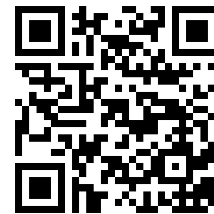


The Influence of Writing Workshops on First-Year English Majored Students' Writing Skills - A Study at a University in Vietnam



Le Thi Tuyen

Thang Long University, Hanoi, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: This research investigates the effectiveness of writing workshops in enhancing the writing proficiency of first-year university students at Thang Long University. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the workshops' impact. A total of 167 students participated in the study, undergoing pre-test and post-test assessments to measure improvements in organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation using standardized rubrics.

Quantitative results from paired samples t-tests revealed significant improvements across all assessed aspects of writing, with mean differences indicating enhanced writing skills post-intervention. Qualitative data, collected through interviews, focus groups, reflective journals, and observations, corroborated these findings and provided deeper insights into the specific components of the workshops that were most effective. Students highlighted the value of peer review for receiving diverse feedback, the detailed guidance from instructor feedback, the collaborative learning fostered by group writing exercises, and the continuous improvement encouraged by iterative drafting. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings suggests that each component of the writing workshops contributed uniquely to the overall improvement in writing proficiency. Despite the overall positive impact, challenges such as variability in peer feedback quality, the need for more frequent instructor interactions, and the time-intensive nature of iterative drafting were identified.

KEYWORDS: writing workshop, peer review, instructor feedbacks, iterative drafting

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Importance of writing skills in academic success

Writing skills are fundamental to academic success, serving as a critical tool for students to express their understanding, engage with scholarly discourse, and demonstrate their learning. Effective writing enables students to communicate complex ideas clearly and persuasively, which is essential across all academic disciplines.

One of the primary reasons writing skills are crucial in academia is that they allow students to convey their thoughts and arguments effectively. According to Graham and Perin (2007), proficient writing is necessary for students to articulate their ideas coherently, facilitating better comprehension and retention of subject matter. This ability to communicate effectively through writing is not only essential for assignments and exams but also for engaging in academic debates and contributing to scholarly conversations.

Moreover, strong writing skills are closely linked to critical thinking. As students learn to organize their thoughts, analyze information, and present arguments logically, they develop a deeper understanding of the content. Applebee and Langer (2013) argue that writing tasks that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information promote higher-order thinking skills. This process helps students to engage with material on a more profound level, enhancing their learning and intellectual growth.

Writing also plays a pivotal role in assessment. In many academic settings, written assignments, research papers, and essays are primary methods of evaluating student performance. As stated by Cho and Schunn (2007), writing assessments provide a comprehensive measure of a student's knowledge, analytical abilities, and ability to apply concepts. Therefore, students with strong writing skills are better positioned to achieve higher grades and academic recognition.

Additionally, writing proficiency is essential for students' future academic and professional careers. Academic writing serves as the foundation for producing research papers, theses, and dissertations. These documents are critical for attaining advanced degrees and contributing to academic fields. Furthermore, effective writing skills are highly valued in the professional world. As highlighted by Andrews et al. (2017), employers often regard writing ability as a key competency, essential for effective communication in various professional contexts.

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Writing skills also foster self-directed learning and personal growth. Through writing, students engage in self-reflection and develop their voice and style. This process encourages them to take ownership of their learning and become more independent and motivated learners. According to Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997), self-regulated learning strategies, including goal setting and self-monitoring during writing tasks, enhance students' academic performance and persistence.

Challenges faced by first-year university students in writing.

First-year university students often encounter several challenges when it comes to writing, which can significantly impact their academic performance and overall learning experience. Understanding these challenges is essential for educators to develop effective strategies to support students' writing development.

One of the primary challenges is the transition from high school to university-level writing. High school writing often emphasizes formulaic approaches, such as the five-paragraph essay, which may not adequately prepare students for the more complex and varied writing tasks required in university (Klinger, 2018). University writing demands greater critical thinking, depth of analysis, and originality, which can be daunting for first-year students accustomed to more structured formats.

First-year students may also struggle with understanding and adhering to academic conventions, such as proper citation practices, the use of academic language, and the structure of research papers. According to Wingate (2012), many students enter university with insufficient knowledge of these conventions, leading to issues such as unintentional plagiarism and poorly structured arguments. This gap in knowledge can hinder their ability to produce quality academic writing.

Another significant challenge is the limited feedback and support available to students. In large university classes, personalized feedback on writing assignments may be scarce, leaving students without the guidance needed to improve their writing skills (Carless & Boud, 2018). Additionally, first-year students might be unaware of or reluctant to seek out available resources, such as writing centers or peer review opportunities.

For non-native English speakers, language barriers can pose an additional challenge. These students often face difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions, making it harder to express their ideas clearly and effectively in writing (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). This linguistic challenge can lead to frustration and a lack of confidence in their writing abilities.

Time management is another critical issue for first-year students. Many students struggle to balance their coursework, extracurricular activities, and personal responsibilities, which can lead to procrastination and rushed writing assignments (Krause & Coates, 2008). Additionally, students may not fully understand the writing process, including the importance of drafting, revising, and editing, resulting in lower-quality work.

Writing anxiety and low self-efficacy also significantly impact first-year students. According to Pajares (2003), students who lack confidence in their writing abilities often experience higher levels of anxiety, which can negatively affect their performance. This anxiety can stem from fear of failure, negative past experiences with writing, or the pressure to meet high academic standards.

Finally, adapting to discipline-specific writing styles can be challenging. Different academic disciplines have distinct writing conventions and expectations, which first-year students may find confusing and difficult to master (Hyland, 2013). This challenge requires students to quickly learn and apply new writing styles, which can be overwhelming.

First-year university students face a range of challenges in writing, including transitioning to university-level writing, understanding academic conventions, receiving adequate feedback, overcoming language barriers, managing time effectively, dealing with writing anxiety, and adapting to discipline-specific styles. Addressing these challenges requires targeted support from educators and institutions to help students develop the necessary skills and confidence to succeed in their academic writing endeavours.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of writing workshops on the writing skills of first-year university students. Specifically, the study aims to assess how participation in structured writing workshops affects the writing proficiency of first-year students, measured through improvements in their ability to articulate ideas, construct arguments, and adhere to academic conventions. Additionally, the study seeks to identify which specific components of writing workshops such as peer-review, instructor feedback; collaborative writing exercises, and iterative drafting contribute most significantly to enhancing students' writing skills. It also explores students' attitudes and perceptions towards writing workshops, including their perceived benefits and challenges, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these workshops influence their writing development. Ultimately, the study aims to offer practical recommendations for educators and institutions on how to design and implement effective writing workshops that can support first-year students in developing their academic writing abilities. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on writing instruction and provide valuable insights for improving writing pedagogy at the university level.

1.3. Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- 1.3.1. How does participation in writing workshops influence the writing skills of first-year university students?

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1.3.2. What specific components of writing workshops (e.g., peer review, instructor feedback, collaborative writing exercises, iterative drafting) are most effective in improving the writing proficiency of first-year university students?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a critical need in higher education by exploring effective methods to enhance the writing skills of first-year university students. As writing is fundamental to academic success, understanding how to support students in developing these skills is crucial for their overall academic achievement and future professional success. Secondly, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on writing instruction by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of writing workshops. By identifying which specific components of these workshops are most beneficial, the research offers valuable insights that can inform the design and implementation of writing programs across various disciplines. Furthermore, by exploring students' perceptions and attitudes towards writing workshops, the study highlights the importance of student-centered approaches in writing instruction. Understanding students' experiences and challenges can help educators tailor their teaching methods to better meet the needs of first-year students, thereby enhancing their engagement and learning outcomes. Additionally, the practical recommendations derived from this study can serve as a valuable resource for educators and institutions looking to improve their writing instruction practices. Implementing effective writing workshops can lead to more confident and competent writers, which is beneficial not only for students but also for the academic community as a whole. Overall, this study aims to make a meaningful contribution to the field of writing education, supporting the academic development of first-year university students and ultimately fostering a stronger foundation for their future academic and professional endeavours.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of Writing Instruction

Writing instruction is a critical component of education, aimed at developing students' ability to express their thoughts clearly, logically, and effectively. It encompasses a variety of approaches and methods designed to enhance students' writing skills, from foundational grammar and composition to advanced rhetorical and analytical abilities.

Traditional Approaches

Traditional approaches to writing instruction often focus on prescriptive methods, emphasizing grammar, sentence structure, and the mechanics of writing. These methods typically involve direct instruction and practice through repetitive exercises aimed at mastering the rules of language. While this approach helps students develop a solid understanding of writing basics, it has been critiqued for its limited emphasis on creativity and critical thinking (Applebee & Langer, 2013).

Process-Oriented Approaches

In contrast, process-oriented approaches to writing instruction emphasize writing as a recursive process that involves multiple stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. This method encourages students to view writing as a dynamic and iterative activity, where ideas can be developed and refined over time. Process-oriented instruction has been shown to improve students' writing by fostering a deeper engagement with their work and promoting critical thinking (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Genre-Based Approaches

Genre-based approaches focus on teaching students to write within specific genres, each with its own conventions and rhetorical purposes. This method helps students understand the different contexts and audiences for writing, equipping them with the skills to adapt their writing style accordingly. By learning to navigate various genres, students can become more versatile writers capable of effectively communicating in diverse academic and professional settings (Hyland, 2013).

Writing across the Curriculum (WAC)

Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) is an instructional approach that integrates writing into all subject areas, rather than confining it to language arts classes. The goal of WAC is to enhance students' learning by using writing as a tool for exploring and understanding subject matter. This approach encourages students to engage in writing activities across disciplines, thereby improving their ability to think critically and communicate effectively in various academic contexts (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006).

Technology-Enhanced Writing Instruction

The advent of technology has significantly impacted writing instruction, providing new tools and platforms for teaching and learning. Digital writing tools, online collaborative platforms, and writing software have made it easier for students to write, revise, and receive feedback on their work. Technology-enhanced writing instruction can also include multimedia compositions, where students use various digital formats to express their ideas (Andrews et al., 2017). These technological advancements offer new opportunities for interactive and engaging writing activities.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the advancements in writing instruction, several challenges remain. One significant challenge is ensuring that students receive adequate and timely feedback on their writing. Effective feedback is crucial for helping students improve their writing

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skills, yet providing individualized feedback can be time-consuming and resource-intensive (Carless & Boud, 2018). Additionally, addressing the diverse needs of students, including non-native English speakers and those with different learning styles, requires adaptable and inclusive teaching strategies.

In conclusion, writing instruction is a multifaceted field that includes traditional, process-oriented, genre-based, and technology-enhanced approaches. Each method offers unique benefits and challenges, and effective writing instruction often involves a combination of these strategies. By continuously evolving and incorporating new pedagogical practices, educators can better support students in developing their writing skills and achieving academic success.

2.2. Writing Workshops: Definition and Components

2.2.1. Structure and key elements of writing workshops.

Writing workshops are an instructional approach designed to improve students' writing skills through interactive, collaborative, and iterative practices. They provide a supportive environment where students can develop their writing abilities, receive feedback, and engage more deeply in the writing process. The structure and key elements of writing workshops are essential to their effectiveness and are typically comprised of several core components.

Writing workshops generally follow a consistent structure that includes several stages. The workshop begins with an introduction to the session's objectives and a brief warm-up activity to engage students and prepare them for writing. This can include discussions, reading prompts, or short writing exercises to stimulate ideas (Calkins, 2014). Following the warm-up, there is a focused teaching segment known as the mini-lesson. This segment introduces a specific writing concept, strategy, or skill and is usually concise, lasting 10-15 minutes. The mini-lesson addresses topics such as thesis development, organization, stylistic techniques, or grammar rules, providing direct instruction that students can immediately apply to their writing (Atwell, 2015).

After the mini-lesson, students are given a significant amount of time to write. During this period, they work on their drafts, apply the concepts learned in the mini-lesson, and explore their ideas. This phase emphasizes the importance of uninterrupted writing time to foster creativity and productivity (Graves, 1983). An integral part of the workshop is the peer review and feedback session, where students exchange their writing with peers to receive constructive feedback. This collaborative element encourages students to engage with different perspectives, learn to critique constructively, and improve their writing based on peer suggestions (Cho & Schunn, 2007). After receiving feedback, students revise and edit their drafts, highlighting the writing process as iterative and emphasizing the importance of refining ideas, improving clarity, and correcting errors (Sommers, 1982).

The workshop concludes with a sharing session where students read their revised work aloud or display it for group critique. This phase allows students to celebrate their progress, gain confidence in their writing, and reflect on the learning process. Reflection activities can include discussions or written responses about what they learned and how they can continue to improve (Elbow, 1998).

Several key elements contribute to the effectiveness of writing workshops. Collaborative learning is emphasized, as peer review sessions and group discussions foster a sense of community and collective learning, where students benefit from each other's insights and support (Bruffee, 1984). Writing workshops are designed to be student-centered, giving students autonomy over their writing topics and processes. This approach empowers students to take ownership of their writing and encourages engagement and motivation (Atwell, 2015). A core principle of writing workshops is the focus on the writing process rather than just the final product. Emphasizing drafting, revising, and editing helps students understand that writing is an evolving activity that can always be improved (Graves, 1983).

Providing students with an authentic audience, such as peers, for their writing encourages them to consider their readers' perspectives, helping them to write more purposefully and thoughtfully (Elbow, 1998). Writing workshops also accommodate diverse learners by allowing differentiation in topics, pacing, and instructional strategies. Teachers can tailor their support to meet the individual needs of students, making the workshops inclusive and effective for all (Tomlinson, 2001). The emphasis on giving and receiving constructive feedback helps students to develop critical thinking and revision skills. Effective feedback focuses on specific aspects of writing, providing actionable suggestions for improvement (Cho & Schunn, 2007).

In conclusion, the structured approach and key elements of writing workshops—introduction and warm-up, mini-lessons, writing time, peer review, revision, sharing, collaborative learning, student-centered approach, process-oriented instruction, authentic audience, differentiated instruction, and constructive feedback—create a dynamic and supportive environment for developing students' writing skills. By integrating these components, writing workshops can significantly enhance students' writing proficiency and confidence.

2.2.2. Peer review, collaborative writing, and instructor feedback.

Writing workshops leverage several interactive components to enhance student writing skills, with peer review, collaborative writing, and instructor feedback being particularly influential.

Peer review is a fundamental element of writing workshops that involves students sharing their work with classmates to receive constructive feedback. This process helps students gain different perspectives on their writing, identify strengths and weaknesses,

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and develop critical analysis skills. According to Cho and Schunn (2007), peer review encourages students to engage more deeply with their writing by considering the feedback of their peers, which can lead to significant improvements in the quality of their work. The collaborative nature of peer review fosters a supportive learning environment, where students learn to critique constructively and accept critiques positively, enhancing both their writing and evaluative skills.

Collaborative writing involves students working together to produce a piece of writing. This approach helps students learn from each other, share ideas, and develop their writing skills in a cooperative setting. According to Storch (2013), collaborative writing activities can lead to higher quality texts as students pool their knowledge and skills, negotiate meaning, and provide mutual support. The interaction and dialogue inherent in collaborative writing help students to clarify their thoughts, refine their arguments, and improve their writing through collective effort. Additionally, collaborative writing can build a sense of community and increase students' motivation and engagement with the writing process.

Instructor feedback is a critical component of writing instruction that provides students with expert guidance on how to improve their writing. Effective instructor feedback is specific, actionable, and timely, helping students understand what they did well and what areas need improvement. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) emphasize the importance of formative feedback, which not only addresses the quality of the current piece of writing but also helps students develop strategies for future writing tasks. Instructor feedback can address various aspects of writing, including content, organization, style, and mechanics, offering a comprehensive review that supports students' overall development as writers. Moreover, instructor feedback can serve as a model for how students should approach peer reviews, further enhancing their ability to provide constructive criticism.

In conclusion, peer review, collaborative writing, and instructor feedback are integral components of writing workshops that contribute significantly to the development of students' writing skills. Peer review provides diverse perspectives and promotes critical thinking, collaborative writing fosters cooperative learning and enhances text quality, and instructor feedback offers expert guidance and supports long-term writing development. Together, these elements create a dynamic and interactive learning environment that can significantly improve students' writing proficiency.

2.3. Previous Research on Writing Workshops

2.3.1. Benefits of Writing Workshops

Writing workshops offer numerous benefits that enhance the writing skills of students. One significant advantage is the improvement in writing quality through peer review and feedback. Studies have shown that peer review helps students develop critical thinking skills and gain new perspectives on their writing. For example, Cho and MacArthur (2010) found that students who participated in peer review sessions produced higher quality revisions compared to those who did not, as they received diverse feedback that helped them refine their ideas and arguments.

Another benefit of writing workshops is the development of collaborative skills. Collaborative writing activities encourage students to work together, share knowledge, and learn from one another. Storch (2013) demonstrated that collaborative writing leads to improved text quality and a deeper understanding of the writing process. The interaction and dialogue inherent in collaborative writing help students to clarify their thoughts, refine their arguments, and enhance their overall writing abilities.

Writing workshops also foster a supportive learning environment where students can develop confidence in their writing. According to Elbow (1998), the workshop setting provides a space where students feel comfortable sharing their work and receiving feedback, which can boost their confidence and motivation to write. This supportive atmosphere encourages students to take risks and experiment with their writing, leading to greater creativity and improvement.

2.3.2. Challenges of Writing Workshops

Despite their benefits, writing workshops also present several challenges. One common challenge is the variability in the quality of peer feedback. While peer review can be valuable, it depends on the ability of students to provide constructive and insightful comments. Nelson and Schunn (2009) found that the effectiveness of peer feedback varied significantly, with some students offering limited or unhelpful feedback. This variability can hinder the revision process and reduce the overall effectiveness of the workshop.

Another challenge is the potential for unequal participation in collaborative writing activities. Some students may dominate the group, while others may contribute less, leading to an imbalance in the collaborative process. According to Paulus (1999), this imbalance can result in uneven learning experiences and may cause frustration among students who feel their contributions are undervalued or ignored.

Additionally, the time required for effective writing workshops can be a constraint. Instructors need to allocate sufficient time for all stages of the workshop, including drafting, peer review, revision, and reflection. Carless and Boud (2018) highlight that managing this time effectively can be challenging, especially in large classes where providing individualized feedback and ensuring active participation from all students is difficult.

In conclusion, writing workshops offer substantial benefits, such as improved writing quality, development of collaborative skills, and increased student confidence. However, they also present challenges, including variability in peer feedback quality, unequal

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participation in collaborative activities, and time constraints. Understanding these benefits and challenges can help educators design more effective writing workshops that maximize their advantages while addressing potential issues.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Objective

The objective of this research is to specify the benefits of writing workshops for 121 first-year students at Thang Long University by measuring improvements in their writing skills through pre-test and post-test assessments using rubrics to evaluate organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study are 121 first-year students enrolled at Thang Long University. The selection criteria include students who have consented to participate in the study and who have not previously participated in similar writing workshops.

3.3. Research Design

This study employs a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of writing workshops.

Pre-Test Assessment

Before the commencement of the writing workshops, all 121 students will complete a pre-test writing assessment. This test will require students to write an essay or a structured piece of writing on a given topic. The pre-test will be evaluated using a standardized rubric that assesses key aspects of writing: organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation. Each aspect will be scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

Writing Workshops

Students will participate in a series of writing workshops conducted over a semester. These workshops will include:

- Mini-lessons: Focused teaching segments on specific writing skills.
- Peer review sessions: Students will exchange their writing with peers for constructive feedback.
- Collaborative writing activities: Students will work together on writing tasks to share knowledge and improve their skills.
- Instructor feedback sessions: Personalized feedback from instructors to guide students' revisions and improvements.

Post-Test Assessment

At the end of the semester, students will complete a post-test writing assessment similar in format to the pre-test. This will again involve writing an essay or structured piece of writing on a new topic. The post-test will be evaluated using the same rubric as the pre-test to ensure consistency in assessment criteria.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative Data Collection

Pre-test and post-test scores will be collected and entered into a database for analysis. Paired t-tests will be used to determine if there are significant improvements in the aspects of organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation. Effect size will also be calculated to measure the magnitude of the improvements.

Qualitative Data Collection

Student interviews and reflective journals will be used to gather qualitative data. A sample of students will be interviewed to gather insights into their experiences with the writing workshops, perceived benefits, and challenges. Students will maintain reflective journals throughout the workshop series to document their progress, challenges, and any notable improvements in their writing skills.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be conducted on the qualitative data from interviews and reflective journals to identify common themes and patterns related to the effectiveness of the writing workshops. This qualitative data will provide context to the quantitative findings and help explain the specific aspects of the workshops that contributed to any observed improvements.

Conclusion

This quasi-experimental research design, combining pre-test and post-test assessments with rubrics and supported by qualitative data, aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits of writing workshops for first-year students at Thang Long University. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods will offer a robust understanding of how these workshops influence students' writing skills in terms of organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation.

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IV. RESULTS

4.1. Quantitative Findings

4.2. The results of the paired samples t-tests reveal significant improvements in the writing skills of first-year students at Thang Long University following their participation in writing workshops. The analysis compares pre-test and post-test scores across various aspects of writing: overall writing skills, organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation.

Overall Writing Skills

The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores for overall writing skills shows a mean difference of -1.562. This indicates that, on average, students' post-test scores were 1.562 points higher than their pre-test scores. The standard deviation of the differences is 0.946, and the standard error mean is 0.086. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -1.732 to -1.392, indicating a high level of precision. With a t-value of -18.161 and a p-value of 0.000, the results are statistically significant, confirming that the writing workshops had a positive impact on the overall writing skills of the students.

Organization

For the organization aspect, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test scores is -2.025, with post-test scores being higher. The standard deviation is 1.319, and the standard error mean is 0.120. The confidence interval ranges from -2.262 to -1.787. The t-value is -16.880, and the p-value is 0.000, indicating a statistically significant improvement. These results suggest that the writing workshops significantly enhanced students' ability to organize their writing effectively.

Clarity

The clarity of students' writing also showed significant improvement, with a mean difference of -1.967. The standard deviation is 1.032, and the standard error mean is 0.094. The 95% confidence interval is between -2.153 and -1.781. The t-value is -20.960, and the p-value is 0.000, indicating a highly significant improvement. This demonstrates that the workshops effectively helped students clarify their writing, making it more coherent and understandable.

Grammar

In terms of grammar, the mean difference is -0.421, indicating that post-test scores were slightly higher than pre-test scores. The standard deviation is 1.302, and the standard error mean is 0.118. The confidence interval ranges from -0.656 to -0.187. With a t-value of -3.560 and a p-value of 0.001, the improvement in grammar is statistically significant, though the effect size is smaller compared to other aspects. This suggests that while there was an improvement in grammatical skills, it was less pronounced than improvements in organization and clarity.

Argumentation

Lastly, the aspect of argumentation showed a mean difference of -1.835, with post-test scores being higher. The standard deviation is 1.368, and the standard error mean is 0.124. The confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -2.081 to -1.588. The t-value is -14.749, and the p-value is 0.000, indicating a statistically significant improvement. This result suggests that the writing workshops were effective in enhancing students' ability to construct and present arguments in their writing.

Conclusion

The paired samples t-test results indicate that the writing workshops had a significant positive impact on the writing skills of first-year students at Thang Long University. Improvements were observed across all assessed aspects: overall writing skills, organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation. The highly significant p-values (all less than 0.001) confirm that these improvements are statistically robust, demonstrating the effectiveness of the writing workshops in enhancing students' writing abilities (Table 1).

Table 1: Paired Samples Test

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------|---|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|---|---------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | Lower | | | |
| Pair 1 | Pre-test – Post-test | -1.562 | .946 | .086 | -1.732 | -1.392 | -18.16 | 120 | .000 |
| Pair 2 | Organization Pre-test Organization Post-test | -2.025 | 1.319 | .120 | -2.262 | -1.787 | -16.88 | 120 | .000 |
| Pair 3 | Clarity Pre-test Clarity Post-test | -1.967 | 1.032 | .094 | -2.153 | -1.781 | -20.96 | 120 | .000 |
| Pair 4 | Grammar Pre-test Grammar Post-test | -.421 | 1.302 | .118 | -.656 | -.187 | -3.56 | 120 | .001 |
| Pair 5 | Argumentation Pre-test Argumentation Post-test | -1.835 | 1.368 | .124 | -2.081 | -1.588 | -14.75 | 120 | .000 |

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4.3. Qualitative Findings

Effectiveness of Peer Review

The qualitative data indicates that peer review sessions significantly enhanced the writing proficiency of first-year university students. Interviews and focus group discussions revealed that students valued the diverse perspectives they received from their peers. Many students highlighted that constructive criticism from classmates helped them identify flaws and areas for improvement that they had not noticed themselves. One student remarked, "Peer review sessions were really helpful because my classmates pointed out flaws in my arguments that I hadn't noticed." However, some students noted variability in the quality of feedback, which depended on the reviewers' proficiency and commitment. Overall, peer review was perceived as beneficial for fostering critical thinking and improving writing quality.

Impact of Instructor Feedback

Instructor feedback emerged as a crucial component of the writing workshops. Students consistently reported that detailed and specific feedback from instructors was instrumental in guiding their revisions and improvements. A participant shared, "The instructor's feedback was very detailed and helped me understand exactly what I needed to improve in my essay." This feedback was highly valued for its expertise and authority. Observational data confirmed that students who actively sought and incorporated instructor feedback showed significant improvement in their writing skills. The effectiveness of this component was also linked to the frequency and accessibility of feedback, with some students expressing a desire for more regular interactions with instructors.

Benefits of Collaborative Writing Exercises

Collaborative writing exercises were found to be highly effective in improving writing skills. Students appreciated the opportunity to work in groups, which allowed for idea sharing, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning. Reflective journals revealed that students enjoyed the collaborative aspect, with one student noting, "Collaborative writing was great because we could combine our strengths and produce a better piece of writing than we could individually." This collective effort not only enhanced the quality of writing but also fostered a sense of community and teamwork. However, challenges such as unequal participation and coordination issues were reported, suggesting the need for structured guidance to maximize the benefits of collaborative work.

Influence of Iterative Drafting

Iterative drafting was highlighted as a powerful tool for writing improvement. Students reported that the process of drafting and redrafting helped them refine their ideas and enhance the clarity and coherence of their writing. Reflective journals indicated that students who embraced iterative drafting developed a more disciplined and thorough approach to writing. One student shared, "Going through multiple drafts really helped me see the progress I was making and understand how to structure my essay better." Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed that iterative drafting fostered deeper engagement with the writing process, encouraging continuous improvement and learning. However, some students found the process time-consuming and challenging, requiring motivation and persistence to benefit fully.

Overall Perceptions of Writing Workshops

The overall perception of the writing workshops was overwhelmingly positive. Students appreciated the structured approach that combined various components to address different aspects of writing. Reflective journals and focus group discussions revealed that students felt more confident and capable as writers after participating in the workshops. One student summarized, "The writing workshops were comprehensive and covered everything from brainstorming to final edits, which really improved my writing skills." The data suggested that while each component had its strengths and challenges, the combination of peer review, instructor feedback, collaborative writing, and iterative drafting created a supportive and effective learning environment that significantly enhanced students' writing proficiency.

Conclusion

The qualitative findings from interviews, focus groups, reflective journals, and observations provide a comprehensive understanding of the specific components of writing workshops that are most effective in improving writing proficiency among first-year university students. Peer review, instructor feedback, collaborative writing exercises, and iterative drafting each contributed uniquely to the students' writing development. These findings highlight the importance of a multifaceted approach to writing instruction that incorporates diverse, interactive, and iterative practices to support student learning and improvement.

V. DISCUSSION

The combined analysis of qualitative and quantitative data provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of writing workshops on the writing proficiency of first-year university students.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative results from the paired samples t-tests reveal statistically significant improvements in all assessed aspects of writing: overall writing skills, organization, clarity, grammar, and argumentation. For example, the overall writing skills showed a mean difference of -1.562, with a t-value of -18.161 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a substantial enhancement in writing

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proficiency. Similar significant improvements were observed in organization (-2.025 , $t=-16.880$, $p=0.000$), clarity (-1.967 , $t=-20.960$, $p=0.000$), grammar (-0.421 , $t=-3.560$, $p=0.001$), and argumentation (-1.835 , $t=-14.749$, $p=0.000$).

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, reflective journals, and observations corroborate these quantitative improvements, providing deeper insights into how specific components of the workshops contributed to these gains. Students consistently highlighted the value of peer review for receiving diverse feedback, which enhanced their critical thinking and writing quality. Instructor feedback was praised for its detailed and expert guidance, significantly aiding students in their revisions. Collaborative writing exercises fostered a sense of community and facilitated shared learning, while iterative drafting encouraged thoroughness and continuous improvement in writing.

Integration of Findings

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings reveals that each component of the writing workshops contributed uniquely to the overall improvement in writing proficiency. The significant statistical improvements in writing skills are supported by students' qualitative accounts of their experiences. Peer review sessions provided practical, real-time feedback, which is reflected in the substantial improvements in organization and clarity scores. Instructor feedback, noted for its depth and specificity, aligns with the observed enhancements in grammar and argumentation. Collaborative writing and iterative drafting were particularly effective in fostering comprehensive writing skills, as evidenced by the broad improvements across all writing aspects.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research findings demonstrate that writing workshops, incorporating peer review, instructor feedback, collaborative writing exercises, and iterative drafting, significantly improve the writing proficiency of first-year university students. The combined quantitative and qualitative data highlight the multifaceted benefits of these workshops:

- Peer Review: Provided diverse perspectives and fostered critical thinking, reflected in significant improvements in organization and clarity.
- Instructor Feedback: Offered expert guidance, significantly enhancing grammar and argumentation skills.
- Collaborative Writing: Promoted teamwork and shared learning, contributing to broad improvements in writing proficiency.
- Iterative Drafting: Encouraged thoroughness and continuous improvement, despite being time-intensive, leading to overall writing enhancements.

The study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to writing instruction that integrates multiple interactive and iterative practices. Future writing workshops can be further enhanced by training students in effective peer feedback, increasing instructor availability, structuring collaborative activities, and allowing sufficient time for iterative drafting.

In conclusion, the combined qualitative and quantitative findings provide robust evidence that writing workshops are effective in developing the writing skills of first-year university students. By addressing the specific strengths and challenges of each component, educators can design more effective writing programs that support students' academic growth and confidence as writers. This integrated approach ensures that students receive comprehensive support, enabling them to achieve significant improvements in their writing proficiency.

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