

ESL Students' Attitude, Learning Problems, And Needs For Online Writing

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Abstract

In many instances, negative attitudes towards writing as well as other language learning problems have been linked to ESL students' poor performance in writing. The study investigates ESL tertiary students' writing attitude and the learning problems they face in BEL 311 writing course at MARA University of Technology. The participants in the study were 60 Part Three Diploma students taking BEL 311 course, and 4 writing instructors who have been teaching this course for more than 5 years. The students were given a set of needs analysis questionnaires, and the lecturers were interviewed. In addition, both groups of participants were asked to describe the important elements which they perceive as useful for a supplementary online writing program. The results indicate that the lecturers felt the majority of the students have negative attitude towards writing as they would procrastinate. They are also careless and dislike writing. The findings from the participants also revealed that they perceive writing in English as difficult and they dislike it. In addition, both groups of participants also perceive that the students' learning problems, which affect their writing quality, include the lack of practice time being allocated in class, dull writing activities and the lack of emphasis towards critical thinking in their writing course. Furthermore, they suggested that a special online writing program which can act as a supplement for the course and help to enhance the learners' writing ability and interest.

Keywords: ESL writing; needs analysis; attitudes; learning problems; online writing program

Introduction

Teaching English writing is very challenging in English proficiency courses. As most students have to cope with numerous course demands, students need to possess good writing skills. A distinct problem that needs to be looked into is that some ESL teachers tend to put aside a few important factors for successful writing such as the students' engagement and interest towards their writing activities and tasks. Chuo (2004) reveals that one of the most prominent problems affecting students' success in college compositions besides language areas difficulties are the students' attitude towards their writing task. Therefore, he urges teachers of writing to come up with innovative and interesting instructional methods such as online writing programs which encourage students to actively participate in their writing tasks. This will develop the students' active minds and increase their personal involvement in order to bring forth their enthusiasm for writing and thus, enhance their writing competence. This study is based on the needs analysis conducted on a General English Proficiency Course known as BEL 311 at MARA University of Technology. Specifically, it looks into ESL students' attitude towards ESL writing and the problems they face in learning to write academic writing in a General English course. The study also looks at possible ways to change the students' negative attitude to positive ones from the perspective of their writing instructors. In addition, suggestions from both the students and their lecturers on how to manage their learning problems and enhance their writing interest and ability are also discussed.

It is important to note that, although the benefits of needs analysis study have been well documented in ESL research, the present studies on needs analysis mostly concentrate on English for specific purposes or ESP courses (Seedhouse, 1995; Siti Hamin Stapa & Ismi Roha Mohd Jais, 2005; Nor Aslah Adzmi, 2009) and very few have been conducted on General English proficiency courses (Seedhouse, 1995; Kaewpet, 2009). Moreover, the ones conducted tend to focus on classroom-based (Seedhouse, 1995; Nor Aslah Adzmi 2008, Kaewpet, 2009; Siti Hamin Stapa & Ismi Roha Mohd Jais, 2005) and not so much on online writing courses (Bada & Okan 2000; Hisham Dzakiria & Rozhan Idrus, 2003; Chan & Yap, 2008; Mah Boon Yit & Er Ann Nah, 2009) especially those, which are course specific, and focus on the concept of a supportive or additional online learning environment (Posiah Mohd Isa, Siti Akmar Abu Samah & Kamaruzaman Jusoff 2008, Noriah Ismail, 2010).

Literature Review

In a study conducted on revised writing drafts of 200 ESL MARA University of Technology (UiTM), it was discovered that the majority of the students were not able to produce high quality essays. This is due to the fact that many of them were not serious or critical enough when producing their drafts or revising (Noriah Ismail, Sumarni Maulan and Nor Haniza Hassan, 2008). These prominent problems which persist during writing among UiTM students are related to their writing attitude and habits (Noriah Ismail, Suhaidi Elias, Intan Safinas Mohd Ariff Albakri, P Dhayapari Perumal & Indrani Muthusamy, 2010). When composing, some of the students were not keen to use certain strategies like to think critically about their writing process, plan and develop contents,

edit or even revise their writing outputs. In other words, they simply wrote without much concern or due regards to their writing steps or process. This is especially so during the exam time when most of them would simply write and produce only one draft without attempting to at least come up with a brief outline, even when they were encouraged to do so by their lecturers (Noriah Ismail, Sumarni Maulan and Nor Haniza Hassan, 2008). In addition, the result from the survey conducted at Putra University Malaysia, involving some ESL lecturers and students, shows that both parties agree that the lecture method to teach English is the least favored and least effective. Thus, they propose that a more individualistic attention and dialogue interaction be applied (Tan Bee Hoon, Emerson and White, 2006). This can be achieved through a more innovative learning method such as through an online learning instruction (Supyan Hussin, 2008). Moreover, it is also important to increase students' learning hours and their involvement in selecting materials and deciding syllabi in order to enhance their interest and positive attitude towards learning (Wilhelm & Chen Pei, 2008). Moreover, according to Supyan Hussin (2008), ESL students need some kind of social support or scaffolding in order to improve and increase their Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD as proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). With the proper guidance, ESL students can then increase their ZPD, and become more self-directed (Supyan Hussin, 2008) as they know what to do next in that learning process. Such an effort warrant writing instructors, especially at the tertiary level, to urge the students to make use of the additional writing instructions outside of class time via online (Mah Boon Yih & Er Ann Nah, 2009). In this case, a special online writing program devised to meet the specific needs of the students is vital and deemed significant to help support them in overcoming their weaknesses in this skill.

Furthermore, another prominent problem concerning writing instruction is that many ESL teachers tend to put aside some important factors for successful writing such as their students' engagement and interest towards the writing activities and tasks being provided (Noriah Ismail et al., 2010). This is important as the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1985) proposes that second language learners can acquire language better in a non-threatening learning environment where the stress level is low and students' interest and motivation are high. In an online writing course, students would be able to engage in peer discussion, get helps from one another, the teacher, and self-paced learning sources that are accessible. Thus, the online writing course provides a favorable medium for students to think critically, explore ideas, gain feedback and share their work with peers as well as does not limit the students' learning hours and practise (Warschauer, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Many Malaysian students face problems with writing in English. In fact, their anguish and apprehension towards writing seem to worsen at the university level since a higher level of writing performance is expected of them (Nor Aslah Adzmi 2009). In fact, based on the researcher's personal observation after teaching UiTM students for more than six years, it is found that many of these students' actual writing quality has not been improved since school days. Eventhough UiTM students are taught to write starting from

the first semester, most of the students are unable to produce a satisfactory essay, and this has resulted to poor grades in English.

In a more recent study on UiTM students, Nor Aslah Adzmi (2009) reported that, “The analysis of the students’ English course results of every academic semester indicates a high failure rate that is found to persist. This has contributed to their bad performance in their specialized courses” (p. 171). Therefore, this study is conducted to analyze the students’ actual writing attitude, learning problems, and writing interest in order to come up with the viable measures in the attempt to enhance the students’ writing ability and interest. This study is also significant in a sense that it also takes into account the opinion of the lecturers or writing instructors regarding the students’ writing attitude and interest and not just the students’ per se. Many previous researches regarding student writing have been conducted on writing in general (McLeod, 1987; Gungle & Taylor, 1989; Rankin-Brown, 2006) and few have focused specifically on academic writing especially on ESL tertiary students. In addition, most of the research conducted do not emphasize on the writing instructor’s perspective and opinion but focus more or solely on the students. Thus, the findings of this study would contribute to this particular field of knowledge.

This Study

The objectives of the research are: a) to discover the students’ attitude regarding writing especially for academic purposes from the perspective of their lecturers, b) to identify the problems the students face in learning to write in BEL 311 writing course; and c) to suggest the ways the students can improve their writing attitude and interest according to the students’ and lecturers’ perspective. With these prescribed objectives, this study intends to answer three questions 1) What is the students’ attitude regarding writing especially for academic purposes from the perspective of their lecturers? 2) What are the problems the students face in learning to write in BEL 311 writing course; and 3) How can the students improve their writing attitude and interest according to students’ and lecturers’ perspectives? Hence, the needs analysis (CA) conducted are meant to address all these there important issues and also to justify the importance of developing a suitable online writing program for the students.

Methodology

The focus of the study are mainly to discover the writing attitudes and learning problems among ESL tertiary students taking BEL 311 course from MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Johor Branch. The study employs a methodological triangulation whereby both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. For this study, 60 out of a population of 200 Diploma Part Three students who were taking a compulsory English proficiency course known as BEL311, at MARA University of Technology Johor Branch, were randomly chosen and these students agreed to participate in the survey. In addition, interviews were conducted with four BEL writing instructors/lecturers (the writing instructors are called lecturers by the institution and students rather than instructors and will be addressed as such in this paper) with more than 5 years of teaching experience in BEL 311 course. The main research instruments used in the study are the

Students' survey questionnaires (Appendix A) and the Writing Instructors'/Lecturers' interview questions (Appendix B)

Results and Discussions

Firstly, the findings of the study are discussed in terms of the problems the ESL students face in writing and also in learning to write academic English in BEL311 course. Secondly, the students' attitude and interest towards writing and the ways the students are able to improve their writing, according to both the students' as well as their lecturers' perspective, are explained. Lastly, suggestions from both the lecturers' as well as the students' on the ways the students are able to improve their writing attitude as well as enhance their writing ability are described. In regards to the students' attitude as inquired in research question 1, it was found that the lecturers feel that many of the students do not have a positive attitude towards writing in English, especially in relation to learning to write academic English in BEL 311.

Findings from the lecturers' interview:

1) The lecturers claimed that most of the students have negative attitude towards writing. They think that the students perceive writing and learning to write in BEL311 as difficult and boring and this may be due to the textbook and materials used in BEL 311 writing course and the method of instructions used in class. Therefore, the students are not really interested or lazy to write and do not give much effort to try to be critical when writing and improve themselves. This makes the writing instruction in BEL 311 ineffective for most of them. The following are some of the (unedited) excerpts from the interview:

*I think basically some of them have **a bad attitude**. They don't have the willingness to commit in class. They do not want or **lazy to write**. Some are good but most have average or poor attitude. They **don't really enjoy writing** in BEL 311, **feel it's difficult**. I think it's the **textbooks** and maybe the **course's writing instruction or method ineffective and boring** to them so they are not interested to try harder you know, this makes the lessons hard for them. (L1).*

*Basically, writing an essay is **not the first choice** among UiTM students. When we tell them about writing an essay, many of them are reluctant... even though they have been exposed to writing essays since...what do you call that, primary school. You see they are **still repeating the same reluctance for writing and commit themselves to thinking**...because when you write you need to think. So because these students are lazy to think they do not write in depth or interesting content and fail to get a good grade. (L2)*

*The students **feel it's difficult** because BEL 311 requires them to write in academic English and in order for them to write, they need to be exposed to and acquire the right vocabulary, new words and so on but they lack the interest and couldn't be bothered to try to improve and err...also **many***

seem bored in class. The textbooks or instructions used at present not so effective for many of them. (L3)

*They would just write, their mind is not dynamic, they **do not want to improvise things** and are satisfied with dull essay content or maybe they are too lazy and **do not want to think critically** regarding their writing process. There is no, what do you call that...the willingness to think. (L4)*

b) The other negative attitudes of the students regarding writing include being lazy to revise or edit their essays even during exams and thus, they produce low quality work. Moreover, they also prefer spoon-feeding and guided writing, like to procrastinate, lack of motivation to write and only do so for the sake of exams:

*Even during exams, **no planning and rushing through things**, and then **no checking..no revising** and make a lot of minor and major errors because many of them just want to leave the exam hall as fast as they can whereas there's still a lot of time left. That's the attitude of our students...they just want to finish and done with it. Regardless of the quality..whether it's a good quality writing..they **couldn't be bothered**. (L1)*

*And from what I observed, many **rely too much on structured and guided writing**. I think many **lack the ability to think** because we spoon-feed them with the contents and everything. (L2)*

*It's very common that students would do **work at the last minute**...the good ones they would prepare early, but most do not look into the other sources or information... they would **procrastinate**, they would delay things and they would never...what do you call it...follow what they've been asked to do.Because of this they turn in poor quality work. (L3)*

*They don't really write on their own will. Even during the exams, they just want to finish it off. They **don't you know, plan or do it in stages**, even when we teach them in class. So there is the **lack of motivation** to do well.So this has affected their writing performance. (L4)*

The findings above indicated that the majority of the students have some negative attitude towards writing in a sense they:

- are not really interested or lazy to write
- do not give much effort to try to be critical when writing
- are not interested to try harder
- do not want to improvise things and are satisfied with dull essay content
- do not plan, check or revise their essay even during exams
- like to rush through their work and finish off without careful, critical thoughts and revisions
- rely too much on structured and guided writing.

- work at the last minute and procrastinate

Due to these negative attitudes, the findings revealed such implications on the students and their writing:

- They fail to write in a critical manner or produce an in-depth essay.
- They tend to produce dull and uninteresting essay.
- They turn in essays full of errors or poor quality essays
- They do not produce good writing content and fail to get a good grade.

These findings add support to similar studies conducted on ESL students. For instance, a study conducted on one hundred ESL tertiary students' taking BEL100 (a General English Proficiency Class for Part One Diploma Students at MARA University of Technology) revealed that the majority of the students also had negative attitudes and did not have much interest in writing especially academic writing. The students' were not very interested in revising their drafts and they would often display lack of care when writing even during exams (Noriah Ismail, et al. 2010).

2) Secondly, in terms of the students' problems in learning to write academic English in BEL 311, both the lecturers and students perceived that the students lack the time to practice writing in class whereas, it is important for them to have more practice time in order to improve their writing. In addition, they also felt that the course do not provide effective writing guides and resources for the students to be able to write inquisitively and critically, in addition to being dull and uninteresting.

The findings from the lecturers' interview indicated that the students lack writing practise and they need more than the four hours of writing instructions to improve. In addition, the students need to be trained to be more inquisitive and critical of their writing process such as through the act of questioning in order for them to produce better written essays.

*We only have about 6 hours of BEL 311 to teach all four skills...so only about two to four hours for writing at the most, but then we **cannot complete in four hours** because they need to be doing the planning and thinking and revising because you know...writing is an integration of other things that we have to teach them. (L1)*

*But doing writing you cannot just write...you **need the right guide for them to be able to write in a critical manner**, they need to be able to question themselves and be critical of their writing process you know, **not just spoon-feed them** with instructions and information like we have in the **textbooks and materials used at present** because err...they are not so effective and well you see...these cannot train them to be critical or autonomous in learning to write. (L2)*

*I think mostly **lack of time to really follow the process writing**...spending too little time on each of the steps and err... **they do not question and be critical in every step** such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising,*

*editing and proofreading and evaluating. Furthermore **writing in class and the materials provided to them in this course are insufficient and well... most of the time they seem uninterested.** (L3)*

*It is **not sufficient** at all because especially for BEL 311, writing is the focus...but we don't have enough time, only two to four hours for it. I also think they **need more effective writing resources** and not just the prescribed books which not really cater to their needs and many find boring. (L4)*

In addition to interview responses, data from the survey were also analyzed. From the survey, 83.3 % of the students perceived that the time spent learning to write in BEL 311 which is around two to four hours a week is insufficient for them to be a good writer. Therefore, they insisted that they need more practice time especially outside of class time in order to improve. Hence, among the learning problems identified from the findings above include:

- lack the time to practice writing in class as the course of provide two hours of concentrated writing
- the course do not provide effective writing guides and resources for the students to be able to write inquisitively and critically
- the course is dull and uninteresting

Due to these problems, the students:

- do not have sufficient writing practice
- are unable to be critical of their writing process
- are not motivated to write

Thus, according to the lecturers, these problems and the implications they have on the students have negatively affected the students' writing. Similar to these findings which indicate the lack of writing practice opportunity faced by the students as well as the lack of ineffectiveness of the writing instruction and materials used in the course, other studies also revealed that many students in ESL writing classes do not get adequate writing instructions and practice due to the constraints of time and space available for writing instruction in class (Ng Kui Choo, 2006). Whereas, it is important for ESL students at tertiary level to have a lot of practice in writing and for the lecturers to spend a lot time reading and commenting on their students' essays in order for the students to write better (Saadiyah Darus, 2008). However, it is found that not only ESL students lack writing practice but also, when they write, many are unable to be critical even at tertiary level (Wan Hurani Osman & Anna Lynn Abu Bakar, 2009).

The final inquiry in this research is about lecturers' as well as the students' responses to improve their writing attitude and enhance their writing ability. It was found that both parties suggested that the students should be given an opportunity to practice writing more outside of class time via a special supplementary online writing program to supplement BEL311 writing course. They suggested that the online program should be

designed to enable the students to not only learn to practice writing more outside of class time autonomously at their own pace and level but also, it should provide the students with a suitable online composing guide that can guide the students to be critical and inquisitive of their writing process. Moreover, the online writing program should also give the students the opportunity to access the right writing practice and materials, discuss their writing progress and provide the right feedbacks using effective online writing tools such as through a special e-forum and blogs in order to enhance their writing ability, improve their writing attitude and increase their writing interest.

From the lecturers' interview responses, it is clear that the lecturers viewed that a supplementary online writing program related to BEL 311 should be provided to the students to allow them to have more writing opportunity outside of class time and at the same time enhance their writing interest and performance. This is because at present, the students only learn writing in class and they use the Internet solely for the purpose of searching for the information related to their essay topics through random search and without the proper guidance. Thus, the supplementary online program must be designed to be not only related to the course but most importantly to cater to the students' specific writing level and needs. Thus, it should be equipped with a special online writing or composing guide, which allows them to be inquisitive and critical throughout their writing process and also have all the right writing links and tools to enhance the students' writing interest and ability.

*A **special** online writing course or program is good for them. Yes! Definitely it would help...provided that they must be made to get attached to this online program...so it must be related to their BEL 311 syllabus and also **specially designed to suit their level and needs** and of course must **interest them**. At present we don't have this online writing program, mostly the students just surf the Internet but only for information to write their essay. So I feel err... there is **the need to design one special online writing guide** for our students you know...so they can **be critical of their writing process** and also be **autonomous** or more independent in writing. (L1)*

*And their attitude problems you know...they are lazy and constantly forget to choose the proper words and do not bring the dictionary. Yes, definitely, having all the **online writing links and resources will help** if the program is complete like you know...with links to online dictionary, thesaurus, grammar, spelling checker and so on, it can help to facilitate their writing and reduce their lack of interest, time and even negative attitude towards writing. (L2)*

*Nowadays students love to use the Internet, so because online writing is related to computers and the Internet, I think they would benefit from it. So **an additional** online writing program will give them the **opportunity to practice writing outside the classroom** and there **must be a lot links and resources** in it that they can use. So yes, I think online writing program will be very interesting and very beneficial for our students. Because this*

*is the 'in thing' for them now, you know...e-forums, blogging which they can discuss and provide or receive feedback...so I think they would **benefit** and will find it **interesting**. (L3)*

*They would only follow the process writing steps when we instruct them in class, but when it comes to exams or outside of class they don't follow the stages that they have been taught and are not critical of their writing process... So if we have **an online writing program that can guide them to do this on their own outside class**...even when the lecturer is not there to oversee and scold, you know...they'd do it because they are being guided online and then will become used to it or you know automatically use the right writing techniques once they are used to doing it...this can change their attitude and approach in their writing. (L4)*

Additionally, from the students' survey, when asked whether the students need to practice writing more autonomously outside of class time, the majority of them 80.0% (put the raw number here) agreed that the opportunity to do so online can help them to enhance their writing ability and interest. Moreover, most of them 86.6 % suggested that BEL 311 be supplemented with a supplementary online writing program which can guide them to be critical of their writing process. The program should not only cater for their needs and level but also able to enhance their writing interest and ability. The following are the **(unedited)** excerpts of the students' responses in the open-ended questions from the survey questionnaire:

*The four hours that are given in class to write essays or practice writing are **not enough for me to improve**. So I would **be interested** to participate in an online writing program so that I can **practice writing more outside of class**. (Student 1/S1)*

*I feel that I am not learning much in this BEL 311 course because my writing does not improve much. The textbook and materials used in this class are boring and not so effective to me. I need **better writing materials** that can help me to be **critical and interested** in learning to write. (S3)*

*I still do not know how to write in critical way. This course does not guide me enough to write that way. An online writing program that can help me to **be critical** and also **have good and interesting writing resources and links** would be more effective for me. (S5)*

*This BEL 311 course **must have an additional online program** because it **can allow us to write and discuss online** through blog and forum which can **interest** us and allow us to **practice more** to improve our writing. (S8)*

Hence, this study revealed positive perception of the ESL tertiary students towards the implementation of online writing instruction or program to improve the students' attitude towards learning to write. This finding further support the study conducted by Fang (2010) which indicated the need for a suitable online writing program to improve

students' attitude towards writing. Fang (2010) study which investigates forty-five EFL learners perceptions of a computer-assisted writing program known as *MyAcces* in a college composition class using a survey questionnaire and interview methods saw that the students' attitudes towards writing has improved with the use of the online writing program. In addition, the study also revealed the benefits the online writing tool in enhancing the learners' motivation and shows that it is a useful support tool in the EFL classroom.

Moreover, this study also supports the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1985) which proposes that students' factor to be considered when teaching ESL writing. Furthermore, Reid (1993) posits that one of the most prominent factors affecting students' success in college composition is the students' attitude towards their writing task. In other words, how the students feel and react towards their writing tasks and activities greatly determine the quality of their composition. As the findings in this study suggest an online writing program can be beneficial to enhance ESL tertiary students' writing ability and interest, recent researchers such as Fellner (2006) and Mah Boon Yit and Er An Nah (2009) also urge teachers of writing to come up with effective and innovative instructional methods through online writing modules and activities that are able to enhance the students' inquisitive minds and personal involvement, in order to bring forth the students' enthusiasm for writing. In addition, online programs provided to ESL tertiary students must be made flexible and allow the students some kind of social support or scaffolding such as through online discussion forums in order to improve and increase their Zone of Proximal Development (Supyan Hussin, 2008) while at the same time allow them to be self-directed and autonomous in learning.

Conclusion

This study provides important descriptions and explanations regarding ESL tertiary students' writing attitudes, problems and learning needs. Although there is a limitation of the study in regards to the number of lecturers involved, these four lecturers represented seventy percent of the lecturers who are teaching BEL311 academic writing instructions at the campus and have vast experience in the subject. More importantly, the study is significant as it also takes into account the writing lecturers' perception and not just the students' – as very few other studies conducted on ESL students' writing attitudes and needs focuses on both the lecturers' as well as the students' perspectives. Furthermore, the study also suggests that in order for ESL tertiary students to improve, they should be provided with some special online learning tools which will support their learning process. Thus, it is imperative that a special online writing program which can cater to the students' specific writing level and needs is developed and provided to them in order to enhance their writing ability and interest.

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APPENDIX A

Students' Survey Questionnaire

(Needs Analysis Questionnaire)

PART 1

A. Demographic Information	
1. Gender	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
2. Age :	
3. Diploma in :	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accountancy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business and Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Others
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Science and Computer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Science and Quantitative

PART II

A. My learning style

	Statements	Tick (/) where applicable
1.	I have been exposed to learning using computer and Internet when I was in secondary school	
2.	I like to learn autonomously with some facilitation from my lecturer	
3.	I study better if I can interact and discuss with my peers	
4.	Learning via online allows me to be more flexible with my time and pace	
5.	I prefer a learning program that allows learners to choose what to learn.	
6.	I do not like to learn online	

**B. If I decide to join an ESL online writing course, it is because
 [Tick where applicable]**

	Reasons	Tick (/) where applicable
1	I just want to try out something new	
2.	I am interested with an online / autonomous writing course	
3.	I want to be a better writer	
4.	I want to be a better learner	
5.	I believe in life long learning	
6.	You may state other reasons:	

C. Your’ knowledge of computer applications and readiness

Rate your knowledge of these computer applications:

1. for **don’t know** at all / never heard about it,
2. for **little knowledge** in it but have heard about it,
3. for use the application with **some limited knowledge**,
4. for use the application and have **some reliable knowledge** in it,
5. for **very proficient** in it- you can even teach the subject!)

		1	2	3	4	5
a	Word Processing (MS Word)					
b	Spreadsheet (MS Excel)					
c	Database (MS Access)					
d	Statistical Package (SPSS)					
e	Search Engine					
f	Entertainment Applications (CDs, MP3)					
g	Communication (E-mail, Blog and E-Forum)					
h	Utility Program (Burning CD, transfer files)					
i	Games					

D. Your knowledge/views regarding writing in English and an ESL online writing program

Rate each item on the scale shown to indicate your level of agreement.

1. How often do you write in English besides writing for your class assignments?
 1. Always (almost everyday)
 2. Often (occasionally)
 3. Seldom (once a while) rarely
 4. Never

2. Learning to write in English well can improve your academic performance.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

3. On the average, how many times do you write in English during the week?

1. 0-2 times
2. 3-5 times
3. 6-9 times
4. more than 10 times

4. Please rank the following types of writing you prefer to learn more starting with 1 for most preferred types of writing and 5 for your least preferred.

		1	2	3	4	5
a	academic writing					
b	creative writing					
c	others (to-do list, messages, etc)					

5. Please rank the following types of academic writing areas you prefer to learn more starting with 1 for most preferred types of writing and 5 for your least preferred.

		1	2	3	4	5
a	grammar					
b	vocabulary					
c	organization					
d	mechanics					
e	content					
f	critical thinking					

6. Students should learn to be more aware or critical of their writing process?

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

7. Spending 2-4 hours a week doing writing in class is sufficient/enough for you to be a good writer.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

8. I need to practice writing more outside class via online in order to improve.
1. Strongly disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree
9. BEL 311 should be supplemented with an online writing course or program.
1. Strongly disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree

PART C

1.	Would you be interested to participate in an online writing program? Explain why or why not.
2.	What types of issues or topics, do you think would be interesting to discuss and write about in an online writing course/program?
3.	Do you think students should learn to be more aware or critical of their writing process? a) yes b) no Give reason(s) for your answer:
4.	What online tools, skills, instructional activities, materials, etc do you think would be interesting and useful to be included in a supplementary online writing program for BEL 311? (Please state) a)Online Tools: Reason(s) for your answer: b) Skills: Reason(s) for your answer: c)Instructions/Activities: Reason(s) for your answer: d)Online Materials/Links: Reason(s) for your answer: e)Others: Reason(s) for your answer:

--THIS IS THE END OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE--

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION.

APPENDIX B

Writing Instructors'/Lecturers' Interview Questions (Needs Analysis Questionnaire)

1. How long have you been teaching English proficiency and BEL 311 classes?
2. What do you think of the majority of our students' attitude towards writing in English?
3. On the average, how many times do our students get to practice writing (essays) in class during the week? Is it sufficient?
4. What strategies or learning styles used by our students when learning to write?
5. Why do you think students should practice writing outside the class more in order to improve?
6. What areas do you feel our students are weak at in writing or learning to write and should be taught to learn more?
7. In what way is critical thinking skill important for students to improve their writing?
8. What is our students' perception towards critical writing?
9. How would we get our students to think and write critically?
10. How do our students perform in exams, especially in writing?
11. What do our students feel about learning autonomously or through an online learning compared to a structured, traditional module when it comes to enhancing their writing proficiency?
12. How would our students' benefit from an online writing course? To what extent online writing courses help the students to enhance their writing interest and performance?
13. What drives our students to participate or drop out from the online writing program? Do they prepare themselves before embarking into the program?
14. What are the challenges our students would face learning online?
15. What should be done if some of our students do not have the necessary computer /Internet skills to learn writing online?
16. In your opinion would our students prefer to be given a chance to choose/select their own writing materials/activities/topics, if so how would it benefit them?

17. Do our students rely solely on the materials provided to them or would they like to add or suggest other materials to be included for their writing class/module, if so, to what extent will this satisfy them and will it then contribute to their success as student writers?
18. What types of issues or topics, do you think would be interesting to discuss and write about in a writing course?
19. What are the skills, activities and materials do you think would be interesting and useful in an online writing course?
20. In what way do you think online writing activities such as writing in blogs, forum, chat, e-mails interesting and beneficial for the students?
21. In your opinion what makes a good online writing course for ESL students?
22. What are the approach/s and technique/s you use when teaching writing? To what extent do they help in improving your students' writing performance?
23. What are the procedures/steps that the students have to go through before they submit the final copy?
24. What are the constraints you face in teaching writing? How do they affect your students, performance?
25. Given a chance, how would you improve your teaching performance?
26. What do your advice or recommend for our students to do in order to improve their writing or to become better writers?

--END OF THE QUESTIONS--

About the authors

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