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### Research Article

## Challenges in Formal Filipino Writing Among Ninth-Grade Students in Special Programs in the Philippines

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### About Article

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### ABSTRACT

Knowledge of formal Filipino academic writing is a constitutionally mandated competence essential for individual success and national progress. This descriptive-comparative study addresses persistent challenges faced by Grade 9 students in Special Curriculum Programs at Isabela National High School in writing formal Filipino essays. Using the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, the research investigates the writing experiences of 231 students enrolled in Special Science, Journalism, and Arts programs. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and One-Way ANOVA to identify writing frequency, motivations, and difficulties. Findings reveal that students infrequently write Filipino essays, primarily motivated by extrinsic factors such as grades rather than intrinsic interest. Despite oral fluency, students struggle with higher-order thinking skills required for essay writing, including idea generation, logical sequencing, and structuring. Frequent writing errors involve punctuation, sentence construction, and grammar. Students express a desire to improve vocabulary and logical flow while valuing teacher and peer support as key facilitators. The study highlights discrepancies in grading practices influenced by students' low appraisal of Filipino writing and related grade inflation concerns. These challenges underscore the need for evidence-based pedagogical strategies that balance linguistic accuracy with cognitive and metacognitive development. The research advocates for equitable grading and instructional innovations that foster comprehensive Filipino language proficiency and holistic student growth within specialized academic settings. This study fills a research gap by providing empirical data to inform curriculum enhancement, teaching practices, and policy-making aimed at strengthening Filipino writing skills among high school students in specialized programs.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Formal academic writing is a skill that helps students write clearly, analytically, eloquently, and professionally about a wide range of subjects. UNESCO and other organizations that value literacy and multilingualism as basic human rights say that it “promotes critical thinking, argumentation, and cultural debate.” Scholars like Farrell also talk about how writing affects other cultures.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution, the Enhanced Basic Education Act (RA 10533), and DepEd orders like Order No. 31 (s.2012), Order 74 (s.2009), and Order No. 25 (s.1974) all stress the importance of language development and achieving bilingualism. These are the laws that the Philippines has adopted and put into effect. The Isabela National High School has programs like the Special Curriculum Programs (SCP) to help students improve their Filipino writing skills, but the problem is still there. Even students who are good at speaking Filipino have trouble with grammar, coherence, and vocabulary in their written Filipino essays. According to teachers, 70% of SCP students have serious problems writing essays. These problems include using academic terms and phrases that are common in their field, as well as outside factors like self-doubt, not having enough time, and not having enough information on the topics they are writing about.

This study is important because there haven’t been any recent studies on Filipino essay writing in the SCP setting of INHS. The goal is to find out what mistakes students keep making and to suggest ways to teach that work, since Filipino is seen as less important than English, Math, or Science. Teachers feel like they have to make sure that Filipino grades are the same as grades in other subjects, even if the student doesn’t do as well in Filipino. This is why grading issues are seen as claims of fairness.

Writing, like Rizal’s *El Filibusterismo*, can change a country. For students, it lets them express themselves, connect with their culture, and think critically. Lumbera, Almario, and Quisumbing are some of the scholars who say that Filipino is important for identity and intellectual growth. So, writing formal essays is a good way to tell if someone is good at language and critical thinking.

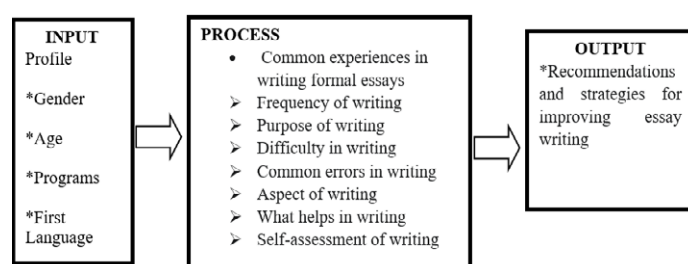
This study will look at students’ writing skills, look at how teachers teach, and make suggestions for how to improve the K–12 curriculum. The results are meant to help improve teaching, support student growth, and shape education policy. This will help Filipinos stay a strong part of national identity and academic success.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mastery of formal academic writing is globally and nationally recognized as a vital skill for critical thinking, clear communication, and participation in modern society. UNESCO (2003, 2016) affirms writing proficiency as a basic human right essential to educational and societal progress. Farrell (2013) emphasizes the growing need for students to develop advanced thinking and writing skills in a globalized world. In the Philippines, this is echoed in key policies including the 1987 Constitution, Republic Act No. 10533, and various DepEd Orders, which promote Filipino language development and literacy. Programs like the Special Program in the Arts and

Journalism aim to deepen students’ language proficiency while maintaining discipline-specific focus.

This study uses the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model as its framework. Inputs include student characteristics (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, curriculum type, first language), with relevant contributions from Bialystok (2017), Baxter (2014), Piaget (2019), and Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2020). The Process examines writing experiences, difficulties, writing apprehension, and self-assessment. Graham and Perin (2019), Schraw *et al.* (2011), Hsu & Wang (2020), and James (2013) support the role of explicit instruction, metacognition, and error analysis. The Output includes strategies such as technology integration (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018), collaborative writing (Storch, 2013), feedback (Winstone *et al.*, 2017), and enhancing self-efficacy (Bruning & Kauffman, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.

At Isabela National High School, especially within its Special Curriculum Programs, students face persistent challenges in Filipino essay writing—grammar, structure, and vocabulary. Despite oral fluency, roughly 70% struggle with formal writing. Gonzales (2020) observed that limited Filipino writing practice, often only 1–2 times a month, hampers language development. This reflects a dominant extrinsic motivation to write for grades (Santos, 2018), rather than intrinsic purposes like expression or communication. While students rate their writing as “Good” (52.1%), this may not reflect true ability due to self-efficacy biases (Honicke & Broadbent, 2015; Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Key challenges include idea generation and essay structure, explained by cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988), executive functions (Kellogg, 2008), and writing apprehension (Daly & Vangelisti, 2020). Students often lack genre awareness (Swales, 1990; Hyon, 2018), which impairs organization. Zimmerman (2002) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) highlight the need for metacognitive and grammatical instruction. Nation (2001) and Connor (1990) support students’ desire to improve vocabulary and logical sequencing.

Students identified all support mechanisms—teacher feedback, peer work, reading models, and practice materials—as equally essential (Graham *et al.*, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986; Ericsson & Pool, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Program-wise, Arts students wrote more than Journalism students, possibly due to differing genre interpretations (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Hyon, 2018). No significant differences were found based on age, gender, or first language, though LGBTQ+ students showed higher writing frequency, possibly tied to identity expression (Erikson, 1968; Queen, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).



This synthesis affirms that effective instruction must balance foundational linguistic accuracy with cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational development. Despite policy support for Filipino language and writing, localized research—especially in schools like Isabela National High School—remains limited, with few studies beyond Carpina (1990). This study responds to the urgent need for data-driven strategies to elevate Filipino writing instruction and counter prevailing attitudes that diminish the subject's academic value.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research design

This study used a descriptive-comparative research design. We chose this method because it would help us accurately describe and analyze the current essay writing experiences of students in a variety of special curriculum programs. The descriptive part of the design made it easy to find out what writing practices and problems were common without changing any variables. At the same time, the comparative part made it possible to look at possible differences in how students in these specialized programs write essays.

#### 3.2. Research locale

The study was done at Isabela National High School in Ilagan City, Isabela. We chose this school because it has a long history of academic success and offers Special Curriculum Programs that are not available at other schools. Students learn a lot of different things in these programs, like science, math, English, journalism, and the arts. It was a great place to look into how these specialized curricula affected students' essay writing skills because the school was all about helping students get better at what they were good at.

#### 3.3. Research participants

The students who took part in this study were in Grade 9 and were in the Special Curriculum Programs at Isabela National High School during the school year 2024–2025. There are three parts to these programs: the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ), the Special Program in the Arts (SPA), and the Special Science Curriculum, which is all about math, science, and English. The researchers chose students from these different academic paths on purpose to learn more about how these paths might affect their ability to write essays.

The study included 231 ninth graders who were in these special curriculum programs. People of different ages, genders, and other traits took part in the study.

**Table 1.** Distribution of research participants by gender and sexuality

Category	Number of students	Percentage
Male	63	27.27%
Female	110	47.61%
LGBTQ+	58	25.10%
Total	231	100%

#### 3.4. Special science curriculum participants

The Special Science Curriculum (SSC) brought in 106 students, which is the whole population of Grade 9 SSC students. As shown in Table 2, this group was made up of 37 men (34.90%), 43 women (40.56%), and 26 LGBTQ+ people (24.52%).

**Table 2.** Distribution of students in the special science curriculum

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Male	37	34.90%
Female	43	40.56%
LGBTQ+	26	24.52%
Total	106	100%

#### 3.5. Special program in journalism participants

There were 58 students in the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ), which included all of the Grade 9 SPJ students. Table 3 shows how their demographics are spread out: There were 14 men (24.13%), 32 women (55.17%), and 12 LGBTQ+ people (20.68%).

**Table 3.** Distribution of students in the special program in journalism

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Male	14	24.13%
Female	32	55.17%
LGBTQ+	12	20.68%
Total	58	100.00%

#### 3.6. Special program in the arts participants

There were 67 participants from the Special Program in the Arts (SPA), which was the full enrollment of Grade 9 SPA students. Table 4 shows that there were 15 males (22.38%), 32 females (47.76%), and 20 LGBTQ+ individuals (29.85%).

**Table 4.** Distribution of students in the special program in the arts

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Male	15	22.38%
Female	32	47.76%
LGBTQ+	20	29.85%
Total	67	100%

#### 3.7. Data gathering instrument

A questionnaire created by the researcher specifically for student participants was the main tool used to gather data for this study. There were five parts: demographic information, students' experiences with writing essays in Filipino, common writing mistakes, tips on how to improve writing skills, and a self-assessment of their writing skills. Based on their own



experiences and thoughts, students answered.

The researcher used their experience as a teacher, relevant literature, previous studies, expert discussions in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, feedback from past researchers, and knowledge gained from professional trainings and conferences on teaching Filipino to come up with the questionnaire content. Three faculty members from the Filipino Department at Isabela National High School and the District Supervisor of Ilagan City carefully reviewed and validated the instrument to make sure it was valid and reliable. They made suggestions for changes or new things to add.

The researcher personally helped with the distribution of the questionnaires, giving explanations and answering questions to make sure that the participants gave honest, complete, and correct answers.

### 3.8. Data collection procedure

After the research framework was set up, the process of collecting data began. The first step was to get official permission to do the study. The researcher sent a formal letter to the principal of Isabela National High School asking for permission to give the questionnaire to Grade 9 students who were in special curriculum programs. After getting the necessary permission, the researcher sent out the questionnaires to the chosen participants and then collected them again.

After the questionnaires were collected, a careful process of analyzing and evaluating the 231 completed ones took place. This meant carefully finding common writing experiences, making it easy to fix mistakes, and accurately figuring out how often each experience happened. To make sure the data was correct, all of the information that was collected was looked over three times to make sure that the common writing experiences of the Grade 9 special curriculum students were correctly identified. A pre-made table was used to carefully record each answer. We carefully checked the tallying process to make sure there were no mistakes, and we kept doing it until all of the questionnaire responses were correctly recorded.

Participants were asked to choose the best answers to the questionnaire items in order to get a full picture of the demographics of the respondents, their overall experiences with writing essays in Filipino, common writing mistakes, their thoughts on how to improve their skills, and how they rated their own writing skills. Then, the collected responses were carefully examined, written down, sorted, and understood in order to meet the study's goals.

### 3.9. Data analysis

The researcher used a mix of statistical tools to look at the data we got from this study. Descriptive statistics were mostly used to describe the typical experiences of Filipino essay writers. To count how many times different experiences happened in each category of the study, we used frequency distribution, percentage, and mean.

The researcher used One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in addition to descriptive analysis. We did this statistical test to see if there were statistically significant differences in how often students wrote based on their gender or the special curriculum programs they were in, especially when we compared three

or more groups. One-Way ANOVA helped figure out if the differences in writing experiences between different groups of students were statistically significant.

Using both descriptive statistics and One-Way ANOVA together made it possible to do a full and strong analysis of the participants' essay writing experiences. The results of these analyses provided the empirical basis for creating useful suggestions to help the students in the study improve their writing skills.

### 3.10. Ethical considerations

To protect the health of the participants and the integrity of the research, this study strictly followed ethical standards. Before data collection began, all potential student participants and their parents or guardians were given a full explanation of the study's purpose, importance, and the fact that participation was voluntary. Before any data collection could start, parents had to give their written permission. In addition, the researcher got permission from the school principal and told the Filipino teachers about how the study would be run.

All of the students' personal information was kept completely private and was never shared with anyone. We only used data that was directly related to the essay analysis, and we presented the research results in a way that made it impossible to identify any one student. No personal information will be shared in any papers or articles that come out of this study.

Participants had the right to withdraw their consent and stop being involved in the study at any time without any negative effects on their academic standing. The safety and well-being of the participants were always the top priority during the research process, and all necessary steps were taken to protect their privacy and safety.

Finally, the results of this study were only used for the stated purpose of helping students improve their writing skills and not for any other secret or unrelated purpose.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Demographic profile of participants

The first part of the study's results talks about the demographics of the students who took part. Table 5 shows how the people who answered were spread out across the different Special Curriculum Programs in Junior High School at Isabela National High School.

**Table 5.** Distribution of participants by program affiliation

Program	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Special Science Curriculum	106	45.9
Special Program in Journalism	58	25.1
Special Program in the Arts	67	29.0
Total	231	100.0

The table shows that 45.9% of respondents belong to the Special Science Curriculum, 29.0% to the Special Program in the Arts, and 25.1% to the Special Program in Journalism. While the Science program has the highest enrollment, our analysis "thinks through" why Arts students might demonstrate higher





writing frequency compared to Journalism students. One possible explanation is that Arts curricula might emphasize reflective, creative writing assignments that are classified as essays, whereas Journalism may focus on shorter news reports that students do not regard as full essays.

**Table 6.** Distribution of participants' Age

Program	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13 & below	6	2.6
14	164	71.0
15 & above	61	26.4
Total	231	100.0

#### 4.2. Student gender

The majority (71.0%) of participants are 14 years old, with a small portion (2.6%) aged 13 and below and 26.4% aged 15 or older. These figures indicate that most students are clustered around the same age, meaning that differences in writing skills and frequency might be less about age-related maturity and more about instructional practices or curriculum design.

**Table 7.** Distribution of respondents' gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	66	28.6
Female	107	46.3
LGBTQ	58	25.1

#### 4.3. Student first language

It was noted that Ilocano was the most common first language among respondents, with 42.0% (n=97) of them saying it was their first language. Ibanag came in second with 39.0% (n=90). Tagalog had the fewest speakers, with only 19.0% (n=44) of the participants saying it was their first language. The fact that the participants speak different languages shows how diverse the languages are in Isabela.

**Table 8.** Distribution of participants'

First Language	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ibanag	90	39.0
Ilocano	97	42.0
Tagalog	44	19.0
Total	231	100.0

#### 4.4. General experience in writing filipino essays

##### 4.4.1. Frequency of writing filipino essays by students

###### a. How often do students write essays in Filipino?

The data shows that the average score for students who write Filipino essays only once or twice a month is 1.87. Almost every week, a smaller group (29.9%) writes, and 16.9% of people rarely write essays. This means that writing essays in Filipino isn't something that students in special curriculum programs do very often. This could be because the curriculum doesn't put enough emphasis on it, students use other languages more often in

schoolwork, or the way teachers teach doesn't encourage them to write often. This backs up Gonzales's (2020) research that shows that not using Filipino in school often makes students less interested and less able to speak the language. The fact that students don't write essays very often affects a lot of things. For example, it might make it harder for them to improve their writing skills and confidence, make it harder for teachers to evaluate and support their progress, and require changes to the curriculum and how it is taught. Because of this, the fact that Filipino students don't write essays very often is a big problem that affects their language skills, how well teachers can teach, and the success of special curriculum programs as a whole. proficiency, teaching effectiveness, and the overall success of special curriculum programs.

**Table 9.** Frequency of participants' filipino essay writing

Writing Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequent (almost weekly)	69	29.9
Occasional (1-2 times a month)	123	53.2
Rare (less than once a month)	39	16.9
Mean: 1.87 (Occasional)		

##### 4.4.2. Students' purpose in writing filipino essays

Students' Purpose in Writing Filipino Essays Table 10 shows that 42.0% of students write Filipino essays to get good grades, which means they are very motivated from outside. 35.1% of people write to express their thoughts and feelings (intrinsic motivation), and 22.9% write to meet teacher requirements. This means that doing well in school is more important for writing than expressing yourself. Santos (2018) found that when people are intrinsically motivated, they get more involved and write better. The data suggests that we need to rethink how we teach and test writing to get kids really interested in it. Relying on grades may make students less interested in writing, which shows how important it is to encourage intrinsic motivation through writing experiences that are meaningful and reflective.

**Table 10.** Participants' purpose in writing filipino essays

Purpose of Writing Filipino Essays	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To get high grades	97	42.0
To express ideas and feelings	81	35.1
To comply with the teacher's assigned tasks	53	22.9
Total	231	100.0

##### 4.4.3. Challenges in essay writing

Table 11 shows that students have trouble coming up with ideas and organizing the structure of their essays (each cited 224 times), which are two of the biggest problems they face when writing. Cognitive load theory and executive functions, such as working memory and cognitive flexibility, help explain why it's hard to come up with ideas (Kellogg, 2008; Hayes, 2012), especially when you're worried about writing (Daly



& Vangelisti, 2020). Limited knowledge of genre conventions and poor metacognitive strategies are to blame for structural problems, as shown in genre pedagogy (Swales, 1990; Hyon, 2018) and self-regulated learning research (Zimmerman, 2002). To deal with both, lessons should include teaching executive function, genre, and metacognition using tools like scaffolds and self-assessments.

**Table 11.** Challenges in essay writing

Most Difficult in Writing	Frequency	Rank
Generating ideas	224	1
Arranging sentences and paragraphs	212	4
Using correct grammar and punctuation	215	3
Choosing the right words or vocabulary	221	2
Ensuring the correct essay structure (beginning, body, end)	224	1

#### 4.4.4. Common errors in writing

Table 12 shows that the most common errors in Filipino essay writing include incorrect punctuation (229 occurrences), difficulty in sentence construction (228 occurrences), wrong grammar (221 occurrences), and improper word choice (205 occurrences). These numbers indicate that students struggle with more than basic grammar—they have trouble organizing ideas and using punctuation correctly, which may stem from inadequate practice and insufficient instructional support. Although students seem to know basic grammar rules, their errors suggest difficulty applying these rules in more complex contexts. To verify these interpretations, triangulation with teacher interviews and classroom observations is recommended. Such triangulated insights could reveal whether current teaching practices—such as scaffolded writing exercises and contextualized grammar instruction—are effective, and could guide the development of more targeted strategies to improve writing proficiency. Table 12 shows that the most common mistakes students made when writing were wrong punctuation (229 times) and problems with sentence structure (228 times). Grammar mistakes (221 times) and using the wrong words (205 times) were next. There were fewer mistakes in grammar and vocabulary, but these are still important areas that need work. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) say that grammar helps with communication beyond just following sentence rules. Nation (2001) says that knowing a lot of words includes knowing their form, context, and meaning. Students may understand basic grammar but have trouble with coherence and using the right words. Teaching grammar in context, using vocabulary strategies, and giving targeted feedback can all help students write more clearly, coherently, and deeply.

**Table 12.** Common errors in essay writing

Most Common Errors in Writing	Frequency	Rank
Incorrect use of punctuation	229	1
Difficulty in sentence construction	228	2
Incorrect or wrong grammar	221	3
Incorrect or inappropriate use of words	205	4

#### 4.4.5. Aspects of writing

Table 13 indicates that students prioritize improving the logical sequencing of ideas (216 occurrences) and expanding vocabulary (213 occurrences) over focusing on grammar (7 occurrences) and sentence clarity (9 occurrences). This finding suggests that students value higher-level writing skills, such as organization and clarity—an observation that aligns with Connor's (1990) emphasis on effective organization and Nation's (2001) emphasis on clear language. However, the relatively low number of students who express a desire to improve grammar and sentence construction might reflect an overconfidence in their basic language skills or a lack of awareness regarding the importance of these fundamentals for coherent communication. In light of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) assertion that strong grammar and clarity are essential for making sense of written text, it becomes important for instruction to strike a balance. Teaching should not only promote advanced skills, like logical sequencing and vocabulary expansion, but also reinforce the basics of grammar and sentence clarity to help students become well-rounded, effective writers.

**Table 13.** Aspects of writing students want to learn or improve

Aspect of Writing	Frequency	Rank
Developing a logical sequence of ideas	216	1
Expanding vocabulary	213	2
Using correct punctuation	13	3
Constructing clearer sentences	9	4
Using correct grammar	7	5

#### 4.4.6. Factors facilitating essay writing

Table 14 shows that every support mechanism for essay writing—teacher guidance, practice materials, writing exercises, reading model essays, and peer collaboration—was endorsed by all 231 respondents. This unanimous response indicates that students value a holistic approach to writing instruction that combines direct teacher input, structured practice, and collaborative learning. Research supports these findings; for example, formative feedback (Graham *et al.*, 2016; Winstone & Carless, 2010), scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), deliberate practice (Ericsson & Pool, 2016), modeling (Bandura, 1986), and



cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) are all proven to enhance writing skills. Therefore, employing a mix of these strategies is crucial to meet diverse learning needs and improve overall writing effectiveness.

**Table 14.** Factors perceived as helpful for essay writing

What Helps in Writing	Frequency	Rank
Guidance from the teacher (e.g., explanation, feedback)	231	1
Additional practice materials (e.g., guides, worksheets)	231	1
Filipino writing exercises	231	1
Reading essay examples	231	1
Collaboration with classmates or group	231	1

#### 4.4.7. Self-perception of proficiency in writing filipino essays

The self-perception data (refer to Table 15) indicate that most students rate their Filipino essay writing skills as “Good” (52.1%) and “Average” (31.4%), while only 16.5% consider themselves “Very Good.” Notably, none of the respondents identified themselves as needing improvement or struggling, and the overall mean rating is 1.87, which corresponds to a “Good” level. This generally positive self-assessment may be linked to strong self-efficacy, a factor known to influence academic performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2015). However, it is also possible that overconfidence or social desirability bias—illustrated by the Dunning–Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999)—could be inflating these self-ratings. Therefore, while students appear confident in their abilities, there is a need for teaching strategies that encourage accurate self-assessment. Incorporating strong formative feedback and metacognitive exercises can help students develop a more realistic understanding of their writing skills (Andrade & Heritage, 2013; Boud & Falchikov, 2007).

**Table 15.** Self-perception of proficiency in writing filipino essays

Self-Perceived Proficiency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Good	31	16.5
Good	98	52.1
Average	59	31.4
Needs Improvement	0	-
Struggling	0	-
Total	188	100

Mean: 1.87 (Good)

#### 4.5. Differences in the frequency of writing filipino essays when students are grouped by profile

##### 4.5.1. Program affiliation

Table 16 shows that students in different special curriculum programs write Filipino essays at very different rates ( $F_{(2,228)}$

= 20.188,  $p < .001$ ). But the results show an unexpected trend: students in the Arts program wrote more often on average (Mean = 2.27) than students in the Journalism program (Mean = 1.62). This goes against the first thought that Journalism would have more writing because it is all about writing and talking.

There could be a number of reasons why this finding was unexpected. First, different programs might have different ideas about what a “essay” is. Students in Journalism might write news articles or reports more often than essays, which aren’t always considered “essays” in their classes. On the other hand, the Arts program’s creative writing assignments might be more like essays. This fits with genre theory, which says that genre changes and depends on the situation (Hyon, 2018). Second, differences in disciplinary literacy could be a factor, since different fields teach and use writing skills in different ways (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Third, the Filipino curriculum and teaching methods used in these programs may be different, which could affect how often students write. For example, the types of assignments and the way they are taught may be different. Finally, we can’t completely rule out the chance of sampling bias. This result suggests that more research is needed, possibly through mixed-methods studies, to get a better picture of the factors that affect how often Filipino students write essays in different academic programs.

**Table 16.** Program affiliation

Program	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
Science	1.75	20.188(228)	<.001	Reject H0
Journalism	1.62			
Arts	2.27			

##### 4.5.2. Student age

Regarding program affiliation, the analysis reveals a statistically significant difference in writing frequency among students from different specialized programs ( $F_{(2,228)} = 20.188$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Arts students report a higher frequency (Mean = 2.27) compared to those in Science (Mean = 1.75) and Journalism (Mean = 1.62). This suggests that the Arts curriculum—possibly due to its emphasis on creative and reflective writing—encourages more frequent essay writing than the Journalism curriculum, where tasks might be shorter or framed differently. In contrast, the influence of student age appears minimal. The ANOVA results for age indicate no significant differences ( $F_{(2,228)} = 0.041$ ,  $p = 0.960$ ), with 14-year-old students writing slightly more frequently (Mean = 1.8780) than those aged 15 and above (Mean = 1.8525). Although one might expect older students to write more often owing to higher cognitive development (Garcia, 2018), the structured nature of the Special Curriculum Programs seems to provide uniform writing opportunities regardless of age. Triangulating these quantitative findings with teacher interviews and classroom observations could further clarify how program-specific teaching methods and curricular designs affect writing frequency and whether the observed differences stem from assignment type or instructional emphasis.



**Table 17.** Student age

Age	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
13 & below	1.8333	.041(228)	.960	Accept H0
14	1.8780			
15 & above	1.8525			

Table 18 presents the ANOVA results for writing frequency across gender groups, revealing no significant differences ( $F_{(2,228)} = 1.904$ ,  $p = 0.151$ ). The mean frequencies were 2.0172 for LGBTQ+ students, 1.8318 for females, and 1.8030 for males, indicating that LGBTQ+ students write somewhat more frequently than their peers. This finding is somewhat unexpected, as prior research (Hyde & Linn, 1988; Pajares & Valiante, 2001) suggests that females typically engage in writing more often due to higher verbal skills and motivation. One possible explanation is that LGBTQ+ students may use writing as a means of self-expression and identity formation (Erikson, 1968; Queen, 2007), supporting the idea that writing fosters a sense of belonging as described by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, given the small subgroup sample sizes and lack of qualitative data, these results are tentative. Triangulation with teacher interviews and classroom observations is recommended to determine whether instructional practices and classroom dynamics influence these patterns in writing frequency, and to further explore how gender identity impacts engagement in writing.

**Table 18.** ANOVA results for writing frequency by student gender

Gender	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
Male	1.8030	1.904(228)	0.151	Accept H0
Female	1.8318			
LGBTQ+	2.0172			

#### 4.5.3. Student first language and writing frequency

The ANOVA showed that the students' primary language did not have a statistically significant effect on how often they wrote Filipino essays ( $F_{(2,228)} = 1.753$ ,  $p = .066$ ). The average score for Tagalog speakers (2.0682) was a little higher than for Ibanag (1.8667) and Ilocano (1.7835) speakers, but this difference was not statistically significant.

The researcher thought that Tagalog speakers would write more often because their first language is so important in both their home and society as a whole. Tan's (2012) study on language exposure suggests that writing opportunities in the Special Curriculum Programs might be the same for all first language groups. This is because there wasn't a big difference. Bautista (2005) suggested that a person's first language could affect their writing, but this effect was not a big reason why Filipinos wrote essays in this situation. This result may mean that the methods used to teach Filipino essay writing in these programs work for students from a wide range of primary language backgrounds. Still, looking more closely at the kinds of mistakes that students make, broken down by their first language, could give us more detailed information and help us plan more focused teaching strategies.

**Table 19.** ANOVA results for writing frequency by student first language

First Language	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
Ibanag	1.8667	1.753(228)	0.066	Accept H0
Ilocano	1.7835			
Tagalog	2.0682			

#### 4.6. Differences in self-perception of proficiency in writing Filipino essays when students are grouped by profile

##### 4.6.1. Program affiliation

When examining differences in self-perception by academic program, the data indicate a significant disparity ( $F_{(2,185)} = 15.763$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Students in the Special Program in the Arts reported the highest self-assessed proficiency in Filipino essay writing (Mean = 2.5714), followed by those in the Special Program in Journalism (Mean = 2.3448), while students in the Special Science Curriculum had the lowest self-rating (Mean = 1.9216). This pattern suggests that students in programs emphasizing creative expression and communication tend to develop stronger writing self-efficacy, an idea supported by Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and further echoed in Bruning and Kauffman's (2016) research on writing self-efficacy. These findings imply that Arts and Journalism students, who likely engage in more expressive writing activities, view themselves more as writers, thus boosting their confidence and engagement. In contrast, more structured curricula in the sciences may limit opportunities for expressive writing, leading to lower self-perception in this area. To address these differences, it is important for all programs to adopt inclusive teaching methods that not only build confidence through frequent feedback and self-assessment but also develop metacognitive awareness of genre-specific writing practices (Hyon, 2018).

**Table 20.** ANOVA Results for self-perception of writing proficiency by program affiliation

Program	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
Science	1.9216	15.763(185)	<.001	Reject H0
Journalism	2.3448			
Arts	2.5714			

##### 4.6.2. Student age

The self-perception of writing proficiency based on student age shows significant variation ( $F_{(2,185)} = 3.409$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ). Specifically, 14-year-old students rated their writing proficiency the highest, with a mean score of 2.2246, while those aged 13 and below rated themselves lower (Mean = 1.8333), and 15-year-old students had a slightly higher score than the youngest group but still lower than 14-year-olds (Mean = 1.9545). This pattern suggests that mid-adolescence may be a peak period for writing self-efficacy—supporting Alonzo and Schutz's (2017) findings that certain aspects of self-confidence in writing can reach a maximum during this developmental stage before





academic pressures increase in later grades. These differences likely influence how students approach writing challenges and their motivation to improve. Given these findings, it would be beneficial for educators to adapt teaching methods to different developmental stages, creating classroom environments that reinforce confidence while addressing specific needs of different age groups. Triangulating these quantitative results with qualitative insights from teacher interviews or classroom observations may further clarify how curriculum design and instructional practices can be modified to support all students more effectively.

**Table 21.** ANOVA Results for self-perception of writing proficiency by student age

Program	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
13 & below	1.8333	3.409(185)	0.035	Reject H0
14	2.2246			
15 & above	1.9545			

#### 4.6.3. Student gender and self-perception of writing proficiency

Analyzing self-perception by gender (Table 22), the ANOVA results indicate no statistically significant differences in Filipino essay writing proficiency among male, female, and LGBTQ+ students ( $F_{(2,185)} = 1.595$ ,  $p = 0.206$ ). Male students reported a mean self-rating of 2.0303, while females and LGBTQ+ students reported slightly higher means of 2.2045 and 2.2353, respectively. Although there is a minor upward trend for females and LGBTQ+ students, these differences do not reach statistical significance, aligning with Hyde and Linn's (2007) findings that suggest minimal gender differences in academic skills such as writing. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that cultural and social gender norms, as outlined in Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), may subtly influence self-perceptions. While these quantitative results suggest gender does not markedly impact self-assessed writing proficiency, further qualitative investigations—through teacher interviews or classroom observations—could help determine if societal expectations or classroom dynamics affect how students evaluate their writing abilities. Triangulating the current findings with qualitative data may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender identity interfaces with actual writing competence and self-assessment.

**Table 22.** ANOVA Results for self-perception of writing proficiency by student gender

Program	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
Male	2.0303	1.595(185)	0.206	Accept H0
Female	2.2045			
LGBTQ+	2.2353			

#### 4.6.3. Student first language

The analysis of self-perception by first language (Table 23) indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in writing proficiency among Ibanag, Ilocano, and Tagalog speakers ( $F_{(2,185)} = 1.140$ ,  $p = 0.322$ ). Although Ibanag speakers reported a slightly higher mean (2.2346) compared to Ilocano (2.0824) and Tagalog (2.0909) speakers, these differences are not significant. This finding suggests that the learning environment in the Special Curriculum Programs, where Filipino is used regularly, may help equalize students' confidence across different linguistic backgrounds. In other words, being immersed in Filipino-speaking contexts seems to mitigate the potential impact of home language differences, aligning with the concept of additive bilingualism (Cummins, 1979). Nonetheless, it remains important to investigate whether these perceived similarities in self-assessment also translate to actual writing ability and error patterns. Triangulating these quantitative findings with qualitative data from teacher interviews or classroom observations could offer further insights into how a student's first language influences both their writing performance and the types of errors they make.

**Table 23.** ANOVA Results for self-perception of writing proficiency by student first language

First Language	Mean	F(df)	p	Comment/Remark
Ibanag	2.2346	1.140(185)	0.322	Accept H0
Ilocano	2.0824			
Tagalog	2.0909			

#### 4.7. Recommendations based on the study results

This section translates the key findings of the study into actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing students' Filipino essay writing abilities. Based on the insights derived from the research results, the following matrix presents a systematic plan for



implementing targeted interventions and innovative activities. challenges and areas for improvement in Filipino essay writing  
This structured approach directly addresses the identified skills among students in special curriculum programs.

**Table 24.** Matrix of intervention/innovation for essay writing in filipino

<b>Result of Learning</b>	<b>Challenges in Student Learning</b>	<b>Intervention/ Innovation</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategies/Activities/ Duration</b>	<b>Learning Resources/ Materials</b>	<b>Assessment of Learning Effectiveness</b>
Developing Skills in Essay Writing	Difficulty in Practicing Different Types of Essays	Exposure to a Variety of Essays	To broaden students' understanding and experience with different types of essays	Use of Modules, Session 2 for practicing different types of essays (informative, persuasive, argumentative, etc.) Guided writing activities (1-8 meetings/sessions)	Different Modules Rubric for evaluating essays (can be modified) Writing prompts (as needed)	Pre-test and post-test of essay quality, observation of student writing, survey of student learning
Difficulty in Forming Ideas for Essay Structure	Weak pre-writing skills related to essay structure	Teaching of Pre-Writing for Essay Structure	To develop students' ability to generate and organize ideas for essay structure	Use of Modules, Session 1 for the following activities: Brainstorming Concept mapping Outlining Explicit instruction on essay structure (introduction, body, conclusion) Graphic organizers	Different Modules Various graphic organizers as examples (if available) Video/ presentation about essay structure	Assessment of essay outlines using graphic organizers, observation of essay structure, self-assessment of learning
Positive Self-Perception	Development of Metacognitive Skills and Self-Assessment	Teaching of Metacognitive and Self-Assessment	To increase the metacognitive awareness and self-assessment skills of the students."	Use the Module, the Reflection section for the following activities: Reflective writing journals (activities within the module with a set frequency) Self-assessment checklists (if available in the module) Setting personal writing goals (if available in the module) Peer assessment with a rubric (if used in the module) Portfolio assessment (if part of the module) (Weeks 1-9)"	Three Module Sessions Additional self-assessment checklists, rubric for peer assessment, or guide for the portfolio (if needed)	Analysis of the reflective journals, Assessment of the accuracy of self-assessment, Analysis of the portfolio
Enjoyment in Exploring Different Programs	Difficulty in Understanding the Expectations for Writing in Different Disciplines	Integration of Examples from Different Disciplinary Writing	To understand and meet the writing expectations in different disciplines	Use of Modules (Weeks 2-6): Analysis of reflective journals Reflective writing journals (submitted per module frequently) Self-assessment checklists (per module) Peer-assessment checklists (per module) Portfolio development (collection of outputs per module) Focused assessment (based on the activity within the module, Weeks 1-9)	Different Modules Self-assessment checklists Peer-assessment checklists Rubric for self-assessment (per module) Rubric for peer assessment (per module) Portfolio assessment guide (per module)	Observation of reflective journals, accuracy of self-assessment, peer assessment, assessment of portfolio



Ease in Understanding the Different Programs	Difficulty in Meeting the Writing Standards Expected in Different Disciplines	Interdisciplinary Approach to Writing	To meet the writing standards and expectations in different disciplines	Use of Modules (entire module): Presenting and discussing information on the writing conventions of different disciplines Providing examples of academic writing from different disciplines Collaborative work among teachers from different departments (planning and teaching writing across disciplines, Weeks 4-6, if possible, guest speakers) Writing activities that integrate content and writing styles from different subject areas (integrated writing time, Weeks 7-8)	Different Modules Examples of academic writing from different disciplines Rubric specific to the discipline (if available) Guest speaker materials (if available)	Analysis of interdisciplinary writing outputs, observation of students' ability to apply knowledge from different disciplines in their writing, assessment of academic writing based on the standards of different genres
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## 5. CONCLUSION

After conducting a careful investigation, these conclusions regarding the essay-writing experiences of Grade 9 students in Special Curriculum Programs can be drawn:

- *Limited Frequency of Practice*: Most students compose Filipino essays only from time to time, which prevents them from attaining the writing fluency expected in programs intended to sharpen academic proficiency.

- *Extrinsic Motivation Prevails*: The drive to write stems mainly from the desire for high grades, suggesting that the academic culture prizes outcomes over the joy of expression, and indicates a weak inner wish to write for its own sake.

- *Cognitive Hurdles in Composition*: Students exhibit relatively developed higher-order thinking skills, yet they encounter acute difficulties in idea generation and essay organization, underscoring the necessity for focused teaching in these dimensions.

- *Ongoing Surface-Level Errors*: Regular errors in punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar point to lingering weaknesses in the basic mechanics of writing that cannot be neglected.

- *Willingness to Cultivate Advanced Skills*: Students articulated a clear interest in refining logical sequencing and vocabulary, which demonstrates their openness to tackling more sophisticated writing tasks.

- *Importance of Supportive Networks*: Feedback from teachers, collaboration with peers, and access to writing resources were repeatedly cited as essential elements that meaningfully enrich the essay-writing process.

Students tend to rate their writing ability higher than their actual performance suggests, indicating a gap that metacognitive self-assessment can help bridge.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the analysis, the strategies below are designed to pinpoint and alleviate the specific issues identified in student writing.

### For Students

Take part in structured brainstorming and idea-mapping sessions to strengthen both the generation of arguments and the overall organisation of essays.

Maintain a reflective journal where you set and revise focused writing objectives, tracking specific improvements in vocabulary and logical flow to deepen self-awareness.

Join writing workshops where you both give and receive peer feedback, sharpening your ability to critique and to incorporate.

### For Teachers

Introduce graphic organisers and phased essay frameworks that are directly matched to Filipino writing conventions, easing cognitive pressure during drafting.

Conduct regular formative assessments, giving focused feedback on recurrent punctuation and grammar issues so that students can make step-by-step progress.

Link Filipino writing assignments to Special Science, Journalism, and Arts content, showing students how writing skills apply in meaningful, disciplinary contexts.

### For Curriculum Designers

Review and adjust the curriculum to ensure that higher-order writing skills such as idea generation and essay construction receive explicit instruction within Special Curriculum Programs.

- *Build Contextual Writing Units*: Assemble units that spotlight authentic writing tasks linked to students' lived experiences, academic goals, and cultural backgrounds. Each unit should include annotated model texts that mirror how students speak and think, guiding them from authentic voice to academic rigor.

- *Invest in Ongoing Teacher Capacity*: Allocate grants for sustained, data-informed professional learning that equips educators to analyze writing levels, track growth, and tailor instruction to the recurring strengths and weaknesses of the cohort. Workshops should model practical assessment



strategies, collaborative scoring, and adaptation of materials to an evolving student landscape.

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