


## Common Writing Problems and Writing Attitudes among Freshman University Students in Online Learning Environments: An Exploratory Study

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Received: 01.10.2020 • Accepted/Published Online: 15.11.2020 • Final Version: 15.11.2020

**Abstract:** This paper is an exploratory study on college freshmen's writing problems in relation to their attitudes towards writing in online learning environments. The writing problems that were explored were the following, as identified by Yates and Kenkel (2002): a) Surface writing problems and b) Global writing problems. The problems were found in the essays of the participants. In conjunction with the writing problems that were identified, attitudes towards checking and revising one's work, towards writing, and towards receiving feedback on one's writing were also identified through the writing attitude scale adopted from Erkan and Saban (2011) and was re-worded to suit the Philippine college context. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the writing problems were surface problems, particularly those related to verbs, nouns, and prepositions. As for writing attitudes, the participants of the study generally manifested positive attitudes towards writing.

**Keywords:** ESL writing, writing attitudes, writing feedback, writing problems.

### 1. Introduction

Writing is one of the four fundamental language macro-skills that every individual is expected to learn. It is corollary to the three other skills- reading, listening, and speaking- and thus it cannot be learned in isolation. Regardless of their grade level, students are taught the rudiments of writing for a variety of purposes. Barone (2010) asserts that the foundations of language learning are very critical in determining students' further success in both the academe and the workplace.

Writing problems are experienced by many students in terms of their communicative competency levels, learning levels, and the status of English use in their respective countries, whether as a first (L1) or a second (L2) language. Yates and Kenkel (2002) define writing problems as those related to the deviation from the grammar, syntax (sentence construction), and meaning of a target language; they are divided into surface problems, which refer to grammar, and global problems, which refer to meaning, to cohesiveness, and to organization (Hyland, 2003). Kho, Wong, and Chuah (2013) cite that two of the reasons behind writing problems is that some student writers think in their L1

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when writing and that they tend to perceive formal writing as difficult due to its complexity in terms of conventions and structure.

The world has been confounded as a novel virus commonly known as the Corona Virus 19 (COVID-19) hit many countries globally. With more than five million deaths worldwide, COVID-19 is a serious threat in the lives of the people and the economy of every country. According to Perlow (2020), “The coronavirus will leave an enormous impact on how we consume, how we learn, how we work, and how we socialize and communicate” (p.2). In the Philippines, people are living in the so-called new normal, forcing them to accept alternative ways of living their lives before the pandemic. Strikingly, the field of education has been affected greatly too, hence, requiring every school to be more aware of the various learning needs of the students in new multimodalities (Pastor, 2020). Such phenomenon paved to the rise of remote teaching in order to continuously teach and assist students, despite of a health crisis in the local context.

In this light, this study explored the common writing problems and attitudes of freshmen college students from three private universities in the Philippines in the context of remote teaching. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

**1.1. What are the common writing problems that freshman college students manifest in their writing performance?**

**1.2. What are the common writing attitudes that college freshman English students have:**

**Regarding checking and revising one’s work?**

**Towards writing?**

**Towards receiving feedback on one’s writing?**

## **2. Literature Review**

Writing attitudes among students in terms of English language learning were explored by Mascle (2013), Williams and Takaku (2011), Al-Mekhlafi (2011), Sarkhoush (2013), Azarnoosh (2013), Gholaminejad, Monizadeh, Youhanaee, and Gohbadirad (2013), Maarof, Yamat, and Kee (2011), and Alamis (2010). Their studies were in correlation with final grades, assessment, and feedback. Shah, Mahmud, Din, Yusof, and Pardi (2011) correlated writing attitudes with their self-perception of their writing skills. Raoofi, Chan, Mukundan, and Rashid (2014) correlated writing attitudes with students’ own strategies while Lo and Hyland (2007) conducted an investigation of students’ writing motivation levels. Zhao and Dong (2011) studied college students’ self-efficacy levels, goal setting in writing, and self-motivation while Wang (2013) conducted a study on students’ attitudes towards writing in relation to learning Chinese. Pariña and De Leon (2013) studied Filipino students’ beliefs and perceptions of their writing skills and writing self-confidence in relation to writing apprehension and to exposure to English; a similar study was conducted by Cequeña, Barrot, Gabinete, Barrios, and Bolaños (2013). Gupta and Woldemariam (2011) did a study on college students’ attitudes towards writing instruction, writing strategies, and writing tasks. Studies on use of electronic media in relation to developing writing skills and to

accepting teachers' and peers' feedback were done by Cequeña (2013), Kim (2012), and Xu, Park, and Baek (2011). On the other hand, Sultana (2009) explored primary-level students' and college students' feedback receptiveness.

In terms of writing problems, syntax-level errors committed by Filipino students from high school to college were discovered and manifested in the results of the studies by Gustilo (2009), Gustilo and Magno (2012), and Masangya and Lozada (2009). In the East Asian context, Bao and Sun (2010), Wang (2013), Zheng and Park (2013), Sun and Shang (2010), Lu (2012), Chan (2010), Lee, Yoo, and Shin (2020), and Lee (2013). Focusing on the Southeast Asian context, particularly in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, studies were done by Abdulkareem (2013), Jalaluddin, Yamat, and Yunus (2013), Depega and Jufriзал. (2020), Kho, Wong, and Chuah (2013), Hansin and Samari (2020), Haerazi and Irawan (2019), Qamariah, Sri Wahyuni, and Meliana (2020), Stapa and Izahar (2010), Darus and Khor (2009), Tlonaen (2020), Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013), and Srichanyachon (2011), who did a comparative study on three types of revision methods: self-revision, peer revision, and teacher revision. Studies on Middle Eastern and South Asian college students' writing problems were done by Abdulkareem (2013), Alamin and Ahmed (2012), Alhaysony (2012), Al-Khairiy (2013), Abedi, Latifi, and Moinzadeh (2010), Almkhaizeem (2013), Khansir (2013), Nezami and Najafi (2012) Khatteer, S. (2019), and Hussain, Hanif, and Ur Rehman (2013). Studies on African students' writing problems were conducted by Ekanjume-Ilongo and Morato-Maleke (2020) and by Elola and Oskoz (2010).

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Participant Demographics

The participants of the study were freshman students of three (3) major universities located in Metro Manila. The schools were labeled as University A, University B, and University C in order to protect their identity. The study took place from August to September, 2020, the first two months of the first term of new academic year in the Philippines. Since President Rodrigo Duterte announced that there will be no face to face classes until a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available, all the classes that were involved in the study were done online. They were chosen according to the class assigned to the teachers whom the researchers have known personally for years. Gender, major, ethnicity, and age did not serve as factors in the study. Only natural-born Filipino students who obtained their basic education in the country were selected as official participants of the study.

**Table 1.** Number of participants per university

	A		B		C	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
MALES	28	45.16%	16	25.40%	9	21.59%

FEMALES	34	54.84%	47	74.60%	9	78.41%
N	62	100.00%	63	100.00%	8	100.00%

The number of participants per university was almost the same, except for University C, since some students belonging to Universities A and B were absent at the time the research was conducted. In terms of college major, all the participants from University B were tourism majors at the time of the study while all the University C majors were communication arts majors. As for University A, 43 (69.35%) of the total number of the participants, were the participants from the said university were business majors while the rest were engineering majors.

Focusing on gender, the observed trend was that the majority of the participants from each university are female.

**Table 2.** Age of participants per university

	A		B		C	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>18 AND BELOW</b>	10	16.13%	4	69.84%	64	72.73%
<b>19 YEARS OLD</b>	31	50.00%	2	19.05%	23	26.14%
<b>20 YEARS OLD</b>	16	25.81%	3	4.76%	1	1.14%
<b>21 AND ABOVE</b>	5	8.06%	4	6.35%	0	0.00%
<b>N</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**3.2. In terms of age, the majority of the participants from University A (50%) were 19 years old at the time the study was conducted. As for University B, almost 70% of the students were 18 years old and below; the same observation was true in the case of University C. Instruments Used**

#### **Personal Attitudes Towards Writing Questionnaire-Scale.**

One of the instruments that was used for the purpose of the study was the Personal Attitudes Towards Writing Questionnaire-Scale, entirely adopted from Erkan and Saban (2011) and was administered to the participants through Google Form. Some of the general items were translated into specific statements in order to focus on certain writing habits.

The Writing Attitudes Scale component determined the students' attitudes towards writing. The scale has ten statements per sub-heading. All items are written in a positive

tone and worded according to the students' level in order for the students to be encouraged to answer every item honestly. The current adopted version is more organized and specific than the previous one due to the categorization of every item into sub-headings. The scoring system used for the scale is a Likert-type one, with 1 as the lowest score and 5 as the highest score. The reason behind the researchers' assignment of 1 as the lowest score is to reduce the negative impact of 0 on students' writing attitude and performance self-appraisal.

A pilot study on the use of the attitude scale was conducted by the researchers before distributing it to all participants of the actual study. The majority of the ten participants who participated in the pilot study were able to answer the scale within 20 minutes, the allotted time the researchers set for them to answer the scale, after the researchers explained the contents and scoring system to them.

### **Writing output**

The writing output that the students produced was supposed to be a five-paragraph essay; however, there were some students who produced essays less than five paragraphs due to some factors such as: (1) Lack of time, (2) weak or distorted internet connection, (3) absence of physical contact with the teachers, and (4) difficulty in translating ideas into writing. A total of four (4) prompts were provided to the students, and they had the option to choose one (1) prompt. The topics of the prompts focused on the preventive measures of the Philippine government to mitigate COVID-19 cases in the country, on the learning modules used by Philippine schools for remote teaching, on the influence of celebrities to the youths, and on the use of social media platforms by teachers and students for educational and professional purposes. All prompts were devised by the researchers themselves.

### **Rubric Utilized for the Purpose of the Study**

The type of rubric for this study was of a seven-point, holistic type. Entitled "College-Level Holistic Rubric for Greater and Consistent Writing Skills Development", the researchers developed the rubric. There were two purposes for the use of the rubric in this study:

1. To match every student's number of writing problems to the score in order to determine his/her current level and to provide more constructive and empowering feedback.
2. To provide credence and additional evidence to support the findings that will eventually emerge from the analyses of the research and of the inter-raters.

The researchers-devised holistic rubric is different from other scales because instead of zero (0) as the lowest score, one (1) is set as the lowest score. The scale intends to determine more of the students' writing strengths and at the same time provide constructive and skill-specific feedback when necessary. The following scores of the seven-point scale have their respective general descriptions of their students' writing levels:

**Table 3.** The seven-point scale as devised by the researchers.

<b>Scale Score</b>	<b>Interpretation of Every Score</b>
7	Outstanding (no writing errors)

6	Very Satisfactory (1 to 5 writing errors).
5	Emergent (6 to 10 writing errors)
4	Developing (11 to 15 writing errors)
3	Fairly Developing (16 to 20 writing errors)
2	Struggling (21 to 25 writing errors)
1	Needs Further Improvement (more than 25 writing errors)

To ensure fairness in scoring the participants' written outputs and in analyzing every student's writing competency based on various categories, the researchers devised several categories for the comments section of the rubric and served as bases for the inter-raters' fair and multi-faceted assessment of the research participants' writing skills at the time of the students' writing: (1) Application of grammar rules, (2) word choice, (3) use of punctuation marks, (4) sentence and paragraph construction, (5) cohesion of ideas in through transitional devices, (6) observance of the conventions of standard writing, and (7) adherence to the topic of the writing prompt.

### **Codification System for Spotting Writing Problems**

The codification system utilized in analyzing, segregating, and tabulating the writing problems to be spotted by the inter-raters was aptly referred to as the "Comprehensive Writing Problems Codification and Categorization System". It was adopted from Abedi, Latifi, and Moinzadeh (2010) and from Hussain, Hanif, and Rehman (2013).

In order for the codification system to be easily understood, common writing problems were assigned to two categories- surface and global writing problems- in order for the inter-raters to be guided on how to assign the proper code to every writing problem.

Codes were assigned to every type of writing problem. Instead of a three-letter code, a four-letter code was devised in order for the type of writing problem to be distinct from one another. For instance, the codes ADJE and ADVE are assigned to adjective-related writing problems and to adverb-related writing problems, respectively.

### **3.3. Data Gathering and Analysis Method**

Apart from administering the scale and giving the writing task, the researchers interviewed two (2) students per university from August to September 2020 via Google Meet. The interviews were done individually in order to maintain the confidentiality of their identities and their answers.

The current study utilized qualitative and document analyses. For the semi-quantitative analysis, the researchers used frequency counts to determine the number of responses per item found in the Writing Attitudes Questionnaire-Scale, as well as the number of writing problems (surface and global). Three (3) inter-raters worked with the researchers to identify and categorize the writing problems found in all writing outputs in consistence with one another.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Research question 1

#### Surface Writing Problems

Table 4. Surface writing problems.

	N	%
1. Noun (NOUN)	162	19.98%
2. Pronouns (PRON)	22	2.71%
3. Verbs (VRBS)	264	32.55%
4 . Conjunctions (CJNC)	36	4.44%
5 . Adjectives (ADJE)	28	3.45%
6. Adverbs (ADVE)	4	0.49%
7 . Preposition (PRPO)	143	17.63%
8 . Interjections (INTJ)	1	0.12%
9 . Articles (ARTC)	82	10.11%
10. Faulty sentences (FAUL)	54	6.66%
11. Fragments (FRGM)	14	1.73%
12. Modifiers (MSPL)	1	0.12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 4 depicts the surface writing problems found in the participants' written outputs, which focus on grammar mechanics. Based on the overall results, most of the surface problems manifested in their written outputs were related to verbs, followed by those related to nouns and toprepositions. On the other hand, adjectives, adverbs, andinterjections accounted for the least number of surface errors. Concerning verbs, the observed trend among the many participants of the study wasthat most of them committed errors on verb tenses, particularly inconsistencies. The following excerpts (provided withcorrections) from selected writing samples illustrate the said trend (sample errors are in bold typeface):

1. WRITING SAMPLE DL-46:

“Social media started when people wants (wanted) to have access on (sic) easy communication and as part of their free time.”

The previously mentioned trend regarding the faulty use of tenses is similar to those of the results found in several studies (Bao & Sun, 2013; Darus & Khor, 2009; Hansin & Samari, 2020; Jalaluddin, Yamat, & Yunus, 2013; Qamariah, Sri Wahyuni & Meliana, 2020; Watcharapunyawong and Usaha, 2013), whose results indicated that confusion in terms of the use of verb tenses, as well as errors, was prevalent.

Another observed pattern was the use of the wrong tense despite the presence of time markers:

2. WRITING SAMPLE US-44:

Technology is quickly taking over the lives of people nowadays. Ten years ago, only the wealthy have (had) camera phone and laptops. Now, even the average man has a gadget or two.

As depicted by the example above, the use of wrong tenses in essays is similar to those found in the results of several studies (Depega & Jufrizal, 2020; Ekanjume-Ilongo & Morato-Maleke, 2020; Masangya & Lozada, 2009; Srichanyachon, 2011).

In terms of the use of present tense, the following writing sample used the present progressive tense, which denotes continuous action at present, instead of the present tense, which denotes habit:

3. WRITING SAMPLE FE-05:

I actually think that it is good for teacher (sic) to use social medias (sic) coz (sic) it (sic) actually make (sic) things easier for us students to contact our teacher using social media especially when our teacher is going to give us new lessons. For example(.) some of our teachers here in the F.E.U. are using (use or utilize) F.B. (sic) to post their lessons & (sic) for us to have a copy.

Subject-verb disagreement, which is categorized under verb-related errors, could be attributed to the presence of clauses between the subject and the verb and unfamiliarity with plural forms of some verbs (especially abstract nouns ending in -s). Examples of subject-verb disagreement are found below:

4. WRITING SAMPLE FE-23: (without intervening clause)

Sometimes, teachers doesn't (do not) allow their students to add them (on Facebook) because they have to maintain their student-teacher relationship.

5. WRITING SAMPLE US-65: (with intervening clause)

We are all responsibilities of our parents. Although celebrities influence us, it is still up to ourselves or our parents to know if the things we are doing is (are) right or wrong. As a fan, I know whether my idol/s are doing the right thing or not.

The erroneous use of subject-verb agreement as shown by the writing samples above and on the previous page are similar to those errors committed by Malaysian graduate students/ESL learners as cited in the study conducted by Stapa and Izahar (2010).

As for nouns, an error related to the said writing problem was on the Philippine English-influenced pluralizing of mass nouns, which is incorrect since only count nouns are made plural through inflection (use of -s or -es), as manifested by the following examples:

6. WRITING SAMPLE FE-46:

Technologies now are very high tech (sic) and many social medias (social media) are interesting (and) also very useful for the student(s).



## 7. WRITING SAMPLE FE-56:

People say that through social media, things are easily done and informations (information) are faster to spread.

In terms of preposition use, the following sample errors that were observed among the participants could be attributed to the interference of the participants' L1 (first language) with their L2 (second language), as in the case of the following highlighted erroneous prepositions:

## 9. WRITING SAMPLE DL-02:

This pandemic affected the world in many unimaginable ways. In fact, even the Olympic Game in Tokyo, Japan is now scheduled on (in) 2021. This most celebrated event should have started at (in) June or July of this year.

## 10. WRITING SAMPLE FE-53:

It's okay for teachers to interact with the (sic) students in Social Medias (sic) because many students have an (sic) social media accounts like Facebook, so teachers must assign the president or leader on (of) their class and make a group to (for) your subject or class.

The results pertaining to the misuse of prepositions are similar to those found in several studies (Chan, 2010; Khatter, 2019; Lee, 2013; Lee, Yoo, & Shin, 2020; Tlonaen, 2020).

The next table presents the number of occurrences of global writing problems.

**Table 5.** Global Writing Problems.

	N	%
1 Problems in Organization (PROR)	1	0.47%
2 Irrelevant idea (IRRI)	11	5.21%
3. Vague idea (VGID)	44	20.85%
4 Translation, from L1 to L2 (TRNS)	2	0.95%
5 Illogical statement (ILST)	0	0.00%
6. Weak content (WKCO)	25	11.85%
7 Transitional devices (TRDV)	28	13.27%
8 Sentence/idea coherence (COHR)	42	19.91%
9 Non-explanation of local terms (NELT)	1	0.47%
10. Lack of explanations/examples (LCKE)	57	27.01%

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
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As shown on table 5, the overall results depict that the most number of global errors were related to lack of explanations and example, to vague ideas, and to sentence and idea coherence. In contrast, the least number of errors were on non-explanation of local terms, problems in organization, and illogical statements.

The findings of the organization-related component contrast those of the studies by Hussain, Hanif, and Ur Rehman (2013), Khansir (2013), and Wang (2013). In terms of the use of transitional devices, the results are somewhat congruous to that of the study conducted by Abdulkareem (2013), Lee (2013), and Sun and Shang (2010).

The following samples illustrate the occurrence of vague ideas (in bold typeface), which affect the entirety of a writing output even if the occurrence is found on the sentence level, hence the non-clarity of the idea that the writer is supposed to convey:

**1. WRITING SAMPLE FE-34:**

My answer is, I agree with the policy that CHED had approved because it is for the good of the students. **But some of the parents K-12 is arguing because many tuition fees they will pay.**

**2. WRITING SAMPLE US-32:**

**Every goods may have their bads.** Every alpha has its delta. And for me, shifting from face to face class to online class has its own loopholes.

Problems related to sentence and idea coherence are almost similar to problems related to vague ideas. Sentence-related coherence problems affect the grammaticality of a point while idea-related ones affect one's understanding of the overall main idea of a point. The following samples illustrate such problems:

**3. WRITING SAMPLE FE-22:**

Mostly (sic) of the universities or schools are suspending their class (sic) because of heavy rain (sic) and floods. **Inmanila (sic), some of the roads here in Manila is easy to have floods** (*Some roads in Manila are prone to flooding*).

**4. WRITING SAMPLE US-33:**

These sites are really a great help for (sic) us because of its (sic) convenient use. I just hope it won't be abuse (sic) and the cause of the students' or the teachers' bad act(s). So (,) that is my point of view regarding the said issue. **I based my answers on my experiences as a active student in media** (*I based my answers on my experiences as a student and a social media user*).

The findings of the second research question are presented subsequently.

#### **4.2. Research question 2**

##### **Checking and Revising One's Work**

Table 6. Results of the items under sub-heading A

STATEMENT	ALWAYS (5)	OFTEN (4)	SOMETIMES (3)	SELDOM (2)	NEVER (1)
1) I spell every word accurately.	26	77	43	39	28
2) I end my sentences and separate ideas with the appropriate punctuation marks.	51	54	57	33	18
3) I check my written work once in a while during writing so that I can make my sentences simpler and more direct.	80	79	48	3	3
4) I go over my written work after I write.	54	77	61	18	3
5) I see to it that I write accurately and coherently.	43	66	73	25	6
6) I tend to be anxious at times when writing.	22	64	92	23	12
7) I consider my intended audience whenever I accomplish my writing task.	23	61	88	32	9
8) I think of my teacher and my peers whenever I write.	46	59	79	23	6
9) I am willing to edit my work again if my teacher says so.	97	66	35	11	4
10) I believe that I will improve my writing skills further whenever I am asked to write.	118	67	21	5	2

Table 6 depicts the results of sub-heading A based on the frequency of the students' manifestation of the attitudes related to checking one's own work. The results above reveal that 37.56% of the participants indicated that they always check their written work from

time to time; 45.53% stated that they always show willingness to correct their written work upon their teacher's recommendation while 55.39% mentioned that they always believe that they will improve on their writing skills as they continue writing, whether for academic or leisure purposes. The results are consistent with several studies (Cequeña, Barrot, Gabinete, Barrios & Bolaños, 2013; Haerazi & Irawan, 2019; Lo and Hyland, 2007; Pariña & De Leon, 2013; Raoofi, Chan, Mukundan & Rashid, 2014; Williams & Takaku, 2011). The results are related to those on items pertaining to focusing on one's willingness to check and edit his/her work. However, it was observed that students generally sometimes tend to forget to consider their audience when writing.

The results of the items on anxiety are in contrast to those found in studies by Gupta and Woldemariam (2011) and Sultana (2009), whose respective results indicated that despite their respective participants' numerous writing tasks and their limited knowledge of English, the participants displayed confidence in writing despite committing mistakes.

The next sub-heading presents the results of the participants' responses to items related to their attitudes towards writing as a skill and writing as a process.

**Table 7. Results of the items under sub-heading B.**

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>ALWAYS (5)</b>	<b>OFTEN (4)</b>	<b>SOMETIMES (3)</b>	<b>SELDOM (2)</b>	<b>NEVER (1)</b>
<b>1) I love writing about topics that I have a passion for.</b>	127	45	27	10	4
<b>2) I like writing about topics that are familiar to me.</b>	124	54	25	8	2
<b>3) I tend to avoid writing about unfamiliar and complicated topics.</b>	50	57	82	21	3
<b>4) I tend to hate writing about controversial topics.</b>	54	77	61	18	3
<b>5) I procrastinate or avoid writing whenever I am not in the mood to write.</b>	40	65	69	28	11
<b>6) I procrastinate or avoid writing if I do not like the teacher.</b>	14	21	52	58	68
<b>7) I tend to forget what I</b>	33	57	74	37	12

<b>have to write whenever I am tired, not in the mood, or upset.</b>					
<b>8) I continue writing even if I am tired, for as long as it is part of my homework.</b>	64	61	65	20	3
<b>9) I set writing goals even at the beginning of every writing task.</b>	34	66	69	33	11
<b>10) I tend to reflect on how I have performed during every writing Task</b>	39	78	57	30	9

The table above depicts the results of sub-heading B based on the frequency of the students' manifestation of the attitudes related to checking one's own work. The results above indicate that the majority of the participants always love writing about topics that they are familiar with and those that interest them.

In terms of writing about familiar topics, one of the possible reasons behind the results could possibly be the participants' exposure to written information and the English language on the internet and on print may have increased their confidence in reading and writing about contemporary topics (e.g. fashion, technology, and current events) since they now study in the conveniences of their homes.

Based on the interview with the participants, the majority of them stated that they often reflect on their performance during the writing process possibly due to the students' self-awareness of their overall performance in every writing task, especially in terms of grammar, mechanics, and content. In relation to self-awareness, another reason could be the students' continuous adjustment to the writing process in the college-level academic writing context despite the difficulties they experience. This is strengthened with the paradigm shifting of the educational landscape in the Philippines for remote teaching.

A significant discovery is that the majority of the participants indicated that sometimes they avoid writing about controversial or unfamiliar topics, set realistic writing goals, procrastinate or avoid writing when not in the mood, forget to write about their topic whenever they feel tired or uninterested, continue writing despite feeling tired, and set writing goals. Among possible reasons could be due to pressure to comply with the tremendous scholastic requirements and to their fear of negative feedback from their teachers and peers since they do not really see them physically. The results of the study in terms of goal setting are in contrast to those found in the study by Zhao and Dong (2011). As for the results pertaining to self-reflection on one's writing weaknesses, they are in contrast to those found in Raofi, Chan, Mukundan, and Rashid's (2014) study.

The next sub-heading presents the results of the participants' responses to items related to their attitudes towards feedback from teachers, peers, and other people.

**Table 8.** Results of the items under sub-heading C.

<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>ALWAYS (5)</b>	<b>OFTEN (4)</b>	<b>SOMETIMES (3)</b>	<b>SELDOM (2)</b>	<b>NEVER (1)</b>
<b>1) I ignore any negative feedback from my teacher, especially if I do not like him/her.</b>	7	14	45	82	65
<b>2) I disregard any negative feedback from a classmate I like the least.</b>	14	20	68	68	43
<b>3) I welcome positive feedback, even if I do not like my classmate and/or my writing teacher.</b>	103	80	22	2	6
<b>4) People close to me (such as family and friends) praise me for my writing skills.</b>	28	72	77	24	12
<b>5) My family and friends give unsolicited advice when it comes to my writing skills.</b>	24	44	91	35	19
<b>6) People have criticized my writing skills in the past.</b>	26	50	80	37	20
<b>7) I tend to be anxious whenever my teacher or my classmates are about to give me feedback on my writing.</b>	35	54	72	39	13
<b>8) I feel relieved after I receive feedback, whether positive or negative.</b>	69	78	54	8	4
<b>9) I perceive negative feedback as constructive criticism.</b>	58	65	68	15	7
<b>10) I feel more determined to improve on my writing skills after receiving positive feedback.</b>	121	57	26	4	5

Table 9 displays the results of the items under sub-heading C. As generally revealed by the results, the majority of the participants indicated that they always welcome positive feedback from their teachers and peers and that they are more determined to improve on their writing skills after receiving such a type of feedback.

The results of the items under sub-heading C are similar to those found in the study by Maarof, Yamat, and Kee (2011), whose participants were shown to manifest positive attitudes towards feedback. They are also similar to those in Alamis' (2010) study in terms of the impact of positive feedback on students' writing attitudes but contrast to the results in terms of the impact of negative feedback on their attitudes.

As for the students' willingness to improve on their writing skills upon receiving positive feedback, a possible reason could be that they feel inspired and motivated to replicate or even surpass their current performance in order to improve on their writing, research, and presentation skills.

## 5. Conclusion

The current study examined and determined the common writing problems that Filipino freshman college students commonly commit in their writing tasks, as well as their attitudes towards writing in the context online learning environments. Delving on the current level of the participants based on the holistic rubric scores, the majority of them are either developing or fairly developing in their writing skills. One of the observations on the students' writing outputs was that there was more than one type of writing problem in their outputs, mostly grammar-related. Another observation was that most of the participants were generally able to express their ideas based on their chosen prompts. Generally, providing students with a selection of topics proves to encourage them to brainstorm and to write about their chosen topic/s even within a limited physical intimacy that they have with their teachers and peers.

On writing attitudes, the participants were found to have a generally positive attitude towards writing. Having a positive attitude towards writing enables one to develop and utilize intrinsic motivation in order to increase his/her ability to read and write independently and voluntarily particularly with the asynchronous online learning environment that their teachers integrate in the class. However, students need to learn more about setting realistic and reasonable writing goals in concordance with being motivated to write.

A recommendation for further research is that other major universities located in other metropolitan areas and municipalities be used as subjects for a more extensive and objective of students across Philippine universities in terms of their writing problems and attitudes in online learning environments. Another recommendation is to create new prompts based on current events in order for further research to be more contemporary. Other recommendations are to have a vernacular translation of the writing scale and to increase the time limit for students to accomplish the writing tasks. Finally, more time and inter-raters are needed in order to detect writing problems more thoroughly.

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