

Workplace Writing in L2 Experiences Among Millennial Workforce: Learning to Write in English

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ABSTRACT

The challenges confronted by the Millennial workforce across the transition from higher education to workplaces are well acknowledged globally. Institutions of higher learning (IHLs) have a responsibility to prepare graduates to become a functional workforce. Among the real-world skills to be taught is workplace writing, which is fundamental in work organizations. This paper aims to explore learning to write in English for the workplace as experienced by millennial workforces. A descriptive phenomenological research design was employed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the Millennial workforce's lived experiences in workplace writing. Seven of them were selected based on a set of criteria. A two-tiered method of interviews was employed to establish the context, relay specific details of the participants' experience and contemplate the meaning of their experiences. In addition, self-portrait descriptions were used to triangulate the data. The findings revealed that the millennials experienced both learning for and about workplace writing in both settings: IHLs and workplaces. They further revealed the practicality of English writing and business writing courses they had taken at IHLs. They have also experienced learning at their workplace through participating in trainings, social interaction, first-hand experiences and intrinsic motivation. These findings can be used as an instructional guideline for ESL workplace writing courses in IHLs. The appropriate instructions and contents could be convenient not only to improve teaching and learning but also promote a more meaningful learning to the graduating students which in turn, creates a powerful workforce who is able to command by today's workplace standards.

Keywords: workplace writing English; millennials; phenomenology; learning about work; learning at work

INTRODUCTION

Workplace writing refers to writing tasks associated with on-the-job environment and normally produced by members of the same work site for in-house use. Evidence suggests that writing is a fundamental workplace communication medium (Md Yunus & Haris 2014). Workplace writing in English is known as an essential part in the current global workplace (Rajprasit, Pratoomrat & Wang 2015). Although in many cases that writing is not stated in the job descriptions, some tasks commonly involved a surprising amount of writing. Writing skill is crucial in the propagation of critical 21st century workplace skills and is considered as one of the most important life-long skills along with analytical reasoning and critical thinking (Fields, Hatala & Nauert 2014). However, studies increasingly show that workforces whose English is their second language (L2) around the world are still facing challenges when they are required to carry out English written tasks as part of their everyday job.

On the other hand, English as a second language research have a long history in dealing with workplace writing (Leki, Cumming & Silva 2009). Studies in this area has focused on the disjuncture between IHLs' preparation and the authentic demand made in the real world of work (Hellekjær & Fairway 2015, Knoch et al. 2016, Payne 2012). Learning provided by the institutions of higher learning (IHL) to prepare graduates for employment is in question. The institutions are accountable to teach real-world skills to prepare graduates for the demand of future work life. The issues of transfer of writing skills from IHLs to the workplace have in fact become a global concern including in Egypt, writing apprehension among graduates (Latif 2015); Australia, employers' complaints on the under-preparedness among new workforces (Knoch et al. 2016); Norway, students' needs for occupational English skills (Hellekjær & Fairway 2015), Belgium, professional writing processes (Leijten et al. 2014), Malaysia, the needs for an in-depth investigation on workplace context (Fadilah et al. 2015, Nur Ehsan & Saadiyah 2011), and Thailand, concerns on English related written tasks (Rajprasit, Pratoomrat & Wang 2015). In addition, the issues are supported by graduates' laments at not being exposed to the real-world writing skills. They admitted not having prepared sufficiently to carry out workplace writing tasks during their undergraduates (Knoch et al. 2016). In Malaysia, 212,830 graduates were produced by Malaysian IHLs and 25% of them failed to find a job (Yoong, Don & Foroutan 2017). Among the main causes attributed to this are their insufficient employability skills including communication (Yoong et al. 2017). On the other hand, one of the main reasons for poor writing skills among graduates and newly hired workforces are ascribed to the effects of technology that is used as the medium to expose students to various forms of writing. In addition, lower priority placed on writing in classroom (Flaherty & Choi 2013, Vikneswaran & Krish 2015).

In the 21st-century workplace, English has become more crucial than ever. English is denounced as the language of global economy (Forey & Lockwood 2010, Quinto 2015). There is a growing concern about workplace writing in English. Graduates were reported to perform incompetently including in English writing at workplace (Onchera, Manyasi & Box 2013). The Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia regards the issue of lacking prerequisite skills among fresh graduates of IHLs. As in many other countries around the world, IHLs in Malaysia is responsible to produce graduates who meet workplace requirements (Yoong et al. 2017). However, there is a huge mismatch between IHLs' preparation for workplace writing in English and the workplace demand. Courses offered by IHLs around the world were said to be insufficient, and graduates still failed to correspond to their tasks effectively (Bracaj 2014, Leijten, Schriver & Waes 2014, Norfazlika & Mohamed Ismail 2014). In relation to IHL preparation, the focus of English writing lessons at IHLs are tuned into general English writing. General English writing skill is taught as employability skills in which it focuses on skills that squeeze out workplace and disciplinary elements. As a result, graduates were found to have limitations to transfer skills especially when they were exposed to out-of-context subjects (Day 2010). Meanwhile, managers agreed that distinctive written genres of a particular work setting should be taught to graduates (Moore et al. 2015). Thus, there is a need to explore learning of writing in English and to discover whether it should be taught as a general English or/and genre specific. In Malaysia, the Malaysian Employers Federation outlined that 200, 000 of graduates were unemployed due to the poor command of English communication (64%) (Zainab, Isarji & Zaidi 2017). To talk of workplace writing skills in English, more than 58% of undergraduates were categorized as limited L2 writers (Zainab et al. 2017).

The current workplaces are dominated by the members of Millennial generations who have outnumbered their predecessors' generation (Birkman 2016). They have graduated and are expected to graduate from institutions of higher learning (IHLs). They are entering the job market in a vast number, and it continues until the year 2022 (Hershatter & Epstein 2010). By

the year 2020, this generation is expected to make half of the workforce population worldwide. This generation of workforce possesses different workplace perspectives than that of the Boomers' and generation X' (Jerome et al. 2014). Therefore, workplace learning especially on writing in L2 that graduates received at IHLs has not addressed the relevant contents and connections with English used in workplace. The disjuncture can create a big divide between IHL and millennial students who are future workforce (Gibson & Sodeman 2014). Practitioners engaged in related disciplines have only perceived a fraction of what is happening in workplace writing as performed by the Millennial workforce. In addition, a study of transitions of the workplace writing from IHL to work as conducted by Schneider (2002) has found that developing the competency works beyond the formal genre of a particular workplace. Hence, this paper aims to explore the transfer of writing skills from IHLs to workplace. Along with that, it hopes to provide a description of learning to write in English for work both in the workplace and at IHLs as experienced by the millennial generation. In order to achieve these aims, this study addresses two research questions;

1. What is the millennial workforce's perception of writing skills in English they learned at IHL?
2. How has the workforce learned at work?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In most workplaces, efficient communication skills are highly appreciated. Workplace communication includes a wide range of work-related events namely professional, business and institutional settings (Koester 2010). In an organization, communication is regarded as a process that involves planning (Jordan & Kedrowicz 2011) creating, controlling/ sustaining and managing meaning. Communication experiences in the professional world involve how communication is expended in persuasion, making meaning, leading and etc. Dainton and Zelley (2011). It is worth to note that communication experiences go on the far side of spoken conversations. Workforce in an organization is required to communicate effectively in written tasks as well. Writing is a vital job skill and a fragment of everyday job (Masclé 2013). It is fundamental in all knowledge-intensive professions (Calvo et al. 2011, Tseng 2012). By seeing writing as a basic communication at any workplace, the workplace itself is the community. A workplace comprises of a complex relationship concerning different groups of people. "Working communities" are characterized by two concepts when considering writing and learning to write: the community of discourse and the community of practice (Pogner 2012). The two concepts conjure the same purpose which is to distribute and cultivate knowledge. On balance, professional knowledge is a vital component to professionalism (Burns et al. 2006).

Studies show that employers desired for workforces who possess proficient productive writing skills more than the receptive skill such as listening (Isarji et al. 2013). Unlike academic writing, workplace writing centres on professional documents (Latisha Asmaak 2011). Exceptionally, employers look for workers who can write smoothly and flawlessly by following the recognized business format, accurate grammar and punctuation (Onchera, Manyasi & Box 2013). In most workplaces in Malaysia, among the most performed genre in English are letters, memos, email, notices, minutes and agendas, contracts/ documents, translating and interpreting documents, reports (technical, daily, rework or/and trouble reports), contracts, conducting research as well as creating advertisements/ brochures, etc. (Anie et al. 2012, Lan, Khaun & Singh 2011).

COMPLEXITY OF WORKPLACE WRITING

Writing is an edge in workplace communication which is situated in a work site as its community. Workplace settings are highly complex. The work community is made of a complex relationship between different groups of people that tried to get a task done together. The community of practice have the intents to extend the capabilities of members within a community through knowledge exchange. The basis for the purpose is the expertise or skills of the group members and their commitments. However, research reveals conflicting findings with regard to the distinctive types of collaboration a workplace community engages in when processing writing. Some regard the nature of workplace writing as unique in which no assumptions on job-ready skills can be accepted (Moore & Morton 2015). Writing is performed distinctly in each context depending on the functions (Dias et al. 2011, Schneider 2002). It is regarded as hard to adequately prepare students for the writing skills that match workplace demands as Dias and his colleagues (2011) established in the title of their book, “worlds apart.” One of the reasons is the complex social work genre. The competing philosophies and interests are at play in an organizational set of genres (Dias et al. 2011).

WORKPLACE LEARNING

The un-paralleled challenges in the world of education and work demanded a plan for a successive regaining. It includes supporting graduates and workforces to acquire skills that lay the fundamentals to match the workplace needs or merely to match with future employment. A number of research has extensively studied and relate the task fulfilment in the workplace with the training/ education and learning that took place during work (Fushan 2010, Hatem 2014, Knoch et al. 2016, Mascle 2013). As for the workforce, learning continues even if an individual has managed to secure a job or obtained a fulfilling profession. There have been a number of workplace learning conceptions. One of the employability concepts is adopting life-long learning while performing a job (Ministry of Higher Education 2012). Competencies and eventually expertise in a profession transpire only by performing a task on a real profession itself which takes place throughout a person’s career (Foley 2004). Billet (1993) assumes it as skills and knowledge acquisition through involvements in authentic tasks by direct or indirect support and guidance from others who are more skilful. The aforementioned descriptions of the relationships between learning and work are easily put as; i) learning through/at work and ii) learning for work (Day 2010, Ramage 2014).

Learning through work and at work occur when employees are paid or voluntarily learn in their work settings. It includes learning through the means of educational programs, in-house trainings or learning on-the-job which happens while executing a task that happens across all stages of a person’s working life (Billett & Choy 2013, Day 2010, Dochy et al. 2011). The 21st century workplace conditions make it indispensable for workforces to respond to the incipient challenges of their work responsibilities, on-the-job tasks and their workplace systems (Dochy et al. 2011). Nevertheless, it remains unsettled about learning through/at work (or work settings) and how the experiences can be useful for trainings and workplace learning. On the other hand, learning for work happens through classroom activities that is of worth for employment. The activities are taught to graduating students who will eventually seek a position in the labour markets (Day 2010). Among the embedded activities designed are the subject-specific enterprise activities or career/personal development and/or work-related learning on the skills useful in the world of work such as writing and English skills.

In order for an effective teaching and learning to take place, the theory and practices of teaching must speak the same language. The same concept applies when working with

millennial students who will eventually become a workforce. Surprisingly, the millennials observe institutions of higher learning (IHL) differently from their predecessors' generation. They view IHLs as more than a place for a social change and learning. Their perspective places less emphasis on learning and intellectual curiosity despite the high desire towards learning (Buckner & Strawser 2016). Rather than viewing college as a philosophical training ground (Berrett 2015) or a place to deliberate new ideas, to socialize, acquire thinking or imagining skills and mull over new subjects (Fitzgerald 2012), the millennial students often take the institution as financials (Berrett 2015). Hence, the role of IHL can be wider than a place to help support such group of students through its emphasis on merely academic and social mobility. In addition, the millennial students were often being noted as lack of academic responsibility and this advocates a belief that the instructors are responsible for their learning outcomes and desires (Buckner & Strawser 2016). Further, scholars constantly underscore the team work between instructors and students in order to target an effective learning experience. A greater functional teaching and learning can be provided if they both are in charge of the academic processes. Previous instructional research on the millennial students have been examining some forms of instructions and teaching practices expended to continue optimally efficient. Research suggests viable practices such as educators and students co-create learning environments or instructional communication through relational perspective as suggested by Mottet and Beebe's (2006); Hosek and Titsworth (2016). Instructors and students allocate and exchange meanings through these learning experiences. Eventually, learning arrives in which there is a reciprocated understanding of information or knowledge to be instilled.

On the other hand, the traditions in work-based learning have highlighted some key theories which the backbones in the pedagogy have been; Carl Rogers' humanistic approach, David Kolb's experiential learning, constructivism, and the social views of learning. As an example, the social views of learning believe that learning has a social dimension. In work-based learning, the work of Lev Vygotsky emphasizes on the essential scaffolding and cognitive apprenticeship namely tools, maxims, and access to more knowledgeable learners (Kozulin et al. 2003, Lucas 2010). Through the apprenticeship, more knowledgeable worker provides scaffolds for novice workers. The popular problem-based learning (PBL) which was derived from the constructivist pedagogy in work-based learning suggested that learning is effective when a learner is empowered to undertake the real problems and develop solutions. Given that millennial students bring different needs and attributes towards learning, higher education and workplaces may be able to attain practically worthwhile insights about them. Different contexts in which the millennials offer, their aptness with the use of technologies, different parenting style and a range of other qualities are among the demands and affordances of writing for work-related learning's interest. In terms of writing in the workplace, the situated learning which was suggested by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1993). Writing scholars who represented the of situated learning deflates the idea of general writing skills to be transferred to workplace-specific writing (Horner 2017). The proponents believe that learning happens in real context. Thus, it highlights the link between learning and the social situation in which it emerges (Mikkonen 2005). The situated learning corroborates the idea of writing as a situated activity. Workplace writing is a social one which is often denoted with the term situated (Dias et al. 2011). It acknowledges the interdependency between writing situation and action that facilitate and constraint "inventiveness" in which activities, cognition, meaning and learning correspondingly interplay (Dias et al. 2011 p 17).

THE WORKFORCE: MILLENNIAL GENERATION

The entire world undergoes a fourth wave of technological evolution due to the upsurge of latest industrial technologies (Eberhard et al. 2017, Oosthuizen 2016, Schwab 2016). Along

with the industrial revolution, the world of work also faces a demographic transformation in which the majority of the workforce are the Millennials who have outnumbered their predecessor generations, the Generation X and Baby Boomers. This has happened since the year 2015 (Birkman 2016). The members of this generation became the element that propagates the transformation in the recent years.

It is believed that demographic trends served by a generation of workforce becomes a parameter of the services and goods produced by an institution (Karoly & Panis 2004). The numerical power centre stage According to Hershatter and Epstein (2010), the perception about a generation is crucial as it determines the proportion of people who will constitute the world. Furthermore, the knowledge about their characters is fundamental in managing them (Fadilah, Kaliannan & Nafis 2015). The millennial generation possesses unique characters and the technologies surrounding them are believed to be the influence (Oblinger & Oblinger 2005). They accomplish a task better when the organizations provide progressive technology and equipment as they dote on contemporaneous and innovative workplaces, which allow them to exploit their skills, and makes them feel valuable (Fadilah et al. 2015, Zhang & Venkatesh 2013). Correspondingly, the proponents of generational studies addressed them with certain labels namely, the next “greatest generation” (Howe & Strauss, 2000); “generation whine” (Hershatter & Epstein 2010)-that implies their protected generation who have been overindulged by the ultra-protective parents or the “hover-moms” (Morreale & Staley 2016); and “Look at me generation”- young people who are self-absorbed and overly self-confident (Fry 2015, Myers & Sadaghiani 2010) or “the me-generation” for their inflated sense of self or narcissistic (Tapscott 2010). Furthermore, they have been acknowledged as appreciating honesty and justifiable practices while seeking for work-life balance, more challenging and prefer flexibility (Kultalahti & Viitala 2015, Luscombe, Lewis & Biggs 2013, Society of Human Resource Management 2008). The significance of investigating this generation of workforces is palpable as they are observed as different from the previous generation besides partake own characteristics. Thus, the revolutions and the millennial generation matter because not only that they come in large numbers but they are expected to be different and powerful generation of workers they are encountering the challenges of the revolutionized world of work.

The millennials are often called the ‘wired’ generation as they show greater know-how than the members of their predecessor’s generations of network relationship management applications such as Email, voicemail, tweets, pokes, timelines and status updates along with other technologies. This greater familiarity with technologies gives them an advantage with the rise of telecommunication and advanced technologies in workplaces. The rise of social networking sites namely LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram resulted in some even more wired millennials. On the other hand, higher education is also demanded to look at this matter to handle the knowledge transfer. This technological culture causes the millennials to expect technology to be utilized in the learning process and they prefer to be allowed access to the vast informational sources available through the multimedia modes (Chelliah & Clarke 2011).

At a minimum, today’s workplaces and IHL need to provide pedagogy, practices and policies that could offer opportunities for them to extend their altruistic values, promotes workplace environment with such support that offer praises and constant feedbacks. The most recent and widely acknowledged source of knowledge in the area of millennials’ traits at workplace is the work of William Strauss and Neil Howe (1992). Seven distinguishing traits of the members of this generation were identified. One of the suggested traits is that they are considered “special”. They are being celebrated by their Boomer parents after they have gone through all sort of works (Wilson & Gerber 2008). As a result, the millennials are more family-oriented. Other qualities of this generation are that they are “sheltered”, surrounded by

abundance of choices and using teamwork significantly (Howe & Strauss 2000). In view of these traits that Millennials take to the workplace, the parenting styles such as the “helicopter parents” (Howe & Strauss 2007, Frey & Tatum 2016) might have been the influence. These ultra-protective parents are said to be the cause for the millennials desire for constant support namely emotionally and when at a job, they require for constant feedbacks as discussed in the following sections. Millennial students are also regarded as the “trophy kids” (Tulgan 2009) whereby they demanded relentless praise (McAllum 2016). They have the tendencies to have delays in maturity, independence development and rely on their parents for financial support and financial as a result of the “helicopter” parents. Studies also show that relationship with parents shaped Millennials’ work value and motivation in executing their work (Leenders, Buunk & Hankens 2017). Thus, research suggested a re-examination in student-instructor rapport that could involve parents as it also helps to understand their work values and motivation at work in future. The inclusion of cutting-edge technologies and communication through social media may enable interactions between instructors and parents which evades the moderation from students (Frey & Tatum 2016). A formative feedback as a type of assessment practice is recommended as it allows the grade-obsessed millennial students to impartially hold complex tasks in both educational and workplace sets (McAllum 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Participants were those who were born between the years of 1982 and 2004. They were characterised as the Millennial workforces by a set of criteria namely; who perform on-the-job writing in English, and they are the graduates of IHLs. They have been working within the same services sector for at least five years. The supposition is that an individual who has worked for more than five years are believed to have understood their work culture (Merriam 2009). A phenomenological inquiry can include five to 25 interview participants who have the lived experience of the event under investigation (Polkinghorne 1989, Yin 2015). As depicted in Table 1, all seven participants were recruited from four services sectors in Malaysia namely manufacturing, government services, power and utility, finance and communication. At their workplace, six of the participants write for their career and one, Amelia writes as her career. All of them were identified from recommendations of friends and relatives.

TABLE 1. The participants involved in this study

No. of participants	Type of services/workplace	Pseudonym	Age
1	Manufacturing	Ana	33
3	Government services	John, Alice, Sophea	31, 31, 32
2	Power and utility	Seth	29
1	Finance	Naz	30
1	Communication	Amy	29

The approach employed in this study is empirical phenomenology which it requires the participants to recall their lived-experiences. It is to ensure a disclosure of the essence of their experiences (Moustakas 1994). In the present study, a two-tiered method of locating descriptions from the participants as recommended by Giorgi (1997) was employed to allow a context to take place which would be followed by meaning (Bevan 2014, Giorgi 1985 & 1997). The data from the interviews were then triangulated with the data gained from the descriptions of their self-portraits. The permissions to interview the millennial workforces selected and the agreement to interview them during their work hour were acquired from

each institution’s head of human resource and the workforce themselves. A pseudonym is used to refer to each of them.

Two stages of interviews which include verbal and visual data elicitation were carried out in two stages. The interviews were semi-structured and face to-face whereby the researcher tried to maintain between the flexibility and control at all time. Throughout the interviews, the pre-determined questions digressed to maintain a continuation of particular responses. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using ATLAS.ti 8. While triangulation is commonly practiced in quantitative paradigm for generalization and confirmation of a research, Barbour (1998) is heedful on the notion of triangulation in qualitative paradigm by claiming that there is a need to delineate triangulation from a qualitative research’s perspective. In the present study, the data triangulation which is time was used to determine the congruence of the event under investigation across time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). In order to consider data triangulation method, interviews were conducted twice which employed the two-tiered method as suggested by Giorgi (1997) and two types of data elicitation namely the verbal interviews and visual were employed. Along with that, the data from the descriptions of the participants’ self-portraits were used to further analyse the findings from interviews. It served to draw a conclusion from a true reflection of the participants and created reliability in the thematic descriptions. In the present study, a systematic thematic analysis which is a modified model by van Kaam was used to analyse the data (Moustakas 1994). It was used to guide the phenomenological data that includes the analysis of data reduction, imaginative variation and finally to synthesize the meaning and essences from the data.

FINDINGS

From their experiences, much learning for workplace English writing took place at work, despite they also recalled learning about work at IHL. Their responses on the practicality of writing in English lessons IHLs have prepared them and learning at work were derived from the semi-structured interview questions: “please describe your university lessons of writing in English”, “what have the university courses related to writing in English prepared you for the reality of workplace writing?” and, “did you recall any trainings you attended/learning on writing in English at your workplace?” Figure 2 depicts the output of the data analysis.

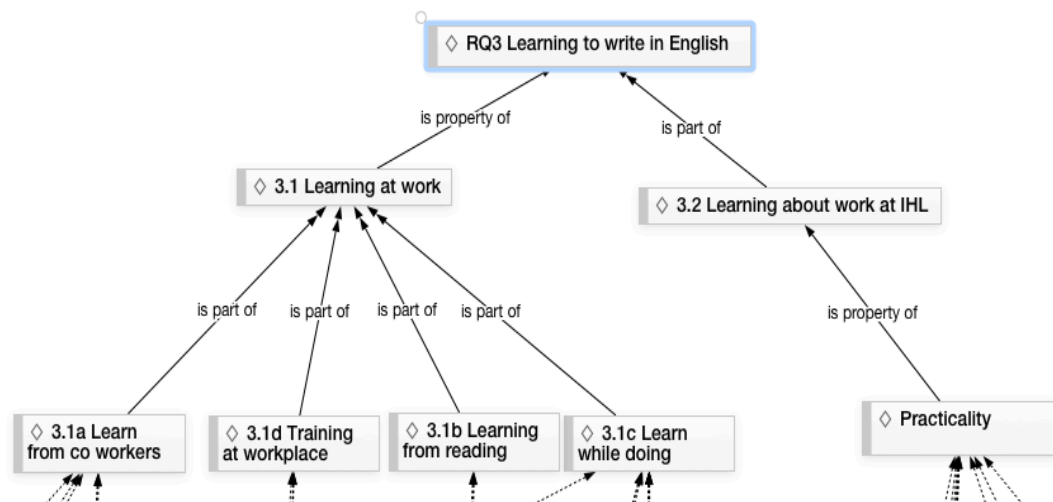


FIGURE 1. ATLAS.ti 8 output- network for learning to write in English

WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LEARNED AT IHL

Within IHLs which provides the primary setting of writing in English, they recalled that they have taken English course in their first year and a business writing course in their final year. Their responses were linked to the practicality of the courses to the current work settings. The participants interviewed came from the different disciplinary backgrounds and four of them work in services that have links with their academic disciplines. The participants expressed contentment in writing lessons offered at IHLs to the familiarity of a particular workplace genre they were assigned in current workplaces. As noted by Jerry, “in xxx (IHL), we were given materials, real materials which I found interesting and I could recall until now.” In addition, they communicated their satisfaction with grammar and mechanics that they find useful to the tasks they produced in the workplace. Ana who works in manufacturing services and has law academic background claimed that she had taken business writing course during her degree but she barely recalled in which semester. According to her the course was helpful since the company also revolves around law. As she put it, “help because law subjects, the company is law, so those stuff useful.” However, when she was asked to further explain the usefulness in English writing she mentioned that only grammar skills she acquired in English course was helpful, “Grammar is helpful because the rest is different... reports during university are assignment but now for organization... the styles are also different.”

Similarly, Sam, who has a finance academic background and working in a finance department noted the practicality of general English course he attended in IHL. He commented that “English modules and lessons in English was very useful in my current job scope because most of my tasks to write reports. So, they help in my English usage in general and my personal skills... but depends on the work contexts.” He added that “English course at university level helped him me in the opportunity and to find the job which I applied.” From his anecdotes, he had to sit for an English writing test and he made it as the head of finance as his current position from there. He put it “we were asked to... basically we were given a piece of paper... finally it was a write-up... a summary with executive write-up of the xxx (organization name) financial performance report. We were asked to scrutinise the report... is there any improper sentences or grammatical errors like that.”

However, Alisya who has a different academic discipline and works in a government service sector which dealing with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) found that English course she had taken barely helped her since it was designed for teaching others. She noted, “for me not really, but the language skills help.” In their descriptions of learning of writing in English prepared by IHLs, none of the participants mentioned practicality other than contexts and language skills especially grammar.

LEARNING TO WRITE AT WORK

Their reflections on learning to write in English for work was elaborated on learning that took place at work. They shared about their approaches to learning at work. Firstly, they recalled their participation in in-house trainings they have received specifically for writing or English in general. Along with that, they also recalled their approaches to learning that they acquired through participation, first-hand, and intrinsic motivation.

PARTICIPATION IN TRAININGS

The participants described that they have experienced learning through the structured or in-house trainings. The trainings were conducted regularly inside or outside their work sites that were organized by the human resource department or corporate training division. They regarded them as short courses which only took place for a day or two. The training was

planned to teach and develop the generic skills that are useful to put together their tasks. The trainings concerned about the practice of their services. Within the same training, English skill was inextricably woven into writing. As noted by Naz, “main motive of these modules is to boost our employee’s skills and knowledge on English especially on writing.” It was supported by Seth, as he put it, “HR led trainings consistently to advance our English and trainings conducted are courses for effective communication in English.” When they were asked to describe further, they expressed that the skills they acquired from their participation in trainings was specific to the skills that are useful for their job scope. As expressed by Alice who works in a government service sector, she had participated in trainings designed for writing during her internship in the agency and the recent year. She shared her satisfaction in participating in trainings conducted by the workplace. “One of it is probably going to courses that they offer. Ya, because we have a time I would say one of the HR people do is like create these courses, short courses a day or two courses of writing.” She elaborated “HR or different parties, they conduct a lot of courses for officers... in a lot of subjects not just writing... They do offer courses on writing. I went last year... I join this course on writing cabinet papers with the memorandum for the ministers... so, it helped in my writing... papers to be sent to the Cabinet because that is a different thing.” From their accounts, none of the participants revealed learning beyond the skills they need to execute their tasks of writing in English.

SOCIAL INTERACTION, FIRST-HAND AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

The participants recalled their experiences of learning through their approach of combining on-the-job and off-the-job tasks. Firstly, the participants stated that they had experienced the opportunity to learn at work from their co-workers or through legitimizing social interactions. It took place when they started to build a positive rapport with them and took advantage to learn the foundation of writing for their occupation and as a result improving their skills. The planned or intentional learning at their workplace happened through a buddy system. Through this activity, the participant acquired language skills from their associates who they know are better in the area. As noted by Naz, “the unending education, we have this through buddy system to improve the quality of report writings in our organization. My buddy or partner graduated from a university in the US. Some of the writing technics he taught us.” The participants also found themselves intrigued to learn from co-workers. They tried to ask their seniors within the same field through personable interaction. The instance was shared by Amy “I asked my senior what tense I should use.” Participants also reported that sometimes accidental learning took place while they were communicating with co-workers. It happened through interactions with the co-workers as experienced by Seth, “I attended meetings that involved different states. Normally conducted in our headquarters. So, we definitely used English. I supposed the conversations helped with my English not only for myself but also for my job.”

The participants also expressed about the learning through first-hand experience. The formal genre familiarity with reports and articles which they have acquired in trainings, guidance from co-workers or/and samples acted for them as a malleable set of guidelines in writing. They also denied that the standards restrained them from fixing a template to suit every task situation. They noted this as a learning approach to establish their own writing style. As noted by Sophea, following reports produced by seniors, learned about the flow of writing that is approved by the standard of her organization. “I follow existing letters, reports of seniors’ and actually learned from there.” While executing a writing task, they reflected that it offered them practices to improve their writing skill in English as well as their general English skills. As described by the participant who work in the government services, John

and supported by the participant who works in a manufacturing services. Learning while doing took place progressively, “a learning process, from time-to-time and I believe there is always an improvement for my skills.” Likewise, Ana shared, “not at once but slowly and gradually.” The participants mentioned that they were responsible for learning while doing to become better at their job. As shared by the participant from the utility services sector, Sam “we’re all up to improve ourselves every time when we work” in which it was supported by Ana who said “we learn and we improve.” According to the participants, rather than merely shortcomings, mistakes are useful as she had the opportunity to learn Sophea noted, “to learn while doing is useful I believe we learn a lot from our mistakes.” Next, there were various aspects of workplace writing skills that they have learned while doing such as to find an angle in writing to bring the objectives or aims of the tasks to life. As shared by the participant who writes for her career, Amy. She shared that throughout her experiences she has learned the premise that gives not just a particular direction for her reports but the techniques in selecting the highlights of a storyline. She described that she acquired the knowledge on what to leave out or put in as well on how to choose an outstanding part from weaker points. As Amy noted, “I learned at work the way of writing, what should be put as weak, what to put in the first, and you know how to angle the writing.” As for general English skills woven in writing, they recalled learning new vocabulary, proper grammar and spelling. As experienced by Alice, she familiarized herself with the ICT terms which she was not exposed in IHLs. It took place as she edited articles that were submitted by the ICT department. She found herself learning new words as she came from a different disciplinary background. She mentioned, “I learned new words and terms because xxx (her work institution) have lots of ICT divisions. So, I learned those by editing. Also, they helped improves my grammar.”

Finally, the participants reflected their learning experiences through intrinsic motivation. They voluntarily read articles and exchanged articles with colleagues. The use of WhatsApp was mentioned to allow them to discuss and exchange reading materials. They read prior to being instructed to write. They found their must-reads for their occupation to find out about topics beyond their areas of specialization. As expressed by Sophea, she read about logistics which is new to her because the services that her organization provides revolve around the area. She noted, “we share a lot of articles about logistics. They are new to me but that’s our usual work. We have WhatsApp group” Along with the knowledge on the field, she learned different styles of writing from her voluntary reading, “I have read different styles of writing that are useful for my work to write reports, emails and sometimes different styles.” Reading on the materials relevant to the services that they are doing was also accomplished by Seth as he mentioned, “I read everything including finance management or business.” A similar learning approach was accomplished by Jerry as he noted, “reading I glimpse through. From there I learned some vocabulary then I tried to use them in my writing. You know when I was preparing my daily jobs like to prepare statements for the minister and such.” From their anecdotal evidence, none of their approaches to learning at work was beyond trainings, social interaction, first-hand and intrinsic motivation.

DISCUSSIONS

Their responses reflected what IHL education prepared them and failed to prepare them for the workplace writing tasks. They are based on their responses on the practicality of education that they have received. It became clear that the participants’ perceptions of IHLs’ preparation for the workplace writing depended on the similarity of their disciplinary background and the genre of writing tasks they produce in workplace. Distinctive written

genres of different workplace settings and generic skills including English language skills that are useful in writing were found to be practical to be exposed to graduates. This result may be explained by the association between theory and practice that helped them developed familiarity with their workplaces' context and situation (Schneider 2002). From their anecdotal evidence, practical inputs gained from IHL that are transferrable to the workplace tasks are language skills, disciplinary specific skills and authentic tasks. The use of authentic tasks, as noted by Jerry, is considered meaningful in their learning. The relationship between the authentic task and effectiveness of learning may partly explained by its ability to bridge the gap between writing discourses at IHLs and real-life practices as found in other studies (Billett & Choy 2013, Koester 2010, Lucas 2010). The knowledge to transfer language skills acquired into workplace tasks should be imparted. As studies have ascribed that language used in the workplace is shaped by the special characteristic of workplace discourse (Koester 2010). Thus, raising awareness on authentic business corpora is practical for workplace learning that help learners in both writing skills and English skills woven into writing.

Along with the practicality of IHLs' preparations, the millennial workforces have experienced a complex nature workplace writing that contributes to learning to write in English at their workplace. Learning was observed through an acquisition of workplace writing skills and English skills that are useful for their workplace writing tasks. Based on the descriptions above, the participants have reflected their values along with their reflections of learning. It was deliberated through their intrinsic motivation to improve their skills through voluntary reading. It was found that they manifested into voluntary reading as a means of learning to appear more prepared for their workplace writing tasks. They also tried to avoid unpleasant consequences while they found that the opportunity to learn about their organization's services through reading is beneficial. These results are in accord with recent studies indicating that the members of millennial generation thrived and feel more secure when they tried to minimize failure or avoiding risks (Leki, Cumming & Silva 2009; Sumer & Didona 2014). As found in the study, the participants not only read the materials that are related to their tasks, they also performed pleasure L2 reading. A possible explanation for this might be that reading signposts their intrinsic motivation to learn. Studies have found that the type of reading in L2 influenced L2 writing proficiency and contributes to a performance (Leki et al. 2009). The preforming of actions to look smart or shunning negative slants are regarded as an internal motivation (Nicholls 1983). In addition, they deployed the technology such as social media to enable the exchange of reading materials. Previous studies represented this thinking pattern as internally motivated when an action denotes a writer's cognitive that supports them in the generation of ideas (Magnifico 2010). Motivational factor is believed to be a dependable predictor of behavioural outcomes (Kohn 2015). As mentioned in the previous section, the millennials expected the use of technology in which it motivates them (Chelliah & Clarke 2011) and the deployment in learning makes it easier for communication (Frey & Tatum 2016). Thus, their action of learning the writing skills thorough the means of reading and deployment of technology can help view their motivation at work and the tools to be considered for learning.

Also, the complex nature of workplace writing in English demonstrated that the millennial workforces have experienced a transition into writing in their job. The complexity of workplace writing was discussed in Dias et al. (2011) as the interdependent position of texts and writers in that are highly situated. In the transition from a novice to a better writer as experienced by the participants, they learned from their social interaction with the co-workers who are more knowledgeable. The notion is explainable through the cognitive apprenticeship because the millennials reflected on skills development after engaging in intentional and accidental learning which includes scaffolding from a more knowledgeable co-worker. Cognitive apprenticeship promotes the concept of skills development (Smith

2003) which was not explicitly discussed in the study. However, the two concepts embedded in it namely the situated writing and learning as well as scaffolding or the external supports were detailed out in a clear manner in the analysis of the study.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In light of the greatly situated nature of learning to write in the workplace, pedagogical implications surface about whether writing for the workplace should be taught in contexts that is highly disciplinary driven. As the analysis of the study has shown, the participants of the study tend to find learning practical if the knowledge and skills they learned are transferrable in their work contexts. They concerned about the authenticity, activities, the learning and knowledge on language and contents that are intertwined in their writing tasks. Notwithstanding the fact that academic environment that IHLS can provide is unfavourable for authentic situated learning setting (Dias et al. 2011). Yet, there are other activities which can hold much promise to expose graduates to the complexity of real-life workplace writing in English such as through collaborative writing (Bremner 2010, Freedman & Adam 1996) with other learners within or from different disciplines. The social interaction through collaborative writing activities, they can get used to working with others of a different disciplinary background or who are more knowledgeable that simulates the scaffolding in the workplace. After all, it supports one of Howe and Strauss' delineated traits of millennials in which the highly appreciate teamwork. In addition, general English writing course should not be overseen since it provides generic language skills that can be woven in real-life tasks.

Thus, the present study managed to explore two dimensions of learning to write in English for the workplace principally as reflected by the millennials. As the future of learning and training of workplace writing in English looks prone to change, it would be interesting to see how strong the relationships between practice and exposure to genres and generic skills as well as social interaction and motivation to writing skills development and task outcomes. Consequently, despite there is a body of work in the area of learning for and at workplace, very little research has been centred on writing skills at workplace. Thus, further research is desirable to expand the analysis of the present study.

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