



# Difficulties in the writing skills of Grade 11 HUMSS students

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## Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the writing difficulties of Grade 11 HUMSS students in a private school in the Philippines. An explanatory sequential research design was employed to examine the students' writing challenges. Forty-one students were purposively selected to determine their level of writing skills and to identify specific areas of difficulty. Subsequently, eleven (11) students were chosen based on the results of the writing activity for a structured interview. This interview aimed to explore how these areas of difficulty affected their writing performance and to inform the development of an appropriate workbook to help improve their writing skills. Results indicated that the students' level of writing skills was poor, with a mean score of 17.24 out of 40 (43.1%). The identified areas of difficulty included grammar, organization of ideas, vocabulary, and writing mechanics. According to the students, these challenges led to disjointed and incoherent writing as the primary effects. It was concluded that the students experienced significant difficulties in writing, and addressing these issues is essential for improving their writing skills and mastery of the English language. To this end, the researchers developed a workbook specifically targeting these problem areas. It is recommended that the workbook be utilized to enhance students' writing skills and that future research focus on creating specialized workbooks addressing each specific area of difficulty.

**Keywords:** *writing skills, writing difficulties, level of writing skills, areas of difficulties, effects, workbook*

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## 1. Introduction

Writing is one of the four macro skills in language learning and is widely regarded as one of the most challenging to teach. Despite its importance, writing is often the least prioritized skill for development. As a result, disparities in students' proficiency levels frequently arise. Writing difficulties refer to the specific challenges that hinder students from expressing themselves effectively in written form. These barriers, if unaddressed, impede their ability to communicate clearly and coherently. Such difficulties may stem from various factors, including limited language proficiency, poor organization of thoughts, and a lack of understanding of writing conventions and grammatical rules.

Proficiency in writing is a critical component of academic success. Within educational contexts, students frequently struggle with writing, and this often has a broader impact on their overall academic performance. According to the English Proficiency Index (EPI), which assesses global English language proficiency, a decline in language skills among young learners has been observed. The Philippines, for example, ranked 13th in 2016, dropped to 15th in 2017, 14th in 2018, and 20th in 2019, indicating a downward trend in English proficiency among young Filipinos (Baclig, 2020).

Diminished English proficiency typically correlates with weak writing skills, further underscoring the urgency of addressing writing challenges in schools. These struggles may be attributed to their limited command of the English language, which affects various aspects of their writing, from structure and grammar to coherence and clarity. Such challenges not only hinder their ability to write effectively but may also adversely impact their academic performance. This reinforces the need to establish a strong foundation in English writing skills.

Therefore, this study aims to examine and assess the writing difficulties faced by Grade 11 Humanities and Social Sciences students of one integrated school in Laguna, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to (1) assess the current level of students' writing skills, (2) identify the specific areas in which students struggle, (3) analyze how these challenges influence their overall writing performance, and (4) develop a targeted workbook intervention to help improve their English writing skills.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1 Writing Skills*

Trang and Oanh (2021) emphasized that writing is one of the most essential language skills. Asiah et al. (2020) further supported this by asserting that improving writing skills is vital in students' academic and personal lives, as it enables them to express emotions, thoughts, knowledge, and ideas effectively. Jayanti (2019) echoed this sentiment, stating that writing is an expressive activity through which individuals can shape their identity and communicate their insights. Moreover, writing enhances one's critical thinking abilities, making it not only a communication tool but also a cognitive development tool.

Epale (2024) highlighted that written communication is a lifelong skill that has shaped societies for centuries. Writing has played a pivotal role in preserving history, transmitting culture, and facilitating collaboration. In today's context, it continues to be a benchmark by which others assess knowledge, values, opinions, and social contributions. Regardless of profession, individuals engage in various forms of writing, emails, reports, messages, which further underscores its relevance. Writing is not only essential in academics but a practical skill that enhances one's professional and social interactions.

Abdalahman (2021) argued that writing cannot be developed in isolation; it must be supported by the other language skills, such as reading and speaking. The integration of these skills fosters a more holistic approach to writing development. In this regard, literature emerges as a valuable medium that bridges language learning and creativity. Cappelli (2023), in her book *Mentor Text*, strongly advocated for the use of literature in teaching writing. She emphasized that literature serves as a solid foundation for students to learn writing, and she offered practical strategies and anecdotes to help teachers effectively model writing instruction.

Collectively, these studies underscore the central role of writing in education, communication, and personal development. They also recognize the interconnectedness of language skills in supporting writing proficiency. However, while these works provide important theoretical and pedagogical insights, they do not specifically address the causes of writing difficulties—unlike the present study, which focuses directly on identifying and addressing students' writing challenges. The current research prioritizes diagnosing foundational issues in students' writing with the goal of developing targeted interventions, such as a skills-based workbook.

## *2.2 Approaches in Teaching Writing Skills*

There are several instructional strategies that educators can employ to improve students' writing and mitigate the effects of writing difficulties. One critical factor is fostering students' self-regulation, which allows them to manage tasks, monitor progress, and take responsibility for their learning. As Lee and Ko (2023) noted, self-regulation, along with self-reinforcement, plays a vital role in making writing more engaging and effective for learners.

Perumal and Ajit (2020) reviewed writing strategies and advocated for the use of daily journaling. They posited that journaling allows students to express themselves freely, without the pressure of correctness, which gradually enhances their writing fluency and personal style. Similarly, Baresh (2022) examined the effectiveness of reflective journaling among Libyan undergraduates and concluded that it significantly improved not only their writing skills but also their overall learning process. His findings recommended journaling as a classroom practice to build writing competence through reflection and daily engagement.

For English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, writing poses unique challenges due to limited language proficiency, negative attitudes toward English, and inconsistent instructional methods. Effective teaching strategies for ESL students, such as task-based learning, blended learning, collaborative learning, and cognitive approaches, have been shown to improve engagement and writing proficiency. These strategies encourage active participation, combine online and face-to-face instruction, and promote mental processing skills. ESL students benefit most when they are motivated and consistently exposed to English in meaningful contexts. Awareness of these instructional challenges allows teachers to tailor support more effectively (Lee & Ko, 2023; Perumal & Ajit, 2020).

An essential component of writing is organizing ideas in a clear and logical manner. Rupp (2023) emphasized that organizing information helps writers present ideas, key points, and evidence in a compelling way. Without a clear structure, writing can become disjointed and lose its intended message. To address this, various organizational frameworks have been developed. One prominent model is LATCH (Location, Alphabet, Time, Category, and Hierarchy) created by Richard Saul Wurman. This framework helps writers sort and structure content in ways that are intuitive and reader-friendly.

Beyond frameworks, several organizational methods can assist writers in planning their content:

*Chronological order:* Arranging ideas based on time sequence, often used in narratives.

*Order of importance:* Presenting information from most to least important, common in persuasive writing.

*Spatial order:* Describing objects or settings based on physical layout (e.g., top to bottom, left to right).

*Compare and contrast:* Highlighting similarities and differences between subjects, useful for analysis and persuasion.

*Problem-solution:* Identifying an issue and proposing a resolution, frequently used in argumentative essays.

*Cause and effect:* Explaining how one event leads to another, effective for illustrating consequences.

*Sequential order:* Presenting steps in a process, often used in instructional texts.

These methods not only improve clarity but also help readers follow complex ideas with greater ease. Understanding and applying appropriate organizational techniques are essential for effective written communication.

While prior research highlighted strategies like self-regulation, journaling, and language proficiency as keys to writing success, the current study introduces a distinct and practical tool, a writing skills workbook. This workbook addresses writing difficulties by starting with foundational skills and progressing to differentiated activities tailored to students' needs. Unlike previous approaches that rely heavily on ongoing self-directed strategies, the workbook offers structured, attainable, and accessible content. By grounding the intervention in both theoretical insights and practical exercises, the study provides a new perspective on supporting students' development in writing.

### ***2.3 Difficulties in Writing Skills***

Many students in public schools, especially in rural areas of Pakistan, struggle significantly with English writing. Akhtar and Hina (2023) identified several reasons behind these challenges, the most prominent being the use of teaching methods that do not cater to students' actual learning needs. In rural Pakistani schools, teachers often employ traditional methods that are ineffective for students learning English as a second language. One additional factor contributing to writing difficulties is the influence of the students' first

language, Punjabi, which they commonly speak at home. The significant grammatical differences between Punjabi and English make it challenging for students to apply correct English grammar rules in writing. The study emphasized that these difficulties, stemming from poor instruction, inadequate learning environments, and first-language interference, negatively affect students' academic performance. However, the authors also concluded that these issues could be mitigated through improved teaching practices and more supportive learning environments.

In a related study, Quiñones (2022) explored grammar proficiency and writing performance among English major students. His study assessed whether these students could identify grammatical errors through a questionnaire designed to evaluate their knowledge of English rules. The purpose of this evaluation was to guide the development of targeted interventions to prepare future educators and strengthen students' command of English grammar. The test required students to correct erroneous texts, particularly focusing on subject-verb agreement. The results revealed a concerning trend: the majority of participants were unable to correctly identify grammatical errors. Specifically, the respondents demonstrated weaknesses in verb tenses, preposition usage, subject-verb agreement, article use, and pronoun-antecedent agreement. Similarly, Sahagun (2021) found that even at the tertiary level, students continued to make basic grammatical errors despite having studied English in primary and secondary school. He recommended several pedagogical approaches such as grammar-based instruction, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP), and the integration of interactive strategies like memory games and crossword puzzles. He further proposed using workbooks similar to *English Grammar in Use* by Raymond Murphy and *Fundamentals of English Grammar* by Betty Azar as elective courses to reinforce grammatical understanding.

In today's increasingly digital and interconnected world, proficiency in grammar has become more important than ever. Early instruction in grammar lays the foundation for literacy, as it helps build students' schema for language structure. Mastery of grammar conventions, such as sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling, is essential for effective communication.

Unfortunately, many students struggle to translate their thoughts into coherent written forms. A key factor contributing to this challenge is difficulty in organizing ideas. Saavedra and Barredo (2020) identified five factors affecting the writing skills of sixth-grade students

in the Zamboanga Peninsula. One critical factor was the students' inability to arrange words and ideas logically. Their findings suggested that the pupils had not yet mastered English as a second language. A major contributor to this issue was a limited vocabulary, which made it difficult for students to organize their thoughts effectively. The study also revealed that many students perceived writing as a difficult and unenjoyable task, primarily due to lack of motivation and interest, factors that were often reinforced by their school environments. Nevertheless, the study emphasized the importance of mastering both English and Filipino, the country's primary languages, to meet societal communication demands.

Empirical evidence highlights the common struggles students face in writing. These include poor grammar, lack of coherence, limited vocabulary, and challenges with organizing ideas. Such difficulties make writing a frustrating task, affecting both academic performance and student confidence. Furthermore, the literature confirms that writing difficulties can affect learners regardless of their background, especially if instruction is not comprehensive. Unlike previous studies that addressed one or two writing issues in isolation, this research considers a broad range of writing difficulties. This comprehensive focus allows for more effective use of instructional materials and provides a stronger foundation for improving students' writing skills.

#### ***2.4 Theoretical Framework***

In this study, two major theories were employed: Corder's Error Analysis and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

Corder's Error Analysis is a linguistic method that identifies and explains errors committed by second language learners. This approach involves a systematic process comprising several stages: collecting samples containing errors, identifying and classifying the errors, describing them, and evaluating their causes (Yilmaz & Demir, 2020). By following these steps, educators can analyze patterns in students' mistakes, understand their origins, and develop appropriate interventions. In the context of this study, Corder's framework helped identify common student errors, offering insights into why these issues occurred and how they could be addressed. The goal was to provide actionable solutions that aligned with the objectives of the research.

On the other hand, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) emphasizes the relationship between language and its social functions. It views grammar not as a set of

arbitrary rules but as a tool for making meaning. According to SFL, language use is inherently functional, and its purpose is to convey meanings shaped by social and cultural contexts. The theory also stresses that language is semiotic, it involves choosing from available resources to create meaning (Nordquist, 2021). Within the study, SFL provided a lens to understand how students attempted to express themselves through writing. Although students structured their sentences with the intent to communicate specific messages, their lack of proficiency in grammar and vocabulary often hindered them from achieving the desired clarity or form. This theory justified the need to improve both grammatical competence and writing conventions. It also served as a basis for the design of the workbook created by the researchers, ensuring that the learning materials supported the development of contextual language use.

### **3. Methodology**

An explanatory sequential design was used, wherein qualitative data supplemented quantitative insights. The purpose was to initiate the research with a quantitative study for both data collection and analysis, followed by a qualitative study based on the data obtained from the quantitative phase (Öner & Cırık, 2023). In this study, the quantitative and qualitative phases of the explanatory sequential design allowed the researchers to gather the most accurate and comprehensive data.

The researchers first conducted a writing activity to determine students' levels of writing skills and identify areas of difficulty. This was followed by interviews to provide a more in-depth analysis of students' experiences and how these difficulties affected their writing performance. The researchers discovered that some students lacked strong writing skills. Based on this observation, they then constructed the relevant data and details necessary to proceed with the study. The research was conducted during the fourth quarter of the academic year 2023–2024 and focused on Grade 11 HUMSS students.

After presenting a request letter to the teachers and principal of the school, the researchers administered an activity requiring participants to write a three-paragraph essay on one of the following topics: “Choose a random photograph from your collection. Look at it for a minute and then write about how it made you feel and the thoughts that came up,” or “A lie you wish you could take back.” These topics were adapted from Creative Nonfiction Quarter 4 – Module 2 for Grade 11 (Alarcon, 2019). They were chosen specifically because

they were already familiar to the respondents, making them more suitable for essay writing. To maintain confidentiality, the researchers clarified that all information collected would be used solely for the purpose of the study.

The essays written by the students were checked and graded using a rubric from the research of Huda and Rahadiano (2019), and a scale was created based on that rubric. This rubric was chosen because it covered various aspects essential to evaluating the essays. The researchers' assessments were validated by three experts to ensure objective grading. Moreover, this writing activity served to filter the sample participants and to identify the students' areas of difficulty.

After this process, eleven (11) Grade 11 HUMSS students were purposively selected for interviews, in which they explained how the difficulties they experienced affected their writing. To interpret the data gathered from the interviews, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes. Through this analysis, the researchers were able to categorize the causes of writing difficulties among the students. Based on these findings, the researchers began developing a workbook that includes guidelines and practice exercises to help students improve their writing skills.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1 presents the students' writing performance categorized as excellent, good, fair, and poor. It also indicates that a total of forty-one participants took part in the writing activity. Among these, zero (0%) fell under the excellent category, three (7%) were rated as good, eleven (27%) were classified as fair, and twenty-seven (66%) were identified as having poor writing skills.

**Table 1**

*Students' writing performance*

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent (100)	0	0
Good (75-99)	3	7%
Fair (50-74)	11	27%
Poor (0-49)	27	66%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100%</b>

Participants who fell under the fair category were purposively selected for the structured interviews conducted by the researchers, as they were expected to provide

balanced and neutral insights regarding the effects of the specific writing difficulties they encountered.

The findings of this study align with those of Huda and Rahadiano (2019), whose research also revealed that a significant number of respondents demonstrated fair to poor writing performance in the absence of targeted instructional materials. In their study, most students experienced writing difficulties, with only eight participants passing and twelve failing. These findings suggest that students' levels of writing proficiency may largely depend on the frequency and severity of the errors they commit during the writing process.

**Table 2**

*Students' level of writing skills*

Area	Mean Score	Items	Score (percentage per area)	Corresponding Level
Content	5.93	12	49.42%	Poor
Vocabulary	4.39	10	43.9%	Poor
Grammar	4.09	10	41%	Poor
Mechanics in Writing	2.83	8	35.38%	Poor
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>Poor</b>

Table 2 presents the students' levels of writing skills across several components. For content, the students obtained a mean score of 5.93 out of 12, which is equivalent to 49.42%, placing them in the poor category. For vocabulary, the mean score was 4.39 out of 10, or 43.9%, also categorized as poor. In terms of grammar, the students scored an average of 4.09 out of 10, equivalent to 41%, again falling under the poor level. For writing mechanics, the mean score was 2.83 out of 8, or 35.38%, which also falls under the poor category. Overall, the students achieved a total mean score of 17.24 out of 40, which corresponds to 43.1%, once again classified as poor. The data clearly indicate that the overall writing skills of the students are at a poor level. This reinforces the conclusion that the Grade 11 HUMSS students are encountering significant difficulties in writing. Each individual component, content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, registered poor results, and the combined total score reflects the same.

This finding aligns with the study of Saavedra and Barredo (2020), which emphasized that students' performance in writing assessments reflects their overall writing proficiency.

Their study indicated that poor performance in writing is often linked to limited knowledge of language fundamentals, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

Table 3 presents the areas of difficulty experienced by the students. Based on the writing activity conducted, the identified areas of difficulty among the 41 participants include grammar, organization of ideas, vocabulary, and mechanics in writing.

**Table 3**

*Areas of difficulties of students*

Areas of Difficulties	Sub Areas of Difficulties	Frequency
Grammar	Subject-Verb Agreement Verb Tenses Sentence Initial Conjunctions	23 or 56.09%
Organization of Ideas	Missing Title No clear introduction and conclusion in their essays Run-on Sentences Redundancy in use of subject and pronouns	29 or 70.73%
Vocabulary	Poor choice of words	19 or 46.34%
Mechanics	Spelling and capitalization Use of punctuations specifically, in commas, period, apostrophe, and quotations	38 or 92.68%

After checking the papers, the following specific difficulties were identified and tallied according to the number of students who committed these errors:

Under grammar: errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, and sentence-initial conjunctions were noted in 23 students (56.09%).

Under organization of ideas: issues such as missing titles, lack of clear introduction and conclusion, run-on sentences, redundancy in the use of subjects and pronouns, and overflowing ideas within a single paragraph were observed in 29 students (70.73%).

Under vocabulary: poor word choice was noted in 19 students (46.63%).

Under mechanics: spelling and capitalization errors, as well as misuse of punctuation, specifically commas, periods, apostrophes, and quotation marks, were found in 38 students (92.68%).

A study conducted by Sulaiman and Muhajir (2019) similarly identified these areas of difficulty in students' writing. Using questionnaires, they investigated writing challenges among English Language students at Universitas Muslim Indonesia. Their findings revealed that students struggled most with grammar (31%), followed by scientific writing style/rules (24%), vocabulary, spelling, and coherence (11%), writing arrangement (7%), and punctuation (5%). Elbashir (2023) also supports these findings. In his study on the writing skills of General Foundation Programme (GFP) students, participants were asked to write a paragraph of 100 to 120 words on the topic "Studying Abroad is preferable than to studying at home: Agree or Disagree." Content analysis was performed on the student compositions, checked by selected instructors, and supplemented with interviews conducted with teachers. The study revealed that students had difficulties in word selection, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, verb tenses, and sentence structure.

Grammar is one of the identified areas of difficulty in the students' writing. Specifically, the issues observed include incorrect subject-verb agreement, improper verb tenses, and the use of sentence-initial conjunctions. The following themes and statements illustrate how difficulties with grammar affect students' writing skills.

**Table 4**

*Effects of the area of difficulty (grammar)*

Area of Difficulty	Themes (Effects)	Statements
Grammar	Distorts meaning	<p>"...pinabasa ko po yung sinulat ko sa kklase ko, and he asked me po what I meant with what I wrote po..." (I asked my classmate to read what I have written, and he asked me what I meant with what I wrote.)</p> <p>"...alam ko po ibig sabihin nung mga sinulat ko, kaso yung mga readers ko po like my teachers and classmates ay hindi po..." (I can understand what I meant in my own writing; however, my readers, like my teacher and classmates, say otherwise.)</p> <p>"...namimisunderstood po madalas yung essay ko" (My essays get misunderstood a lot.)</p>
	Struggle in Forming Sentences	<p>"...nung pinagsulat ng essay about a picture doon pa lang hirap na hirap na ako." (When we are asked to write an essay about a picture, it was truly hard for me.)</p> <p>"Minsan masyadong magulo yung mga sentences ko." (Sometimes, my sentences are too chaotic.)</p> <p>"Nahihirapan akong mag-ayos ng tamang pagkakasunod-sunod ng pangungusap." (It is hard for me to use the right order of sentences.)</p>

Two recurring themes emerged under grammar: it distorts meaning, and it causes struggles in forming sentences. The students mentioned that they have a hard time with grammar. They believe that because of these difficulties, they struggle significantly in forming sentences, which in turn affects the clarity of their writing and makes their ideas vague.

A study conducted by Polpo and Mahakaew (2019) reported similar findings among students at Rangsit University. Using a questionnaire, their results revealed that around 200 English majors, similar to the Grade 11 students in this study, generally found it difficult to complete writing tasks. This was primarily due to concerns that their work might appear vague and grammatically incorrect to both themselves and others.

One of the areas of difficulty found in the students' writing is their struggle with organizing ideas. Even though the students know what to write, they still find it hard to arrange the information logically. Specifically, the issues identified include missing titles, unclear introductions and conclusions in their essays, run-on sentences, redundancy in the use of subjects and pronouns, and overflowing ideas within a single paragraph.

**Table 5**

*Effects of the area of difficulty (organization of ideas)*

Area of Difficulty	Themes (Effects)	Statements
Organization of Ideas	Patterns get messy	<p>"...hindi ko na po alam kung paano tatapusin yung sentence kaya nagtutuloy tuloy..." (I do not know where to end my sentences. As a result, my sentences often continue unnecessarily.)</p> <p>"Kapag 'di po maayos yung ideas ko, nagugulo niya po yung sequence." (When my ideas are not arranged properly, it messes up their sequence.)</p> <p>"...sinusulat ko na lang po kasi kung ano tumatakbo sa isip ko, kaya po siguro nagugulo ideas ko gawa no'n..." (I just write what goes in my mind; maybe that is the reason why my ideas get messed up.)</p>
	Impact of ideas	<p>"Nagdagdag na lang po ako ng maraming information kapag di ko po mapoint out, ... ang feedback po sa akin ay parang wala na raw po sense or nawala yung impact." (I simply add more information when I cannot point out something. The feedback I get from that is that my paper doesn't make sense anymore or the impact is not there.)</p> <p>"...mahaba daw po masyado kaya nawawalan ng dating yung sulat ko" (They say that it is too long; that is why my essay has no impact anymore.)</p> <p>"...sometimes pansin ko nakakalito na po yung sentences ko to the point na wala ng power sa sinusulat ko..." (Sometimes I notice that my sentences are already confusing, to the point that they do not have the power they hold.)</p>

The themes under organization of ideas revealed patterns that become messy and reduce the impact of their ideas. The students mentioned that they struggled to organize their ideas properly. As a result, the sentences they wrote tended to be disorderly, which affected both the meaning and impact of their writing. This finding is supported by the study of Sarwat et al. (2020), who used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect data. They found that organization of ideas is one of the primary reasons for elementary students' poor writing skills. For example, the statement "I cannot communicate well in English writing as my English sentences are not well structured" received a mean of 4.039 and a standard deviation of .8731, while "While writing I usually face difficulties connecting different ideas" received a mean of 2.750 and a standard deviation of 1.2700. This further demonstrates that difficulties in organizing ideas, which many students face when writing schoolwork such as essays, are a serious concern in education that needs to be addressed. Although this problem may begin in elementary school, it can persist even as students progress to college.

**Table 6***Effects of the area of difficulty (mechanics in writing)*

Area of Difficulty	Themes (Effects)	Statements
Mechanics in Writing (Capitalization)	Alters word meanings	<p>"...tingin ko rin po naapektuhan no'n yung sentence ko kasi puro po capital letters." (I also think that it affects how my sentences are understood because it was in big letters.)</p> <p>"Hindi po ako sure sa kung ano ano po cincapitalize ..., hindi po nila gets anong gusto ko sabihin." (I am not quite sure with what I should capitalize in my sentences. Hence, they do not get what I really want to say.)</p>
	Emphasizes wrong ideas	<p>".... minsan namamali yung pag emphasize ko sa sulat ko..." (Sometimes I emphasize wrong ideas in my writings as I tend to capitalize wrongly.)</p> <p>"Minsan po puro ginagamit ko lang sa sinusulat ko is small letters kahit po dapat talaga capitalized." (Sometimes when I am writing, I only use small letters, even though they should be capitalized.)</p> <p>"Minsan din po nagamit ako ng malalaking letters pag may gusto ako ipoint talaga, kaya lang minsan napapansin ko sobra na po pala." (I sometimes use big letters to make a point. However, there are times when I notice that it is excessive already.)</p>
	Sentences become incoherent	<p>"Pwede po kasing mamisinterpret yung essay kapag wrong punctuations ginamit". (My essay could be misinterpreted if I use the wrong punctuation marks.)</p> <p>"...nakakalito na din po kung saan dapat ilagay yung ibang punctuation baka po hindi na maintindihan yung sentences ko."</p>

Area of Difficulty	Themes (Effects)	Statements
(Punctuation)	Changes meaning	(It is confusing where to place the other punctuation, so my sentences might not be understood.) <i>“Kapag po maling punctuation ang nagagamit ko sa essay ko, hindi po nagiging klaro yung sinusulat ko”</i> (When I use wrong punctuation in my essay, my writing becomes unclear.)
		<i>“... naiiba yung meaning kasi kung saan ako naglalagay basta makagamit lang.”</i> (The meaning gets altered because I just put it wherever I want just for the sake of using it.) <i>“...for example ay yung exclamation point akala ng mga nagbabasa galit ako or sumisigaw sa way ng pagkakangawa ng sentences ko.”</i> (For example, at the exclamation point, people think I am angry or shouting with the way my sentences are constructed.)
(Spelling)	Disoriented sentences	<i>“...dahil di maayos spelling ko, nakakalito sya kapag isinama sa sentence...”</i> (Because my spelling isn't good, it becomes confusing when I include it in a sentence.) <i>“naaapektuhan nya po yung clarity ng sinusulat ko po, since di ako magaling sa spelling”</i> (It affects the clarity of my work since I'm not good at spelling.) <i>“Hindi po ako aware sa ibang words and then I also have a hard time spelling it out kaya tingin ko nakakaapekto rin sya sa clarity of my work.”</i> (I'm not aware of some words, and I do not know how to spell them, so I think it affects the clarity of my work.)
		<i>“...minsang hindi ko talaga alam spelling pero yun lanhaveg talaga yung alam kong swak gamitin, kaya nahihirapan ako isulat yung best ko.”</i> (Sometimes I do not know the spelling of a word, but that is the only appropriate one to use that I know, which is why I'm having a hard time writing my best work.) <i>“Kapag hindi ko alam spelling ng word hinahayaan ko na lang, tapos ilalagay kahit mali yung spelling ko, kaya tingin ko po hindi po maayos sulat ko kapag ganon.”</i> (When I do not know the spelling of a word, I let it be, and then I will use it even though my spelling is wrong. That is why I think my written work is not good.)

Mechanics in writing is one of the identified areas of difficulty for the students. This includes capitalization, spelling, and punctuation, which encompasses commas, periods, apostrophes, and quotation marks. The statements show that students experience difficulties with mechanics in writing (punctuation, capitalization, spelling). Errors in capitalization cause words in their writing to be misinterpreted, which in turn affects the meaning of the entire sentence. Meanwhile, mistakes in punctuation lead to sentences becoming incomprehensible and sometimes alter the message they want to convey. Lastly, spelling errors cause confusion in their statements and impede the overall effectiveness of their writing. These statements provide reasons for the themes and difficulties students face regarding mechanics in writing.

The study by Masoud and Al-Deen (2021) analyzed the types of errors in learners' essays, focusing on mechanics in writing. It was found that students committed errors in all categories, with the most frequent mistakes being capitalization, followed by spelling and punctuation. Their research further established that inaccuracies in mechanics are prevalent and negatively affect students' writing skills.

**Table 7**

*The content and objectives of each module*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
Module 1: Vocabulary	At the end of this module, the students should be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the tips and tricks to improve vocabulary,</li> <li>2. Recognize synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and root words,</li> <li>3. Use context clues to analyze paragraphs, and identify meanings of unfamiliar words, and;</li> <li>4. Differentiate the connotation and denotation of a word.</li> </ol>
Module 2: Organization of Ideas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the three major parts of a creative writing,</li> <li>2. Differentiate dependent and independent clauses and their rules,</li> <li>3. Determine what phrases are and its types,</li> <li>4. Distinguish the types of sentences and their use, and;</li> <li>5. Recognize sentence fragments and why they happen.</li> </ol>
Module 3: Grammar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the basic rules, special cases, and common challenges in subject-verb agreement,</li> <li>2. Use proper subject-verb agreement in sentences,</li> <li>3. Identify verb tenses and its types, and;</li> <li>4. Analyze and correct sentences with wrong verb tenses.</li> </ol>
Module 4: Punctuations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the different types of punctuations,</li> <li>2. Determine the functions of each type of punctuations, and;</li> <li>3. Point out incorrect usage of punctuations and correct them.</li> </ol>
Module 5: Capitalizations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the importance of capitalization in writing,</li> <li>2. Understand the rules of capitalization and the M.I.N.T.S technique, and;</li> <li>3. Apply them in finding wrong capitalization in sentences, and constructing sentences with proper capitalization.</li> </ol>
Module 6: Spelling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grasp the different spelling strategies;</li> <li>2. Realize the various spelling tips, and;</li> <li>3. Acknowledge the importance of applying them in their writing.</li> </ol>

The researchers first considered the areas of difficulty identified in the students' writing when developing the workbook. Each area was provided with lessons and activities designed to enhance the students' knowledge and mastery. Additionally, the effects of these

areas of difficulty, as revealed by the interview results, were taken into account in selecting the types of exercises included in the workbook. Furthermore, the difficulty of the activities and questions varies and follows a progressive format, factoring in differences in students' writing skills and mastery of related concepts, as well as the improvements expected as they use the workbook. The researchers also incorporated suggestions made by the students during the interviews as a basis for the workbook's development. This approach ensures that the research output will effectively address the students' writing difficulties and improve their writing skills.

The study by Utami and Aminatun (2020) examined the benefits of using a workbook for students. While teachers' explanations of lessons are helpful, having a workbook that summarizes the entire lesson allows students to revisit topics and practice in order to retain information. Felder (2020) also studied the effectiveness of workbooks in assessment and found that, although a workbook may not be the most adequate way to measure someone's improvement, it is useful for uncovering unexpected findings and can contribute to improving the evaluation process. Similarly, the study by Laila et al. (2021) on using textbooks to improve students' reading and writing skills showed that such materials helped improve these skills and were more effective than simpler learning materials. The results of these three studies support the conclusion that a workbook is indeed helpful in various ways, regardless of the particular skills or knowledge targeted for improvement.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Grade 11 HUMSS students experience difficulties in writing; their level of writing skills was determined to be poor based on the same evaluation rating. It was inferred that the areas of difficulty the students face include grammar, organization of ideas, vocabulary, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. The effects of these difficulties include distorted meaning, struggles in forming sentences, messy patterns, lessened impact of ideas, hindered translation, inability to elaborate messages, altered word meanings, emphasis on wrong ideas, incoherent sentences, changed meanings, disoriented sentences, and overall hampered writing. Each of these factors contributes to the decline in the quality of their writing and their current low level of writing skills.

The findings of this study highlight the writing difficulties experienced by the students. Educators and policymakers should use this as a basis for modifying teaching

approaches to improve educational support in writing by enhancing the fundamentals of language skills, which fosters deeper comprehension and inclusivity. The workbook developed could also be utilized by schools to provide students with various lessons, activities, and tasks tailored to enhance their writing skills. Achieving this would likely translate into better academic performance and improved future employment prospects for the students.

Future researchers could further develop a workbook consisting of guidelines, techniques, and activities to help students improve their writing in terms of grammar, vocabulary, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and organization of ideas. Secondly, the researchers recommend the utilization of the workbook to address students' areas of writing difficulty. Thirdly, it is recommended that future researchers allocate more time to gather data for a more in-depth analysis of students' writing difficulties. Lastly, future researchers could also explore the underlying reasons behind these difficulties for a more comprehensive and extensive study.

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### **Institutional Review Board Statement**

The ethical standards for research that includes human participants were followed during the conduct of this study. Obtained from all student participants and their parents or guardians before the conduct of the study and data collection were the informed consent forms. Throughout the research process, participation was also voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were assured. There was no formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval obtained, as the research was done within the guidelines and authority of the school administration.

### **AI Declaration**

The author declares the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the author used *Quillbot in paraphrasing ideas*. The author takes full responsibility in ensuring proper review and editing of contents generated using AI.

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