



## Second Language Academic Writing: A Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Pedagogical Practices in Senior High School

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## **Abstract**

Education practitioners such as teachers play an imperative role in translating learning among students and understanding their belief systems and practices is central in the reshaping of educational policy and instructional practice. This study employed a case study design to explore teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices in teaching second language (L2) academic writing in the context of senior high school. Two purposively selected teachers who were teaching academic writing courses in a polytechnic school in the Philippines participated in the study. Drawing from semi-structured interviews, the study revealed that the teacher participants held complex belief systems about the nature of writing and the process of teaching academic writing. While the participants shared a variety of beliefs about L2 academic writing, findings from non-participatory classroom observations showed that they tended to adhere strictly to these beliefs when enacting classroom instructions. Moreover, the participants indicated that time, class schedule, class size and school facilities were among the factors that constrained them from translating their beliefs into instructional practices. The study has practical implications to L2 writing pedagogy. Recommendations for future research are also discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Beliefs, Pedagogical Practices, Academic Writing, Senior High School

## **1. Introduction**

The increasingly globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century continues to grow by leaps and bounds and education has to be recalibrated in order to meet the rising needs of the workplace for students who soon would-be professionals. Suwaed (2011) notes that the most crucial role of all if one talks about meeting the demands of the global market today is perhaps that of English teacher for English language is “the language of science, technology and communication” (p.11). In the Philippines, although English language has gained high prestige over the past few years (Global English, 2012), there remains strong controversy regarding the status of Filipino students as second language (L2) learners. According to Lasala (2014), writing skills of Filipino secondary senior students were significantly lower as compared to their oral abilities though both skills were found to be within the bounds of being acceptable. This finding was observed in all four linguistic components of English language such as grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. In

addition, a more recent study by Pablo and Lasaten (2018) revealed that Filipino Grade 11 Senior High School (SHS) students are experiencing difficulties in all areas in writing academic essays. The preponderance of students' difficulty was attributed to the lack of variety of ideas, lack of connectives, incorrect word usage, poor sentence constructions and lack of citations. Still, Filipino college students are weak in writing and most of them embody negative attitudes towards writing (Hernandez, Amarles & Raymundo, 2017).

The new K to 12 curriculum in the Philippine educational system is espoused to develop students' skills holistically. For English language education, the curriculum framework focuses on the full development of communicative competence and multiliteracies of the students (see K to 12 Curriculum Guide-English, 2013). A number of important principles that constitute effective teaching of language arts and multiliteracies emphasize developing communicative competence and critical literacy, drawing on informational texts and multimedia in order to build academic vocabulary and strong content knowledge, emphasizing writing arguments, explanatory/informative texts and narratives, providing explicit skill instruction in reading and writing (K to 12 Curriculum Guide-English, 2013, p. 4).

It can be argued that writing as one of the macro skills owns a prime spot in the teaching and learning of English language in the Philippines. In fact, at the senior high school level which is the new 2-year addition into the basic education, several writing subjects such as English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP), Reading and Writing, Research in Daily Life, and Practical Research are required of students to complete before they can graduate. Saladino (2009) pointed out that writing in English is crucial in the total growth of literacy education and communicative skills among Filipino learners. More often than not, the ability to write paves the way to student's academic success. In fact, "writing has become a requirement in civic life and in the global community" (Pablo and Lasaten, 2018, p. 47). However, writing in a language that is distinct from one's native tongue can be a challenging task to the many, especially the Filipino learners where English is considered as a second language (Myles, 2002). Writing is a highly complex process because it entails a myriad of skills. Beyond work of cognition, writing is an intricate mental construction requiring "careful thought, discipline and concentration" Grami (2010, p. 9).

Remarkably, teaching writing becomes even more difficult for teachers who are not even writers themselves. According to Griffiths (2008), in a context where there is little immersion to

the target language, the role of the writing teachers is the most challenging one. These said, writing teachers play a critical role in determining students' successes and failures in their academic endeavors. Hence, an exploratory study into what beliefs teachers hold about L2 academic writing and whether these teachers' beliefs are realized through their instructional practices is instrumental in strengthening the teaching of academic writing in the senior high school. The findings of this study hope to bring in useful insights necessary for classroom teachers, education practitioners, and curriculum developers to design informed instructional decisions and sound teaching practices for the continuous improvement of quality education. In addition, the study will enrich existing body of knowledge in the field of second language teaching which education specialists from other contexts may find relevant and useful.

## **2. Research Objectives**

This study explores senior high school teachers' beliefs in teaching L2 academic writing and the extent to which these beliefs are translated into actual teaching practices. The research also attempts to look at factors influencing these ESL teachers in putting their beliefs into classroom practices. Specifically, answers are sought on the following research objectives:

1. determine beliefs senior high school teachers hold about teaching L2 academic writing;
2. assess the extent to which teachers' beliefs correspond to their pedagogical practices; and
3. ascertain factors that constrain the teachers when translating their beliefs into pedagogical practices.

## **3. Literature Review**

### ***3.1. The Concept of Teacher Beliefs***

Research into teachers' beliefs in language teaching has been flourishing for the past few decades. However, the notion of belief as a term is still relatively confusing (Savasci-Acikalin, 2009). Pajares (1992) noted that the term belief is one of the most difficult construct to define because it "does not lend itself to empirical investigations (p.308)". Borg (2003) characterizes beliefs as part of "teacher cognition" referring to "the unobservable cognitive dimensions of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think (p.81)." Beliefs are "complex, inter-related system of often tacitly held theories, values and assumptions that the teacher deems to be true, and which serve as cognitive filters that interpret new experiences and guide the teacher's thoughts

and behavior” (Mohamed, 2006, p.20). In addition, Pajares (1992) pointed out that beliefs are some kind of hidden characteristics that are revealed only through one’s words and actions.

### ***3.2. Teachers’ Beliefs and Classroom Practices in Language Teaching***

Teacher beliefs have been steadily found to have a profound impact on instructional decisions (Borg, 1998, 2003; Borg & Phipps, 2007, Farrell and Lim, 2005; Kuzborska, 2011). Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, and Thwaite (2001) accentuated that these beliefs are indispensable as they “influence how the teacher orchestrates the interaction between learner, teacher, and subject matter in a particular classroom context with particular resources” (p. 473). In a case study of an experienced and a novice English language teachers, Farrell and Bennis (2013) have shown strong evidence of language teachers holding certain teaching beliefs which are not always realized in the classroom. They indicated that teaching practices of an experienced teacher were more clearly correlated to his beliefs as compared to the novice one. Nurusus, Samad, Rahman, Noordin and Rashid (2015) through a quantitative inquiry support this result noting that years of teaching experience is a factor with strong influence over the beliefs of teaching grammar. In particular, they found out that teachers with less than 7 years of teaching experience put a little importance on feedback giving to students and foster language production.

Suárez Flórez, and Basto Basto (2017) explore the relevance of pre-service teachers’ beliefs about teaching EFL and their potential changes. The results disclosed that most of the pre-service teachers’ beliefs changed once they faced the reality of the classroom teachings. On reflecting language teaching practice in polytechnic schools in Malaysia, Abdullah and Majid (2013) concluded that perception towards students is a primary source which shapes the language teaching practice of the experienced English lecturers. The authors also indicated that this striking finding could be related to the fact that polytechnic students’ language proficiency is low and that teachers need to take extra efforts in order to respond to the needs of such kind of students.

A case study in Hawaii by Yoshihara (2012) reveals some insightful findings about teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices. The study unveiled that, although the participants hold different teaching beliefs, they share one in common, that is, meeting students’ demands and needs. These teachers’ beliefs were found to have been shaped by their life experiences including class status, learning experiences, teaching experiences, and mentors. Khonamri and Salimi’s (2010) investigation on the interplay between EFL high school teachers' beliefs and their instructional

practices regarding reading strategies in Iran pointed out that teachers recognized the significant role reading strategies play in reading comprehension and that it is essential to teach reading strategies in reading classes. In addition, Farrel and Yang (2017) by exploring one female English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teacher in the context of teaching speaking have witnessed convergence of beliefs and classroom practices. Like what previous studies have shown, however, occasions where teaching beliefs diverge with practices were also discovered. Reasons for the occurrence of divergence were attributed to the programme prospects, the need to sustain the instructional flow of the class, and the novice teacher's insufficiency of teaching experiences in an EAP programme.

### ***3.3. Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices in L2 Academic Writing***

Studies inquiring teachers' beliefs in various fields of applied linguistics and English language teaching has provided us with a key understanding of classroom realities, successes and failures. However, as Borg (2003) pointed out, more research into teachers' beliefs has leaned towards native contexts, not to mention areas like speaking and writing have not been the subject of scrutiny until recently.

In a case study in Ethiopia by Melketo (2012), mismatch between university teachers' stated beliefs and classroom practices evidenced due to certain contextual factors such as class time, students' expectations, teaching the test rather than teaching the subject and focusing on classroom management concerns. Suwaed (2011) in her Libyan investigation displayed a number of interesting findings regarding teachers' cognition and classroom instructions in teaching writing. Main findings unearthed that culture plays an integral part in the way teachers know, believe, and think about teaching writing. Al-bakri (2015) embarked on a case study of EFL teachers' beliefs, practices, and challenges focused on written corrective feedback (WCF) and found that both teachers' general beliefs about life and their educational beliefs have impact on their WCF practices. Similarly, teachers' beliefs about their role as teachers, teaching and learning and their students were discovered to be factors affecting their WCF practices.

In addition, Shi, Baker and Chen (2017) from a systemic functional lens with emphasis on informed genre approach to improve Chinese students' writing communicative competence disclosed that professional training in Systemic Functional Linguistics genre pedagogy carries a positive impact towards teachers' cognition about teaching writing among six Chinese College

English teachers. Applying ethnographic qualitative method, Wu and Hung (2011) on examining a teacher's beliefs in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course has proposed a framework for EAP teaching practice and a circular model addressing important phases and components which emerged from teacher's beliefs. The framework incorporates five elements: instructional foci, scaffolding, in-class learning activities, corporate learning cycle, and evaluation with three major focal points: critical thinking, academic writing, and thesis writing. Yang and Gao's (2013) investigation of four experienced EFL writing teachers in China has pointed out notable findings about the link between beliefs and practices in teaching writing. Specifically, they saw consistency in three teachers as regards beliefs and practices in writing instruction although one teacher was found out to have some degree of inconsistency between his beliefs and instructional practices.

#### ***3.4. Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices in the Philippine L2 Contexts***

In the Philippines, research into L2 teachers' beliefs and classroom practices has been scarce until recently. Gutierrez (2004) explored the case of one secondary school teacher as regards the interplay of beliefs and classroom practices. As a result, she saw consistency in what the teacher holds as her beliefs and in what she demonstrates as her instructional practices. For instance, the use of Socratic method (patiently leading students to the discovery of the answers) by the teacher in the teaching-learning process approves her belief that learning is self-discovery. In 2010, Barrot investigates the teaching beliefs and practices of five experienced ESL teachers. She found out that although there are consistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices, some degree of divergence was observed. For example, two teacher participants in the study were aware and agreed to the existence of multiliteracy but failed to practice it in their respective classrooms. Another distinguishing divergence was that all the teachers confirmed that they were fully aware and agreed to the notion of differentiation and reflective learning, but then failed to execute them in the actual classroom situations. In connection, Maestre (2016) uncovered that there are discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practices in using the CLT approach. For example, the teachers claim that they employ CLT; however, their beliefs about CLT when asked do not conform to CLT principles. Consequently, this ambiguity resulted in teachers providing activities unrelated to CLT approach.

Meanwhile, Zipagan and Batang (2011) through a quantitative investigation of secondary ESL teachers' belief systems and practices yield some useful findings emphasizing that both

teachers' beliefs on the use of the learners' mother tongue and relating to the learners' culture significantly affect their practice use of it when performing certain classroom tasks. In addition, they uncovered that most English teachers give priority to locally-produced materials; however, the employment of learning activities established on English-speaking countries was found to be beneficial and important in the teaching and learning process in the Philippines.

Applying a mixed-method approach, Cirocki and Caparoso (2016) indicated that Filipino ESL teachers hold various beliefs about motivating learners to read in second language. Among these beliefs include creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom, challenging students to love reading through provision of reading materials with high difficulty, allowing students to read a wide array of texts that are interesting, etc. Lastly, Gabinete (2017) exposed that access to technology and availability of instructional materials may also prove to be crucial factors in helping teachers to teach and assess the mentioned skill. The study ended with an urgent call to reinforce school or government support in order to take viewing comprehension in basic education to the next level in order to meet the growing demands of the 21st century.

Nonetheless, little if any studies are available in the Philippine contexts which can provide clear reference to teachers' beliefs and classroom practices as regards L2 academic writing. Hence, an exploration on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in L2 academic writing is indispensable to provide deeper understanding on the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. If we are to develop and strengthen skills in English especially in the light of the K to 12 curriculum, then considering expanding research focus in second language teaching is imperative since good teaching practices are guided with theories that are based empirically.

## **4. Methodology**

### ***4.1. Research Design***

This study applied a qualitative research method to explore senior high school teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in L2 academic writing. An exploratory case study was employed as a qualitative research design in this paper. The use of exploratory case study in this research could be effective since the researchers attempted to provide the in-depth analysis of one or more cases (Creswell, 2014). In addition, the employment of a case study as a design in this study proves to be beneficial because description and explanation are sought rather than prediction based



on cause and effect (Merriam, 1988, as cited in, Faizah, 2008). This type of approach enables the researcher to venture into the data gathering without any pre-established instruments (Clark & Creswell, 2010) and discover the individual's experiences in reference to desired topics (Faizah, 2008) which provide multiple sources of data being gathered to meet the objectives of the study.

#### ***4.2.Participants and Sampling***

A convenience sampling technique was employed in selecting the subjects for the study. Dörnyei (2007) defined convenience sampling as a variant of non-probability sampling in which members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study when certain practical criteria such as accessibility, geographical proximity or the willingness to participate are met. Moreover, “captive audiences such as students in the researchers’ own institution are prime examples of convenience sampling” (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, this sampling strategy was favored in order to obtain an in-depth description of a focused individual in a population (Clark & Creswell, 2010). The subjects of the study were two English as Second Language (ESL) teachers teaching L2 academic writing courses at the senior high school in a polytechnic school in Pasig city, Philippines. In order to protect participants’ identity, pseudonyms, Maria and Brenda were assigned. During the time of the study, Maria was teaching Practical Research I-Qualitative Research Writing while Brenda was teaching Practical Research II-Quantitative Research Writing.

#### ***4.3.Data Collection***

The data gathering was conducted during second semester of the academic year 2017-2018. Collection of data from the participants lasted for about 30 days through semi-structured interviews and non-participatory classroom observations. Semi-structured interview is an extremely useful tool for researchers who are scrutinizing areas that are familiar to them (Dörnyei, 2007). Non-participatory observations are preferred to participatory because they are unobtrusive (Creswell, 2013). Both the interviews and the observations were audio-taped using an A1416 iPad and a Core i3 Lenovo laptop. Classroom observations were conducted on a random basis a week after the interviews. Two classes of different sections held by each participant were observed. In addition, the researchers kept field notes during each classroom observation in order to ensure that the participants’ teaching practices are completely captured.

#### ***4.4. Instrumentation***

The primary research instrument was an interview questionnaire developed by the researchers after reviewing related studies on teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching academic writing. The interview guide underwent validation by 3 experts in the field of languages and research. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part entails the participants' demographic profile. The second part is the interview questionnaire itself where 10 specific questions regarding academic writing, feedback practices, previous writing experiences, and instructional practices are listed. There were 15 questions initially and after the validation process, only 10 interview questions were retained. The other 5 questions were removed due to validity reasons.

#### ***4.5. Data Analysis***

Data were analyzed through transcription and coding. First, the researchers transcribed all interview data word for word. Then, they coded the data in order to identify recurring themes under each category. To determine the extent to which teachers' beliefs match with classroom practices as regards teaching academic writing, they transcribed data taken from classroom observations, identified recurring topics and analyzed them together with the themes identified in the interviews. The researchers referred their data analysis on classroom observations to the field notes made. In so doing, they could guarantee strong evidence to back up an underlying theme in order to ensure that the study obtains the highest level of accuracy due to the findings being drawn from multiple sources of information (Clark & Creswell, 2010). Furthermore, the interpretations of data were referred back to the participants for their perusal of the truthfulness thus ensuring internal validity of the present study (Clark & Creswell, 2010).

### **5. Results and Discussion**

#### ***5.1. Teachers' Stated Beliefs in Teaching L2 Academic Writing***

The primary objective of this study is to explore teachers' beliefs in teaching academic writing. From the summary of the interview transcripts, several recurring themes are identified.

### 5.1.1. Teachers holding similar views about the nature of teaching academic writing

During the interviews, the participants generally expressed quite parallel views about the nature of academic writing and the process of teaching it. They recognized that teaching academic writing is a complex process as it entails a composite of skills.

*Well, teaching academic writing is a...a very complex process, in terms of you, as a teacher, you know how to strategize effectively in terms of the lessons that you will be teaching inside the classroom and...of course...this is writing....(Brenda)*

*Well, for me, academic writing is not just one skill but it is a collection of skills, so meaning to say, if you are going to teach academic writing, you also need to hone their critical thinking skill... so simply collection of skills. (Maria)*

Notably, both the participants approved that teaching academic writing is a multifaceted skill where teachers should help students not only to write but also develop other skills necessary for writing. This finding lends support to cognitive model of writing by Flower and Hayes (1980) and Hayes and Flower (1980) which describes writing as an intricate phenomenon holding three separate components, i.e. writer's long-term memory, task environment and writing process. This is also consistent with Grami's study (2010) which underscored that writing is more than just work of cognition but a complicated psychological construction that needs "careful thought, discipline and concentration" (p. 9). If writing is a difficult task to do, then teaching academic writing becomes even more difficult for teachers who are assumed to play two important roles at the same time, being the writer and the teacher

### 5.1.2. Learners' motivation influencing teachers' academic writing instruction

One of the recurring themes that this study found is concerning how learners' needs and motivations play crucial role in determine instructional success. The participants stated that they use different means to build on their students' needs and motivate them to write.

*I personally believe my students are good when it comes to writing but they are not motivated enough. So, what I do is I would let them watch videos and write something about what they've watched. I found this effective in motivating them. (Maria)*

*I see them differently, I need to handle first their abilities, and their, ah, readiness in terms of writing academic genres, especially with persuasive essay. I really have to think of ways on how I could be able to attach the lessons into real-life scenarios, like for example, ahmm, societal issues like martial law, ah, social media....(Brenda)*

Interestingly, this finding connects with Nargis' recent study (2018) which concluded that teacher's belief in students can "diagnose the learners' needs to master the foreign language..., develop a good atmosphere environment in teaching and many kind of teaching strategies...and determine the right teaching strategies by looking at the students difficulties" (p. 63). The use of instructional videos in language classroom is also consistent with Baratta and Jones' (2008) study where they discovered that the use of films can arouse students' interests and help them learn to write effectively. The impact of using moving image in the writing classroom also links to the research conducted by Burn and Leach (2004) noting how stimulating moving pictures can be in classrooms increased literacy. The idea of connecting lessons to real-life situations like what Brenda does substantiates Whitaker's (2012) claim, "when students write about issues, needs, problems, or subjects they find important and relevant to their lives, we {teachers} improve the odds for their engagement, as well as the likelihood that they will strive to write well" (p. 4).

In addition, Brenda shared "I really have to engross more of how efficient or how effective, ahmm, approaches in writing should be... in a particular way that I could be able to motivate them as well that they can also write as best as they could". As writing can be a daunting task to many students, teachers' strategies in handling writing classes are important in keeping students motivated to write. Lopez (2010) stresses out that teachers must be mindful of the students' needs to foster favorable learning experiences which transport a sense of belonging. Keeping track with students' needs not only provides relevant learning experiences to students but also guarantees success in meeting the learning outcomes.

### *5.1.3. Teachers' written corrective feedback heightening learners' motivation towards writing*

Feedback plays a crucial role in improving writing skills among L2 learners (Magno & Amarles, 2011). Of note is that Brenda steadily provides valuable comments regardless of what outputs her students submitted. She shared that students are always excited to hear something about their work from their teacher so she would indicate 'see me', 'very good', or 'talk to me' on students' papers. According to Brenda, whether her students' outputs are desirable or not, it is always important to let them know that their works are being valued. Similarly, Maria regards feedback as a powerful tool in enhancing students' writing proficiency. She revealed that her

students love to read encouraging words and they love to be corrected. The viability of feedback in writing is well documented by Ferris (1999). The author endorses that feedback has a tremendous effect on students' writing abilities. Furthermore, the finding also provides strong support to a recent study by Tee and Cheah (2016) which approves that feedback is essential in writing instruction, however, for it to be effective, feedback provided to students should be "clear, timely and loaded with information regarding their writing performance." (p. 100).

#### *5.1.4. Teachers' previous writing experiences shaping their beliefs in teaching L2 writing*

Maria stated that she was a senior writer of her school paper during college and currently taking her master's degree where she does a lot of paper work. Her passion towards writing is a result of the many strategies she learned as a student. Maria hinted that for successful writing, it is indispensable that one familiarizes the rudiments of language. During the interview, she also shared that she loves reading grammar books. Apart from this, Maria also pinpointed how reading stories can be a tremendous help in enhancing her writing. Meanwhile, Brenda shared that she is an experienced writer of various genre as she was also immersed in writing during her college days since she was an English major student. Her professors would task them with numerous writing activities—both academic and creative which allowed her to further enhance her writing skills. She also noted that she was able to publish her undergraduate thesis because she said she was given enough exposure how to write effective academic paper. Both of them insinuated that, as teachers, it is essential to share her personal write ups with students. Whitaker (2012) notes that teachers, being writers may have the advantage in empathizing with students about their experiences in writing. Undoubtedly, this finding clearly advances Borg' (2003) claim that teachers' experiences as learners can inform cognitions about teaching and learning.

#### *5.1.5. Writing teachers playing different roles in L2 writing instruction*

As to the role they play in L2 writing instruction, the participants expressed different stance. Maria stressed that her role in her writing classes is more of a facilitator. She stated all her students have potentials in terms of writing, and she is there only to guide them through to unleash those potentials. On the contrary, Brenda underscored that she plays as a coach in her writing classes. She emphasized that she motivates her students, speaks with them personally, and coaches them what to do even if it means failures or successes. The difference in the roles Maria and Brenda

play in their writing classroom may probably have been established by their previous experiences as language learners who once were student writers, their educational backgrounds and professional trainings. In Borg's (2003) Teacher Cognition Framework, it is outlined that schooling and professional coursework are two vital components that can possibly impact teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Additionally, Gabinite (2017) echoed that teachers' early education influenced Filipino teachers' ability to assess students' viewing skills.

#### 5.1.6. *'One size does not fit all' or 'no best' strategy in teaching L2 academic writing*

The participants regard the principle of learning which states that students learn in different ways.

*There is no best strategy in terms of teaching writing or academic writing in particular. First of all, ah, you need to know the students' level, their abilities and their motivation in writing. Since I'm teaching in polytechnic school and most of the students are not very well versed in terms of academics, so I really have to engross more of how efficient or how effective, hmm, approaches in writing should be. (Brenda)*

*Just like what I said before, one size does not fit all...so, I'm applying different strategies...For example, to Automotive students...So...I need to speak slowly for them to understand our topic and the repetition...it's very important...the repetition. (Maria)*

From the statements above, it can be seen how much the participants recognize students' needs and learning styles. The concept of 'one size does not fit all' by Maria or 'no best strategy' by Brenda in teaching academic writing resides in Tomlinson's (1999) differentiated instruction. Ferguson, Tilleczek, Boydell, Rummens, Cote and Roth-Edney (2005) show that, "when teachers recognize diversity in their students, in terms of how and what they identify with and how they learn, and when this recognition is reflected in how teachers teach, students are free to discover new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners." Each student is a unique individual and brings with him cultural identities which teachers need to address and if these cultural identities are not considered by teachers in their instructions, the students may feel unsupported and thus are unable to fully unleash their potentials. Also, providing customized instructions also allows for a wide variety of learning experiences for students which surely increase their creativity.

## ***5.2.The Interplay Between Teachers’ Stated Beliefs and Pedagogical Practices***

The second research problem that the study attempted to seek answers is the extent to which teachers’ stated beliefs influence their classroom practices. Data from classroom observations reflected teachers’ actual writing instructions which may provide pragmatic evidence to support or disavow their stated beliefs.

### ***5.2.1. Maria’s Teachers’ Beliefs and Pedagogical Practices***

From the two classes the researchers observed, they noticed that Maria was being consistent in informing students of the learning targets for the day at the beginning of each session. She utilized PowerPoint presentation to deliver her lessons and her learning objectives were presented to the class through the slides. This practice is aligned with her belief, “I need to inform them {my students} about the importance of studying academic writing for them to also appreciate the subject itself.” Jones (2005) elucidates this point stating that the learning outcomes—the tasks students are assumed to accomplish—need to be clearly articulated to students in order to encourage them to be part of the learning process. The author notes that if we are to make students learn and achieve the goals, then two-way communication is imperative to unlock students’ potentials. In addition, Maria’s belief on motivating her students was reflected on the way she asked motive question at the beginning of the lesson.

*So, last time, we talked about the importance of research. Now, this is the question. As a student, what do you want to research on and why? Any volunteer? (Maria, observation #2)*

However, it should be noted that she did this part only to the second class the researchers observed, Grade 11 Automotive. As noted earlier during the interview, her Automotive students struggle to understand her and often find it effective to have instructions repeated. This variation in teaching technique approves her statement on the idea of ‘one size does not fit all’ teaching strategy. In a more practical sense, it illustrates how much she adheres to her belief about considering the nature of the students. Meanwhile, Maria integrated technology in her lessons through which she makes use of PowerPoint presentation every time she teaches (as far as my two observations). However, the researchers often found her reading the slides with very limited explanations she gave. Chesser (2012) on her paper “Can Technology Replace Teachers?” argues a teacher that while technology is an excellent apparatus to engross students effectively and

competently with information, it should be borne in mind that it by all means does not replace teachers.

In the two classes the researchers observed, Maria was having similar lesson on the introductory concept of research. As part of her strategies, Maria prepared asked her students to do role play presentation she had assigned the other day. The presentation covered the importance of research in students' daily lives and the students presented their work in groups. Although this is a qualitative research class, Maria showed how fun writing can be. This practice is undoubtedly tied to her testimonial that writing should be fun and engaging.

### 5.2.2. *Brenda's Beliefs and Pedagogical Practices*

Brenda holds a strong belief about creating a positive atmosphere before starting the class. During the two classes the researchers observed, they saw that Brenda set the mood of her students before she began her discussion by making them arrange their chairs, sitting up properly and requesting one student to lead the prayer for the whole class. On the first observation, Brenda proceeded to reviewing her students regarding the previous lesson after the preparation.

*Before I'll continue discussing our last topic, I'd like to have a quick recap on what we discussed last day. I think the last topic we had is all about levels of measurement. Now, who can give me the levels of measurement? (Brenda, observation #1)*

After the review, Brenda gave the class a short activity immediately where students were made to determine the levels of measurements expressed in each statement. This was an individualized activity. Providing personalized activity where students decide on their own without the help of their peers echoes Brenda's contention about addressing uniqueness of her individual students. However, Khan (2009) on her comparative study between group work and individual work in ESL classrooms opposes this practice who concluded that interaction is motivating for students, i.e. when students work in groups, they tend to gain confidence to think of what to express rather than how to express. Additionally, Wu and Hung (2011) supports this idea stating that dynamic classroom interactions among students encourage knowledge construction, ranging from critical awareness to underlying literacy.

On the second class observation, Brenda was introducing a new lesson, Sampling Techniques. She reminded the class of the deadline submission for their review of related literature. Then, Brenda went on discussing the lesson for the da. During the discussion, Brenda



drew out an example where students can entirely relate. She made use of the school's name and its total population and expound the process of drawing sample from there (see excerpt below).

*Let's say we have 1000 students in this school and we need to get a 333 sample out of that population. Now, for stratified random, we have strata. In this school, we have dual training system students, senior high school students, bachelor of technical teacher education students who are our strata and we will take sample from each stratum... (Brenda, observation #2)*

In this case, Brenda's account on the importance of providing topics where students see relevance and have direct application to real life situations is markedly mirrored. This incidence boils down to her belief on learners' motivation, a theme which she had reiterated earlier during the interview. Interestingly, this practice relates to what Theall (2004) stated, "*Applications of theoretical material in real-life situations make content easier to understand, and that the relevance of content is demonstrated by real-life examples*" (p. 1).

Moreover, for the whole time the researchers were observing, Brenda demonstrated positive appraisal towards students' verbal responses during class interaction. Although there researchers were unable to collect her students' outputs due to time constraints to see how she provides written feedback, this somehow provides an initial support to her assertion on positive feedback provision.

### ***5.3.Factors Constraining Teachers When Translating Their Beliefs Into Classroom Practices***

From both interview transcripts and classroom observation data, a number of important factors which seem to constrain teachers when translating their beliefs into pedagogical practices were discovered. One of the salient factors found to have a strong influence over teachers translating their beliefs into classroom teaching is time. Both the participants agreed that time is a prime force which instigated the delay in their lessons knowing writing is a tedious process.

*Hmm, well, there are so many factors wherein you need to consider, of course, that is writing. As I said, it is a very long process. You cannot be able to expect a student to write within an hour. (Brenda)*

*It happens actually. The time was too short, like for example, if you want to...if you want to teach for two hours and only you have one hour. (Maria)*

Likewise, time was also seen as a distressing factor when Brenda told her students after the activity (during the first observation) that she would continue with the next lesson the following

meeting because it was already time for dismissal. Likewise, Maria illustrated a similar case where she had to dismiss the class and the last group who was supposed to present their role play would have to do it the next meeting.

Connected to time is the scheduling of classes. Brenda said that if a writing class were scheduled after lunch, students would find it boring and they would be sleepy during the class hours. This finding corroborates Melketo's (2012) study which he found time as the primary contextual factor leading Ethiopian university teachers to teach in ways opposed to their stated beliefs. Alzaanin (2014) also reported similar finding among Palestinian writing teachers. Strong evidence of time as a constraining factor in enacting teachers' beliefs has been extensively noted in numerous research in the field (e.g. Andrews, 2003; Burns & Knox, 2005; Li & Walsh, 2011; Mak, 201, as cited in, Melketo, 2012).

Apart from the scheduling of the writing class, the nature of students also affected the participants. Maria stated that for her students, it is their behavior and their educational backgrounds that influence her teaching the most.

*For example, you planned to give them activity, and you want them to finish that activity asap, but some of them find it hard to finish that activity so you always have to adjust you have to understand their educational background, their knowledge, intellectual capacity in terms of writing. (Maria)*

Notably, it can be understood how Maria works out to fit his teaching into the needs of her students. This statement was demonstrated in her Automotive class where she had to incorporate motive questions, something she did not do in her Computer Programming students. On a similar occasion, Brenda also highlighted how she adapts to the levels of her Automotive students by making necessary modifications in her teaching strategies. Findings on the nature of students as interceding factor in writing classroom have been reported from different perspectives (e.g. Zhang, 2017; Alzaanin, 2014).

Apart from the nature of students, Brenda claimed that the number of students in the class is also an important element to consider. She added that when there are more students in one class than the other, it will cause her more preparations because the activities she employed to a small class, for example, may not be effective for a class that is composed of numerous students. Although Brenda advances the idea of individual differences, her concern with preparations still has to do with time in general. This finding proves Faour's (2003) finding, as cited in (Jamalzadeha

& Shamsavar, 2015) that several factors such as schools' socioeconomic status, class size, and grade level can influence teachers' beliefs and classroom practices considerably.

Lastly, Both the participants recognized how much importance technology has on their work as teachers who need to prepare daily tasks for their students. In particular, there was an instance where Brenda was unable to use the pre-installed projector in the room where she had the class because the unit was not functional. This is similar to Cuayahuitl and Carranza (2015) found where institutional factors such as the length of courses and lessons, the school facilities, among others appeared to be the most powerful in the teachers' lessons. A more recent study conducted in the Philippine context by Gabinete's (2017) also disclosed similar findings where access to technology and availability of instructional materials affected teachers in teaching and assessing the students' viewing skills.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, teachers hold complex belief system about the nature of writing and the process of teaching academic writing. There is strong evidence that writing teachers' beliefs correspond well to their pedagogical practices. However, certain factors such as time, class schedule, class size, nature of students, and school facilities are important considerations if teaching academic writing has to thrive successfully. Writing is a complex process, a product of multifaceted skills which demands not only good writers but good writing teachers packed with understanding and skills on how to strategize instructions for students. Students' needs and motivations are primary attentions in selecting methods of teaching. The best teaching method for academic writing is that which responds to students' writing needs. Positive feedback is key in triggering students love for writing. For L2 academic writing instruction to be meaningful and successful, it is a must that teachers are writers themselves. Moreover, writing teachers may play different roles in the classroom provided that the goal is to help students overcome the fears of writing and consequently become writers themselves.

## **7. Pedagogical Implications and Directions for Future Research**

In the light of the findings and the conclusion of the study, a number of pedagogical implications for L2 academic writing can be considered. First, the study generally underlines how

important L2 teachers' beliefs are in shaping their classroom practices and, in turn, effecting learning. The correspondence between teachers' stated beliefs and pedagogical practices found in this research implies that teachers need to engross themselves in professional trainings in order to continuously improve on their beliefs as beliefs are invaluable bedrocks of teachers' instructional decisions (Borg, 2003). Second, academic writing teachers need to establish close relationship with their students in order to understand their struggles, needs and motivations as writing can be an extremely complex process, more so for ESL learners. Third, curriculum experts are suggested to rethink on the length of time to be allotted specifically for academic writing courses, especially in the context of senior high school where there is bulk of writing subjects offered. Scheduling of writing classes is one important aspect in this category which needs further deliberation as well. Last, schools must be supportive of their teaching practitioners in keeping up with their functions by providing enough facilities such as provision of LCD projectors, computer laboratories, etc. which are beneficial for both the teacher and students.

Nonetheless, for a more encompassing result, the following limitations are noted. Only two senior high school teachers from a Polytechnic school were purposively considered for investigation in which data obtained may have issues generalizing the result. Other subjects which fall under academic writing category such as English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) and Reading and Writing were not part of the study coverage which may engender rich data regarding teachers' pedagogical practices. Also, only two classroom observations were carried out for each participant and these observations occurred roughly around the beginning of the semester which may have failed to capture substantially teachers' actual practices in their academic writing classes. In addition, using simulated recall after the observations and document analysis of students' written outputs could have provided supplementary information for a much stronger finding. If we are to provide more pragmatic evidence on the configurations of teachers' beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs interlock with pedagogical practices in the context of L2 academic writing in senior high school, then an investigation which incorporates large number of participants from different schools covering different academic writing subjects where data are drawn from multiple sources is indispensable.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

### *Part I- Participants' Demographics*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

Gender:

Male

Female

Course Finished:

Education

Non-education

Area of Specialization:

English

Non-English

Educational attainment:

Bachelor's Degree

Bachelor's Degree with Master's Units

Master's Degree Holder

Master's Degree Holder with Doctorate Units

Doctorate Degree Holder

Length of Service:

1-5 years

5-10 years

10-15 years

15-20 years

20 years and above

### *Part II- Interview Guide*

1. What is academic writing from your own perspective?
2. Can you share your experiences with writing in general before you became a teacher?

3. Did your experiences in writing influence how you teach academic writing? If so, in what way?
4. What are your beliefs on feedback practices in academic writing classes?
5. What type of feedback to student writing do you consider most important as a teacher? Why?
6. What type of feedback to student writing do you think your students consider as useful? Why?
7. How do you develop academic writing skills among students? What specific strategies do you usually take in teaching the subject?
8. Can you share an instance where you conducted a successful writing in class? Why do you think it was successful?
9. Can you also share about a writing activity you have recently conducted in class which you felt was not really successful? Why do you think it was not successful?
10. What roles do you play in the classroom as a teacher of academic writing? How important are these roles to your students' learning?