

Self-Made Guide Book: An English Learning Tool to Enhance Students' Correspondence Writing Skills

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Abstract

The self-made guidebook is an English learning tool used by Grade 10 students to enhance their correspondence writing skills. The guidebook was subjected to validation and acceptability test by students and experts. This study sought answers to the following questions: To identify the acceptability level of the content of the guidebook. To identify the acceptability level of the visual features of the guidebook. To identify the level of proficiency in correspondence writing among Grade 10 students using the guidebook and lecturing method as to: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. To identify if there is a significant difference between the level of learner's proficiency in correspondence writing using the guidebook and lecturing method. And to identify if the content and the visual features of the guidebook have significant effect to the learner's proficiency in correspondence writing skills.

The respondents of the study were fifty (50) Grade 10 students of Pedro Guevara Memorial National High School. The descriptive survey method was used in this study in order to assess the acceptability level of content and visual features of the guidebook.

The findings revealed a very high level of acceptability for the content of the guidebook, particularly. Students strongly agreed that the objectives were clear, achievable, and relevant, and that the examples and exercises were clear, relevant, engaging, and helpful. Additionally, the visual features of the guidebook, including size, layout, and typography, were also highly acceptable to students. The utilization of guidebook showed superior results in content, organization, and mechanics. However, there were no significant differences observed in grammar and vocabulary proficiency between the two methods.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the self-made guidebook as an English learning tool in enhancing Grade 10 students' correspondence writing skills. Based on the conclusions formulated from the findings, the following recommendations were hereby formulated: the guidebook could be used as an effective alternative learning tool/material to traditional way of teaching correspondence writing, educators should make use of validated instructional materials to assist in the traditional method of teaching in order to enhance learners' proficiency in correspondence writing, instructional materials should have activities that develop critical thinking, and exercises that will help learners find better understanding of topics or concepts. the Department of Education or schools can provide educator training or workshops to train teachers or facilitators on effectively using guidebook or other learning material in teaching writing, a similar study may be conducted to determine the validity and acceptability of the guidebook by subjecting it to use of other students from other grade level.

Keywords: guidebook; traditional; instructional materials

1. Introduction

Among the four macro skills, writing is considered to be the hardest to teach and learn (Gepila, 2018). It is a complex skill requiring individuals to possess the necessary competencies for effective written communication. The mastery of effective writing skills is crucial for students, offering a plethora of benefits, especially in the Philippines, where English is widely used in education, business, and government. Proficiency in writing is more than a valuable asset; it is synonymous with achieving overall excellence (Gepila, 2018). Acknowledged widely, adept English writing skills empower students to attain higher academic achievements and develop a deeper and more expansive perspective of the world.

Writing and English proficiency in the Philippines is, unfortunately, declining. Studies showed that the Philippines is no longer considered to be the leading English-speaking countries and received an average score in writing. According to Valderama (2019), an article shows Filipinos are declining in English proficiency. The Philippines placed from 14th in 2018 to 20th in the year 2019. English Proficiency Index (EPI) is said to measure the average level of the English language skills of language learners based on the results of an online Standard English Test (SET). The test was administered by a Swiss-based global company focusing on language, academic, cultural exchange, and educational travel programs, named English Proficiency Education First. Furthermore, based on results of the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics 2019 (SEA-PLM), when it comes to writing assessment, Filipino students received an average score of 288, behind Vietnam (327), Malaysia (318) and Myanmar (298), and ahead of Cambodia and Laos, where students got an average score of 285 and 283. This suggested that a student in the Philippines can produce very limited writing with fragmented ideas and inadequate vocabulary as some 46 percent fell to the lowest proficiency band in writing—those who have limited ability to present ideas in writing and can produce a few sentences with very limited content (Dela Peña, 2023).

The country's English Proficiency Index (EPI) and SEA-PLM writing assessment result are believed to be a good reason why the country's education sector should worry and address this concern immediately.

With this in mind, the Department of Education is trying to strengthen its effort in dealing with the concern. This includes the consideration of many factors that affect the learners' proficiency. The Department of Education has developed an enhanced basic education curriculum that will allow schools to personalize, localize, and enrich their learning materials based on the students' unique educational and social circumstances. Locally created instructional materials are encouraged, with regional and divisional education units having the final approval authority in accordance with Section 10.5 (h) of Republic Act No. 10533 (2013). Furthermore, DepEd Order No. 31, issued in 2012, recognizes the creation of learning materials as a strategic approach to meet the evolving needs of Filipino learners and adapt to the demands of contemporary education, fostering the creation of locally relevant teaching materials.

In light of these substantial challenges and the ongoing efforts of the Department of Education to promote locally relevant instructional materials, it becomes evident that addressing the issue of English and writing proficiency among students in the Philippines is of paramount importance.

This study seeks to investigate the potential of guidebook as an English learning tool for enhancing students' correspondence writing skills, with the objective of mitigating the identified challenges and ultimately contributing to the enhancement of writing proficiency among Filipino students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the acceptability level of the content of the pamphlet in terms of:
 - 1.1 Objectives;
 - 1.2 Examples; and

- 1.3 Exercises?
2. What is the acceptability level of the visual features of the pamphlet in terms of:
 - 2.1 Size of the material;
 - 2.2 Layout; and
 - 2.3 Typography?
3. What is the level of proficiency in correspondence writing skills among Grade 10 students using the guidebook and lecturing method as to:
 - 3.1 Content;
 - 3.2. Organization;
 - 3.3. Grammar;
 - 3.4. Vocabulary; and
 - 3.5. Mechanic?
4. Is there a significant difference between the level of learner's proficiency in correspondence writing using the guidebook and lecturing method?
5. Does the content and the visual features of the guidebook have significant effect to the learner's proficiency in correspondence writing skills?

2. Methodology

This study utilized an experimental research design to investigate the effectiveness of a self-made guidebook as a learning tool to enhance Grade 10 students' correspondence writing skills at Pedro Guevara Memorial National High School in Santa Cruz, Laguna. The study will randomly assign participants to either an experimental group, which will use the self-made guidebook, or a control group, which will receive traditional lecturing.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter present, analyzes and interprets the data gathered that showed significant difference between the level of learner's proficiency in technical writing using the pamphlet and lecturing method. Additionally significant effect on the content and the visual features of the pamphlet to the learner's proficiency in technical writing skills.

Acceptability Level of the Content of the Guidebook

The acceptability level of the content of the guidebook includes instruction, examples and exercises and was determine by mean and standard deviation.

Table 1. Acceptability Level of the Content of the Guidebook in terms of Objectives

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1. <i>The objectives of the guidebook were clearly stated and they were easy for me to understand it.</i>	3.56	0.51	Strongly Agree
2. <i>The objectives of the guidebook were clear and specific, making it easy for me to determine if they were met.</i>	3.48	0.51	Strongly Agree
3. <i>I found that the objectives of the guidebook were achievable and realistic.</i>	3.64	0.49	Strongly Agree

4. The objectives of the guidebook were relevant to me.	3.00	0.29	Agree
5. I found that the objectives of the guidebook were consistent with its content.	3.92	0.28	Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 3.52

Standard Deviation = 0.52

Verbal Interpretation = Very High

Table 1 presents the acceptability level of the content of the guidebook in terms of objective. Respondents strongly agree that the objectives of the of the guidebook were consistent with its content (M=3.92), relevant for the user (M= 3.00).

The overall mean of 3.52 with the standard deviation of 0.52 indicate a very high level of acceptability of the content of the guidebook in terms of objective. This means that the guidebook perceived the objectives as clear, achievable, realistic, relevant, and consistent with the content, indicating strong alignment with users' expectations and needs

Table 2. Acceptability Level of the Content of the Guidebook in terms of Examples

Indicators	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I found the examples provided in the guidebook clear and easy to understand.	3.64	0.57	Strongly Agree
2. The examples provided in the guidebook were relevant to the topic.	3.56	0.51	Strongly Agree
3. The examples in the guidebook were engaging and they kept my interest.	3.48	0.51	Strongly Agree
4. The examples in the guidebook helped me understand the content better.	3.80	0.41	Strongly Agree
5. The examples in the guidebook helped me understand the concepts better.	3.80	0.41	Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 3.66

Standard Deviation = 0.49

Verbal Interpretation = Very High

Table 2 presents the acceptability level of the content of the guidebook in terms of examples. Respondents strongly agree that the examples of the of the guidebook were clear and easy to understand (M=3.64), relevant to the topic (M=3.56), were engaging and kept their interest (M=3.48), helped them understand the content better (M=3.80), and helped them understand the concepts better (M=3.80).

The overall mean of 3.66 with the standard deviation of 0.49 indicate a very high level of acceptability of the content of the guidebook in terms of examples. This mean that the guidebook perceived the examples as clear, relevant, engaging, and helpful.

Table 3. Acceptability Level of the Content of the Guidebook in terms of Exercises

Indicators	Mean	SD	Remarks
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1.	The exercises in the guidebook were clear and easy for me to follow.	3.60	0.58	Strongly Agree
2.	I found the instructions for each exercise clear and easy to understand.	3.60	0.58	Strongly Agree
3.	The types of activities in the guidebook vary.	3.08	0.40	Agree
4.	The learning activities stimulated my critical thinking skills.	3.48	0.51	Strongly Agree
5.	The exercises in the guidebook enhanced my understanding of the topic.	3.88	0.33	Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 3.53

Standard Deviation = 0.55

Verbal Interpretation = Very High

Table 3 presents the acceptability level of the content of the guidebook in terms of exercises. Respondents strongly agree that the exercises of the guidebook were clear and easy to follow (M=3.60), the instructions were clear and easy to understand (M= 3.60), it stimulated their critical thinking skills (M=3.48), and it enhanced their understanding of the topic (3.88). Likewise, the respondents agree that the activities in the guidebook vary (M=3.08).

The overall mean of 3.53 with the standard deviation of 0.55 indicate a very high level of acceptability of the content of the guidebook in terms of exercises.

Acceptability Level of the Visual Features of the Guidebook

Acceptability level of the visual features of the guidebook include size of material, layout, typography and was determine by mean and standard deviation.

Table 4. Acceptability Level of the Visual Features of the Guidebook in terms of Size of Material

Indicators	Mean	SD	Remarks	
1.	The size of the guidebook made it easy for me to handle and read.	3.64	0.49	Strongly Agree
2.	I found the guidebook's size suitable for holding and carrying.	3.56	0.51	Strongly Agree
3.	The size of the guidebook was appropriate for its intended purpose.	3.60	0.50	Strongly Agree
4.	I found the guidebook's size convenient for quickly referencing information.	3.84	0.37	Strongly Agree
5.	The size of the guidebook was too large, making it difficult for me store.	2.76	0.78	Agree

Overall Mean = 3.48

Standard Deviation = 0.66

Verbal Interpretation = Very High

Table 4 shows the acceptability level of the visual features of the guidebook in terms of size of material. Respondents strongly agree that the size of the guidebook made easy to handle and read (M=3.64),

suitable for holding and carrying (M=3.56), appropriate for its intended purpose (M=3.60), convenient for quick referencing of information (M=3.84). Likewise, respondents agree that the size of the guidebook was too large, making it difficult for the user to store (M= 2.76).

The overall mean of 3.48 and the standard deviation of 0.66 indicate a very high level of acceptability of the features of the guidebook in terms of size of material. This means that it is important to consider user feedback and preferences in the design and development of instructional materials to enhance usability and effectiveness.

Table 5. Acceptability Level of the Visual Features of the Guidebook in terms of Layout

Indicators	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. The layout of the guidebook was visually appealing to me, with appropriate image sizes and harmonious colors that clarified the function.	3.60	0.50	Strongly Agree
2. The title and text colors of the teaching material stood out from the background.	3.72	0.46	Strongly Agree
3. I found the organization of content, including sections and paragraphs, logical and easy to follow, with titles and illustrations placed to avoid interference with understanding.	3.56	0.58	Strongly Agree
4. I found the placement of decoration/illustration as a background did not interfere with the title or content understanding.	3.24	0.44	Agree
5. I found the spaces between text and illustrations to be appropriate.	3.68	0.48	Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 3.56

Standard Deviation = 0.51

Verbal Interpretation = Very High

Table 5 shows the acceptability level of the visual features of the guidebook in terms of layout. Respondents strongly agree that the layout of the guidebook was visually appealing with appropriate image sizes and harmonious colors (M=3.60), the title and text colors stood out from the background (M=3.72), the organizations of content, including sections and paragraphs, logical and easy to follow, with titles and illustrations placed to avoid interference with understanding (M=3.56), the spaces between text and illustrations were appropriate (M=3.68). Likewise, respondents agree that the layout of the guidebook considering the placement of decoration/illustration did not interfere with the title or content understanding (M=3.24).

The overall mean of 3.56 and the standard deviation of 0.51 indicate a very high level of acceptability of the features of the guidebook in terms of the layout. This means that it is important to consider user feedback and preferences in the design and development of instructional materials to enhance usability and effectiveness.

Table 6. Acceptability Level of the Visual Features of The Guidebook in Terms of Typography

Indicators	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. The typography, including the font style, size, and color, used in the guidebook was visually appealing to me.	3.56	0.51	Strongly Agree

2.	The letters used were clear and easy for me to read. It also complemented the overall design and content.	3.72	0.46	Strongly Agree
3.	The hierarchy of titles was clear, consistent, and proportional for me.	3.64	0.49	Strongly Agree
4.	The typography used in the guidebook aligned with what I perceived as the target audience and purpose.	3.76	0.44	Strongly Agree
5.	I was satisfied with the typography used in the guidebook.	3.76	0.44	Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 3.69

Standard Deviation = 0.47

Verbal Interpretation = Very High

Table 6 shows the acceptability level of the visual features of the guidebook in terms of typography. Respondents strongly agree that the typography of the guidebook including the font size style, size, and color used was visually appealing (M=3.56), the letters used were clear, easy to read, and complemented the overall design and content (M=3.72), the hierarchy of titles was clear, consistent and proportional (M=3.64), aligned with what the respondents perceived as the target audience and purpose (M=3.76) and the respondents was satisfied with the typography used (M=3.76).

The overall mean of 3.69 and the standard deviation of 0.47 indicate a very high level of acceptability of the features of the guidebook in terms of the typography. This means that it is important to consider user feedback and preferences in the design and development of instructional materials to enhance usability and effectiveness.

Level of Proficiency in Correspondence Writing

Level of proficiency in correspondence using lecturing method and guidebook and was determine by mean and standard deviation.

Table 7. Level of Proficiency in Correspondence Writing Among Grade 10 Students Using the Guidebook and Lecturing Method

Indicators	Lecturing Method			Using the Guidebook			
	Mean	SD	Remarks	Mean	SD	Remarks	
Letter Application of	Content	2.56	0.77	Good	3.44	0.51	Excellent
	Organization	2.56	0.77	Good	3.44	0.51	Excellent
	Grammar	2.60	0.82	Good	3.16	0.55	Good
	Vocabulary	2.60	0.82	Good	3.16	0.55	Good
	Mechanics	2.12	0.67	Fair	3.04	0.79	Good
Letter of Inquiry	Content	2.56	0.71	Good	3.16	0.80	Good
	Organization	2.56	0.71	Good	2.92	0.76	Good

	Grammar	2.64	0.86	Good	3.00	0.58	Good
	Vocabulary	2.64	0.86	Good	2.96	0.61	Good
	Mechanics	2.08	0.81	Fair	2.44	0.58	Fair
Letter of Complaint	Content	2.60	0.82	Good	3.16	0.75	Good
	Organization	2.64	0.86	Good	3.00	0.71	Good
	Grammar	2.68	0.90	Good	2.84	0.75	Good
	Vocabulary	2.64	0.86	Good	2.88	0.73	Good
	Mechanics	2.04	0.84	Fair	2.28	0.61	Fair
Overall	Content	2.57	0.76	High	3.25	0.70	High
	Organization	2.59	0.77	High	3.12	0.70	High
	Grammar	2.64	0.85	High	3.00	0.64	High
	Vocabulary	2.63	0.83	High	3.00	0.64	High
	Mechanics	2.08	0.77	Low	2.59	0.74	High

Table 7 shows the level of Proficiency in Correspondence Writing of the students using lecturing method and guidebook in different writing activities such as writing letter of application, letter of inquiry, and letter of complaint using different indicator as indicated in the rubrics. These are based on content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. The students who were instructed through the lecturing method attained overall mean scores of 2.57 for content, 2.59 for organization, 2.63 for grammar and vocabulary, and 2.08 for mechanics, respectively. While students who utilized the guidebook method exhibited higher proficiency in correspondence writing, including composing letters of application, inquiry, and complaint in comparison to those instructed through traditional lecturing. Specifically, the overall mean scores for content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics were 3.25, 3.12, 3.00, 3.00, and 2.29, respectively, indicating superior performance among students who utilized the guidebook. This indicate that the use of the guidebook facilitates better comprehension and application of correspondence writing skills among students. However, it's worth noting that while the utilization of the guidebook yielded higher scores overall, there were still areas such as mechanics where improvement could be made. Nonetheless, the overall trend indicates that the use of guidebook holds promise as an instructional approach for enhancing correspondence writing skills in Grade 10 students. The results support the study conducted by Lasaten (2014), where learners' common linguistic flaws in English works include errors in choice of words, verb tenses, prepositions, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling.

Table 8. Significant difference between the level of learner's proficiency in correspondence writing

Correspondence Writing	Guidebook		Lecturing Method		Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Content	3.16	0.70	2.57	0.76	0.59	2.92	48	0.005*
Organization	3.03	0.70	2.59	0.77	0.44	2.24	48	0.030*
Grammar	2.91	0.64	2.64	0.85	0.27	1.29	48	0.203
Vocabulary	2.91	0.64	2.63	0.83	0.29	1.36	48	0.181

Mechanic	2.52	0.74	2.08	0.77	0.44	2.44	48	0.018*
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Note: * $p < .05$.

Table 8 show the results of a study comparing the proficiency levels of learners in correspondence writing using two different methods: a guidebook and a lecturing method.

In terms of content and organization there are statistically significant differences between the proficiency levels of learners using the guidebook compared to the lecturing method ($p= 0.005$) content, ($p= 0.030$) organization which is ($p<0.05$). However, grammar and vocabulary, has no significant differences observed between the two methods.

Table 9. Significant effect of content of the guidebook to the learner’s proficiency in correspondence writing skills

Content of Guidebook	Correspondence Writing Skills	Beta	SE	95 % CI		β	p
				LL	UL		
Objectives	Content	3.265	1.375	0.376	6.155	0.760	0.029*
Examples		-0.261	0.679	-1.687	1.165	-0.123	0.705
Exercise		-0.487	0.605	-1.758	0.784	-0.277	0.432
Objectives	Organization	3.502	1.271	0.831	6.173	0.846	0.013*
Examples		-0.427	0.627	-1.745	0.891	-0.209	0.505
Exercise		-0.363	0.559	-1.537	0.812	-0.214	0.525
Objectives	Grammar	2.742	1.279	0.055	5.429	0.630	0.046*
Examples		0.799	0.631	-0.527	2.125	0.372	0.222
Exercise		-0.737	0.563	-1.918	0.445	-0.414	0.207
Objectives	Vocabulary	2.540	1.302	-0.195	5.276	0.575	0.047*
Examples		0.884	0.643	-0.466	2.234	0.405	0.186
Exercise		-0.587	0.573	-1.790	0.616	-0.325	0.319
Objectives	Mechanic	2.299	1.199	-0.221	4.818	0.580	0.071
Examples		-0.426	0.592	-1.669	0.817	-0.218	0.481
Exercise		-0.796	0.527	-1.904	0.312	-0.491	0.149

Note: * $p < .05$.

Table 13 presents the significant effect of the content of guidebook on learners' proficiency in correspondence writing skills across different dimensions.

It shows a significant positive effect on correspondence writing skills related to content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Learners who received guidebook with clear objectives demonstrated higher proficiency across these dimensions ($p<0.05$). While there is no significant effect observed on correspondence writing skills for examples and exercise content. This indicates that the effectiveness of guidebook content may vary depending on its specific elements and how they are designed to support learning outcomes. These elements in the guidebook did not significantly affect learners' proficiency in correspondence writing ($p>0.05$).

Table 10. Significant effect of visual features of the guidebook to the learner's proficiency in correspondence writing skills

Visual Features of Guidebook	Correspondence Writing Skills	Beta	SE	95 % CI		β	p
				LL	UL		
Size of Material	Content	1.285	1.474	-1.811	4.381	0.583	0.395
Layout		2.235	2.344	0.811	6.381	0.453	0.035*
Typography		1.725	1.430	-1.279	4.729	0.720	0.243
Size of Material	Organization	0.397	1.362	-2.464	3.259	0.187	0.774
Layout		0.076	1.063	-2.084	3.649	0.287	0.755
Typography		0.682	1.321	-2.094	3.458	0.295	0.612
Size of Material	Grammar	-0.751	1.370	-3.630	2.128	-0.337	0.590
Layout		-0.561	2.681	-2.339	2.956	-0.037	0.762
Typography		-0.181	1.330	-2.974	2.612	-0.075	0.893
Size of Material	Vocabulary	-0.969	1.395	-3.900	1.962	-0.428	0.496
Layout		-0.285	1.354	-3.129	2.558	-0.116	0.835
Typography		0.625	1.004	2.429	2.538	0.326	0.035*
Size of Material	Mechanic	0.896	1.285	-1.804	3.595	0.440	0.495
Layout		0.766	1.265	-1.965	3.342	0.689	0.505
Typography		1.453	1.247	-1.166	4.072	0.657	0.259

Note: * $p < .05$.

Table 10 presents the significant effect of the visual features of guidebook on learners' proficiency in correspondence writing skills across different dimensions. It shows a significant positive effect on correspondence writing skills related to content and vocabulary. Learners who received guidebook with visually appealing layout and typography demonstrated higher proficiency across these dimensions ($p < 0.05$).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

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

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the self-made guidebook as an English learning tool in enhancing Grade 10 students' correspondence writing skills at Pedro Guevara Memorial National High School in Santa Cruz, Laguna.

Based on the hypothesis formulated, which posited that the utilization of guidebook would result in higher proficiency levels compared to traditional lecturing, the study found that the use of guidebook led to significantly higher proficiency levels in correspondence writing, particularly in terms of content, organization, and mechanics. This supports the decision to reject the first hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the level of proficiency in correspondence writing skills between Grade 10 students who use the self-made guidebook and those who receive traditional lecturing and the second hypothesis that the content and the visual features of the guidebook have no significant effect to the learner's proficiency in correspondence writing skills..

The findings of the study highlight the importance of innovative instructional materials, such as self-made guidebook, in improving students' learning outcomes. The high acceptability of the guidebook's content

and visual features among students further emphasizes the potential of such materials in enhancing the learning experience.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The guidebook could be used as an effective alternative learning tool/material to traditional way of teaching correspondence writing.
- Educators should make use of validated instructional materials to assist in the traditional method of teaching in order to enhance learners' proficiency in correspondence writing.
- Instructional materials should have activities that develop critical thinking, and exercises that will help learners find better understanding of topics or concepts.

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