not necessarily work for another.	Authors: Mira M. Alameddine and Hanadi S. Mirza (2016)	Research revealed that by following certain strategies, academic writing skills may be acquired more systematically when learners have a high level of English skills. The results revealed that seriously following the designed essay template has improved the students' academic writing, and thus, the researchers recommend using the template.
Factors affecting undergraduate students' academic writing practices in Turkey (sciencedirect.com)	College students in Turkey had experienced difficulties with academic writing as they tried to accommodate their existing writing knowledge to the requirements of the new discipline-specific writing and learning situation of tertiary-level education.	Authors: Derya Altınmakas and Yasemin Bayyurt (2019)	It was discovered that undergraduate writing is influenced by an array of interrelating educational and contextual factors: (1) the amount and nature of L1 and L2 pre-university writing instruction and experience, (2) students' perceptions about academic writing and disciplinary-specific text genres, (3) prolonged engagement with the academic context and discourse, and (4) expectations of faculty members. The insights gained from the study provide important implications for the reconceptualization of writing instruction in Turkey.
Diagnosing English learners' writing skills (tandfonline.com)	The students had difficulty mastering the content part of writing an essay.	Author: Zahra Shahsavar (2019)	The skill mastery pattern across writing showed that language was the easiest skill to master, while the content was the most difficult. Researchers, teachers, and language students may benefit from using the 21-item checklist in the EFL context to assess students' writing.
Embedded provision to improve source-based	Information-sharing and the need for explicit instruction in linguistic and communicative aspects	Author: Rosemary	The results indicated that opportunities for students to become aware of the elements of source-based

writing skills in a first year health sciences course (sciencedirect.com)	of academic writing, such as disciplinary conventions, rhetorical purposes of citations, options for how to cite, and integration of sources into individual academic arguments, were both identified as problematic issues.	Wette (2019)	writing in Year 1 and throughout their undergraduate years would aid in their mastery of this intricate, multifaceted skill set.
The effects of a socio-cognitive approach to teaching academic writing on stance support moves and topicality in students' expository essays (sciencedirect.com)	Writing essays in English is essential to academic success for students in an English-medium educational system, but such writing can be challenging for students whose English is their second language.	Author: Antonia Chandrasegaran (2013)	Significant improvements were evident in students' stance support moves and functionality of topics in post-instruction essays. The discussion section argues that these findings point to the effectiveness of a social-cognitive approach to teaching writing.
Essaying the essay: Nursing scholarship and the hegemony of the laboratory (sciencedirect.com)	Essays never became fully accepted as an academic form in nursing.	Authors: Lyn Gardner and Gary Rolfe (2013)	We suggest that the essay is thematically and stylistically broad, drawing from a broad range of cultural, disciplinary, and academic reference points. As such, it presents a challenge to the dominant technical rational approach to academic nursing in both its form and its content, particularly in its disregard for the rigidly imposed genres and structures increasingly demanded by academic nursing journals.
Predicting integrated academic writing task performance: Source comprehension, prewriting planning, and individual differences (sciencedirect.com)	Second-language writers experience challenges with the comprehension and integration of source ideas.	Authors: Caroline Payant and Kim McDonough (2019)	The findings indicated that anxiety and reading scores were significant manifestations of CAEL writing band scores, and the interview data provided greater insights into the L2 writers' reading-to-plan strategies and challenges. Pedagogical implications were articulated to increase students' understanding of the relationship between reading comprehension and prewriting planning.
Exploring second language writers' source-text use in an integrated writing assessment (sciencedirect.com)	Research has revealed that novice writers had difficulty comprehending source text information, paraphrasing and summarizing source information, and incorporating that information into a coherent piece of writing.	Authors: Pakize Uludag and Rachael Lindberg (2019)	Written texts were analyzed and evaluated in terms of the number of source-text ideas utilized, linguistic modifications to source information, and content accuracy of source information. Results revealed that both the number of source ideas and content accuracy predicted participants' English language standardized assessment writing scores.
Second language writers' use of outside sources and the related challenges (sciencedirect.com)	The students face difficulty with both the reading and writing phases of source-based writing.	Authors; Heike Neumann and Sarah Leu (2019)	Researchers have called for the development of new pedagogical strategies to help students learn how to integrate source information into their own texts effectively.
ESL students' perceptions of the challenges they face in a community college writing class are expressed in art. (sciencedirect.com)	A student's difficulties in an ESL writing course and for community college students can be attributed to a variety of factors, including multiple jobs, family obligations, and poor prior educational experiences. The aforementioned obstacles could create a variety of difficulties, such as course failure and the need to take the necessary writing class again, which would cause frustration, anxiety, and a lack of motivation.	Author: Heather B. Finn (2018)	Students rarely attribute their difficulties in a writing class to just one cause, according to research, and frequently they are unaware of all the contributing factors. As it provides both students and teachers with a more nuanced perspective of challenges within the class, the students are encouraged to reflect on and discuss their struggles. As ESL students advance through their academic programs and develop their L2 writing abilities, this can help faculty and administrators support them.

Table 7 presents the challenges or barriers in academic essay writing. The aforementioned barriers in academic essay writing imply that since essay writing is a systematically and thematically broad English skill, it is understood that there are surrounding factors that may hinder the students in learning the essay writing skill effectively. Thus, using the most appropriate pedagogical strategy in the classroom is the key to successful essay writing not only in the classroom but also in the outside world.

Table 8. Barriers in Academic Essay Writing Based on Experts' Judgment

(n=20)

Challenges/ Barriers	Levels of Judgment				
	Highly Agree (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Somewhat Disagree (%)	Highly Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1. Providing various essay structures for the students to follow is my concern.		80%	20%		100%
2. Many of my senior high school students have not yet mastered the basics of essay writing.		40%	50%	10%	100%
3. Many of my senior high school students have poor background knowledge about the concepts of writing an essay.		40%	50%	10%	100%
4. Many of my senior high school students lack exposure to writing essays.		50%	50%		100%
5. I need an extended time for explicit instruction in essay writing.	80%	20%			100%
6. Teaching essay writing to learners whose English is their second language is a barrier to my instruction.	100%				100%
7. Many of my senior high school students have difficulty in understanding source text information which leads to having a problem writing a good essay.		40%	50%	10%	100%
8. Many of my senior high school students do not have strategies in place that will help them plan and write their essays.	50%	50%			100%
9. Lack of parental support is a problem I have faced in my instruction.	50%	50%			100%
10. Even after a series of explicit teaching, many of my senior high school students could not write their essays due to a lack of motivation.		50%	40%	10%	100%

Table 8 details the teacher experts' level of judgment on the given challenges or barriers in teaching academic essay writing. On the first barrier, *providing various essay structures for the students to follow is my concern*, 80% of the experts adjudged Somewhat Agree (SA), and 20% for Somewhat Disagree (SD). This connotes that many English teachers have believed that they need more resources to aid them in teaching academic essay writing. On the second barrier, *many of my senior high school students have not yet mastered the basics of essay writing*, 40% of the experts adjudged Somewhat Agree (SA), 50% for Somewhat Disagree (SD), and 10% for Highly Disagree. This shows that the essay writing skill level of senior high school students is heterogeneous. There are experts who have perceived that their students have already mastered the basics of essay writing, while some experts thought otherwise. On the third barrier, *many of my senior high school students have poor background knowledge about the concepts of writing an essay*, 40% of the experts adjudged Somewhat Agree (SA), 50% for Somewhat Disagree (SA), and 10% for Highly Disagree (HD). This means that there are senior high school students whose background knowledge about the concepts of writing an essay is poor, while others are not as perceived by the experts. On the fourth barrier, *many of my senior high school students lack exposure to writing essays*, 50% of the experts adjudged Somewhat Agree (SA), and 50% for Somewhat Disagree). This implies that the senior high school students differ in terms of the opportunities or exposures for them to write essays. On the fifth barrier, *I need an extended time for explicit instruction in essay writing,* 80% of the experts adjudged Highly Agree (HA), and 20% for Somewhat Agree (Agree). This clearly shows that enough instructional time for academic essay writing is a great factor for the teaching-learning process to be successful.

For the sixth barrier, *teaching essay writing to learners whose English is their second language is a barrier to my instruction*, 100% of the experts adjudged Highly Agree (HA). This is a great manifestation that having enough resources, instructional support from the Department of Education and school administration, clear lesson scaffolding, and lessons' accommodations and modifications are key factors for these second language learners to thrive well in the academe. For the seventh barrier, *many of my senior high school students have difficulty understanding source text information which leads to having a problem in writing a good essay*, 40% of the experts adjudged Somewhat Agree (SA), 50% for Somewhat Disagree (SD), and 10% for Highly Disagree (HD). This means that there are senior high school students who have difficulty comprehending the text source, while others do not have the same difficulty. Before the students can write an essay, they will have to read some passages first and use the details from the passages in writing their essays. Thus, understanding the text source is an essential skill to succeed in essay writing. For the eighth barrier, *many of my senior high school students do not have strategies in place that will help them plan and write their essays*, 50% of the experts adjudged Highly Agree (HA), and 50% for Somewhat Agree (SA). This shows that the students do not have some strategies or structures in place that will guide them in writing their essays. Having some structures or designed templates that the students are familiar with will help them easily write their essays. For the ninth barrier, *lack of parental support is a problem I have faced in my instruction,* 50% of the experts adjudged Highly Agree (HA), and 50% for Somewhat Agree (SA). This connotes that the students do not get parental support at home. Getting parental support is an important key to the educational success of any students. For the last barrier, *even after a series of explicit teaching, many of my senior high school students could not write their essays due to lack of motivation*, 50% of the experts adjudged Somewhat Agree (SA), 40% for Somewhat Disagree (SD), and 10% for Highly Disagree (10). This connotes that there is a differing students' level of motivation. Motivation is one big area that always impacts the teaching-learning process. Providing a sort of motivation is one of the key responsibilities of teachers to their students.

The above-mentioned barriers or challenges in teaching academic essay writing were adjudged by experts at different levels. The common

fact is that these barriers are still existing in the academe, and it is imperative for them to be at least minimized or lessened, if not eliminated. With this present research, it aims to do it so. These barriers have confirmed the previous studies of Alameddine & Mirza, 2016; Altinmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Chandrasegaran, 2013; Finn, 2018; Gardner & Rolfe, 2013; Neumann & Leu, 2019; Payant & McDonough, 2019; Shahsavar, 2019; Uladag &Lindberg, 2019; Wette, 2019.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results, it was concluded that traffic light color coding, planning using an informal outline, and framed paragraphs were effective pedagogical strategies that teachers could utilize in teaching academic essay writing, as evident in the students' performance in this research. Additionally, the three strategies investigated in this research were always used in teaching argumentative and informative essays as perceived by the teacher respondents, which in one way or another, contributed to the students' performance results. The strategies used, and the students' performance showed a significant relationship. The implication is that the strategies of writing both argumentative and informative essays with the traffic light color coding strategy, planning using an informal outline, and framed paragraphs are effective in improving students' writing skills. The insights gained from the findings can be used by educators to design effective teaching materials and methods, and by students to improve their essay writing skills. The barriers or challenges in teaching academic essay writing based on related literature were confirmed through the experts' judgment that those barriers are still existing and need to be remediated. The top barriers in teaching academic essay writing were as follows: teaching essay writing to the second language learner, lack of time for explicit instruction, no strategies in place for the part of the students, lack of parental support, and lack of essay structures on the part of the teachers. Based on the findings, some relevant recommendations are postulated: that suitable pedagogical strategies be utilized in teaching academic essay writing; that high-quality essay writing activities be taken into consideration, and that similar or related research on academic essay writing may be conducted.

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