

CORRELATING WRITER'S BLOCK AND ESL LEARNERS' WRITING QUALITY

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Abstract

Despite the importance of writing in the language learners' development, there are difficulties faced by English as a Second Language (ESL) learners that stem from various factors. One of them is the presence of writer's block that could affect writing quality. Therefore, this study aims to describe writer's block, along with a statistically-laden analysis of the possible correlation between the blocking experiences of 55 Filipino ESL learners and the levels of easability and readability of the essays they had written. This research employed a descriptive-correlational design using The Questionnaire in Identifying Writer's Block (QIWB) to gauge the extent of occurrence of writer's block and the Coh-Metrix Common Core Text Easability and Readability Assessor (hereafter Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A.), an online computational tool, to measure the levels of easability and readability of the essays. The result shows that the learners generally experienced writer's block, and their essays collectively showed high levels of easability on the basis of narrativity, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion. However, the essays were low in syntactic simplicity and word concreteness, while the level of readability computed exceeded that of the reading ability of 10th-grade learners. Test of correlation revealed that there exists negligible relationship between writer's block and the overall easability and readability levels of the essays, though a significant but a weak relationship was documented between lateness and word concreteness and with premature editing and deep cohesion, respectively.

Keywords: writer's block; easability; readability; text quality; Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A.

When students are asked to write down on paper their thoughts about several concepts, or when the language teacher finally announces that an essay test will be administered, sighs of agony and apprehension reverberate in the L2 (second language) classroom. This situation is particularly prevalent among L2 learners whose writing performance is encumbered by a number of L2 writing issues such as the influence of the writer's personal characteristics, L2 writers' attitudes and composing processes, not to mention the interplay of cultural, social, political, and institutional contexts with L2 writing (Lee & Ferris, 2017). As such, the complexity of writing, as part of second language learning, continues to pose challenges to learners of different linguistic backgrounds and academic levels. Jun (2008) therefore asserts that the area of L2 writing qualifies relevant topics for second language researchers because of the many blank spots that could be filled in through language-related investigations.

Aside from studies that highlight significant fields such as L2 writing feedback, L2 writing instruction, and L2 writers' texts, scholarly efforts to improve L2 writing learning and instruction also drifted to the area of writing process per se. Saadat and Dastgerdi (2014) describe research expanse in

L2 writing as highlighted with studies that examine the effect of a variety of factors having to do with learners' cognitive, affective, and demographic characteristics as well as extrinsic factors linked to the processes of L2 writing teaching and assessment on learners' ability to write.

Writer's Block

Due to the essential nature of the writing process, Flower and Hayes (1981) revealed composing as a profoundly cognitive behavior, requiring many sub-processes within three main phases of planning, translating, and reviewing. Significantly, more than the fields or areas to be underscored in L2 writing research are considerations on the courses of development learners undertake in order to produce an excellent piece of writing. The truth is that in the early stages of writing alone, problems arise due to varying factors such as the learners' inability to carry out cognitively-challenging writing tasks, fear or apprehension, perfectionism, and other related influences which Bergler (1950) first described as writer's block.

Another interesting investigation involving writer's block, aside from its existence, is the influence that it incurs on the quality of writing learners tend to produce. For Rose (1984), rather

than looking at writer's block as an independent variable, it should be viewed as a phenomenon that is affected by several other factors. Hence, writer's block may be influenced by some variables that share the same nature. Few factors are linked to discourse mode and expected audience, the cognitive styles and the type of personality writers have, even their past writing experiences.

For Jones (1985), the generalizability of the construct of writer's block in relation to performance or ability measures needs to be cautiously explained. This is due to the fact that there are also varying results about the influence of writer's block on the quality of writings produced by students. For example, the study of Lee (2002) found that even great blockers can write essays of good quality. However, since writer's block is linked to both cognitive and psychological burden on the part of the experimenter, it may still bring about some adverse effects on writing quality, an idea that may be answered through exhaustive research investigations.

The development of L2 learners' communicative skills is also manifested on the 'communicativeness' of their writing outputs. For second and foreign language learners, writing quality essays is always a challenge. Barkaoui (2007) reports that writing is one of the most difficult skills that L2 learners are expected to acquire because it requires mastery of a variety of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies. As such, among other things important to the study of L2 writing, language instructors should also look into the necessity of identifying factors that either facilitate or debilitate learners' writing performance, and in the present context, on a positive continuum, those which are contributory to writing quality, including the text's easability and readability levels.

Writing Quality

Quality of writing is based on how comprehensive the writing output appears. It also ushers in the concepts of easability and readability. On the one hand, comprehensibility according to Rameezdeen and Rodrigo (2013), relates to how a reader understands a material; with this, readability zeroes in on how complex a text or a document is (Lintao & Madrunio, 2014). The concept of readability may also relate to the necessity of providing readers "ease" in comprehending the ideas embedded in the text. Apparently, what other researchers found as supportive of good writing quality is the ability of the writer to make use of rhetorical and other linguistic elements like cohesion. However, most L2 writers would produce outputs that are problematic when it comes to tense, spelling, and concord (Yankson, 1994). To others, students' writings are characterized by lack of coherence, weak thematic progression leading to flat paragraphs and themes

that are underdeveloped (Adika, 2003; Appiah, 2002; Dako & Forson, 1997).

One of the elements that should be looked into by L2 writing instructors is the concept of cohesion. Crucial to the measurement of cohesion is its distinction with coherence. According to Crossley, Kyle, and McNamara (2015), cohesion generally refers to the presence or absence of explicit cues in the text that allows the reader to make necessary connections between ideas in the material. For Halliday and Hasan (1976), connectives and other transitional devices provide explicit cues that inform the reader about the relations between concepts and the nature of those connections. Coherence, on the one hand, is the understanding that the reader derives from the text (O'Reilly & McNamara, 2007). Just like cohesion, coherence relies on specific cohesion cues, implicit cues, and nonlinguistic factors such as prior knowledge and reading skill. Comprehension is, therefore, the outcome of coherence (Crossley et al., 2015).

Researchers also conducted investigations on the quality of writings produced by both native and non-native speakers. For instance, Duppenhaler (2003) examined the essays provided by native and non-native speakers of English and divulged that by efficiently considering previous experiences or schema of the non-native speakers, they are better able to develop compelling teaching situations that foster good writing performance. On the one hand, research has traditionally linked writing quality with writing development (Crossley & McNamara, 2011). For textual quality, linguistic features such as lexical diversity, word repetition, word frequency, and cohesive devices may distinguish differences among L2 writing proficiency levels (Connor, 1990; Engber, 1995; Ferris, 1994).

High and low proficient essays could also be determined based on linguistic variables demonstrated such as the level of cohesion the compositions possess and the linguistic sophistication employed (Crossley & McNamara, 2011). On a more different variable, Wong (1999) asserts that it is through developing in learner's metacognitive knowledge, the awareness of the purpose and process of writing and self-regulation of writing, that they are able to do better in a particular writing task. Hence, it was reported that such knowledge had been linked to writing proficiency in numerous studies (e.g., Donovan & Smolkin, 2006).

Jun (2008) reported that writing quality might also be affected by a number of inclusive and complex psychological variables. These include apprehension, emotion, and extroversion/introversion, and field dependence/independence. Among these psychological variables, writing apprehension is most prevalent. More relevantly, Betancourt and Phinney (1988) and Skibniewski and Skibniewska (1986) found that more writing

apprehension was felt by less skilled L2 writers than by more proficient writers and graduate students. Other research results would also show that writing apprehension correlates with lower quality of writing.

Text Easability and Readability Measures

It is equally important to the study of text quality to understand the ways by which both text easability and readability levels are measured. Traditionally, different readability formulas that include the new Dale-Chall readability formula, the Lexile framework, Advantage-TASA open standard for readability, and Read-X use easily recognizable variables like the words, phrases, and sentence lengths and the rates of recurrence of common words (Lintao & Madrunio, 2015). However, these traditional formulas or methods, as argued by Stevens, Stevens, and Stevens (1992), are defective and contribute to procedural failures, not to mention their inability to gauge readability scales of adult reading materials.

The dawn of the contemporary age also gave birth to more reliable readability formulas and computational tools that facilitate identification of the level of comprehensibility of a given text. One growing trend in both easability descriptions and readability measures is the use of online computational tools that have undergone validation and extensive reviews from experts. With this said, a number of online computational tools that measure various linguistic characteristics of texts provide simplification on the analysis and evaluation of several linguistic elements in writing.

Crossley, Kyle, and McNamara (2016) recently devised an online computational tool, the TAACO (Tool for the Automatic Analysis of Cohesion). It is a tool that easily calculates 150 indices covering local and global cohesion, a number of type-token ratio indices (parts of speech, lemmas, bigrams, trigrams, etc.), adjacent overlap indices (both at the sentence and paragraph levels), and lastly, indices for connectives. What is interesting with TAACO is its ability to identify specific constituents of the texts (connectives) that contribute to the level of cohesiveness within paragraphs. TAACO is downloadable for free and provides a novel way for researchers and language instructors to analyze the easability and readability of students' writings on the basis of cohesion.

Directly related to the present study is the use of another online computational tool that gives a clear picture of texts' cohesion and comprehensibility at different levels of language, discourse, and conceptual analysis that count as improved ways of measuring readability of English texts for L2 learners (Crossley, Greenfield & McNamara, 2008). Specifically, the present study features the applicability of the Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A. It is accessible online, and researchers

could see text profiles along percentile comparisons to other texts with text description properties. The tool provides component profiles of text easability on five different dimensions: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion. Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A. also provides a readability formula known as the Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability.

Narrativity refers to the story-like characteristics of a text. The higher the narrativity score, the more comfortable the text is. *Syntactic simplicity* is measured based on the structure of sentences—that is, texts with fewer clauses, fewer words per sentence, and fewer words before the main verb, contain high syntactic simplicity. *Word concreteness*, on the one hand, encompasses the use of concrete terms more than abstract ones. As such, if the text is embedded with more concrete words, then the better the readers would sense the meaning of the text. There is *referential cohesion* if sentences and paragraphs have similar words and conceptual ideas, while *deep cohesion* relies on the effective use of connectives. The featured readability formula, the *Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability formula*, provides an estimated level of the reading ability of the reader.

Manoeuvring within the bounds of necessity and justifiability, the present research undertaking takes its conception on the need to further qualify results yielded from previous studies on the existence of writer's block as a cognitively-laden behavior among L2 learners and on the question of whether or not blocking phenomenon influences the levels of easability and readability of essays written. Furthermore, the study would also highlight the use of an online computational tool to analyze the comprehensibility or the ease of understanding essays as ESL students' writing outputs, a writing assessment innovation that could help L2 instructors in carrying out instructions and creating experiences that would work towards helping learners produce quality write-ups. The current research investigation is also a response to the growing need to support research efforts devoted to grounded reports of research and discussions that may contribute to the current understandings of issues and problems about writing as a form of communication (Myles, 2002). Hence, this time, focusing on writer's block experiences and the assessment of learners' quality of writing on the basis of easability and readability, respectively.

The conduct of a language research slanted towards second language writing, with writer's block and writing quality as variables highlighted, was therefore sought in this study. Its objectives focused on looking into the blocking experiences of 10th-grade ESL learners in accomplishing different writing tasks, and on analyzing the levels of easability and readability of the essays they produced using a readily available online

computational tool. Implications for the teaching of L2 writing and strategies inclusion to reduce writer's block and improve learners' ability to write could be drawn from the results given. Specifically, the study was conducted to reveal the frequency of 10th grade learners' experiences of writer's block in terms of blocking, lateness, premature editing, strategies for complexity, and attitudes and to gauge the levels of easability and readability of their essays using narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, deep cohesion, and Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability as linguistic indices. In addition, this study endeavored to determine the relationship between the writer's block experiences of 10th-grade ESL learners and the levels of easability and readability of their essays.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational design. Descriptive statistics were determined in order to describe the responses of the ESL learners towards writer's block, and on the analysis of the levels of easability and readability of the essays written. On the one hand, correlational research was dealt with in identifying the degree of relationship that exists between the two main variables, writer's block experiences and writing quality of the ESL learners.

Research Instruments

In this empirical investigation, two main instruments were utilized in order to describe how often 10th-grade ESL learners experienced writer's block and to qualify the levels of easability and readability of the essays analyzed. The first one was the Questionnaire on Identifying Writer's Block (QIWB) designed by Rose (1984). The QIWB is a standardized survey-questionnaire used to identify the presence of writer's block among students. The second research instrument was an online computational tool, the Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A., developed by McNamara, Louwerse, Cai, and Graesser (2013), which measures text easability and readability using five linguistic characteristics: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, deep cohesion, and one readability formula, the Flesch-Kincaid grade level

readability to further describe texts' levels of comprehensibility.

Respondents

A total of 55 10th-grade English as a Second Language (ESL) learners participated in the study. More specifically, they came from a homogeneous class from one of the resettlement secondary schools in Tarlac Province, the Philippines. The purposive sampling technique was employed because as students from an A-class, they are often given writing tasks and language learning activities relevant to many language concepts that they need to concretize through writing.

Data-Gathering Procedure

Both the Questionnaire on Identifying Writer's Block (QIWB) and a writing task was administered to the respondents. A total of 15 minutes was given to complete the survey-questionnaire. The writing task was intended for a unit lesson in grade 10 English in which the expected output was a descriptive essay about *leadership*. The lesson further featured the life story of one of the former cabinet secretaries in the Philippines known for his *tsinelas leadership* (slippers leadership).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used for the study. Mean scores with corresponding verbal descriptions were computed in order to look into the responses and scores of the learners numerically. The degree of relationship that exists between the two variables was calculated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The use of Microsoft Excel Program facilitated all statistical calculations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Writer's Block Experiences of 10th-Grade ESL Learners

Five determining factors were used to measure the level of writer's block the respondents had prior to the administration of the writing task. The subscales include blocking, lateness, premature editing, strategies for complexity, and attitudes towards writing, which constitute a combination of both attitudinal and cognitive dimensions in identifying the presence of writer's block among writers.

Table 1. Summary of the ESL learners' writer's block experiences

Writer's Block Subscales	Mean	Verbal Description
Blocking	3.61	Often True
Lateness	3.03	Sometimes True
Premature Editing	3.56	Often True
Strategies for Complexity	3.41	Sometimes True
Attitudes	3.24	Sometimes True
GRAND	3.37	Sometimes True

The table reveals that from among the subscales of writer's block, blocking was most frequently experienced by the ESL learners, followed by premature editing, strategies for complexity, attitudes, and lastly, lateness. Overall, the summary provides for the finding that writer's block is "sometimes experienced" by the 10th-grade level ESL learners when accomplishing a given L2 writing task.

As a writing phenomenon, blocking is said to affect the process by which learners tend to get started in writing. Learners' experiences on blocking may be a manifestation of the anxiety they feel through negative or difficult experiences with writing. When blocking occurs, students get stuck and find it difficult to go on with their writing (The Writing Center, 2014). The respondents of the current study may have developed apprehension towards writing that contributed to their frequent experience of writer's block. However, in the study of Sommers (1980), the process of revising and editing, which is prevalent in the blocking phenomenon, was regarded by the respondents as writing strategies. For instance, the students in the study reported that they scratch out and go over their

work often. They read what they write and cross out a word and put another word that is more decent and adjudged as more acceptable than the previous one. Meanwhile, the result of the present study is consistent with that of Zorbaz (2015) when the researcher found that approximately 94% of faculty of education freshmen students who served as respondents said that they struggle with writer's block on at least a semi-regular basis.

Easability and Readability of the 10th-Grade ESL Learners' Essays

One of the objectives of the present study was to provide a clear picture of the levels of easability and readability of the essays written by the respondents using an online computational tool, the Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A. The two measures therefore lead to the description of writing quality. Analysis of the said essays was based on five components and one readability formula—narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, deep cohesion, and the Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability formula, respectively. The following table provides illustration of the extent of easability and readability of the ESL learners' essays.

Table 2. Easability and readability levels of ESL learners' essays

Text Easability and Readability Components	Mean	Description
Narrativity	74.34	High
Syntactic Simplicity	29.40	Low
Word Concreteness	19.34	Very Low
Referential Cohesion	68.92	High
Deep Cohesion	75.24	High
Flesch Kincaid Grade Level	11.66	

Overall, owing to the measures of easability and readability of the essays analyzed, it can be deduced that since three of the five components were effectively satisfied—narrativity, deep cohesion, and referential cohesion—the written outputs relatively possessed easability. When it comes to the general level of readability, the essays were collectively challenging or difficult to comprehend by their intended readers who should have the same level of reading ability, similar to that of a 10th-grade learner. Also, the fact that the respondents produced complex syntactic structures in their essays and less concrete words, high levels of easability and readability, respectively, could not be fully achieved.

Slightly similar results could be drawn from the study of Lei, Man, and Ting (2015) on the analysis of the writing skills of third-year and fourth-year curriculum students. The researchers concluded, using the same online computation tool, Coh-Metrix, that fourth-year curriculum students tend to write less complex and temporal sentences as compared to the third-year curriculum students. However, the analysis also showed that the younger group of respondents worked better in developing referential/deep/verb cohesion relationships in their

essays. Hence, there is a need to train further fourth-year curriculum students on how to improve the way they present logical ideas in their essays as part and parcel of textual cohesion.

The same result was documented from the study of Xu and Liu (2016) when they also found that students majoring in Chemistry produced more mechanic errors, sentence complexity, and less cohesive ideas at the paragraph level, compared to English major students. On the one hand, the result of the present study may suggest that the 10th-grade ESL learners could be trained on how to make their sentences more straightforward, and at the same time, even more comprehensive through trimming down the number of unnecessary words they use and striking a balance between the use of abstract and concrete words to represent ideas in their essays.

Correlation between Writer's Block and Levels of Easability and Readability of 10th-Grade ESL Learners' Essays

A test of correlation was done in order to identify whether or not the confusion, uncertainty, problems with organization, anxiety or fear that contribute to the occurrence of writer's block have a significant relationship with the quality of essays written by the

ESL learners. The following table illustrates the result of the test of correlation.

Table 3. Correlation between writer's block and levels of easability and readability of ESL learners' essays

Writer's Block Subscales and Easability and Readability Measures		Narrativity	Syntactic Simplicity	Word Concreteness	Referential Cohesion	Deep Cohesion
Blocking	Pearson Correlation	.038	.176	-.019	-.124	-.148
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.780	.198	.893	.368	.280
	N	55	55	55	55	55
Lateness	Pearson Correlation	-.057	.234	-.300*	-.002	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.679	.085	.026	.991	.942
	N	55	55	55	55	55
Premature Editing	Pearson Correlation	-.083	.159	-.005	-.059	-.338*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.549	.246	.971	.668	.012
	N	55	55	55	55	55
Strategies for Complexity	Pearson Correlation	.126	-.014	-.057	.062	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.360	.916	.679	.651	.968
	N	55	55	55	55	55
Attitudes	Pearson Correlation	.172	-.022	-.194	.176	.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.211	.876	.156	.199	.745
	N	55	55	55	55	55

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The correlation matrix shows that generally, the subscales of writer's block such as blocking, lateness, premature editing, strategies for complexity, and attitudes, were negligibly correlated with the components of text easability and readability. Simply put, the experiences of 10th-grade ESL learners on writer's block do not significantly relate to the overall quality of their essays, measured on the basis of easability and readability.

The given data further provide justifications that writing quality, measured through readability and easability as indices, may not be strongly influenced by writer's block as a cognitive phenomenon. There could be other factors or governing variables that interplay with the quality of written outputs produced by the learners in the second language context. For instance, extensive exposure to the English language itself and the writers' more years of exposure to literacy skills such as reading and writing, makes them achieve enhanced writing performance (Nik, Hamzah, & Rafidee, 2010). In the EFL context, Kobayashi and Rinnert (2001) concluded in their study that both English proficiency and writing experience were significantly related to the essay revision performance of university students. While there are no ample studies that would suffice the inquiry presented in the current investigation about the possible relationship between writer's block and writing quality; still, literature in writing instruction would argue that attitudes play a crucial role in building learners' motivation and performance towards this productive language skill (Wolcott & Buhr, 1987). Since attitudes are one subscale of

writer's block, it could be adjudged that it is one of the governing factors that influence learners' performance in writing.

On the contrary, a number of language research studies that slightly scratched the idea of the influence of blocking experiences on L2 writing were conducted. In the investigation of the correlates to the writing performance of L2 writers, Chu (2012) found that learners who performed poorly in writing were prone to executing writing strategies related to the surface level of checking. This may condense the idea that surface editing and other premature editing practices negatively influence the level of deep cohesion measured in texts written. However, in the present study, the said degree of correlation was apparently weak. Significantly, Lee (2005) underscored that writer's block tends to inhibit writing performance along with writing apprehension. However, when statistical tests were conducted, it was revealed that it was only free reading that predicted writing performance and not so much with writer's block. The present study also documented a relatively similar finding, since the majority of the subscales of writer's block do not significantly relate to the levels of easability and readability of the essays written. Though correlations were found to be weak, Alnufaie and Grenfell (2013) assert that the most stressful strategies were those that promote lack of generating ideas, the care about accuracy, and meeting teacher's expectations. This may mean that factors relevant to writer's block may influence writing quality, though correlating the entire subscales of writer's block per se may not yield the

same level of relationship when compared with other subscales treated and correlated individually.

Two exceptions, however, can be gleaned from the test of relationship between writer's block and writing quality. The highlighted figures represent the pairs of variables that have low but still significant relationship. These are lateness and word concreteness (-.300*) and premature editing and deep cohesion (-.338*), respectively, using 0.05 level of significance. Specifically, the two pairs represent a negative correlation—that is, an inverse relationship between the variables exists. An increase in the occurrence of lateness significantly (though at a weaker extent) leads to the decrease in the possibility of writing more concrete words. This is consistent with the relatively low level of word concreteness from the essays written by the 10th-grade ESL learners. On the one hand, the more the learners practice premature editing, the lower is the level of deep cohesion. The weak correlation between the previously mentioned variables is apparent from the result of the descriptive statistics since the descriptive data would tell that overall, the level of deep cohesion of learners' essays was high. Hence, the frequently occurring premature editing practices of the learners do not significantly influence their use of connectives in their essays.

One of the many writing issues that hampers writing performance of learners is their utter procrastination when faced with any writing task. This is relevant with what the current study presents as part of its findings, since lateness is weakly but significantly correlated with word concreteness in reference to the written outputs of the respondents. In an article written about procrastination in writing, it was described that lateness leaves L2 writers stressed, overwhelmed, and interestingly, write subpar papers (College of the Sequoias, 2015). Apparently, premature editing also contributes to less appreciable writing outputs, for such practice is common among less skilled L2 writers. As reported by Smagorinsky (2006), less skilled L2 writers would edit and revise more frequently and would focus more on lexis, syntax, spelling, and punctuation. This is precisely different from the writing practices of more skilled L2 writers who spend less time revisiting their outputs. As such, instances cited would support the findings presented in the current study, wherein both lateness and premature editing negatively relate to two essential characteristics of writing quality—word concreteness and deep cohesion.

CONCLUSION

This study puts forward an empirical investigation concerning writer's block and how it influences the levels of easability and readability of essays written by 10th-grade ESL learners. The following conclusions may be drawn from the study.

First, blocking phenomenon when it comes to writing, actually exists. Hence, a finding that is in congruence with the assertions made by different researchers such as Bergler (1950) who tried to disprove fallacious arguments about the existence of writer's block. In his *The Writer and Psychoanalysis*, the author denotes writer's block as a neurotic inhibition of productivity in creative writers. Bergler (1950) further describes it as a neurotic disease. As evidenced by the results of the study, the 10th-grade ESL learners reported that they do acknowledge the possible occurrence of writer's block and that majority of the subscales featured were often and sometimes experienced, respectively.

Second, language instructors are given more avenues to look into the quality of writing outputs produced by learners, for instance, through analyzing the linguistic features of their essays leading to two crucial textual elements—easability and readability. One way of improving the writing skills of the learners is to scaffold them towards coming up with writings that do not incur “cost-benefit” on the part of intended readers (Nielsen, 2015).

Responding to the foregoing imperatives, significant features of online computational tools such as those of the Coh-Metrix T.E.R.A. could facilitate textual analyses better, the tool that was primarily used to measure the levels of easability and readability of learners' essays in the present study.

The aforesaid computational tool is reliable enough to be utilized since it provides explicit representations of linguistic elements found in a given text. As asserted by Iliev, Dehghani, and Sagi (2014), the constant increase of computational power and the wide availability of textual data will inevitably make automated text analysis a standard tool for researchers and psychologists.

Third, results of the study would support previous findings that writer's block may not be entirely considered as a good predictor of the levels of easability and readability of learners' essays, more specifically, of the influence it gives on the quality of writing. Though writer's block was reported to inhibit potentially the writing performance of writers, its influence on writing quality may not be entirely captured through correlational tests as depicted in the study of Lee (2005).

Finally, the results embedded in this study may not adequately represent both quantitative and qualitative descriptions about writer's block, text easability and readability, and the association that exists between the two research variables. Thus, there is a need to increase the number of respondents and extend research population encompassing university level and graduate level students, prospective subjects who are regularly given more complex, extensive writing tasks.

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