THE EXPERIENCES OF 1ST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN LEARNING

COMPOSITION WRITING THROUGH SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE REMOTE TEACHING


Tracy-Ann K. N. Beckford


A Research Project

Submitted to the William Howard Taft University

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of


DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

November 2021

Committee:

Dr. Daniella Bianchi-Laubsch, Chair

Dr. Larry Ellis

Dr. Lorraine Cleeton

THE EXPERIENCES OF 1ST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN LEARNING

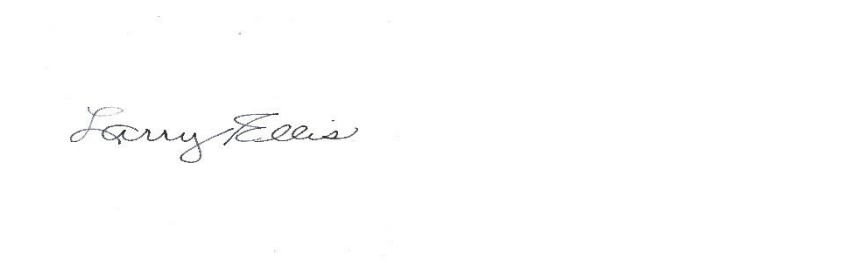COMPOSITION WRITING THROUGH SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE REMOTE TEACHING
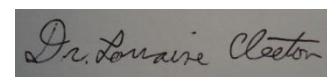
by

Tracy-Ann K. N. Beckford

Approved:

Dr. Daniella Bianchi-Laubsch, Ph.D.

Research Committee Chairperson

Dr. Larry Ellis

Research Committee Member

Dr. Lorraine Cleeton

Research Committee Member

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to assess the experiences of 1st-year college composition writing students in a synchronous online remote learning environment. The researcher, through this qualitative study, used a case study design to examine the quality of the learning experiences of the participants. A total of 14 participants in a teacher training institution in Jamaica constituted the sample, which was purposively selected. The data were arrived at from a survey, semistructured interviews, and analysis of artifacts. It was found that participants had positive experiences in terms of teacher interaction and instruction, but they had negative views of Internet connectivity, peer interaction, and slow rate of instructional feedback. Participants displayed attainments in aspects of content and organization but exhibited weaknesses in the use of English and documentation. The findings of this study can be instructive to members of the population of the study and while the findings cannot be generalized, educators who are utilizing online remote teaching and teachers of English can use this study to inform their practice and conduct similar investigations.

*Keywords***:** academic writing, college students, Internet, online learning, remote teaching, synchronous learning

Dedicated to Auntie Nurse, my mother, who always said "I knew you could do it!"

**Acknowledgements**

This research journey has been an amazing one because of the support of people who believe in me and the cause of education. I sincerely thank my committee members, Dr. Ellis and Dr. Cleeton for your scrutiny of my work and guidance. Also, I must express heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Bianchi-Laubsch whose patience and kindness seemingly knows no boundary. Your availability, counsel, and expertise were greatly appreciated. Together, you have provided expert guidance that has contributed to my growing knowledge of not only English education, but also a greater understanding of research processes and the tools that are available to aid me in my continued pursuit of knowledge.

Additionally, I am very appreciative to the staff and students at the institution where the study was conducted. Special thanks to the Principal, Director of Research, Head of the Language Department, and the Class Lecturer who supported this study and accommodated my many questions. I am very grateful to the participants who graciously availed themselves to participate in the interviews amidst pressing assignments and examination preparation. Your sacrifice is a commendable mark of commitment to the cause of education.

Finally, to the one who encouraged me to pursue further studies, Stephen, my family, church family, and friends, I thank you. This is our achievement. I thank God for all of you.

## Table of Contents

**Table of Contents (Cont.)**

**Table of Contents (Cont.)**

**Table of Contents (Cont.)**

# List of Tables

**List of Figures**

Page

## Chapter 1

## Introduction

College writing has been a challenge for 1st-year college students for many years. So significant has been the concern about college students' writing that it necessitated the establishment of writing centers on college campuses from as far back as the 1930s (Norris, 2010). Writing centers are still on college campuses. Educators have expressed concern about the deficiencies in the writing of college students over many years (Jones-McKenzie, 2018; Milson-Whyte et al., 2019). In 2020, college students faced the additional challenge of learning Composition Writing remotely as a result of a move from face-to-face teaching to online and remote teaching. This move came about because of more than 1.57 billion students in 190 countries being impacted by school closure as a result of the ravages of Covid-19 (UNESCO, 2020). The move to online remote instruction was of concern, as it had been asserted that online programs did not necessarily lead to academic success (Beck, 2017). Many issues revolve around digital tools and the skills that students must master in the writing classroom.

The researcher sought to unearth the challenges and opportunities presented in the teaching of writing in an online remote learning environment. Consideration was given to the language situation present in Jamaica. The ensuing section presents a discussion of the background to the study and elucidation on the significance of this study in order to justify the worth of a study that focused on students' experiences learning writing in an online remote environment. This section also presents three research questions for which this research aimed to provide answers. Essentially, this study sought to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of 1st-year college students as they learn writing in the online remote learning environment synchronously.

**Background to the Study**

In addition to the stated concerns, the Covid-19 pandemic forced students and educators alike to embrace digital devices more in teaching and learning and, thus, adopt a new approach to composition writing. Identifying solutions to the negative impact of the pandemic caused educational institutions to convert lessons to online platforms quickly and with little time to assess the effects of the changes. The response to the pandemic resulted in students at the college at which this study was conducted being required to pursue most of their courses in semester 2 of the 2020 to 2021 school year remotely. This move was mandated despite expressions from some students that they learn better in a face-to-face mode. There was, therefore, a concern that college students' writing may have suffered further decline because of an online remote method of delivery.

Although there were many studies available about online learning, there were very few studies available that examine students' experiences learning remotely, especially during the current pandemic. While there were studies on the teaching of writing, the remote environment was not factored into the equation. The absence of this kind of information, especially in a digital age, made this study important. This research also happened to be quite timely considering that most schools globally had moved online or adopted blended modes of learning. Certainly, as teaching and learning evolve, it will be instructive to stakeholders in the field of education to find out the pros and cons of teaching writing synchronously in an online remote environment.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem addressed in this study was that 1st-year college students have had poor learning experiences in online writing classes. College students have expressed disquiet with remote instruction because of the perceived absence of growth and fun that they associate with

face-to-face classes (University Wire, 2020). This study was deemed necessary because of lingering concerns about the quality of college students' writing and the move to teach students remotely, despite concerns about the efficacy of online remote teaching.

The issue of college students' writing in online settings and in remote learning environments has not been widely studied; however, a significant number of educators have expressed concern about students' deficiencies in writing (Atkinson, 1997; Jones-McKenzie, 2018; Lea & Street, 2006; Lillis, 2001; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). The writing levels of 1st-year college students may have declined further than the previously identified 33% from pre-Covid traditional class levels when classes were taught in a synchronous, online remote environment. Writing skills have historically decreased in brick-and-mortar classes but the changes in delivery methodology to the online remote format may have exacerbated the problem.

**Purpose of the Study**

The 2011 report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011), revealed deficits in college students' writing. In fact, the report showed that 33% of students completing high school scored below proficiency in areas such as exposition and argumentative writing. The purpose of this study was to assess the experiences of 1st-year college composition writing students in an online remote learning environment. This study was also to evaluate the method of delivery of composition writing instruction and its impact on the experiences of 1st-year college composition writing students who were learning remotely. Furthermore, the researcher sought to assess the instructional approach to identify a more effective online protocol for teaching writing in an online environment. Some students have anecdotally claimed to have had positive learning experiences in the online remote learning environment; however, the researcher sought to employ a systematic approach to examine the extent to which 1st-year college students had

positive experiences while learning synchronously in an online remote environment in which the goals of the curriculum were attained. In the event that the online platform was determined to be a part of the problem, effort would be made to suggest suitable alternatives.

**Research Questions**

The researcher sought answers to the following questions:

1. How were 1st-year students engaged in composition writing classes in a synchronous online remote learning environment?

2. What experiences did 1st-year college students have in composition writing classes in synchronous online remote learning?

3. What challenges did 1st-year college students experience while learning composition writing in a synchronous online remote learning environment?

**Key Terms and Definitions**

*Academic Writing:* Academic writing is usually specialized and defines the intellectual boundaries of academic disciplines and specific areas of expertise. It is formal writing that uses the third person, has a clear problem or focus, and employs precise word choice (University of Southern California Libraries, 2020).

*Digital tools:* Digital tools are instruments such as tablets, laptops, and smartphones that rely on the Internet and are used for supporting teaching and learning (IGI Global, 2020).

*Remote Teaching:* Instruction that is relayed through technology by an instructor who is not in the same physical space as the learners is referred to as remote teaching. Lessons may be facilitated through video conferencing software, learning management systems, or other forms of technology driven platforms; this may be synchronous or asynchronous (*Remote Teaching*, 2020).

*Synchronous Learning:* Synchronous learning occurs in a specific place at a particular time. It involves learners being engaged at the same time (Reese, 2015).

*Traditional Students:* College or university students who are between18 and 24 years old are generally referred to as traditional. Such students usually attend college or university shortly after completing high school. Age is a common descriptor of students in this group (Yoder et al., 2014).

*Writing Process:* Writing involves several stages that lead to the final product. The stages are brainstorming, outlining, developing a rough draft, revising, editing, and then polishing to arrive at the finished product (Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2013).

**Methodology**

A case study approach was selected for this study so the researcher would be able to examine how the performance of 1st-year college Composition Writing students was impacted by students' experiences taking lessons in a synchronous online remote learning environment. This approach provided a qualitative overview and, thus, a deep analysis of the quality of writing that was produced by students as well as the kinds of experiences that students might have had while learning in the online environment synchronously. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) asserted that a qualitative approach is appropriate in contexts where a concept or phenomenon needs to be better explored or understood. This was appropriate in this study, as more research on writing processes in synchronous online remote learning environments is needed especially with the current reliance on teaching online.

According to Gay et al. (2009), a case study allows researchers to "focus on a unit of study known as a bounded system" (p. 426), which, in this case, was a classroom. Much of the focus in a case study is heavily rooted in the context in which the phenomenon is found. As

suggested by Gay et al. (2009), case studies are useful in explaining how a particular innovation is impacting persons in a specific setting. Remote teaching or writing was the innovation in this study that the researcher explored among 1st-year college students in their Academic Writing course. A case study can also provide insight into strategies that are used in synchronous online remote teaching and learning. Thus, the case study produced a narrative that presented a clear description of the subject. This included multiple variables and an analysis of the ways in which they interact.

A case study about students' experiences learning writing synchronously in an online remote environment was essential, as some educators and other thinkers have expressed that online remote teaching hinders students' learning and can negatively impact student writing. The researcher interviewed participants in order to ascertain their perspectives on the experiences in the synchronous online remote writing class and the impact on their learning of writing. Participants also shared their perspectives about challenges that they encountered while learning composition writing in an online remote environment.

**Implementation Plan**

The researcher met with the participants and made clear the research aims. The researcher then sent a survey to the 34 students by email. The researcher explained that their responses to the survey questions would help her identify the most suitable candidates to participate in the study. In the survey, 19 individuals indicated a willingness to participate in the study, but only 14 were suitable candidates. Consequently, 14 participants were selected for interviews and close study based on their gender and being students taking the course for the first time. The selected participants gave informed consent, through signing a document that was sent to them via email. The researcher then conducted all interviews. The researcher asked the participants to submit the

first and last major pieces of writing done during the course, outside of the examination, for analysis. This process was followed up with data analysis involving triangulation. The researcher then wrote the initial report and asked participants to review varying sections that were relevant to them. Following this, the researcher prepared the final report.

**Study Limitations**

Through this study, the researcher explored the experiences of students who were pursuing a writing course through online remote learning at a Caribbean teacher training college among a group of 1st-year students. Because of the unique features of the setting and characteristics of the small sample size, the study's findings cannot be generalized to other universities or colleges in Jamaica and the Caribbean. The experiences and views of the participants in this study might not reflect those of other 1st-year college students in the region or even other students on the same college campus. Additionally, the study focused on the experiences of students in a writing course during a pandemic. This is not a common experience across generations, and so there may be social issues that may have had some impact on the outcome of this study. Furthermore, because of the features of Caribbean economies and the particular site of study, the findings of this study were closely linked to, and thus limited to, the specific time and place.

**Summary**

Chapter 1 provided a general introduction and, thus, the foundation for this proposed study, and in so doing, established its relevance. In this section, the background to the study, statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study were presented to establish the need for this qualitative study. Concerns about the quality of 1st-year college students' writing and a shift to online remote learning gave rise to a need to explore the experiences that 1st-year college

students had in learning writing synchronously in an online remote learning environment.

Definitions of key terms, an overview of the approach to the study, and the study's limitations

were also explored in this section. Chapter 2 presents a detailed review of the related literature to

online and remote learning, cognitive load theory, as well as issues related to the teaching of

writing at the college level.

**Chapter 2**

**Review of the Related Literature**

Composition writing has the reputation of being one of the most dreaded courses by freshmen (N. Miller, 2019). The fear of academic writing is compounded by issues related to accessing courses online. How the move to online remote learning will impact students' learning experiences continues to unfold. Barham (2016) asserted that students contend with issues ranging from challenges with Internet connectivity to collaboration on assignments. While there are problems that are common to both genders, Marley (2007) examined studies that found that males and females have varying experiences in online learning. Irrespective of the apparent differences among learners, college students in 2020 to 2021 have the unique opportunity to begin their college journeys experiencing learning writing in a remote learning environment utilizing the Internet amidst its challenges and privileges.

The Caribbean, which comprises mainly developing countries, has seen its education sector significantly negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. A UNESCO (2020) study found that in 150 low and middle-income countries studied, the learning loss amounted to 4 months for developing countries, but only 6 weeks of learning loss in high income countries. The same study found that 90% of the countries studied offered remote teaching during the pandemic through online learning, requiring the use of mobile phones or provided Internet access at no or low cost. Access to Internet service was found to be quite varied across the countries.

Online and remote teaching were largely facilitated through the proliferation of the Internet and digital tools. According to Palvia et al. (2018), online education is on the path to becoming widespread by 2025. This implies that at least some of the necessary systems would have been in place by 2020. To a large degree, the hasty move to remote teaching was

augmented by the vast number of digital systems that were already available at the onset of Covid-19. By the time most universities and schools moved to remote learning, Palvia et al. (2018) had already asserted that online higher education enrollment had started to outpace traditional higher education enrollment.

It is then not surprising that the Covid-19 pandemic sparked changes to enrollment patterns in colleges and universities globally. Long (2020) reported that colleges in America experienced a drop in enrollment of 4% from the 2019 fall semester enrollment. However, some institutions such as the University of Washington actually had a slight increase in their numbers. Washington State University has experienced a gain of 23% more students in its online Global campus, a program that has been offered since 1992. Some of the students who had previously enrolled in the face-to-face program have switched to the online program (Long, 2020). Conversely, administrators at one of Jamaica's leading universities had projected a 20% drop in student enrollment for the 2020 fall semester but found that the actual drop was slightly lower than that. Accordingly, changes in college enrollment are likely to impact the number of students and the patterns of interactions in writing classrooms.

**College Students' Writing**

There are concerns in education about college students' inability to write proficiently. Milson-Whyte et al. (2019) asserted that instruction in college composition writing in the Caribbean has traditionally been heavily dependent on the American approach to composition writing. While there are clear similarities between the Caribbean and American approaches to writing instruction, practitioners in the field need to establish a distinctly Caribbean approach, given that Caribbean college students possess a first language that is not usually International English (Milson-Whyte et al., 2019). Consequently, much of the pedagogy and resulting

concerns in Caribbean classrooms share some similarities with the teaching concerns of writing in the United States.

Arguably, the concerns about students writing extend to the level of preparation that students received ahead of matriculating to college. Hoppe (2014) found that college students felt that there is a disconnect between how they were expected to write in high school and the expectations in college writing. Invariably, throughout the years, the disconnect results in the underperformance of many students in writing at the college level. Whitford (2018) found that one third of college students in the U.S. have never written a paper of 10 pages or longer and it did not matter to the students. This is of concern, as it suggests an aversion to writing among college students. Consequently, Furness and Paulson (2018) suggested that there is a need to develop mechanisms to motivate college students to write, as some students are reluctant writers. This is a critical issue because, as Conley (2008) asserted, writing is the main skill that determines students' academic success in college. Such concerns are of importance, as writing does not only impact students' college performance but will also affect students' future careers. Wellington (2010) pointed out that employers place great emphasis on writing skills and even use it as a measure of the worth of one's college education.

Another concern is that college composition writing is, in most colleges, the one course that every student is required to pursue, and it is feared by some students because of the rigors of academic writing. N. Miller (2019) pointed out that this unique placement in the curriculum poses a challenge every semester to instructors who must facilitate learners who have a range of aptitudes and prior writing experience. A study found that 1st-year college students tend to experience difficulty in composing the introduction, thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting

sentences, and the conclusion of compositions (Cekiso et al., 2016; Warrican, 2005). Such findings were derived from a study that was carried out in the context of face-to-face instruction.

In 2000, the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), the regional examination body, reported observations about deficiencies in students' writing at the secondary level (as cited in Warrican, 2005). According to the CXC, the examination script seemed to have been the longest reading that students have engaged in at any one time (as cited in Warrican, 2005). The CXC continued to raise concerns about students' reading and writing skills, as the annual report showed that 62% of candidates achieved proficiency, which was an improvement over the 59% in 2015 (CXC, 2017). Findings of this nature are instructive, as the same students who attain passes in the regional examination are likely to matriculate to higher learning at institutions such as the college at which this study was conducted.

Although Milson-Whyte et al. (2019) expressed that Creole Interference is too often blamed for writing deficiencies in Caribbean students' work, it is widely held that much of the difficulty that students in the English-speaking Caribbean experience in using Standard English in writing is attributed to the influence of Creole languages that are endemic in many of the islands, as is the case in Jamaica. In 2014, the CXC reported that, while candidates may have content knowledge, their expression is weak. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the early part of this decade, only one third of the candidates who sat in the English Language examination attained proficiency. In addition, Jones-McKenzie (2018) posited that because of the problems seen in students' writing, Jamaica's two major universities choose to have new students sit for an English proficiency test. As high as 60% of the students who sit (and even pass the test) tend to display deficiencies in several aspects of writing and reading comprehension. Correspondingly, Warrican (2005) asserted that the writing deficiency among Caribbean students is also caused by

students' lack of interest in reading, as students have become engaged in other kinds of activities. Writing skills are closely associated with reading skills, as reading exposes students to models of writing.

The problems displayed in college students' writing seem to be rooted in negative attitudes and an inability to write well. Jones-McKenzie (2018) found that 1st-year students at the University of Technology in Jamaica failed to perform as well as desired. Some students felt that they could already write and did not need to pursue a writing course, while some students expressed that they would prefer to focus on the courses in their discipline. Furthermore, Jones-McKenzie (2018) suggested that a lack of preparation and poor class attendance were among the problems that contributed to the less than desirable performance of students in college writing courses that were delivered in face-to-face mode.

As in the Caribbean, students in higher education in the United States, tend to exhibit a range of similar challenges. Such challenges include deficiencies in critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills (Takeda-Tinker, 2018). Ramsay (2011) also implied similar concerns about the writing of students in the Caribbean. Considering this fact, the experiences of American students and writing instructors can ably inform this study. For decades, educators have found that some students who manage to matriculate to colleges and universities are not adequately prepared for college writing (Goldburg, 1996; Kidwell, 2005; Ramirez-Espinola, 2018). Interestingly, in Texas, Barnes and Slate found that only 53.91% of graduating high school seniors were at the required reading level for college in 2009 (as cited in Ramirez-Espinola, 2018). Similarly, the writing of Caribbean students at the K12/13 and postsecondary level has been characterized as below standard or even troubling (Milson-Whyte et al., 2019).

The intricacies of the practice of writing, which is closely related to reading, have seemingly caused students much distress.

Based on online surveys that were conducted by Hart Research Associates (2013), only 27% of employers believe that college and university students are graduating with adequate writing skills. Practitioners in higher education are also concerned about the level of mastery currently being demonstrated by college students (Milson-Whyte et al., 2019). Accordingly, Ramsay (2011) asserted even earlier that many university students in the Anglophone Creole context find writing at the college level to be quite difficult. Arum and Roska (as cited in Roberts et al., 2017) added that colleges and universities, are not effectively developing writing skills in their students. This is a concern in all disciplines, as writing is necessary in all fields of study.

According to the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators in April 2000 (as cited in Downs & Wardle, 2007), there are four major goals of writing instruction: equip the learner with rhetorical knowledge, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. As pointed out by Downs and Wardle (2007), universities generally expect that 1st-year composition writing will prepare students for writing across the university. However, the writers observed that extensive research during a 20-year span indicated that such a unified academic discourse has not been found. It is apparent that students will write differently in different settings. Indeed, questions have been raised about exactly what students transfer from one course or setting to another. Given the character traits of the 1st-year college student as a writer, the college at which this study was conducted offered a writing program in accordance with the suggestion of Downs and Wardle (2007) that universities need to help students to understand better writing, rhetoric, language, and literacy.

In a bid to help students to understand better and compose various elements of writing, students engage in reading and writing of a scholarly nature. Students should then be able to use language and writing appropriately to fit varying contexts. The researcher observed that many of the strategies and activities that tend to be used in face-to-face classrooms are also employed in remote learning, as both face-to-face and online remote teaching have the same goals. Jones-McKenzie (2018), in presenting activities for graded participation for academic writing (face-to-face) classes, suggested the following activities: self and peer reviews, selection and reporting of broad and narrowed topics, preparation of essay outlines, writing and rewriting of essay drafts, practice synthesis essays, and so on. The aim of having students complete the range of activities identified is to improve their writing ability.

Most students are failing to demonstrate adequate writing skills (Persky et al., 2003; Salahu-Din et al., 2008). According to Jones-McKenzie (2018), almost 30% of the students who pursued the 1st-year writing course in the period 2009 to 2015, either failed the course or failed to complete the course, while 50% of the students scored within the C range. Writing is a vital skill for all students and any deficit in this area is likely to result in students experiencing struggles in their academic lives (Graham & Perin, 2007). Of great concern is that students are entering higher education with poor writing skills, and they are hardly given a reason to improve such skills (Arizona State University, 2018). Collier (2014) asserted that most students entering college hold narrow views of what writing really is. Many seem to be of the view that only the five-paragraph essay counts as real writing, and any other form of written expression will not achieve the desired score.

Additionally, cultural, and linguistic barriers are cited as impeding the freshman's progress in writing (Ramirez-Espinola, 2018). Caribbean college students tend to exhibit errors

such as the "use of informal, personal language" (Lunsford, as cited in Milson-Whyte et al.,
2019, p. 15). Students also use evidence and discourse conventions that are not appropriate for
academic registers (Miller, as cited in Milson-Whyte et al., 2019). While college postsecondary
writing students in the Caribbean and the United States seem to display some similar
characteristics, the Caribbean postsecondary student has the added challenge of writing in a
language that is somewhat different from their first language, which for many Caribbean
nationals is an English-based Creole language.

Accordingly, Belkhir and Benyelles (as cited in Sharhan et al., 2020) found that some
students who learn English as a foreign language experience difficulties in coherence and
cohesion, which is a difficulty that is attributed to the lack of reading, limited first-language
transfer, and low writing practice. Similarly, Iraqi college students displayed low language
proficiency, limited reading and weak writing practice, overgeneralization, and interference of
the students' mother tongue (Sharhan et al., 2020). In another study, Jiménez et al. (2013) found
that college students' writing had errors in spelling, grammar, syntax, organization, and so on.
The same study found that students had difficulty distinguishing important information from
extraneous details and students also failed to organize paragraphs effectively by not including
topic sentences and supporting details appropriately. Such findings indicate that the challenges
that college students experience in writing courses are not limited to the surface level of
grammar and mechanics, but extend to comprehension and the ability to organize and synthesize
information.

Interestingly, Lamsberg (as cited in Jiménez et al., 2013) provided a psychological
perspective on the challenges that students experience in academic writing. Lamsberg (as cited in
Jiménez et al., 2013) found that students failed to display self-management, and so they had a

history of incomplete courses and/or tended to turn in assignments late. Some students did not have a composing strategy or a set of procedures to work through assignments. Students also wrote poorly organized papers, lacked a system of proofreading, failed to understand and follow instructions, and their papers may have lacked introductions. Although these concerns were from the 1970s, the challenges have persisted in the writing classroom. Fennick et al. (1993) asserted that schools have been slow to embrace visual information and electronic media. Furthermore, to function effectively in the world of work after completing the college program, students need to be able to produce writing to complete extensive, complex projects, adapt text products and processes for various audiences and processes, and writers must understand electronic tools and the impact of such tools on communication and fostering social relationships (Fennick et al., 1993). It is of concern that college students have been displaying weaknesses such as those mentioned throughout several decades.

**Conceptual Framework**

The teaching of writing encapsulates a range of variables, which when combined, influence learning outcomes. Wilson (2011) asserted that composition in the 21st century integrates writing process pedagogies, collaborative pedagogies, and computer-mediated or digital media pedagogies. Pedagogies of this nature feature heavily in composition instruction in an online remote learning environment. There is also the implication that cognitive processes must feature in actual learning. Consequently, it is necessary to highlight the theoretical underpinnings that govern the teaching of writing in a synchronous online remote learning environment.

Classical rhetoric, as postulated by Aristotle, suggested that writing is a recursive process, and it is necessary for writers to revise and refocus. Quintilian also suggested that

composition instruction does not only focus on writing as a product, but the approach should constitute writing as process as well (as cited in Wilson, 2011). While the product will be the ultimate focus, the writer will compose, organize, and revise in the writing process. Hesse (2017) echoed many of the sentiments expressed by Aristotle and Quintilian, but sought to extend the discussion by suggesting that writing instruction does not need to exceed 3 hours of lecture, as the critical factor is practice. In essence, instructors need to provide students with ample opportunities to write about topics that require serious effort. Instructors must pay keen attention to curriculum design, sequence, and course material as well as help students to understand how to transfer skills to other writing tasks.

Accordingly, a process approach has been used for centuries to develop the skills that a college writing program targets. The process approach focuses on writing as a process, rather than a product. According to Emig (1968), in the process theory of composition, students more completely develop their writing competence through exploring their own ideas, interests, language, and techniques through the freedom that undergirds the process. Murray (1972) proposed a basic three-step process to composition writing. The steps are prewriting, writing, and rewriting or revision. The writing process is a fixture in composition as a result of the widely accepted thinking that learners benefit from discovery and that they can learn from their mistakes. Accordingly, process theory supports the notion of students working in pairs through which students also teach, review, brainstorm, and edit (Murray, 1972). The various steps of the writing process inform the peer review approach to essay writing that was employed in the 1st-year composition classroom under study. Critics such as Kent (1999) expressed that writing cannot be captured in one big process. Gary Olson (as cited in Kent, 1999) argued that process writing tries to systematize something that cannot be systematized. While such views may be

existent, the process approach to composition is widely used, especially at the higher levels of education.

Writing is a manifestation of cognitive processes (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Consequently, any understanding of the processes involved in writing must be grounded in cognitive theory. A theory of relevance here is cognitive load theory. Sweller (1988) asserted that human beings generally have working memory and long-term memory. The processing of new information implies a greater cognitive load on the working memory that stems from mental effort; this effort impacts learning. According to Kirschner et al. (2018), cognition plays a crucial role in collaboration. Human beings process biologically secondary knowledge through a process of natural selection. Through the process of natural selection, the information store principles require a vast amount of stored information in order to function. Much of this information is stored in long term memory.

Working memory pulls information from long-term memory to satisfy the communicative needs of a particular environment. Sweller and Cooper (1985) are among many scholars who have provided evidence supporting the thinking that long-term memory is critical for human cognition. Interestingly, the principle of borrowing and reorganizing holds that the vast amount of information that is held in long-term memory was in fact borrowed from the long-term memories of other people. This is on the understanding that learners have a limited amount of working memory and so instruction should not be too much, as this will result in overload. According to Poffenbarger (2017), the way in which material is presented (extraneous and germane cognitive load) and the complexity of the material (intrinsic cognitive load) affect working memory load and can shape learning outcomes. The application of such principles factors heavily into instructional design and can be readily accessed with the assistance of

educational technology (Sweller, 2020). This gives merit to collaboration in writing and the great opportunity created for learners to exchange ideas. In terms of lectures, cognitive load theory implies that information is most readily received when presented in two modes: visual and auditory (Poffenbarger, 2017). For instance, in teaching writing, in order to avoid cognitive overload, it is best to explain topic sentences while showing examples.

Composition in the 21st century employs principles of the long-standing writing process along with collaboration. Because of the perceived or real difficulties associated with the writing process, students often try to find ways to avoid writing (Davies & Birbili, 2000). The process model of composition writing approach to composition writing has become increasingly student-centered and is incorporating aspects of digital media in how teaching is done (Wilson, 2011). Indeed, the emphasis on collaborative learning and on online learning systems has significantly influenced the way in which process writing is achieved. According to Wilson (2011), collaborative approaches to writing actually build on process models of writing, but this approach provides a more authentic experience of how writing is generated among learners. Such approaches to learning seem quite appropriate for this era in which learning is more social in nature and affected by digital media. The social aspect of learning is well-supported by computers that enable interaction between learner and student, student and student, student and text (as well as various forms of media).

Because of the potential of instructional technology facilitating interaction, students largely produce writing through digital tools. From a theoretical standpoint, it is evident from the literature that there is a view that digital tools are useful in the writing classroom, as they support collaboration. According to Bruffee and Harvey (2006), the teacher develops and assigns a problem, and the students work together to figure it out collaboratively, which results in a form

of indirect teaching. This is achieved in the composition classroom through peer group work or peer reviews. Wilson (2011) asserted, "A collaborative theoretical orientation in the writing classroom also presupposes writers can compose texts in response to the social and ideological discourses of these groups, not just in response to an individualistic need to communicate or express themselves" (p. 59).

Interestingly, Krajka (2012) mentioned that multiple studies have made a case for the use of word processors in the production of students' writing. Computers, in general, are seen as serving the useful function of easing the mechanical processes that are involved in generating text. Additionally, users can conveniently revise text by enabling functions such as block moves, additions, deletions, and substitutions. The use of Google docs allows all group members to work on a particular piece of writing simultaneously. The findings of Krajka (2012) indicate that the use of web 2.0 tools is supportive of collaboration in the writing classroom. This builds on the ideas of Lev Vygotsky's on social learning (Wilson, 2011). The difference is that technological tools are incorporated into the equation.

Even though students are unable to meet physically, online applications allow for the research, curation of information, questioning, sharing of ideas, and the achievement of writing tasks, albeit in a purely virtual space. Although Arbaugh and Benbunan-Finch (2006) found that collaboration in online courses leads to positive student experiences and that which is positively correlated with improved learner outcomes, collaboration is scarcely used in online courses. In fact, Margaryan et al. (2015) carried out a study involving 76 randomly selected universities and found that 79% of them do not include collaborative activities in their courses. If the theories of social learning are indeed true, the lack of collaboration in university-level courses has implications for the students' capacity to work with others, especially in the work world.

**Teacher Education**

As is the case elsewhere, teacher education in Jamaica has evolved throughout the years. The first teacher training colleges were established in the Caribbean in 1830 (E. Miller, 2018). According to Trines (2019), in Jamaica, up to 2010, teacher training spanned 3 years for each candidate, and graduates were awarded teaching diplomas. In 2010, the government mandated that teachers who would serve at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels must be holders of Bachelor degrees. In the 1830s through to the 1950s, E. Miller (2018) pointed out that the secondary-level graduates who went on to teacher training were usually the high performers. However, by the 1980s, there was a decline in the status that was previously enjoyed by the certificate- and diploma-holding teachers. A growing number of other professionals were holders of degrees and commanded a greater level of respect than that which was accorded teachers.

Traditionally, teacher education attracted a higher number of females than males. This is not surprising in the Jamaican context, since, based on data from the World Economic Forum, in 2018, 34% of women in Jamaica pursued higher education, but only 20% of men did so (Trines, 2019). The disparity between genders in higher education is even more pronounced in teacher education. An article from Caribbean Partners for Educational Progress (2012) indicated that the teaching force in Jamaica consisted of 3:1 female/male ratio; however, school leaders were mostly males. This was despite the fact that females, throughout the years, have been more academically qualified than males.

According to E. Miller (2018), distance education, in the Caribbean, was pioneered in Belize in 1994 and was later replicated at Shortwood Teachers' College in Jamaica. Shortwood Teachers' College used the distance education mode to facilitate teachers in their upgrade from diplomas to degrees. The model included self-study distance learning material that was

developed by the college, school-based interaction, and monthly workshops at regional resource centers and summer workshops at the college. By the late 1990s, the Joint Board of Teacher Education, Jamaica's governing body for teacher education, developed plans to introduce online learning as a part of teacher education.

More than a decade later, Granston (2004) found that teacher training programs in Jamaica had not systematically infused technology integration. In addition, teachers' college faculty and the teachers who were in training did not perceive themselves as being ready to teach using computers. Even later, McAnuff-Gumbs (2011) found that the University of the West Indies had made strides in implementing online training for literacy coaches in the Caribbean. McAnuff-Gumbs (2011) asserted that the venture appeared to have been promising, but the program lacked Caribbean-oriented resources. Despite the limitations, McAnuff-Gumbs (2011) mentioned multiple studies that indicated that the online platform could be successfully used for teacher training.

The Ministry of Education in Jamaica introduced a National Standards Curriculum that had Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as one of its main drivers. This program was rolled out in the 2016–2017 academic year. According to Williams (2017), the then Minister of Education in Jamaica indicated that the ministry had plans to optimize the output of schools through greater use of ICT in teaching. The minister noted that concerns had been raised by school principals that incoming teachers lacked the necessary skills to use ICT in the classroom. He said this would be addressed by including training in ICT in the teacher training programs. Shortly following this pronouncement, Salmon-Ferguson and Barrett (2018) raised questions about the readiness of beginning teachers to deliver programs that required knowledge of ICT. They found that there was limited inclusion of ICT integration in the teacher education

curriculum. This implies that teachers in training were not being adequately prepared to engage learners employing digital tools. This is concerning, especially in a digital age.

**Online Remote Teaching**

Even as teachers of English face the challenge of helping students to improve their writing, teachers are also required to demonstrate competence in navigating online learning platforms. Online remote learning is deemed to be an alternative to traditional face-to-face education. According to Ray (2020), remote teaching is generally utilized in emergency situations. While the terms remote and online teaching are used interchangeably by some people, there are differences between them. Schlesselman (2020) sought to create a basis for the distinction between the terms by establishing that there is an essential difference between teaching and learning. It was suggested that teaching is not the most important aspect of learning. In essence, learning can be attained void of a teacher. Students may acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes from sheer experience or through independent study. Online learning, although predominantly asynchronous, tends to focus on accomplishing learning objectives, while remote teaching primarily focuses on covering content. Nonetheless, Schlesselman (2020) pointed out that research shows that many faculty members are averse to online teaching, as they believe it is ineffective in comparison to face-to-face teaching. Despite this concern, Roblyer (2016) posited research from the United States Department of Education that indicated that students in online classes outperform their counterparts in face-to-face learning environments. It was concluded from the research that the increase in performance may be attributed to the increase in the time that students spend on task in online programs.

Educators have identified challenges and opportunities in remote teaching. According to Long (2020), the president of Evergreen College in Washington pointed out that remote teaching

has the advantage of allowing for prerecorded lectures. This is convenient in facilitating guest speakers from around the world. Interestingly, 92% of the studies on online and distance education programs have indicated that such programs are as effective or more effective than face-to-face teaching; 3% of the studies showed a negative effect, and 4% had mixed findings (Nguyen, 2015). There seems to be no similar study available on online remote learning, but given the similarities with online and distance learning, aspects of related research can inform this research, at least to an extent.

**The History of Remote Learning**

Although the idea of remote teaching and learning seemingly came to the front with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shifts in instructional practices of 2020, remote learning predates the current era. Interestingly, distance education, distance learning, and online learning are all reiterations of what was previously known as correspondence courses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). Programs of this nature have evolved into Massive Open Online Courses, distributed learning, e-learning, and virtual classrooms. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2016), distance-learning takes place without the teacher and students being in the same physical space or in a school setting. Currently, this involves the Internet or a version of online learning.

One of the earliest methods of students learning from home dates back to 1728, when there was an advertisement in the *Boston Gazette* for students who wanted to learn shorthand through lessons that were sent by post weekly (Holmberg, 2005). Later, Sir Isaac Pitman was credited with the development of a system of transcribing text by shorthand and mailing to students who would in turn transcribe the texts and return them for feedback. The element of feedback was seen as a novelty that led to the practice of students transcribing texts and sending them to their instructors for feedback; feedback in distance learning became very popular (Tait,

2003). This was the advent of new horizons in how teaching and learning developed. According to Bell and Tight (1993), the University of London expanded its program to offer a range of courses that students could pursue and complete testing without ever physically attending school in London. This essentially broke the link between place and study. By 1873, the Society to Encourage Studies at Home was founded in the United States (Robinson, 2012). The developments later led to concerns about the credibility of testing in distance learning. According to Rothblatt et al. (1988), this led to the development of independent examining bodies, as students were permitted to engage in self-study and be tested by a state governed body. Despite such advances, it was in 1984 that the first fully online course was completed at the University of Toronto (Bates, 2016).

In 1971, the United Kingdom introduced the first Open University through which courses were offered to students at a distance. They began with 24, 000 students (Harting & Erthal, 2005). This early version of remote teaching relied on specially developed books, and as Perry (1977) stated, involved the use of television, radio, audio, and video tapes as well as computer software. The expansion of the worldwide web since the 1980s and the apparent explosion of Internet capabilities that is characteristic of the 1990's and into the 21st century, have revolutionized access to information. The developments allow for web conferencing, video conferencing, live streaming, radio streaming, educational television, and instructional television (Lever-Duffy & McDonald, 2007). Such capabilities allowed for learners to be engaged on a virtual platform simultaneously in what became known as synchronous learning.

**Remote Teaching in the Present**

Increasingly, the Internet and Web-based technologies have become a popular platform for the development and delivery of distance learning programs in an online class setting. This

includes online remote teaching classes. Popular platforms used in remote teaching in 2020 include Zoom, Google meets, and Blackboard Collaborate. Platforms of this kind allow learners to interact through voice and video conversations, text messages through the chat feature, emoticons, polls, and hand raising. Meyer (2015) postulated that some United States universities have introduced Telerobotics, an area of robotics, to the remote learning experience, and they have reportedly been enhancing the learning experience for some students. Telerobotics have been used in hybrid classrooms, which are classrooms that facilitate both remote and in-person learners.

In some remote programs, learners access classes asynchronously, which means that they listen to or view lessons at their convenience. In this way, students need not be together at the same time. This may involve video and audio recordings, emailing print material, and discussion forums. Interestingly, in Jamaica, radio and television are also included in remote teaching, especially because of thousands of students reporting Internet connectivity challenges. The inclusion of radio and television in remote instruction goes back to the 1930s, when there was heavy emphasis on audio-visual instruction and instructional radio (Reiser, 2012), especially in developed countries.

Despite major advances in educational technology, there are mounting concerns about the efficacy of remote teaching. Jasford Gabriel, president of the Jamaica Teachers' Association in 2020, stated that, based on sampling, the union found that only 36% of the nation's students had been accessing classes online. The same study further indicated that a lack of, or poor Internet connectivity, were the main contributors to students' inability to access online lessons (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020). While these findings may be primarily applicable to primary and secondary students, the numbers are suggestive of the wider challenge that is likely

to impede learning using online platforms. Nonetheless, in a study that was carried out at the University of the West Indies, Smith and Haughton (2021) found that student access, connectivity, communication, and student engagement, including feedback, were areas of weakness in online remote learning.

According to Burt (2020), the United States State of Technology survey indicated that only about 20% of educators in American schools reported that their schools were ready for remote teaching. It was found that 40% of educators felt that they had the right form of IT in place, but they were not equipped with the processes. Educators generally indicated that they were utilizing technology in their lessons, and up to 95% of those surveyed indicated that they were using online strategies in lesson delivery. Educators opined that the digital divide was impeding educators in transitioning to remote or hybrid teaching (Burt, 2020). Of significance here is the observation that only 6% of educators expressed that a lack of technological resources was a major obstacle; however, 43% of educators felt that more training was needed for staff to engage in remote teaching.

Amidst reports of concerns about inadequacies in online teaching, Thalheimer (as cited in Schlesselman, 2020), concluded from examining several research studies that it is the teaching method and not so much the modality that determines the learning outcome. A key to improving what is offered through remote teaching is to invest more preparation time and change the program to meet the standards of online learning. In so doing, some of the challenges that relate to connectivity may be reduced. Collaboration, student interaction, and extensive formative assessments should feature heavily in such courses to achieve the desired effects.

For students to benefit from remote teaching, there are some requirements that must be met. Ray (2020) emphasized that a key determiner of the kind of experiences that students and

educators will have in remote learning is the structure of the program. The instructor must pay attention to communication, time, and lesson design; principles governing each of these points must be clear at the outset of the program. First, students must be informed of the communication channels that are available to them. They must be told if the instructor will communicate by email, WhatsApp, phone, or any other medium. It would also be useful for instructors to inform students of alternative channels in the event that the primary mode of communication fails. Students would also appreciate information on how soon they can expect feedback and responses to their messages. All program participants must be made aware of the times when instructors are available and when students must be in class, or the instructor is available for consultation. Such information helps to establish boundaries and expectations for all parties. Students must also be told approximately how much time they are expected to spend on activities for each day, week, unit, or module. This can help them to plan and organize their own learning.

Additionally, Nguyen (2015) asserted that in online teaching, when course design, the physical environment, and other support systems are adequate, students are likely to have higher satisfaction in terms of their learning experience. Experts have postulated that higher learner satisfaction correlates with increased learning (Alqurashi, 2019). Opportunities for increased communication among students and between instructor and students contribute to the quality of the experience that students have in online programs (Roblyer, 2016). It is also possible for students to have higher satisfaction in their learning experiences while engaging in online classes (Kirtman, 2009), as they can engage in practices that they would not have been afforded in a face-to-face context. For instance, in remote contexts, students view lesson recordings as many

times as they wish. Of course, such experiences will impact students' learning and the quality of writing that they produce.

**Teaching Writing Remotely**

Teaching writing to college students online is not a panacea, despite the benefits that have been observed. Imig (2010) asserted that some of the challenges that are experienced in the online classroom are in fact reminiscent of the challenges faced in the brick-and-mortar classroom. There is still the challenge of insufficient student writing, as well as a lack of engagement. Invariably, some of the same tried-and-tested strategies that cause students to excel in the traditional classroom have been proved effective in the online space as well. Regardless of where writing instruction is given, students must be exposed to the following: "plenty of background, writing done over time, modeling, opportunities for personal connections, creativity, peer sharing, success for students with a range of skills, and authentic presentation/publication" (Imig, 2010, para. 1). Unlike Imig (2010), Warnock (2009) postulated that students tend to write more in an online learning environment.

The teaching of writing remotely online is purported to aid in helping learners to understand and appreciate the range of rhetorical situations and contexts that are available (Dockter & Borgman, 2016). Consequently, students' observation of the use of various tools and modes to communicate different kinds of messages can aid their understanding of rhetorical situations. Accordingly, Eyman and Ball (2014) postulated that nearly all compositions at this time are, in fact, digital compositions. The writers suggested that there is a need for a shift in the discussions in the field of composition studies to give more focus to digital literacies as composition processes and writing pedagogies are explored, and literacies as composition processes and writing pedagogies are developed.

The call for a shift in conversations about composition processes is particularly pertinent in this the digital age. Such conversations are urgent, as students are faced with traditional modes of writing as well as learning to use digital tools. Despite this, there are some long-standing concerns that need attention. Among the concerns is that college composition writing is, in most colleges, feared, though it is the one course that every student is required to pursue (N. Miller, 2019). Grabill and Hicks (2005) suggested that there is a need for writing instructors to see writing in the same way as the learners do in order to devise effective pedagogical principles.

Furthermore, English educators need to develop an understanding of how new technologies support writing and new literacies to meet the needs of English education in the 21st century. It is in keeping with the emphasis on the available modes of learning in the 21st century that Ruefman was critical of a seeming heavy reliance on text in college writing courses. Instead of being so text heavy, Ruefman (as cited in Dockter & Borgman, 2016), proposed that writing instructors should seek to integrate more digital media into writing programs. This conclusion is based on the theory that "True learning takes place through aesthetic experience, in an environment that is conducive to the learning process" (para. 11). This is achieved through "providing direction, reinforcing content and providing constructive feedback" (para. 11) through visual and auditory means.

Digital technology readily facilitates visual and auditory feedback, and this is likely to enhance the learning experience and impact the writing product. In fact, Griffin and Minter (2013) stated that the rise in technology impacts the way in which writing is taught in at least two ways. Writing instructors must ensure that their chosen Learning Management System works across a range of device types, considering that learners may sign in from any type of device and even multiple devices at once. Additionally, instructors must accommodate a shift to learners'

use of devices such as tablets and smartphones that are primarily designed for consuming rather than composing writing. The writers further asserted that college students are likely to use their smartphones to access course material and they may create most of their writing using their smartphones. Such practices are expected to put a strain on writing instruction. This is because the instructor and learner may not be seeing writing on similar screen-types and so writing will look different to each party. Certainly, speech to text and revision software, such as that offered by Turnitin, go a long way in revolutionizing ways in which students may compose written text.

Accordingly, Bridgewater (2014) carried out a comparative analysis of students' writing practices on computers with their writing practices on mobile devices, namely tablets and smartphones. It was found that teachers have a general concern that digital tools are likely to cause students to take shortcuts in writing and to be careless in writing. As Bridgewater (2014) asserted, devices, such as the smartphone, are impacting how, where, what, and why students write and so there is a need for more research in this area. Further research will enable a better understanding of how the use of the smartphone, in particular, is impacting students' writing. As Bridgewater (2014) found, educators theorize that the quality of students' writing is likely to suffer when digital tools are used. Despite concerns about the negative impacts of students' use of the various devices, Collet (2016) asserted that digital tools allow learners to connect their in-school writing experiences with their outside-of-school communication practices. This puts learning into a real-world context and makes it more meaningful to learners. This seemingly builds on the Mower (2011) assertion that there is a digital language that has been found to have a positive association with literacy. Accordingly, Eyman and Ball (2014) opined that composition in the 21st century has become digital to a great extent.

Furthermore, Bridgewater (2014) found that many students use smartphones to access course materials, communicate with professors, and navigate the writing process. Socioeconomic and cultural factors featured heavily in the ways in which the smartphone was used in the learning process. A noticeable gap in the available literature is that there is no real assertion about the kinds of experiences obtained in the use of smartphones in writing classes that are held in remote learning environments. Are the writing outcomes obtained different in a face-to-face or in a purely online context? While this study does not seek to carry out a comparative analysis, it is expected that insight will be provided on the quality of students' writing as well as their experiences in the online remote learning environment and that might instigate further enquiry.

Another area of high importance in the teaching of writing, especially in the online environment, is the giving of feedback. Warnock (2009) posited that feedback is critical in teaching writing online. Feedback must be distinguished from assessment and must be so carried out that learners do not express the same kind of anxiety that is often associated with testing and other forms of grading. Given that students who are learning remotely do not engage in face-to-face conversations with instructors or peers, there is heavy reliance on feedback to help learners to gauge their learning, especially as they engage in the writing process. Warnock (2009) suggested that the use of visual and auditory modes of providing feedback can help learners to understand better the feedback and this can provide needed support to learning.

A UNESCO (2020) report raised concern that transferable skills that are critical to the 21st century learner may be neglected in the remote learning environment. Such skills include critical thinking, creativity, and communication. These are all skill sets that the Communication Skills 1 course at the site of this study aimed to develop in students. That classes were being held through online remote teaching was of concern, as remote teaching tends to focus on the

impartation of content and lacks an emphasis on transferable skills. Mounting concerns are no surprise because, as Feldman (2020) asserted, most educators are not trained to "provide high-quality education remotely" (para. 11). As a consequence of a lack of adequate training, educators may teach using the same methods that are used in face-to-face teaching. However, Feldman (2020) cautioned that online teaching requires more than posting worksheets and readings on a website.

Furthermore, Griffin and Minter (2013) raised concern about the tools that students use to access online classes and to perform writing tasks. They theorized that tablets and smartphones are more effective for consumption than for production of writing. In their view, using such tools to produce writing might have a debilitating impact on students' writing. The further move to remote teaching, has led to even a greater reliance on technology; this, therefore, calls for careful and deliberate instructional design and shifts in English teaching pedagogy to cater to the needs of learners.

In a blog post by The Daring English Teacher (2020), it was suggested that in order for teachers to teach effective writing remotely, there is a need to adjust expectations and student activities. Questions were raised about whether the assignments could be adjusted in length and the number of sources required. The general thinking seemed to be that the workload should be reduced to make the work more manageable for the learner. Although the suggestions were directed at teaching secondary-level writing remotely, this leads to several concerns about the general teaching of writing in this domain such as the following: Were students being asked to write too much in an academic essay prior to transitioning to remote learning? Will reducing writing requirements yield similar results to those that would have been obtained outside of remote teaching? Are we attempting to sacrifice quality in order to complete a syllabus? The

proposed reduction in the writing requirements for high school students is concerning, as it has far-reaching implications for students who will move on to college in the ensuing years.

Additionally, in order to provide adequate and appropriate support for students, instructors must be adequately trained. A general concern in the field of online teaching is the lack of high-quality training of instructors to teach writing in a digital space (Griffin & Minter, 2013). While most college writing instructors have extensive experience in planning and teaching in the face-to-face mode, they often have very little or no experience in online communication processes, strategies, and general use of the requisite technologies (Baran et al., 2011; Davidson-Shivers et al., 2018; Salmon, 2012). In some cases, instructors are mainly provided with training to use particular platforms and software, but there is no instruction in pedagogy Griffin and Minter (2013). This has implications for students' learning experience in the online platform.

Respondents in a survey indicated that their institutions had only provided training for faculty to use the institution's learning management system. In like manner, the college at which this study was conducted provided similar training for the staff in light of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to online remote teaching. However, Lowenthal et al. (2019) postulated that faculty in some universities are required to participate in highly structured training before teaching online, while in other universities faculty access informal forms of training. As asserted by Ballard (2018), the instructional competence of the instructor is important in online environments, as this will invariably impact students' learning experience, which will in turn impact retention rates. Naturally, this has implications for the continuation of teaching and learning using online formats.

In addition to concerns about training, there have been reports of heavy workload of faculty and students, with online teaching imposing increased time demands to respond to students' email and to satisfy other administrative functions. Such demands will impact the instructor's ability to meet adequately the needs of learners. Griffin and Minter (2013) found in a survey that the required reading in a particular online course was 2.75 times greater than what was required in face-to-face classes. In another survey, it was found that no more than 45% of survey respondents indicated that their students had access to a writing center tutor, and no more than 57% of these same students had access to an online librarian, whether synchronously or otherwise. This find implies a greater burden on writing instructors and it raises concerns about the potential debilitating impact on students' learning outcomes.

**Students' Online Experiences**

College students of the 21st century have mixed experiences with online platforms. Because of changes in the media landscape, Lederman (2018) found that in 2016, more than 6 million students in the United States had taken an accredited online course. In the United States, at the turn of the century, 60% of persons who were enrolled in online degree programs were females (Kramarae, 2001). Marley (2007) made reference to literature that confirmed that there is a significant body of research affirming that male and female students experience the online or remote learning environment quite differently. Sullivan (as cited in Marley, 2007) found that females tended to place a higher value on the flexibility that online learning afforded them. Females also felt that the online environment facilitated shy and quiet students as well as family needs. Interestingly, Di Xu and Jaggers (as cited in Griffin & Minter, 2013) found that while all students tend to experience difficulty in adjusting to the online learning environment, females tend to outperform males in online programs. In general, Marley (2007) found that there are six

factors that gender differences may influence in online learning. These factors are motivation for enrolling, learning style, attitude toward and use of technology, communication style, level of support/sense of community, and drop out or failure rate.

Although there may be differences between genders in their online learning experiences, there are some common experiences and concerns. Administrative support is crucial in online learning. Some students feel disconnected from their institution of study, have trouble with time management, and feel the need for greater support (Owens et al., 2009; Palloff, & Pratt, 2003). Accordingly, Ray (2020) suggested that school personnel should be sensitive to student needs in terms of access to technology. While some schools may allow students to take devices home, some students have no access to devices. In the case of the site of this study, computer labs were made available to needy students. In cases where students cannot access such benefits, Ray (2020) asserted that instructors should still accept paper assignments that may even be sent in by mail. In any case, students must receive clear instructions on how to access the learning platform, especially at the start of the program. This will go a long way in limiting student and instructor frustration. Technical support should also be readily available.

As such, Palvia et al. (2018) posited that online students are concerned that they may feel isolated from their peers and instructors, as well as they may be concerned about their inability to master new technology and associated software. Interestingly, Barham (2016) found that community college students who were participants in a study felt that collaboration as a teaching tool in online courses better prepared them for the world of work. The students also expressed the view that collaboration helped to increase their achievement. Furthermore, students felt that being able to work with other students online in collaborative projects promoted a greater understanding of content as well as the experience helped them to develop a greater sense of

community. However, there were some students who felt that some of the worst things about working with other students online included limited participation of some students, poor communication, and poorly organized collaborative activities.

Interestingly, educational research has indicated that there are some critical components in the design of effective online programs that can be of benefit to students who are learning online (Matuga, 2007; Rivenburg, 2015). Close attention must be paid to content presentation, course structure, collaboration and interaction, and timely feedback (Lister, 2014). Although there is great emphasis on collaboration in 21st century learning, according to Barham (2016), most college students who were pursuing online programs indicated a preference for working alone. Interestingly though, Weimer (2013) found that when college students work collaboratively, their academic scores improved by 4%. There then seems to be a disconnect between students' experiences and their learning outcomes. It is evident that students do not enjoy working collaboratively, yet there are potential academic benefits.

Furthermore, it is likely that students' background will influence their experience in online learning. Griffin and Minter (2013) raised concern about the socioeconomic factors that have been found to impact particularly students from low-income backgrounds. Such students are likely to have limited access to computers, tablets, and smartphones, and this is exacerbated by little or no Internet connectivity. Some students are even hampered by a lack of knowledge of how to navigate the online platform. United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] et al. (2020) found that students who hail from situations of poverty or with few resources tend to fall behind their peers academically and this tends to widen the poverty gap. Nonetheless, Griffin and Minter (2013) asserted that online learning can alleviate some of the challenges that college students often encounter. These challenges include difficulty accessing time-off to attend classes,

transportation issues, lack of childcare, and meeting family obligations. The flexibility of online learning implies that online classes may potentially provide students with increased time for study.

Despite the advantages to pursuing courses online, there are some disadvantages that have been found even in developed countries. Even for participants who are in the same region, there may be issues with obtaining devices, Internet connectivity, and general accessibility. Remind, a digital platform that is used by schools in the United States to facilitate online communication indicated that approximately 1.3 million students stopped engaging with their schools by the end of the 2019 to 2020 school year. The drop of 8% to 17% in school-student communication occurred just after schools switched to remote teaching (Bradley, 2020). This finding implies that students were not as engaged in learning as they were before the move to online remote learning in 2020. Concerns of this kind have led many to question the efficacy of online remote teaching programs. Struggles to acquire devices, data plans, and maintain connection during a class have led to frustration for a great number of students. By implication, such frustrations are likely to impact the quality of the experience that students are likely to have in the online remote learning environment. Online remote teaching is said to be ineffective as a result of limited opportunity for collaboration and student interaction, as well as there is felt to be a reliance on summative assessment.

In an open letter, college students expressed their aversion to continuing online remote learning into the fall of 2020 (University Wire, 2020). Students in Jamaica have raised similar concerns and have made calls for even some of their classes to be face-to-face. The students' disquiet with remote instruction was nestled in the absence of growth and fun that they associate with face-to-face classes. In their view, the curriculum is only one aspect of the college

experience and remote learning robs them of a vital part of this experience. Jeffery and Bauer (2020) found that when chemistry lessons were moved into a remote learning environment, students reported that their communication among peers suffered. Furthermore, learning chemistry remotely negatively impacted students' understanding, and motivation to engage and persist. Jeffery and Bauer (2020) concluded that social dynamics, peer interaction, real-time communication, and hands-on manipulation are all important in educational settings.

Conversely, Gillis and Krull (2020) found that 70% of students stated that live Zoom discussions tend to be very accessible, and 83% of students felt that small-group videos were very accessible. Despite suggestions by some that online learning is superior to other modes of learning (Roblyer, 2016), an evidence review of education technology has indicated that courses that are offered exclusively online in developed countries experience a lowering of student academic performance in comparison to face-to-face courses (UNICEF et al., 2020). Since remote learning adopts an online mode, there may be implications for student performance where remote teaching is practiced.

It is likely that some of the challenges experienced across the United States and in small island nations such as Jamaica in online remote teaching are identical. Online teachers have expressed that they find it difficult to develop connectedness with their online students and students feel the same disconnect from their teachers (Anson, 1999; Dockter & Borgman, 2016). A Mississippi teacher of the year, Renee Moore, shared in an interview that the two most significant challenges that students were encountering in remote learning in 2020 were limited access to reliable Internet service and devices, as well as teachers lack the pedagogical skills to teach subjects such as writing online (Rizga, 2020). Additionally, it has been found that students need more interaction than that obtained in the remote classroom; some students learn

independently while others thrive on collaboration. Moore pointed out that the writing class can benefit from discussion boards, videoconferencing, and other forums; however, this too is frowned upon by some students who see online discussions as too impersonal.

A recent study carried out by Achieve3000 (2020) indicated that one of the greatest challenges faced in remote learning is students' lack of participation. The study made reference to a Common Sense Media survey that was conducted in early 2020. The survey indicated that 25% of teens connected with their teachers less than once per week during school closure and up to 41% of students had not attended online classes at all since the onset of the pandemic. It was further found that some educators failed to sustain grading and did not provide adequate feedback in remote teaching. This is problematic, as John Hattie (as cited in Achieve3000, 2020) asserted that feedback is among the top 10 influences on achievement. Indeed, feedback can be instructive to learners and can also motivate learning. Achieve3000 (2020) suggested that this is particularly difficult to enforce in a remote learning environment. In fact, Feldman (2020) asserted that grades that are assigned during remote learning are likely to be inaccurate, as they might not reflect the true capabilities of learners. Certainly, this has implications for the teaching and assessment of writing at the college level.

**Self-Regulation**

College students have a role to play in achieving success. For college students to improve their writing skills in an online remote environment, they must display self-regulatory skills. Self-regulation is defined by Berk (as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2010) as "the ability to direct and control one's own actions and emotions" (p. 20). This implies displaying self-control and a responsible attitude that relate to cognitive, personal, and social development. Self-regulation also has to do with having the ability to wait for rewards, pleasure, and the basic fulfilment of

desires. According to Cazan (2014), the online learning space connotes learner centeredness and self-regulation. Online learners must, therefore, be able to establish personal learning goals, monitor their own learning progress, manage their time, and seek help when necessary. (Cazan, 2014) referred to multiple studies that had findings indicating a positive relationship between self-regulated learning and achievement in online programs. Eggen and Kauchak (2010) mentioned research that indicated that children who displayed the ability to forgo privileges in their early years were more positive, motivated, and persistent in the pursuit of their goals as adults. They also enjoy better social relationships with family and peers and develop good habits. Persons who are self-regulated generally enjoyed a better quality of life.

Furthermore, students who are self-regulated have been found to score high in tests and usually have academic success. In fact, Schunk and Ertmer (as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2013) asserted that success in school, in many instances, "depends more on self-regulation than on native ability" (p. 21). Additionally, Bondurant (2010) postulated that children who showed signs of deficits in self-regulation in their early years went on to under-achieve academically. Children at 41/2 years old who also showed delay-of-gratification deficits tended to experience reading underachievement in later years. This suggests that self-regulation in students is useful, as it helps them to be responsible, conscientious, persistent persons who can forgo gratification for greater rewards later. While it has been well established that self-regulation is important to learner success in the traditional classroom, Cazan (2014) asserted that self-regulation takes on even more importance in the online space. This may be especially true in situations where learners hardly interface with their instructors.

Many 1st-year college students tend to be young adults who may be recent graduates from high school. According to Yoder et al. (2014), traditional college students are18 to 24 years

old. Not all these individuals can manage themselves well. Stephen and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2021) found that college students need guidance in time management, goal commitment, and how to navigate the online space to do well in online learning. Glenn (2018) found that self-regulation was a key determiner of student success in online learning. Despite this, Cazan (2014) posited that many studies indicated that there were no significant differences in the self-regulatory skills that were demonstrated among learners before and after their participation in online courses.

Additionally, self-regulation is deemed as a vital skill among future teachers. Lee and Turner (2017) found that preservice teachers needed to have a clear understanding of how their course content connects to their future teaching goals to promote their use of strategies to develop self-regulation and learning. This complements the preservice teachers' intrinsic motivation to learn in their content area. Not only is self-regulation relevant to mastering the content area, but it is necessary for general classroom management and instruction. Nonetheless, Yalcin (2017) found that self-regulation had a negative effect on learner satisfaction. In the same study, (Yalcin, 2017) also found that self-regulation is an essential skill that online learners must have to maintain their engagement in the learning process. Indeed, challenges will come in life, but the acquisition of self-regulation can help individuals to take charge of their situation, be persistent, and develop strategies to achieve success in any area. This is because students who are self-regulated are purpose driven, work hard, and achieve not only academic success but are socially adept as well.

**Assessment**

Assessment is important in any mode of teaching and learning, which includes the synchronous online remote writing classroom. Banta and Palomba (2014) defined assessment as

the process through which measures are implemented to ascertain the impact of resources, actions, and outcomes that are engaged in to improve the effectiveness of teaching, programs, and other services. Assessment is also defined as the ways in which institutions document their own organizational, instructional, and pragmatic effectiveness (Ewell, 2002). In the field of education, assessment can be taken to mean measures that ascertain students' educational attainment. Formative assessment, or assessment for learning, is widely used in remote teaching. That formative assessment occurs ahead of course completion, allows students to receive fast feedback; this promotes greater student engagement while fostering a learning community (Baleni, 2015). This has proved to be beneficial in teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 2008). UNICEF et al. (2020) asserted that feedback is a critical aspect of formative assessment. According to Ray (2020), it is critical that instructors provide feedback to students in the shortest possible time. Understandably, the ability of instructors to provide timely feedback will depend on the varying degrees of complexity of different assignments.

Of importance though, is that there are concerns that the literature of the last decade shows that college students who are learning in online environments continue to be assessed by objective-type assessments that merely measure lower-level thinking skills (Juele, 2017). Skills of this nature fail to prepare adequately college students for the work world. Studies have found that students benefitted from the inclusion of authentic assessment in their online courses (Baleni, 2015; Juele, 2017; Vonderwell & Boboc, 2013). Students' critical thinking skills were developed through their participation in writing assignments, discussion forums, and problem-based assignments (Juele, 2017). Similarly, Powell et al. (2017) found that discussion posts promote active learning through learner involvement. This is especially critical as students develop their writing skills.

The online environment also has an impact on the modes of providing feedback to learners. Dockter and Borgman (2016) suggested that when instructors provide a sound or audio overview of writing assignments, it enables learners to make meaning of the instructions and to decipher better the complexities of the task. Further, comments on students' work should typically be more detailed than in face-to-face teaching, as there is reduced opportunity for students to make queries. Detailed comments can encourage students to continue on to future assignments. Even before the transition to remote learning, researchers in the field of education lamented the quality of feedback students receive in writing classes. Postsecondary instructors have been found to give feedback at the surface level of students' writing (Hesse, 2017; Milson-Whyte et al., 2019). This is of concern, as the implication is that students would only make cosmetic changes to their work.

Interestingly, it has been found that the traditional written commentary is not the most effective for online learners. According to 60 years of composition research, students tend not to understand the comments, limited quality and quantity of communication are accomplished, and such comments sometimes come across as the instructor being picky (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). Accordingly, programs such as Jing, video e-mail (Pacansky-Brock, 2017), and the Turnitin feedback studio's voice and text features have been incorporated into online programs. Pacansky-Brock (2017) asserted that online students are very motivated when instructors use technological tools such as those previously mentioned. However, Hewett (2006) found that when students received written feedback, their tendency was to revise at the sentence level and not really make substantive changes.

Consequently, instructors must support students in gaining optimum benefits from feedback (Baleni, 2015). In keeping with this type of instruction, lesson design in remote

teaching requires more detail than that which is expected in face-to-face instruction (Anson, 1999; Dockter & Borgman, 2016). The reason for increased demands in planning for remote instruction is that in-person classes allow the teacher to read the expressions of students to determine the need for intervention. In remote settings, the instructor must anticipate a lack of understanding and need for repetition or reinforcement and plan accordingly (Rizga, 2020). That students are often hidden behind a screen in remote learning, makes lesson design somewhat more tedious.

**Summary**

In Chapter 2, the researcher presented literature related to the teaching of writing to 1st-year college students, online and remote learning, and their associated elements. Composition students in higher education displayed writing deficiencies both online and in face-to-face classes. During the Covid-19 pandemic, students faced challenges in acquiring electronic devices, and having a lack of Internet connectivity. Did 1st-year college students have similar experiences in synchronous online remote learning and to what extent was their performance in writing impacted? Remote learning, which is a product of distance education, has been around for a very long time, dating back to 1728. Nonetheless, distance learning has appeared in various forms throughout centuries of teaching and learning and has evolved to embrace the Internet and the proliferation of electronic devices that make teaching and learning arguably accessible, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. College students' level of self-regulation is an important consideration in examining students' experiences in the remote learning environment. The application of cognitive load theory and the process model of composition are theorized to be quite instructive in understanding the development of writing skills in students. Additionally,

formative assessment and feedback must be carefully measured to support positive learning experiences in online remote learning. It may, therefore, be concluded that:

1. Educational technology continues to advance and facilitate education.

2. Techniques are needed to improve college composition writing.

3. Applying a range of instructional approaches can positively impact college students' experiences in learning composition writing.

In Chapter 3, the researcher presents the methodology employed in this research project. The case study approach is explained and explored, considering the topic at hand and the Caribbean context of this study.

## Chapter 3

## Methodology

In Chapter 3, the researcher presents a discussion of the qualitative approach that was employed in this study. Details are presented on the case study as a qualitative method and its appropriateness in developing an understanding of the issues related to 1st-year college students' experiences learning writing in an online remote learning environment. Emphasis is also placed on the tools that were used in deriving the relevant findings in this research. This section also presents information on the research site and sample selection, participants, data collection, data management strategies, data analysis, trustworthiness features, the researcher's role, and bias, as well as other ethical considerations.

### Design of the Study

A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study, as qualitative methods allow for detailed analysis of the experiences of the participants as they were engaged in activities to develop their writing. Qualitative research approaches facilitate deep inquiry. In a qualitative study, the researcher's goal is usually to understand the larger population (Parrado, 2008). The qualitative research approach involves "the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., nonnumerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 7). A qualitative approach is further supported by Gay et al. (2009) in their assertion that qualitative research does not necessarily subscribe to the view that the world is stable, coherent, or uniform. The transient nature of the world was highlighted in 2020 with the changes caused by the impact of Covid-19. Changes in education are also reflected in the myriad approaches to the teaching of writing as well as the varying approaches to remote learning. Clearly, the proliferation of the Internet and its appended smart

devices has necessitated novel approaches to teaching and learning. A qualitative study allowed for the researcher to unearth experiences that were situated in specific contexts and told from the perspectives of individuals and groups who lived the particular experiences.

Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) asserted that a qualitative approach is appropriate in contexts where a concept or phenomenon needs to be better explored or understood. This is applicable in this research, as more research on writing processes in remote learning environments was needed, especially with the reliance on teaching in the virtual space that was current at the time of the study. The inclusion of interviews in this process was especially useful, as it allowed for the researcher to gain insight into the views and perspectives of the participants as they allowed for the probing of issues (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Gay et al. (2009) added that interviews provide insight that would not be accessible through observation.

It would have been difficult to carry out observation of students in the online remote learning environment because all students were not necessarily seen on-screen at once during classes. Thus, interviews were particularly useful when studying the kinds of experiences students had while learning writing in an online remote environment, as some students were not able to access the video feature by choice or because of problems with their devices or limited bandwidth. Consequently, the researcher interviewed 14 first-year college students who pursued a writing course in a remote learning environment. A review of samples of participants' writing was also used to derive a deeper understanding of the students' experiences while learning writing in an online remote environment.

A case-study approach was selected for this study, as it sought primarily to examine 1st-year college students' experiences in learning writing in an online remote learning environment.

A case study is defined by Seawright and Gerring (2008) as an intensive qualitative or quantitative analysis of a unit or segments of a unit of a larger population. Case studies are also used to analyze a phenomenon, generate hypothesis, and validate a method (Teegavarapu et al., 2008). This approach can provide a qualitative and, thus, a deep analysis of the performance of students and the kinds of experiences that students have while learning writing through online remote teaching. A case study allows researchers to "focus on a unit of study known as a bounded system" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 426). In this case, a classroom was the focus. Much of the focus in the case study is heavily rooted in the context in which the phenomenon is found. As suggested by Gay et al. (2009), case studies are useful in explaining how a particular innovation is impacting persons in a specific setting. Remote teaching, through the Internet, was the innovation in this study and it was explored in the 1st-year college student writing class. The case study can also provide insight into strategies that are used in the learning process in synchronous online remote instruction. Thus, the case study was expected to produce a narrative that presented a "thick description" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 427) of the subject. This included multiple variables and an analysis of the ways in which they interact.

An additional aspect of the methodology that was used in this study is triangulation. Triangulation is deemed to be an effective method to ensure the reliability of research findings through testing the findings of one data source against another. Gay et al. (2009) asserted that triangulation allows the researcher to "obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information" (p. 377). Additionally, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that triangulation can lead to increased internal validity of research findings. Usually, triangulation involves three clearly distinct sources of data; however, in this study, two main data sources were examined. The researcher identified relationships between interview findings and

participants' written work. This led the researcher to a better understanding of the experiences that 1st-year college students had in an online remote learning class while learning writing.

This was a necessary investigation, as it can be instructive as to whether students have been having positive or negative experiences in the synchronous online remote writing course. To begin the study, the researcher had a discussion with the selected class (sample) and explained the research aims. The class teacher had previously indicated that the students would be willing to participate in the study. After the meeting, the researcher sent the class a link to a Google forms document for them to complete. Students were instructed to indicate whether they were willing to participate in the study. If they indicated that they were not willing to participate in the study, no further action was required.

The researcher reviewed the completed forms with the aim of selecting the two males in the class and to eliminate those who were repeating the course. Unfortunately, no male opted to participate in the study; however, one male later consented to participate after he was encouraged by a friend in the class. Consequently, 14 cases were selected for interviews and close study. The selected cases were requested to give informed consent. The researcher contacted participants through email and WhatsApp messages to ask them to indicate a convenient day and time for their interviews. Later in the process, the researcher conducted interviews. Participants also provided the researcher with samples of their writing. This process was followed up with data analysis that involved triangulation. The researcher then wrote the initial report and asked participants to review varying sections that were relevant to them. Following this, the researcher prepared the final report.

**Site and Sample Selection**

The research site is located in Jamaica. The institution offers accredited higher education programs to the island from its location and online through remote learning. The college offers a range of teacher training programs to the nation.

The college primarily offers undergraduate programs; certificates and diplomas are also offered. The Bachelor of Education in teaching is offered through a 4-year full-time program; this has been the case since the 2011 to 2012 academic year. Students are trained to teach at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels of education. Programs are delivered through several departments, namely, early childhood education, mathematics and sciences, modern languages, human ecology, history and geography, and language arts. General education courses are offered through the department of aesthetics as well as the education department. Through these departments, the college offers programs to approximately 1,200 students annually. Students also enrolled in certificate, diploma, associate degree, advance diplomas, and occupational studies programs. The postgraduate diploma is offered on a part-time basis. The institution also offers the City and Guild program to untrained teachers and practitioners. Traditionally, programs are offered through a face-to-face mode; however, because of Covid-19 impacting nations in 2020, the college has shifted to online remote teaching. Communication Skills 1, and, in fact, most courses at the college, are facilitated on the Microsoft platform.

**Participants**

The research participants were 1st-year teachers in training, pursuing the course Communication Skills 1 at the institution at which the study was conducted. All participants were pursuing the course online remotely. Approximately 137 full-time 1st-year students, from all areas of specialization, pursue Communication Skills 1 in semester 2 annually. Additionally,

14 students from one class of 34 students that were assigned to one instructor was purposively selected for this study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), while there is no strict rule on the number of subjects in qualitative studies, sample size depends on the particular study design. Usually, four or five cases can be sufficient for a case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, the researcher opted to include 14 participants in this study in the event that any participant had to drop out of the study. If all participants remained in the study, there would be greater opportunity to show reliability and validity of the findings.

Additionally, 14 participants would be representative of the demographics. Students were randomly placed into classes for Communication Skills 1 according to their area of speciality. Nonetheless, all classes were taught according to the same syllabus. The class selected had students whose majors were language and literacy or language and literature. Two students in the sample resided on campus, while 12 participants accessed classes from their homes or a location that was convenient to them. All the participants were pursuing most of their courses online remotely because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher issued consent forms to all participants and received the signed forms, through email, before interview sessions were conducted.

The sample included 13 females and one male based on the distribution between genders represented on the campus and within the faculty's and students' willingness to participate in the study. Only two males were in the class. Sullivan (as cited in Marley, 2007) found that females appreciated the flexibility of online learning, as it facilitated other obligations that the learners might have. Consequently, students who worked on a part-time basis were purposively included in the sample. A higher number of full-time students (who do not work) were included in the sample since most of the students did not have jobs. Effort was also made to include 10 students

in the sample who were present for most classes. It was important that participants attended most

of the sessions and completed the writing course, as this allowed the researcher to gauge the

online remote learning experience for the duration of the course.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected through interviews and artifacts in the form of samples of

participants' work. The researcher used a diary to record notes for use after the interviews. Some

interviews were recorded through the Zoom platform through which most interviews were

conducted. Subsequently, 14 participants—13 females and one male—were interviewed.

Samples of each participant's writing were analyzed.

*The Interviews*

Research participants were interviewed individually, which was the primary means of

collecting data. Gay et al. (2009) posited that interviews enable researchers to gain access to

important information that they could not obtain through observation only. Accordingly,

interviews facilitate follow-up questions and deep probing that might be inspired by a response

to a particular question. This leads to further insight into participants' feelings and experiences

(Gay et al., 2009). Consequently, the interviewer utilized semistructured interviews, as they

allow for pre-determined and structured questions as well as unstructured questions that were

prompted by responses in the interview (see Appendix A). In keeping with this, open-ended

questions were asked to allow participants to share their experiences, unconstrained by the

researcher's perspectives or past research (Creswell, 2005).

The sample was selected from the students in the Communication Skills 1 classes in

semester 2, 2020–2021. A lecturer volunteered one of her classes for the study, as she felt they

would have presented an interesting case for this study and the students would have been willing

to participate in the study. Students remain in their specialist groups for Communication Skills 1. This means that Language Arts students remain in their class group for this course, even though it is a general education course that is taken by all year-1 students. The participants were selected for the study based on their attendance and involvement in classes that were facilitated remotely. Students who were resitting the course were not selected for this study. Random purposive sampling was used in this study. The sample included one male, since the student population consisted of very few males and only two males were in the selected class.

Upon the completion of teaching in semester 2 (February-June 2021), the researcher sent email to 34 students who pursued the writing course. The email was to ascertain whether students would be willing and able to participate in the study. A follow-up survey that informed the researcher in the selection of research participants was sent to garner general information about the students (see Appendix B). When the surveys were submitted and reviewed, 14 suitable candidates were selected for the study. The researcher then sent the prospective participants letters of consent for their signatures (see Appendix C). The email also entailed details on the interview protocol as well as the purpose of the study.

Subsequently, the researcher sent (via WhatsApp) a reminder of the interview 2 days ahead of each scheduled interview; a final reminder and the Zoom link were sent the morning of the interview. Before commencing interviews, the researcher discussed the procedure with each participant and their questions were facilitated. The researcher reminded the participants that their identity would be kept confidential during and after the research process. Through the discussion, the participants helped the researcher to understand better the research problem and to uncover possibly hidden themes. All interview questions enabled the interviewer to uncover information to answer the research questions. The researcher systematically developed and

constructed themes for this study based on the findings of the interviews and the analysis of the participants' writing. The emergent themes were then organized, grouped, and compared with the themes that emerged from the literature that was reviewed.

*Artifacts*

Samples of written work that were composed by each research participant were collected for analysis. Gay et al. (2009) posited that artifacts are among several types of documents that are used in qualitative research. The researcher examined students' written work. Students' work is among those sources of information that occur naturally in the educational setting and so does not require any additional effort on the part of the participants. The participants would have composed expository essays at the beginning and at the end of the composition course; these were useful for comparative analysis. A comparison of the interview findings and participants' written work can help the researcher to determine whether there is correspondence between participants' perceptions of their learning experiences and their learning outcomes. The pieces indicated whether there was improvement in the participants' writing.

The researcher requested permission from the college to include the participants' work in the study with the understanding that the identity of the participants would not be disclosed. Participants were also asked for their consent to share their work in the letter of consent. They were asked to provide the researcher with the documents by the day of each interview. The researcher read the pieces as many times as was required to identify themes. Findings were then coded and included in the report.

**Data Management Strategies**

Findings that were derived from interviews were recorded in narrative form in a diary. The interviews were carried out during periods that were mutually convenient for the participants

and the researcher. With the consent of interviewees, interviews were recorded using the recording feature available on the Zoom platform. Recordings were carefully stored for use during the analysis and reporting phases of the research process. Files saved to the researcher's personal computer have been encrypted for greater security. The researcher lives alone and so will keep research material in a secure work area where visitors are not allowed. Files will be kept secure for 3 years and then deleted.

The interview sessions were conducted on the Zoom platform, which allowed for social distancing and the precautions necessary because of Covid-19. The Zoom platform was also convenient in eliminating the need for extensive travel to gather data. Following the interviews, the files were saved on the researcher's computer for the duration of the study. Gay et al. (2009) asserted that the preferred method of data collection is audio or videotape recording, as they provide "a verbatim account of the session…and they ensure that the original data is available at any time" (p. 372). Given the proclivity of online systems to fail at times, the researcher ensured that data that were saved in audio format were also written in a diary. This provided easy access to the data for the researcher to carry out ongoing analysis throughout the research phase.

**Data Analysis**

There were two males in the Language Arts group, the area of specialization from which the sample was selected. The campus facilitates both residential and nonresidential students. Given the detailed nature of qualitative research, it is expected that 14 participants can be dealt with in the study and not the entire group of students. In this study, the 14 participants were purposively selected from the group of 34 students. The participants were included based on their willingness to participate in the study, frequency of class attendance, and they were pursuing the course for the first time.

Three interviews were carried out as the pilot phase of the study. Through the pilot, the researcher discovered that it would have been useful to add a question asking participants to share whether they think group work should have been included in the course. This realization came about as a result of participants' constant reference to the role of group work in the formation of their friendships in the class. As the interviews progressed, some participants also expressed that they were not in a position to compare the writing course offered remotely to the face-to-face offering of the course. Despite this concern, the researcher opted to retain the question, as the responses provided some insight into participants' perception of the volume of work that was required of them even if it were only perceived in one context.

The interviews and samples of participants' writing were analysed to frame key themes that were evident. The researcher also reviewed the reflective notes from the diary entries and drew conclusions. Additionally, the researcher listened to recordings and read notes as many times as necessary to code data, arrive at the emergent themes, and make connections with the literature review. The data that were generated from the semistructured interview sessions were organized, coded, and analyzed using the constant comparative method. This method implies constant comparison of the data that were obtained. According to Merriam (1998), the constant comparative method requires that the researcher start with a specific incident that is observed in an interview, field notes, and other documents and carries out a comparison with other incidents either in the same set of data or another data set. The comparison enables the researcher to arrive at tentative categories that can be compared.

In accordance with the guidelines that were suggested by Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Schneider, 2010), the researcher developed and constructed themes for this study (see Appendix D). Subsequently, the emergent themes were organized, grouped, and compared with the themes

that emerged from the literature that was reviewed. All information obtained has been secured

and will only be used for the purpose of the current study.

**Trustworthiness Features of the Research Process**

The researcher engaged in the research process throughout a prolonged period.

Triangulation was used to verify data sources. This involved the researcher carrying out

individual interviews, and she also analyzed artifacts in the form of participants' writing to see

whether the findings corresponded. Because of the heavy reliance on interviews, this study does

not meet the quality of independence in a strict sense. Nonetheless, the artifacts presented a

different kind of data from that obtained through the interviews.

Additionally, the researcher wrote notes about her personal experiences throughout the

study. Such notes captured the researcher's observations, especially during data collection, and

thoughts on what can be learned from various occurrences. According to Creswell and Creswell

(2018), engaging in this process is called reflexive thinking, which can be quite useful in

qualitative research. It is vital that the researcher not only record notes, but also reflect on their

own personal experiences, and think about how their own experiences may influence their

interpretation of the findings of the study. The researcher engaged in this reflective process. This

helped the researcher to become aware of her connections with the participants and the research

site and to make a conscious effort not to allow personal biases to shape her interpretations of

findings.

**The Researcher's Role and Bias**

A formal written request was made to the administration ahead of the commencement of

the study. Ethical obligations were honored, as all participants were assured in writing that their

names would not be used in the study and all information obtained would be used for the sole purpose of this study. They were assured of confidentiality throughout the research process.

During the research process, the researcher was the main instrument. The researcher carried out interviews of individual participants. In this study, the researcher also recorded findings and secured all data. The researcher encouraged participants to give honest responses. Participants had not previously met the researcher, and this might have provided ground for objectivity as well as it might have encouraged student honesty and openness. Accordingly, the researcher was careful not to cast judgment on the participants or to assume their responses.

**Ethical Considerations**

The participants in the study were assured that their identity would not be divulged during or after the research process. Participants were assured in writing that their comments and all notes made about their interactions would be kept confidential. Participants were required to sign a document indicating their willingness to participate in the study before it commenced (see Appendix C). Gay et al. (2009) asserted that it is critical that qualitative researchers ensure procedures related to informed consent be upheld as well as they must also maintain "closely aligned personal and professional ethical perspectives" (p. 114). At various stages of the research process, the researcher had conversations with participants in relation to informed consent.

Additionally, an application was submitted by Dr. Bianchi-Laubsch, the chairperson of my research committee, to the institutional review board (IRB) for its approval. IRB serves the necessary function of safeguarding the rights of human subjects in the field of research.

**Summary**

This qualitative study was conducted with the researcher using a case study design to examine the quality of 1st-year college students' writing and the experiences that the students

had in learning writing in a synchronous online remote learning environment. Data were collected through qualitative individual interviews, and analysis of the participants' written course work. The researcher investigated the kinds of interactions that were facilitated in a 1st-year synchronous online, remote, college composition writing class and how these contributed to the learners' experiences in the course. Effort was made to ascertain factors that could augment writing practices and those that could negatively impact students' writing experiences in the online remote learning context. Consequently, the study provides information that educational practitioners can use to support writing instruction and in uncovering ways that students' writing experiences can be bolstered, especially in online remote learning.

Consequently, the researcher aimed to explore the various ways in which college students learn about writing while working in an online remote environment synchronously. Insight into whether the online remote learning environment enhanced or diminished the quality of the experiences that students had in the writing course would be found in this study. Additionally, this research sought to ascertain students' perception of the overall impact of the use of the approaches employed in the online remote learning environment on their learning outcomes.

**Chapter 4**

**Findings**

The aim of this study was to examine the experiences of 1st-year college students while

learning composition writing through synchronous online remote teaching. The researcher

sought to explore the instructional practices that students were exposed to in a formal

synchronous online remote writing classroom. Participants commented on the practices that they

deemed to be effective and those that they thought needed improvement. Additionally, the

researcher analyzed samples of participants' writing at the start of the course and the writing that

they produced toward the end of the course. A description of the results is presented in this

chapter to provide answers to the questions asked in Chapter 1. The first set of data presents

insight into how 1st-year college students are engaged in composition writing classes in a

synchronous online remote learning environment. The following set of data presents the positive

experiences that the students had in composition writing classes in the synchronous online

remote classroom. Included in this section is a set of data indicating the challenges that 1st-year

students encounter in synchronous online remote learning. To answer the research questions,

descriptive statistics were used.

**Section A—Descriptive Statistics**

*Demographics of Sample*

There were 14 participants in this study, comprising 13 females and one male. In this

study, 64% of the participants were between ages 16 and 20 years old, while 22% were between

21 and 25 years old. In addition, 14% of the sample was 26 years old or older. All of the

participants were enrolled in Communication Skills 1, which is a compulsory writing course for

all 1st-year teachers' college students. Participants persued the course remotely from February through June 2021.

In the interviews, 64% of the participants indicated that their first experience in synchronous online remote learning commenced in October, 2020. The other 36% of the participants indicated that they first participated in synchronous online remote learning in March, 2020 to complete their high school program at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. One participant indicated that she engaged in synchronous online remote learning in a private learning institution from March through to May 2020. While two students began their first year of college in February 2021 (semester 2), only one of them was participating in synchronous online remote learning for the first time. The initial survey revealed that 29% of the participants were present for all Communication Skills 1 classes that were held during the semester, while 71% of the participants were absent from one to three classes. The demographics of the population are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of the Study Participants*

|  | Number of Students | Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender |  |  |
| Male | 1 | 7 |
| Female | 13 | 93 |
| Age |  |  |
| 16–20 | 9 | 64 |
| 1. 21–25 | 2. 3 | 3. 22 |

<div align="right">(continued)</div>

|  | Number of Students | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 26+ | 2 | 14 |
| Status |  |  |
| Full-Time Student | 11 | 79 |
| Full-Time Student/Part-Time Employee | 3 | 21 |
| Specialization |  |  |
| Language and Literature | 2 | 14 |
| Language and Literacy | 12 | 86 |
| Online Course Experience |  |  |
| 2 Courses Online | 5 | 36 |
| First-Time Online Students | 9 | 64 |

*Note.* $N = 14$.

### *Emerging Themes From the Interviews*

**Remote Learning.**

***Devices Used to Access Synchronous Online Remote Classes.*** This section captures the devices used by the selected sample for synchronous online remote learning for the course Communication Skills 1. The devices that were identified are presented in Table 2 along with the number of participants who indicated that they used the device. One student indicated that he used a Chromebook to access classes, while one student indicated that she used a tablet to access most of her classes.

**Table 2**

*Devices Used by Participants to Access Online Remote Classes*

| Devices | Number of students | Percentage of sample |
|---|---|---|
| Laptop | 10 | 72 |
| Tablet | 1 | 7 |
| Smartphone | 3 | 21 |

Table 2 shows the devices that were used by each participant to access synchronous online remote Communication Skills 1 classes. The most popular device that was indicated was the laptop computer, which were used by 72% of the participants. On the other hand, 21% of the sample used smartphones to access online remote classes, while 7% of the participants used a tablet to access classes.

The participants had a range of reasons for the laptop being the preferred device to access synchronous online remote classes. The most popular reason for the laptop being chosen was that it provided a large screen for viewing, and this was especially advantageous when the screen was being shared in class. The same four participants indicated that the laptop was flexible and easier to use than other devices were. Second to that, two participants indicated that the laptop had more features than other devices did. Another two participants indicated that the laptop offered more storage than other devices did. Individual participants stated that the laptop allowed for access to email and the class link that was stored in email allowed access to a range of documents and held a charge longer. Participant 4 indicated that the laptop allowed her to multi-task. In so doing, she could navigate away from the class to do an assignment for about 15 minutes and then she returned to class. Participant 6 expressed that the laptop was convenient, as

it allowed users to make phone calls or attend to other matters on the phone while still being in class on the laptop.

While 21% of the participants used smartphones for classes and 7% used a tablet, they indicated that the laptop was their preferred device. Two participants used the smartphone to access online remote classes in Communication Skills 1 because they did not have access to a functioning laptop computer. One participant used the smartphone to access data or Internet through her phone. This same participant indicated that she used a laptop to do assignments. The participant who used a tablet indicated that she had no access to a laptop and used her phone for a while. She later got a tablet to borrow to use for classes; however, the tablet sometimes froze. There was a general disquiet with using phones for classes, as it was expressed that phone calls often interrupted the classes. Participant 14 was not able to hear the class or lecturer and they could not hear her when she used her phone to access online remote classes for Communication Skills 1.

**_Participants' Perceptions of Remote Online Learning._** In this study, 50% of the participants indicated that they liked remote learning, while 50% said they were neutral. No participant disliked remote learning even though they said that there were challenges. Additionally, 79% of the participants indicated that they would recommend the course taught remotely to their friends, but 14% of the participants said that they would not recommend it to their friends, as their friends were easily distracted and would not do well in the online remote environment. It was also found that 14% of the participants indicated a preference for online remote learning rather than face-to-face learning. Their main reasons were the convenience and flexibility that online remote learning offered. Most of the participants, 57%, preferred face-to-face learning, and 50% of the participants said they would not necessarily be interested in online

remote learning outside of a pandemic. The main reasons included Internet challenges and distractions in their home environment. Conversely, the 50% who would be interested in remote learning outside of a pandemic said that it was convenient, flexible, and there was no difference between online remote learning and face-to-face learning.

The participants generally felt that online remote teaching was effective for theory-based courses, but not the technical ones. While most participants said they had a good experience learning Communication Skills 1 remotely, they expressed frustration with another course that they said should not be taught through the online remote platform. Participant 1 said the following:

> I think that remote learning is fine for theory-based courses.…not the technical ones.…In face-to-face, the teacher spends too much time writing on the board. Online, the slides are prepared before class. The information is more rounded as the lecturer uses videos and we get much more than we get from the textbook.…She does not have to find a projector or other things for class.

Additionally, participants expressed concern that problems with the Internet and devices slowed down the pace of presentations, but they felt those were negligible. Participant 4 expressed, "We mostly type responses in the chat and that slows down the process." When asked what they thought course designers could do to enhance the learning experience, 71% of the respondents said the course was fine as it was.

Participants 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10 said that they perceived online remote learning was more demanding than face-to-face learning. Participant 1 said, "Well, I cannot really compare having not done this course in a face-to-face mode. I think though that online might have more research, reading, and writing." According to Participant 5, "Learning remotely is more demanding in

some ways because more effort is required online. Writing is the same, but reading is more. Since I am online, I can find more sources and visit a lot of websites." Participant 8 said that she felt that students got more work in the remote environment than they would have got in the face-to-face classroom "to make up for the fact that we are not face-to-face just to show that we are a part of the class." Participants 2, 3, 6, and 14 said that the course outline helped them to follow the course. In addition, 43% of the participants stated that online remote learning was equally demanding to face-to-face learning.

**Internet Connectivity**. Challenges related to Internet access and stability were the most pervasive problems shared by the participants. Accordingly, 50% of the participants stated that the greatest challenge that they experienced in online remote learning was Internet connectivity problems. Table 3 displays a numerical description of participants' level of Internet stability during online remote learning in Communication Skills 1 classes.

**Table 3**

*Participants' Description of Their Level of Internet Stability During Online Remote Learning Classes*

| Quality | Number of Participants | Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stable | 5 | 36 |
| Fluctuate | 6 | 43 |
| Unstable | 3 | 21 |

Five participants indicated that their Internet connectivity was mostly stable throughout online remote classes in semester 2. On the other hand, six participants reported that their Internet connectivity fluctuated during online remote classes, while three participants perceived that their Internet connectivity was generally unstable throughout online remote classes.

Combined, 64% of the participants indicated that there were ongoing problems with their Internet connectivity throughout online remote learning classes, while 36% of the participants indicated that they had stable Internet connectivity.

According to Participant 1, "The main challenge is the Internet connection. The lecturer's Internet might drop in the middle of an important point. To help us, the lecturer repeats, posts the information in the WhatsApp group, or sends it through email." Participant 3 indicated, "The greatest challenge is when the Internet goes.…If the Internet goes in the middle of a session for an extended period of time." Participant 4 had the challenge of moving to another parish during the course, so, "I had to go by my sister's house so I could get access to reliable Internet. I did not have a computer for approximately one month. During that time, I used my phone for classes." Participant 6 said, "The Internet is generally stable, but it is rough lately." Lately referred to nearing the end of the course. Additionally, Participant 10 stated, "I have Internet issues but not too bad." This suggested that the challenges that she encountered were not perceived to be as severe as some other participants might have experienced.

**Figure 1**

*Factors Affecting Remote Learning*
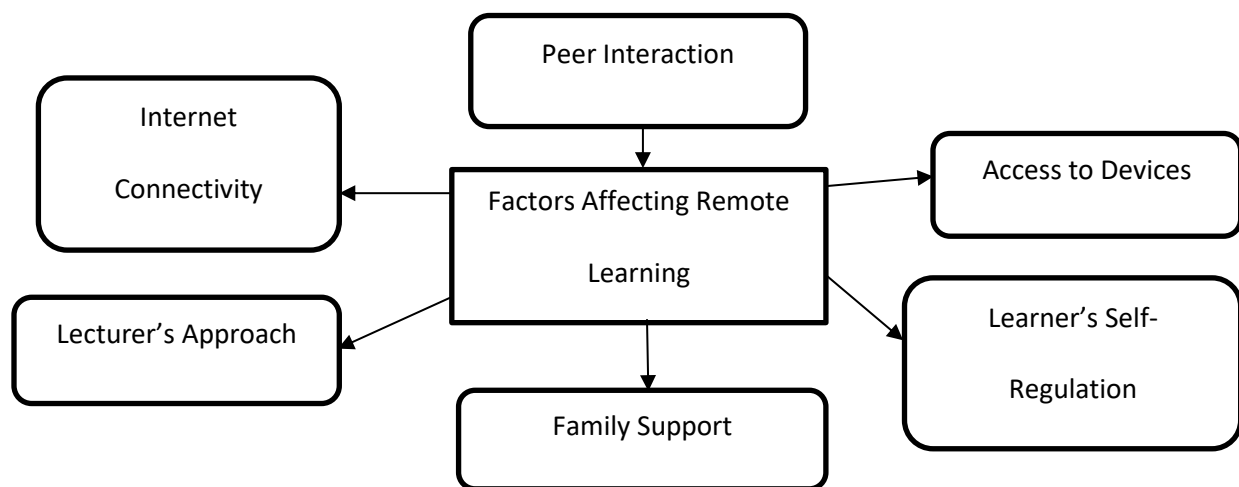
Participant 14, who was the last participant interviewed, had the greatest challenge with Internet connectivity it seemed, to the extent that it significantly affected the interview session with her. The interview was scheduled to be held via the Zoom platform. The participant had to exit and reconnect three times before her audio was connected. Subsequently, after the greeting and the interviewer posed the first question, the participant lost audio. The interviewer proceeded to call the Participant via WhatsApp. After every two to three questions, the call signal was lost. After 55 minutes of having trouble with the Internet, the interviewer resorted to making a phone call to the participant offline. Consequently, the last 10 minutes of the interview was conducted through a direct phone call. Incidentally, Participant 14 was the only one who indicated that she was located on the college campus and was relying on the college Wi-Fi for the Internet. She indicated that the instability that was experienced with the Internet connection during the interview was similar to that which she experienced during some of her classes. As she did during the interview, she kept changing location on the campus to try to gain Internet stability. When she thought she had found a good spot, the stability only lasted for a maximum of 12 minutes. Challenges with Internet connectivity, while causing participants to miss some instruction, did not affect all the participants' online remote learning experience to the same degree.

**Teacher Approach and Student Motivation.** Participants were generally satisfied with their experience learning composition writing through synchronous online remote learning. They attributed much of their satisfaction to the teacher's approach to teaching. Four participants indicated that they were very satisfied with their experience learning composition writing remotely, while eight participants indicated that they were satisfied with their online remote learning experience. Combined, 86% of the participants indicated that they were either satisfied

or very satisfied with their experience learning composition writing remotely. On the other hand, 14% of the participants were neutral, as they indicated a preference for face-to-face learning. The level of participants' satisfaction in learning composition writing remotely is reflected in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Level of Learner Satisfaction With Learning Writing in a Synchronous Online Remote*

*Environment*

| Level of Learner Satisfaction | Number of Participants | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very Satisfied | 4 | 29 |
| Satisfied | 8 | 57 |
| Neutral | 2 | 14 |

Participant 1 said the following:

The best thing about my experience in the remote learning environment is the lecturer. Some people say that she is spoon feeding us, but her method works. She repeats for emphasis and calls on students randomly to even answer a question that has been asked before. Her repetition of questions helps me to understand better. She makes the information basic and builds on it and she does not limit the information to the textbook. The students sometimes challenge the lecturer. She is very thorough. There has been a dramatic change in my writing style.

Participant 3 expressed some similar points but added the following:

If you are not at class, you are missed. Although it is remote, you are not forgotten. She asks for missing students and if you are quiet, she will call on you. She prays with us and ask about our weekend. We like the personal connection and to feel valued. Her class is the best. Even if we don't get it, she is not disrespectful. She will say if you don't pass

this course, don't see me and call to me. Unlike some other lecturers, she is consistent in how she interacts with us.

Participant 5 expressed, "My most meaningful learning experiences in the remote environment includes the lecturer taking baby steps with us." Participant 11 said, "I really like the lecturer. She makes it interesting." Participant 8 said that she would recommend the course to a friend "especially if it is the same lecturer." Similarly, Participant 7 said, "I would recommend this course taught remotely to a friend, especially with my current lecturer. She is the best teacher, as she makes the course fun and easy."

Additionally, 11 of the participants indicated that they thought the strongest aspect of the composition writing course was teacher interaction and feedback. Three of the participants who selected this option raised concern about feedback but expressed that though feedback was slow on class assignments, it was very helpful when they received it. Two of the three participants who had the concern about feedback expressed that it was difficult for the lecturer to mark assignments quickly, as she had too much to do. Accordingly, nine of the participants indicated that the aspect of the program that they were most satisfied with was the lecturer and her approach to teaching. Participant 1 said, "I was most satisfied with the lecturer and her teaching style. She teaches for us to understand the subject. She would ask us if we understand and ask, 'What don't you understand?'" According to Participant 10, "My teacher is incredible. She is always motivating us, and she goes the extra mile to ensure that we understand when she is teaching." Participant 11 expressed that it really helped to have a lecturer like this one, especially during a pandemic, as she was very understanding, while maintaining very high standards.

All participants indicated that the level of support that was provided by the course lecturer was either very good or excellent. Furthermore, 10 participants felt that the level of

lecturer support was excellent, while four participants felt that the level of support was very good. Participant 1 stated, "The lecturer is amazing. She goes above and beyond. She loves what she does and wants her students to learn." Participant 5 said, "The lecturer is exceptional. She has been working with us very hard." Participant 9 shared that the lecturer was:

> She is very encouraging. Sometimes she says, "You guys need to do this; you don't have to do it, but it will help you if you do." That encourages us to do the work. She sends outlines for different activities, and we can communicate with her at any time, and she responds.

According to Participant 13, the lecturer's level of support was next to no other. "She is very supportive Miss, always there even when she is extremely busy; she makes time for us."

All participants described their interactions in the online remote learning environment with the lecturer as very good or excellent. In keeping with this, 79% of the participants felt that the interactions with their lecturer were very good, while 21% of the participants felt that the interactions with the lecturer were excellent. Participant 1 said:

> She is very good. She is open, approachable and responds promptly to WhatsApp messages and email. If she cannot address the issue immediately, she indicates that she is in a meeting or seeing a student on teaching practice, but the response is sure to come.

Participant 3 said that the lecturer "is very good. We feel free to interact in her class. We use the raise hand feature, and we have the flexibility to type in the chat or use the mic." According to Participant 6, the lecturer is excellent. "She is very understanding and ensures that everybody understands. She is energetic and expressive. She breaks down everything into parts and she does not make it boring. She simplifies the material." Participant 12 said she appreciated that "when we give answers in class, the lecturer does not make us feel like we are wrong." Participant 10

had similar sentiments but added that the lecturer was very reassuring and let her students know that incorrect responses were not necessarily a bad thing. "She corrects us, and we do not feel bad about it, and she does not laugh at our errors.…Well, she laughs sometimes, but we don't feel bad."

Participants seemed to place a high value on teacher student interaction. Participant 7 said:

> My teacher is very interactive, as she asks us to turn on the camera and she always greets us with a smile and ask us, "How are you doing?" She has devotions and prays with us when she has us in the morning. She also asks questions and ensures that we understand.

Participant 8 said that her interaction with the lecturer was better than that with the students. She said, "I don't always open my mic, but if she calls on me, I respond. I don't say much outside of class." Participant 3 expressed that the activities in the course were creative and engaging. For instance, the lecturer used a game in which she would say a word, such as morning and students were to suggest a song with that word in it. Students would compete to answer in the chat or using the microphone. This was a form of ice breaker and played in teams. The first team that responded correctly won. In another game, the teacher mouthed something, and students lip read. The first to respond, stating correctly what the teacher intended, was declared the winner. Participant 14 said that the interaction with the lecturer was very good, both inside and outside of class. According to Participant 3, the WhatsApp group for this course was the most interactive and useful one that the class had.

**Writing Pedagogy.** The participants indicated that the methodology that was employed by the lecturer was effective. Accordingly, 50% of the participants indicated that they were satisfied with their writing development in the semester under study. Five participants were

neutral. They expressed that their writing had improved to an extent, but there was room for more improvement. Two participants were not satisfied with their progress. The participants who felt that they had made progress attributed this to the impact of their lecturer's teaching. Participant 1 said, "I am satisfied with my writing development this semester. At first, I thought the online thing would have been an issue.…I did not think I had issues, but now understand how to write an expository essay." Both Participants 2 and 9 expressed that they struggled with writing in semester 1 but saw significant improvements in semester 2. According to Participant 14:

> The most meaningful experiences I had include writing a reflective piece at the start of the course and the lecturer pointed out the errors such as run-on sentences. I learnt from the lecturer going through the errors.…Another meaningful experience was learning how to structure the expository essay.

Participant 10 said that she had many meaningful experiences in the course, but she had struggles with tense before the course. In her words:

> I struggled, and my teacher broke it down. She gave us online quizzes and we came back to class and gave her our scores. We got to tell her what we were confused about, and she broke it down. She would also post additional information on the topic on SOLE [the college's virtual learning environment]. When we were writing the expository essay, she asked us to break it down into parts—topic sentence, conclusion, and supporting details, all the parts.…We sent drafts that we corrected together in class.

Participant 13 said that she benefitted from doing outlines of the expository essay. She said, "We got to see the elements needed for each paragraph. I now can write better." Participant 6 expressed, "I learnt how to write topic sentences, and thesis statements. I learned how to make

my work better organized. The lecturer sent different sections of the essay for us to examine each part of the essay in detail." Participant 5 shared:

> My most meaningful learning experiences in the remote environment includes the lecturer taking baby steps with us. She went step-by-step to explain the expository essay—from introduction to the conclusion.…For writing and delivering a speech, she used videos which show what we are expected to do.

In addition, 50% of the participants commented that learning how to write and deliver an expository speech was one of the most meaningful activities that they did in the course. Participant 13 said that the speech helped to improve her confidence. Seven of the participants explained how engaging the sessions on public speaking were. They said that the lecturer instructed them to create a short video (about 1 minute long) in which they introduced themselves. They then posted the video in the WhatsApp group. Students were allowed to comment on the videos and the lecturer gave them feedback in class. They said that the lecturer pointed out what they did well and told them the aspects that needed improvement. They all expressed that this activity was very meaningful, not only in developing public speaking skills, but it also allowed them to meet their classmates and share feedback. Furthermore, the lecturer went on to show videos of speeches in which the dos and don'ts of public speaking were highlighted.

**Figure 2**

*Interaction Patterns in the Synchronous Online Remote Classroom*
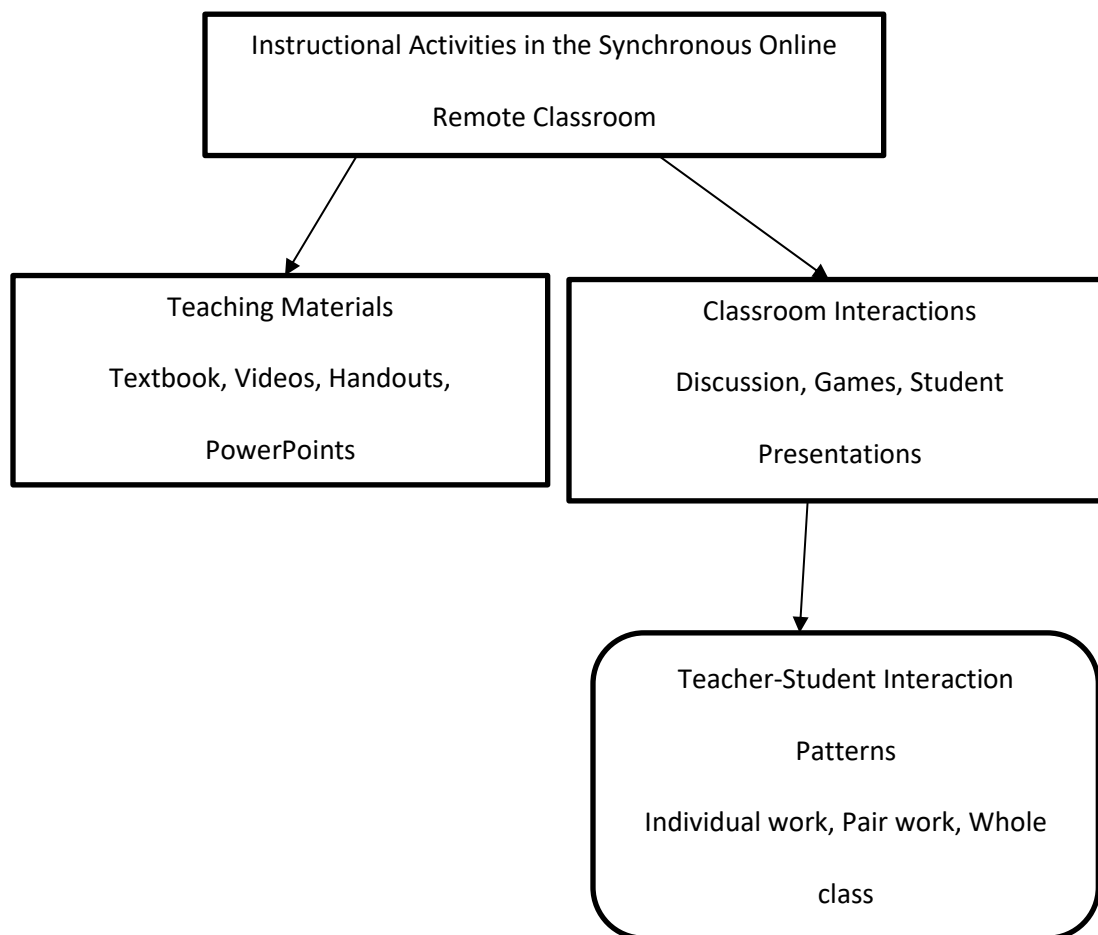


Participant 8 said, "I don't like public speaking, but I know it is necessary for

teachers.…Since I have to do public speaking…it's relatable, as I speak at church." Participant

1 said:

> The lecturer is very thorough. Some may call it "spoon-feeding," but she repeats for
>
> emphasis. She calls on students randomly and asks questions that she already asked
>
> and got answers for. This helps me to understand. She makes the information basic and
>
> then builds on it. She does not limit the information to the textbook. She allows
>
> students to challenge her, and this has led to a dramatic change in my writing style.

Participant 3 expressed that the activities in the course were creative and engaging. For instance, the lecturer shared essays with the class, and they marked them together. This was after getting each student's permission. Students also engaged in peer review of writing assignments. According to Participant 3, "This helps us to learn." Participant 2 said, "Some useful topics were explored such as APA citation, topic, and closing sentences. We also had games that we played in groups. We were asked questions and timed to come up with responses." According to Participant 13, "The lecturer explains well, and I grasp as though we were face-to-face. She makes us feel comfortable."

Additionally, Participant 4 attributed much of her writing development during the semester to her personal effort and the help of her older sister, who was a writer. However, the participant said that the lecturer motivated her to want to do better in her writing. She, as with Participant 13, said that she watched videos on all the topics that were being done and she analyzed them. For instance, she said she watched videos on how to understand expository comprehension passages and the videos helped.

In general, the participants expressed that they had a good experience learning writing in the online remote learning environment. Participant 6 said:

I feel very good about my experience in remote learning, but at points I wish the lecturer could have written on the board.…For example, it would help to see examples of attention grabbers on the board. I love writing, but I felt like I could have produced more though the lecturer has helped with that.

According to Participant 10, "I have learnt a lot as my lecturer went down deep.…Although it was not face-to-face, I understood.…My teacher used PowerPoint, which was good and the participation…she would know if we do not understand."

The participants seemed to have been particularly appreciative of the way in which the lecturer taught the different aspects of the expository essay. Participant 13 said that one of the most positive aspects of the writing course was the breakdown of the expository essay. She said, "Now when I write, I remember some of what the lecturer said and I apply it…because of this, my writing has improved." This was the general view of the participants.

**Feedback and Consultation.** Feedback was a major issue that was mentioned by most participants. While 11 participants identified teacher interaction/feedback as the dominant strength in the course, two participants were hesitant in making the choice. Participant 11 said that teacher interaction was the strength, but not feedback. Generally, participants expressed that they got excellent feedback from their lecturer, but it was slow in coming. Table 5 shows participants' perception of the level of instructional feedback that they received during the writing course.

**Table 5**

*Positive and Negative Perceptions of the Level of Instructional Feedback*

| | Perception of Level of Lecturer's Instructional Feedback | Percent Interviews |
|---|---|---|
| Positive | The lecturer was present in the conversation and cared about the student | 100 |
| Negative | Level of individual feedback was less than in a traditional face-to-face class | 57 |
| Positive | Feedback was instructive and helped student to improve writing | 100 |
| Negative | The pace of receiving feedback on assignments was slow | 86 |

Participant 14 said, "I learnt expository writing, but the class is big and even though the teacher tries to give feedback, it is hectic, so we all do not know if we are on the right track." She added that Internet connectivity problems sometimes hindered her from asking questions or from hearing the answers when she asked. In addition to benefitting from feedback from the lecturer, participants said that they also learned from the feedback that they got from their peers both in and out of class. Participant 11 said that feedback from her peers contributed to the progress she had observed in her writing.

Most participants expressed the view that face-to-face teaching allowed for more feedback than that which they received in online remote teaching. Participant 11 stated, "I think, in person, we would do more writing exercises and receive more feedback, ahhh, to see our progress." Participant 10 said that in face-to-face classes, the teacher corrected the work immediately. Not everything could be explained online. In face-to-face, the teacher also stayed back and assisted the students. Nonetheless, participants indicated that the lecturer provided comments on their videos and performance in quizzes in class. This was immediate feedback that Participant 10, for instance, said helped them to understand better what they were doing. All participants indicated that they received feedback through WhatsApp, email, and in class. Some participants expressed that being able to see the lecturer and discuss their performance would have been more effective than just receiving written feedback. Participant 8 felt, "More consultations would help us to know where we are going wrong…yeah…instead of just having the feedback on paper. Discussing it helps us to get it better."

When participants were asked, "In what way could the college better support your writing development?", the most popular response was through regular consultation sessions with lecturers. Participants seemed to be of the view that if there were a scheduled consultation time

each week, their writing would have improved more. In this regard, 43% of the respondents felt

that consultation would have made a difference in their writing development. In addition, 29% of

the participants felt that seminars and writing workshops, with specially invited guests, would

have been useful. Participant 3 said:

> The seminars would really help, but the classes would need to be accommodated in small
>
> groups because there have been sessions for the entire year group but the numbers did not
>
> allow for many students to ask questions and so we left with unanswered questions.

The thinking, therefore, was that small-group sessions would be more impactful.

The participants indicated that the Communication Skills lecturer used her own initiative

to offer them consultation. Some of these sessions were with individual students, but, at times, it

involved the entire class. For instance, the lecturer would go through a student's essay in class

and the class contributed to the marking of the essay. Participant 4 said, "The college could help

by providing one-on-one consultation to help us know where we need improvement. The lecturer

offers consultation, but not everyone can be seen in the short time period." While some

participants felt that consultation would be of help, Participants 3, 7, and 10 expressed that the

lecturers had too much to do and so it would be difficult for them to accommodate consultation

sessions. According to Participant 7, "They can provide more consultation with lecturers. More

feedback would definitely help, but I realize that the lecturers are very busy." There seemed to be

a concern among the participants that lecturers did not seem to have enough time to balance

teaching duties, teaching practice supervision, administrative functions, and provide consultation

outside of classes.

**Student Interaction.** The participants indicated that peer interaction, especially in class,

was the weakest aspect of the composition writing course. While there was a slight variation in

what was the strongest aspect of the writing course, all 14 participants agreed that students'

interaction with other students was the dominant weakness and, thus, a concern for some of them

in the course. Participants felt that the limited peer interaction was because of the online remote

environment. No participant described their interaction with their peers as having been excellent;

29% said their interaction was good, and 64% of the participants characterized their peer

interaction as fair. One participant described her peer interaction as poor. This student said that

she did not interact with her classmates, but would receive information that they posted in the

WhatsApp group. Participants' rating of their peer interaction during the course is presented in

Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Student-to-Student Interaction in the Remote Learning Environment*

| Level of Peer Interaction | Number of Participants | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Excellent | 0 | 0 |
| Good | 4 | 29 |
| Fair | 9 | 64 |
| Poor | 1 | 7 |

All participants stated that the class WhatsApp group was the platform where most of the

interaction with their classmates took place. See the channels of communication used by

participants in Table 7. Participants 2 and 5 said that they did not say much in the group, but they

read the posts and found the messages useful. All participants indicated that they communicated

with peers for writing-related activities through WhatsApp. Five participants indicated that they

had meetings about writing tasks using the Microsoft Teams platform, while four participants

indicated that they had meetings via the Zoom platform. Three participants stated that they

communicated about writing tasks through phone calls made off the Internet. Google classroom, email, and face-to-face communication were indicated by two participants as platforms used during the writing course to consult with peers on writing tasks.

**Table 7**

*Methods of Communication Used by Participants for Writing Assignments*

| Method of Communication | Number of Participants |
| --- | --- |
| WhatsApp | 14 |
| Microsoft Teams | 5 |
| Zoom | 4 |
| Phone Calls (off-line) | 3 |
| Google Classroom | 2 |
| Email | 2 |
| Face-to-Face | 2 |

Participants 5 and 14 said that they were able to meet some of their classmates because they lived on campus. This living arrangement allowed for some group meetings face-to-face. Most participants met their classmates for the first time when they had their semester 1 examinations earlier in the year. Since April, some courses had classes face-to-face. Participants 6 and 12 began the 1st-year in college in February, the start of semester 2. They both expressed that it took them a little time to adjust, as the other students had been together from the previous semester and were already comfortable in the class. Participant 6 said, "At first, I was not seeing any faces, so it was difficult to connect with them." Nonetheless, they both indicated that they soon developed a sense of belonging mostly because of how comfortable the lecturer made them feel. Participant 12 said that she developed a friendship with two of her classmates and when she

struggled with her essay outline, one of them helped her. As a result of the assistance she got, she said that the final draft was good. She was careful to point out that she did not do well at first because she did not pay attention while the lecturer was teaching and so the lecturer was not to be blamed.

Participants generally indicated that they developed friendships with classmates with whom they did group work for other courses. They maintained interaction outside of class in these small groups. Participant 13 said that six of them communicated frequently outside of class. Participants 1 and 3 said that the class had a good relationship and if they missed a class, someone would send them notes through WhatsApp or email, or they would send a recording. Students also sent work to classmates who lost Internet access during a session. In fact, Participant 2 attributed some of her progress in writing to the help that she got from her peers. Participant 3 shared that the class had two WhatsApp groups, one that included the lecturer and one for just the students. He said, "We felt 'freer' to express ourselves in the group without the lecturer, but the group with the lecturer was very active and was the best one for all our courses." Participant 1 said, "Initially, I did not really trust the class, but by March I got comfortable with three students, and I shared assignments with them for their feedback." She expressed concern that "…students have less time to correct errors when peer review is done" in online remote learning.

Another concern was that students do not get ample opportunity to know their classmates in the online remote class, as only one set of students participated all the time. Participant 1 said, "That is why the lecturer picks on different students to answer questions." Participant 4 admitted to doing assignments for other courses while in Communication Skills 1 classes. She said she did assignments in other online classes as well. When asked if she missed out on what was being

taught, she said, "Yes, but my classmates fill me in on what I miss." Additionally, most of the friendships that developed in the course came about as a result of group work. Participants 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12 indicated that they formed friendships through group-work that they had for courses other than Communication Skills 1. Consequently, Participant 3 felt that group work should be added to the course, as it can foster more relationships. Participants 4, 7, and 9 said that they preferred face-to-face teaching because they could interact more with their peers. Participant 4 said that it helped her to feel connected when the lecturer asked them to turn on their cameras and they did so, but she would have preferred, to be learning "with others in the same space." The course, therefore, facilitated limited student-to-student interaction. Participants felt that more interaction with their peers would have enhanced the learning experience.

**Self-Regulation.** Participants in this study suggested that self-regulation was critical to achieving success in the composition writing course that was pursued in an online remote learning environment. The views of the participants are represented in Table 8. Participants 12, 13, and 14 indicated that they had trouble in managing distractions in their physical environment during online remote classes. In fact, 57% of the participants indicated a preference for face-to-face instruction, and the main reason they gave for this was that it would reduce distractions. Conversely, 29% of the participants indicated that they could adapt readily and learn remotely or face-to-face just about the same, while 14% of the participants said they preferred learning in the online remote environment.

**Table 8**

*Participants' Preferred Learning Environment*

| Preferred Platform | Number of Participants | Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Face-to-Face | 8 | 57 |
| Remote | 2 | 14 |
| Same for Both | 4 | 29 |

Furthermore, 29% of the participants indicated that they attended all Communication Skills classes, while 71% of the participants were absent from two to three classes. Participants 3, 5, 10, and 11 said that they missed at least one class because of personal reasons. All other absences were a result of Internet connectivity problems. Participant 14 indicated that one of her challenges in the online remote environment was time management, while Participant 13 said that she tended to procrastinate when she had assignments to do. Participant 14 said that being provided with the course outline helped her "to know what was required and when, so I begin ahead of time." Conversely, Participant 3 felt that a more detailed rubric would have helped him to understand better what was required for some assignments.

Persistence was displayed by Participant 14, as she lost Internet connectivity multiple times during her interview (see Appendix E). Every time the Internet failed, she reconnected and carried on unfazed. She said that she had grown accustomed to it and understood that it was a part of online learning. Participants 4 and 5 also displayed self-regulation in that they said that they started to conduct research on their own whether on the general Internet or on the college's virtual environment. Participants 4, 5, 12, and 13 said that they started taking initiative to find videos to support their own learning. Participant 9 said she sought additional tools to help herself, including getting help from her grandmother who was a teacher of English. When asked

what prompted her to do additional work, Participant 13 said that it was her desire to do well, a quest to find more examples "to ensure I am on the right track," and because of the lecturer's motivation. Nonetheless, she said that her performance would have improved if she had read more. She said that what she lacked was not because of the teacher. Similarly, Participant 12 had trouble completing the essay outline because she said that she had not paid attention in class. Participants 3 and 13 commented that they appreciated that Communication Skills 1 was done synchronously, as for their asynchronous classes, they tended to put off doing the work and it piled up.

The qualities that most participants felt were important for online learners to have were the ability to manage time well, patience, consistency, a willingness to learn, and the ability to ignore distractions. To be successful online, participants also said that students must have drive, a positive mindset, discipline, open-mindedness, and they must be focused. See the qualities that participants perceive that online learners must have to be successful in Figure 3. Participant 1 said, "They must have the discipline to ignore WhatsApp.…Success really depends on the individual student's goals." Participant 8 added:

> Perseverance, as it is easy for you at home to just log in and go to sleep…yeah.…It is easy to be in class and not participate. There is nobody monitoring. Know what you want and be ambitious. Push against the temptations like spending more time on social media…going out instead of going to class.

**Figure 3**

*Qualities of the Successful Online Learner*
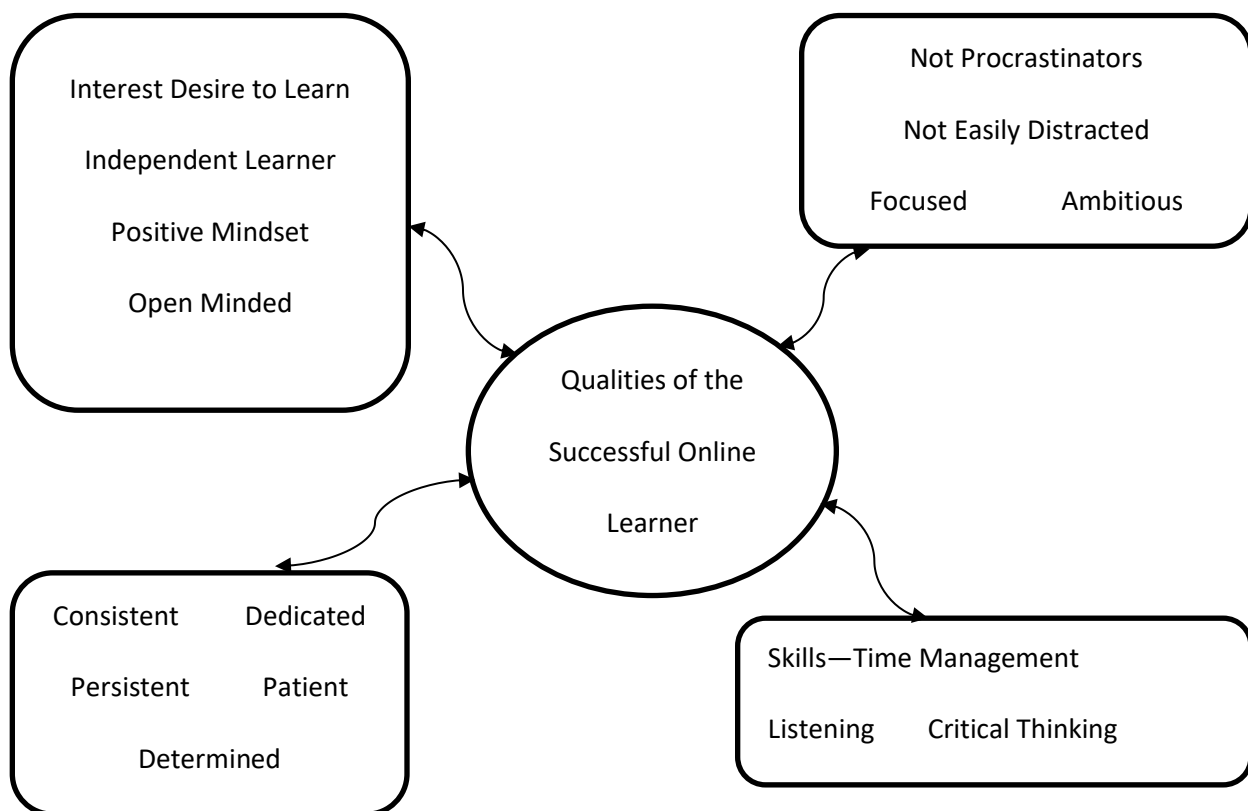


Participant 5 said that the main challenge that she faced during the course was trying to cope with personal challenges. She expressed that she was not satisfied with her writing development and said her unsatisfactory performance was a result of the personal struggles that she faced.

In terms of student progress, it was evident that learners must do their part. Participant 1 indicated that the lecturer helped tremendously but "I do my share of the work." Participant 2 said the following:

I had a problem with reviewing my work and not reading enough, so sometimes I was unable to contribute as I would like to in class. This happens because I am home and relaxed. I mostly wait until the last minute to complete the work. It is also a challenge to

submit work on time, but this is due to poor planning. Still, I do submit my work on

time.…If I plan better, I can do better.

Participants 1, 2, and 3 worked and attended college and so had the challenge of balancing the

two. All three of them said that remote learning helped to facilitate work and study. Participant 1

worked as an assistant at a doctor's office; Participant 2 did babysitting and Participant 3 worked

as a security guard at nights. Participant 3 said that remote learning was ideal for him because of

his job. Participant 2 said that she was on a scholarship, which required her to do some hours of

community service. She said that remote online learning allowed her to carry out community

service, do babysitting, and still do her schoolwork.

While 57% of the participants indicated a preference for face-to-face learning, 86% of the

participants stated that they were able to adjust to online remote learning. According to

Participant 8, the platform "does not affect me that much because I want to learn." Some

participants said that they started to take charge of their own learning. According to Participant

4, "I started to read more.…I read a lot and started paying attention to sentence structure when

reading. My sister also gives me extra lessons and I watch a lot of videos." Participants 7, 10, 12,

and 13 indicated that they were satisfied with their progress in their writing development but

determined that there was room for improvement, and they had a critical role to play in that

regard. Participant 6 was not satisfied with her writing development, but recognized that she had

to overcome her personal challenges to improve her performance.

**Outside of Class Support for Online Remote Learning.** It was found that 1st-year

students who were learning writing in an online remote environment needed support in addition

to that which was provided by the class lecturer. Learners benefitted from support from their

family, college library, virtual learning environment, and technical support, as was provided by

the institution of learning. Participants indicated that they got some support from the college

library, but 50%, benefitted from the college's virtual learning environment. Participants'

perception of the support that they received from college systems for their writing development

is represented in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*College Systems That Supported Students' Developing Writing Skill*

| College System | Number of Participants | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Consultation | 4 | 29 |
| Library | 2 | 14 |
| Virtual Learning Environment | 7 | 50 |
| None | 1 | 7 |

Additionally, 36% of the participants said that they had no interaction with the college

library. On the other hand, 14% of the participants said that they used the college library's

printing service. These two participants also indicated that their interaction with the library staff

was good, while 50% of the respondents said that their interaction with the library staff was fair.

In addition, 57% of the respondents said they had no support from the library staff. Conversely,

21% of the participants said that the level of support that they received from the library staff was

good, while 14% of the participants said that the support that they received was fair. One

participant said that the support from the library was very good. Incidentally, that student

volunteered as a student worker at the library.

There was an apparent hesitancy among participants to utilize the services provided by

the library. Participant 13 said that even though students received orientation in using the library,

she had not felt adequately equipped to navigate the library platform. Participant 1 said, "My

friend works at the library, so I asked him to borrow a book for me.…I have used the online

library, but I don't fully understand how to use the platform." Participant 6 said that she only

used the library once and that was to use the computer provided there, while Participants 7 and 8

said that they had used the online library. On the other hand, Participant 9 said, "Last semester I

had a problem. I called and asked where I can get past papers. They said if I was boarding, I

would have access but there are no online past papers." Participants 7 and 11 said that they found

Ebscohost and ProQuest, which were provided by the college library, useful. Participants

generally indicated that they got information from books that were provided by the lecturer, the

college's virtual platform, and Google.

The college's virtual learning environment was the most popular source of information

that participants said that they used. Participant 13 said that she used the virtual environment

because "they always upload documents so if you don't remember things, you can check there."

Participants 2, 6, 10, 12, and 14 said that the material posted in the virtual environment helped

them to make progress in their writing. While the lecturer posted information in the WhatsApp

chat, participants said that she also posted in the college's virtual environment and they found the

resources useful.

Additionally, participants said that they got some support from the head of department

and the college administration. Accordingly, 29% of the participants indicated that their

interaction with the office staff was good, while 50% of the participants indicated that their

interaction with the office staff was fair. On the other hand, 7% of the participants indicated that

their interaction with the office staff was poor, while 14% of the participants said they had no

interaction with the office staff. Participant 1 said that the office staff was good even though it

was virtual; however, Participant 7 said, "I call them to get things cleared up. The persons who

work there are pleasant, but service is slow to get results." Participant 10, on the other hand, said

that she found the office staff to have been cold and she did not like interacting with them.

Unlike Participant 10, Participant 1 said, "IT department responds promptly. I had issues

selecting modules and I was assisted quickly." She added that the head of department was

"active and present. She responds to messages within 24 hours at least. She will ask 'Can I call

you back?' and she gets back to me." Participant 13 said that the head of department was very

supportive and met with the class monthly. Table 10 represents participants' perception of their

interaction with the office staff in their college.

**Table 10**

*College Students' Interaction With the Office Staff in the Online Remote Environment*

| Quality of Interaction | Number of Participants | Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Excellent | 0 | 0 |
| Good | 4 | 29 |
| Fair | 7 | 50 |
| Poor | 1 | 7 |
| No Interaction | 2 | 14 |

Participants indicated that they perceived that they had some support from the college

administration. Table 11 provides a visual representation of participants' perception of the level

of support they received from the college administration. In this regard, 7% of participants

indicated that the level of support from the college administration was excellent and another 7%

indicated that it was very good. Furthermore, 21% of the participants indicated that the level of

support was good, while 36% of the participants indicated that the level of support from the

college administration was fair. Conversely, 29% of the participants indicated that there was no

noticeable support from the college administration. Participant 13 said that the college administration was good and said that the bursar worked out a payment plan with her, as she could not pay all her college fees at one time. Participant 8, on the other hand, said, "I don't feel their support." Participants 3, 6, 9, 10, and 14 indicated that they were satisfied with the level of support from the college administration.

**Table 11**

*Level of Support From College Administration*

| Level of Support | Number of Participants | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Excellent | 1 | 7 |
| Very Good | 1 | 7 |
| Good | 3 | 21 |
| Fair | 5 | 36 |
| No Support | 4 | 29 |

In addition to the other sources of support, some participants indicated that they received support from family members. Participants 3, 4, 6, and 9 said that they were well supported by their families throughout the program. Participant 4 said, "My sister also gives me extra lessons and I watch a lot of videos." Participant 4 further said, "I had a lot of struggles, but my sister helped me a lot." Participant 9 said that her grandmother had been a major support to her on many levels. Her grandmother, who was a teacher of English, assisted her with her assignments and made all the calls to the office to ensure that everything was in order. Participant 6 said that her mother allowed her to visit her workplace so that she could use the laptop and Internet there. These aids have helped the participants in their online remote classes.

**Group Work.** The course, Communication Skills 1, did not require students to engage in group work for any of the assignments. It was found that 71% of the participants thought that group work should not be included in the course, while 29% of the participants were of the view that group work should be included in the course. Despite the absence from the course requirements, participants expressed that they consulted with their peers on writing assignments. Participants indicated that they shared documents via Google Docs and in Zoom meetings. They also sent their work via email to their peers for feedback, while they provided feedback to others in the class. Participants also indicated that the lecturer included pair activities in class and incorporated group tasks in class activities such as team games and review activities.

Consequently, three participants attributed some of their progress in writing to the high-quality feedback received from peers throughout the semester. Participant 1 indicated that for the first few weeks of the course, she did not trust her peers enough to share her work with them. She said that eventually she gained three friends in class, and they subsequently began working together on assignments. On the same note, Participant 5 shared the following:

> I live on campus and so I meet with my peers face-to-face outside of classes. We also use WhatsApp or regular phone calls when we are working on assignments. That is how we pass on information that some students might have missed or how we help those who do not understand certain aspects of the material.

According to Participant 3, "We proofread work for one another, and we help one another."

Furthermore, most of the participants who stated that they had friends in the class recalled that the friendship developed through group work in another course. Despite this, Participant 5 indicated that she did not think that group work should be required in the course. She said that this was "because other courses have group work. I want to think on my own and

see where I need to improve." Participant 7 was also averse to group work being included in the course. She stated that group work "is stressing especially online." Additionally, Participant 8 expressed that group work should not be included in this course, as advancement in her personal work was key. Even though Participant 9 liked group work, she did not feel that it should be included in the course.

Conversely, Participant 6 thought that group work would have enhanced the experience in the course. In her view, group work could be of help because there being a lot of writing in the course, but she expressed concern that lecturers would not be able to see individual student's writing. That was a drawback. Participant 10 was of the view that group work should be added to the course "because we would get to learn from each other. For example, in essays and punctuation. We would get a better grade." While the concerns were evident, most participants felt that group work could provide invaluable support to their writing development. Participants who were averse to group work being incorporated in the course were mostly concerned about receiving individual feedback and the tendency of some students not to do their share of the work.

In this section, the results of participants' responses to the interview questions were presented. Participants said that they benefited from the interactive approach used in Communications Skills 1 classes. However, they felt that peer interaction was limited and feedback was slow in coming. Despite recognizing the benefits of group work, participants did not feel that it should be added to the course.

**Section B—Students' Work**

This section has information on the work that was produced by the research participants in the course, Communication Skills 1. The researcher examined the work that was produced by

seven participants in the diagnostic test that was administered at the start of the course. The participants were asked to write an essay describing their experience with the English language. The test results were compared with the participants' work that was produced in the major expository essay that was required close to the end of the course. The expository essays that were written by the participants who did not write the diagnostic test were also analyzed comparatively. Each participant chose a theme from those that were provided by the lecturer and then formulated a narrowed topic in keeping with the theme. Consequently, most topics were unique to each participant. The themes chosen by the participants were health, violence, and education. The expository essays were at minimum twice the length of the essay that was required in the diagnostic test. All but one participant produced acceptable expository essays that were awarded a score of 50% or higher by the class lecturer. See scores in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Scores of Participants in Expository Essays*

| Participant | Essay Raw Score (20 marks) | Essay Score in Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 14 | 70 |
| 2 | 12.5 | 62.5 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 16 | 80 |
| 5 | 11.5 | 57.5 |
| 6 | 12.5 | 62.5 |
| 7 | 14 | 70 |
| 8 | 12.5 | 62.5 |

(continued)

| Participant | Essay Raw Score (20 marks) | Essay Score in Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | 12.5 | 62.5 |
| 10 | 13.5 | 67.5 |
| 11 | 11 | 55 |
| 12 | 11.5 | 57.5 |
| 13 | 13 | 65 |
| 14 | 15 | 75 |

Through this study, the researcher found that 50% of the participants were absent at the start of the course and so did not write the diagnostic essay, but all participants wrote the final in-course essay. According to the requirements of the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica, students must attain a score of 50% to pass a course. Students must also attain a course work score of 50% to sit for the final examination.

All, except one research participant, attained the required course-work grade to sit for the examination. Only Participant 4 attained a score in the A range, 80%, while nine participants attained scores in the B range, three participants scored in the C range, and one essay could not be graded. The essay that was not graded was plagiarized as well as off topic. Nonetheless, in general, the essays had a range of strengths and weaknesses. See errors and their frequency of occurrence in Table 13. The errors with low frequency of occurrence may be regarded as areas of strength.

**Table 13**

*Error Types and Their Frequency of Occurrence in Participants' Writing*

| Error Type | Diagnostic Test | Expository Essay | Total Number of Occurrences | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Article | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Number | 3 | 5 | 8 | 2, 5, 6, 7 |
| Fragment | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Capitalization | 2 | 5 | 7 | 1, 2, 5, 7 |
| Weak Support | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2, 6, 13 |
| Relevance | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Preposition | 4 | 0 | 4 | 1, 4, 5, 13 |
| Pronoun/Antecedent | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1, 2 |
| Tense | 6 | 2 | 8 | 2, 6, 7, 13 |
| Contraction | Allowed | 3 | 3 | 1, 7 |

### *Emerging Themes in Participants' Writing*

**Language Errors.** All participants displayed grammatical errors in the diagnostic test as well as in the final expository essay. The extent of the occurrences of errors varied among participants. There were 10 error types that occurred a total of two to eight times in both the diagnostic test and in the expository essay. Errors in the use of the article, number, fragments, capitalization, prepositions, pronoun antecedent agreement, tense, and contractions in formal writing occurred eight or fewer times. Weak supporting material and irrelevant information in the expository essay also occurred three and two times, respectively. The diagnostic test was not a research-based essay and so no supporting material was required. However, it is noteworthy

that while there were two cases of misused articles and four cases of misused prepositions in the diagnostic essays, there were no such cases in the expository essays.

Conversely, there was an increase in the occurrence of some categories of errors. There were no pronoun-antecedent errors in the diagnostic essay, but there were three such errors in the expository essays written by Participants 1 and 2. No sentence fragments were detected in the diagnostic test, but one was seen in the expository essay written by Participant 1. Similarly, there were three errors in the use of singular and plural forms in the diagnostic test, but five such errors in the expository essay. Two cases of capitalization errors were seen in the diagnostic test, but five such cases were seen in the expository essay. On the other hand, there were six errors in the use of tenses in the diagnostic test, but only two such errors were seen in the expository essay. Given that the diagnostic test was a reflective essay, contractions were permitted. However, in the formal expository essay, Participants 1 and 7 used a total of three contractions.

All the seven participants whose written pieces were selected for comparison, had word-choice errors in their writing. Participant 1 had four word-choice errors in the diagnostic test, but had no such error in the expository essay. Similarly, Participant 5 had seven word-choice errors in the diagnostic test, but had two such errors in the expository essay. Conversely, Participant 7 had no word-choice error in the diagnostic test, but had one such error in the expository essay. Participant 2 had four word-choice errors in the diagnostic test and had six such errors in the expository essay. Participant 13 had two word-choice errors initially, but had four such errors in the expository essay. Four of the seven participants had slightly more word-choice errors in the final essay than they did in the diagnostic test. Combined, the errors had a sum of 23 in the diagnostic test and 19 word-choice errors in the expository essay, as reflected in Table 14.

**Table 14**

*Major Error Types and Their Frequency of Occurrence in Participants' Writing*

| Error Type | Diagnostic Test | Expository Essay | Total Number of Occurrences | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Word Choice | 23 | 19 | 42 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13 |
| Verb Form | 6 | 7 | 13 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 13 |
| Subject Verb | 6 | 17 | 26 | 2, 4, 5, 13 |
| Comma | 2 | 8 | 10 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 |
| Punctuation | 2 | 11 | 13 | 1, 2, 5, 7 |
| Run-on Sentences | 11 | 19 | 30 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 13 |
| Incomplete Information | 11 | 3 | 14 | 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13 |
| Sentence Structure | 6 | 8 | 14 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 13 |
| Expression | 17 | 20 | 37 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13 |
| Documentation | 0 | 15 | 15 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 |

All participants also displayed errors in their expression. There were 17 occurrences in the diagnostic test and two in the expository essay. Participant 1 had five errors in expression in the diagnostic test, but displayed two such errors in the expository essay. Conversely, Participant 2 had two errors in expression in the diagnostic test, but had five such errors in the expository essay. Participant 4 had one error in expression in the diagnostic test, but had three such errors in the expository essay (see Appendix F). Participants 6 and 13 had one more error in the expository essay than they did in the diagnostic test, while Participants 5 and 7 maintained the same number of errors in both pieces of writing, three and one, respectively. The following error appeared in Participant 6's expository essay: "A failure mindset in an adolescent becomes

evident by negative thinking." Participant 13 had the following error in the diagnostic test: "The teacher would point at the images and call the name of them."

The third most frequently occurring error in the participants' writing was run-on sentences. In most cases, the error appeared in the form of comma splice. There were 30 occurrences of run-on sentences when the diagnostic test and the expository essays were combined. Participant 5 had five run-on sentences in the diagnostic test, and she had seven in the expository essay; she had the highest occurrence of this error. For instance, in the diagnostic test she had, "I was a student who hated math, I still hate it and whenever a question seemed challenging to me I would stop and I would read a book or two to relax my mind and continue." Participant 5 also had the following error in the expository essay: "Fighting depression takes a lot of vigor and courage as it makes you weak and vulnerable, women who experience violence and are able to stand strong again should be appreciate as it is not easy." Participant 2 had only one run-on sentence in the diagnostic test, but had seven occurrences in the expository essay. Participants 1 and 7 had two run-on sentences each in the diagnostic test and they had two such errors each in the expository essay. Participant 13 had no run-on sentences in the diagnostic test, but had one in the expository essay. On the other hand, Participant 4 had one run-on sentence in the diagnostic test, but had none in the expository essay. Participant 6 did not have any run-on sentences in her work.

Another major error seen in participants' writing was subject-verb agreement. There were 36 errors in the use of subject-verb agreement in the diagnostic test and expository essays combined. Importantly, six of the errors appeared in the diagnostic test, while 20 of the errors appeared in the expository essay. Participant 2 had the highest number of subject-verb agreement errors, a total of seven in the expository essay, but only one such error in the diagnostic test. The

error that was presented by Participant 2 in the diagnostic test was in the form of focus as used in the following: "This essay focus on my experience with the English language." One error that Participant 2 presented in the expository essay was in the following sentence: "…it is evident that Patricia show little or no knowledge of effective parenting." Another example was seen in the following: "There are many examples of financial stress that may leads to child abuse." Participant 13 had one subject-verb agreement error in the diagnostic test, but had four such errors in the expository essay. Participant 7 had no subject-verb agreement error in the diagnostic test, but had three such errors in the expository essay. Participant 5 had three subject-verb agreement errors in the diagnostic test, but had five such errors in the expository essay. Participant 4, on the other hand, had one subject-verb agreement error in each of the two pieces of writing. Participants 1 and 6 had no subject-verb agreement error in either piece of writing.

Verb form was another frequently occurring error in the participants' writing. There were 13 such errors in the diagnostic test and the expository essay combined. Six of the errors appeared in the diagnostic test, while seven of the errors appeared in the expository essay. Participant 2 had six errors in the use of verb forms: one error in the diagnostic test and five errors in the expository essay. The error in the diagnostic test was in the following: "It began with my parents communicated with me in English." One error in the expository essay was in the following sentence: "These cases include a nine-year-old diabetic boy who has been abuse.…" Participant 1 had three verb-form errors in the diagnostic test, but had no such error in the expository essay. In like manner, Participants 5 and 13 had one verb-form error each in the diagnostic test and none in the expository essay. Participant 4 had no verb-form error in the diagnostic test, but had one such error in the expository essay, while Participants 6 and 7 had no verb-form error in either of the two written pieces.

Another type of error that was seen in participants' writing was the use of commas. There were 10 cases of the comma being missing or misused. Two of the cases appeared in the diagnostic test, while eight of the cases were in the expository essay. The errors were seen in five of the seven participants' work that were selected for comparative analysis. Participant 2 had most of the errors, with one error in the diagnostic test and four errors in the expository essay. An example from the diagnostic essay that was written by Participant 2 is, "My father on the other hand was the sole bread winner.…" An example from the expository essay is, "Either way flashbacks can be stressful and even terrifying for a survivor of child abuse." Participant 1 had one error in the diagnostic test, but none in the expository essay. Participants 4, 5, and 7 had no errors of this type in the diagnostic test, but Participants 4 and 7 had one each in the expository essay, while Participant 5 had two such errors. Participants 6 and 13 used the comma appropriately.

The semicolon was also misused in 10 instances in four participants' essays. There were two occurrences in the diagnostic test and 11 occurrences in the expository essay. Participant 1 had three errors in the use of the semicolon, and they all occurred in the expository essay. An example of the misuse of the semicolon was in the following: "To understand how criminals become the way they are; we will explore three contributors to violent criminal behavior.…" Errors in the use of the semicolon appeared two times in the expository essays written by Participant 2, and one time in the essay written by Participant 5. The semicolon was misused two times in the diagnostic test and two times in the expository essay written by Participant 7. There were no errors in the use of the semicolon in the work of Participants 4, 6, and 13.

Additionally, there were 14 sentence structure errors that were identified in the writing of six participants. Six such errors were in the diagnostic test, while eight errors were in the

expository essay. Participant 1 had the highest number of sentence structure errors: two in the diagnostic test and three in the expository essay. An example of a sentence structure error in the diagnostic test was seen in the following: "Speaking, is another important principle to language, by practicing to speak the correct words aloud in conversations help to develop my skills on the use of words." An example of the errors from Participant 1's expository essay is:

> Some of these practices are observed within the home, in the form of spankings and spousal fights: the music played in the home and around the community, which are violent and aggressive, promoting criminality and the like; observing and imitating noxious behaviours by peers and adults, encouraging unlawful conduct.

Participant 2 had two sentence structure errors that appeared in the expository essay only. Participants 4 and 5 had one such error each in the diagnostic test only. Participant 6 had one sentence structure error in the diagnostic test, but had two such errors in the expository essay, while Participant 13 had one such error in each of the two written pieces. Participant 7 had no sentence structure error.

**Content.** The focus of the essays was maintained in most of the pieces, but there was a weakness in the supporting details that were presented in the expository essays. In the diagnostic test, the focus was on participants' experience learning the English language. Participants generally recounted their experiences at school and interactions at home that facilitated their development in the use of the English language. There seemed to have been a false perception among some of the participants that English is the first language of the Jamaican population, and that Jamaican Creole is their second language. For instance, Participant 7 wrote the following: "English is the first language of my country, however, Jamaican creole/patios which is my

countries second language is what I grew up hearing and learning." Generally, though, participants recounted the experiences that they had while learning how to read and write.

The expository essay, on the other hand, required a stronger content focus. Participants were required to support their points with research. While all participants attempted to include some support in the essays, some of the supporting information was weak. There were instances of overgeneralizations, such as Participant 6's statement that "adolescents lack motivation." Similarly, Participant 4 stated, "We all know that Jamaica is a developing country.…" Participant 4 also failed to support the claim that, "Most students in the rural areas have not been able to access online classes for number of reasons such as: electricity, and connectivity issues." Participant 5 also stated, "Violence against women first started about 2,000 years ago in the roman culture where men were given life and death authority over his wives." No source was presented for this information.

Additionally, various sections of the expository essays did not directly address the point that was stated in the thesis. Participant 6 stated, "Whether it be demotivation from self, family, teachers, friends, or even the community, it is a recipe failure mindset." According to the participants' lecturers' commentary, Participant 6 explained, in the above statement, what could lead to a failure mindset, but did not clearly show how having a failure mindset could lead to a bad mental health. On the point of social media, Participant 6 could have provided an example of how the use of social media could impact adolescents' feelings and thereby impact their mental health; this would have strengthened the point.

Another area of concern was the effectiveness of information selected from the sources. For instance, Participant 7 cited, "Like an expensive car, the brain functions best when it gets only premium fuel (Selhub, 2020)." This was the only citation to support the claim that eating

healthy meals is essential to maintain good mental health. Participant 7 also stated, "Smoking is addictive and done by hundreds of people around the world but smoking can cause a large amount of damage to the brain if abused." There was no reference to specific statistics or research to support the claim. Similarly, Participant 13 cited, "Structural unemployment is a longer lasting form of unemployment." This was the only reference to research to support the point of the structural type of unemployment. The citation did not indicate how long this type of unemployment lasts and so it was not deemed as strong support in the essay. Participant 13 also stated, "Many companies from developed countries migrate to other countries that are not fully developed." This kind of generalized information did not adequately support the claim. Specific examples of companies that migrated to other countries that were not fully developed would have been more effective in supporting the claim.

In addition to weaknesses in citations, participants also failed, at times, to make effective links between the examples that they gave and the points that they were making. For example, Participant 2 stated the following:

> The third example of financial stress that may lead to child abuse is an employed mother with multiple overdue bills and an eviction notice for her outstanding rent dealing with her overindulged child. These examples show how families struggle with day-to-day survival issues and mounting financial pressures, some parents can be pushed over the edge which end up taking their pain, anger, and frustration out on their children.

In the above, the link was not really made. While it is possible that a mother with the pressures that were identified might be driven to abuse a child, there was nothing in the essay that proved that it did. Additionally, "Several studies found childhood sexual abuse experiences for both men and women are associated with family histories of alcoholism (Widom, 2001)" was useful for

Participant 2 to include in the essay, but it would have been more effective to identify even one such study. Participant 1 also stated, "A negative social environment is a cause of violent behavior among Jamaican youths," but no research was included in the paragraph to provide support. It would, therefore, be difficult for the audience to establish the truth of the claim.

In general, reference to statistics and case studies would have strengthened the claims. All the essays that were written by the seven participants had weaknesses in content. Participant 4 had the strongest content, along with organization and competent use of English, and was accordingly awarded the highest score. The other essays, at varying degrees, tended to rely on hypothetical cases instead of real examples, case studies, and statistics. The inclusion of stronger support would have made the pieces more compelling.

**Organization.** Organization was an area of strength seen in the expository pieces composed by the study participants. Generally, the expository essays were better organized than the diagnostic essays. Most of the participants did not include a thesis statement in the introduction to the diagnostic essay, but all the expository essays had even an attempt at a thesis statement (see Appendix G). Some of the thesis statements had structural problems, but the essay's focus was clear in each case. The participants included an outline for each essay. The outlines presented the thesis statement, topic sentences, and some supporting information.

Generally, the participants in this study did not include effective attention getters to introduce the essays in the diagnostic test. Participants tended to begin with general statements related to the issue. For example, the first sentence in the essay that was written by Participant 7 was, "English is an official language in many countries, a second language to others and an option to some." On the other hand, each introductory paragraph of the expository essays typically began with an effective attention grabber. Participants 1 and 5 began with general

statements, while Participant 2 began with a question; Participants 4 and 6 began with anecdotes and Participants 7 and 13 began with quotations. Participant 5 started the expository essay with, "Women face an uphill battle, from sexism and violence to inequality." The anecdote that was used by Participant 4 received special commendations from the lecturer. The anecdote that was used by Participant 4 is below. The essay topic was "Discuss three disadvantages of online learning."

> Jax a thirty six year old sat in his younger brother online class because he was fascinated about the new way of learning as this modality was not present in his high scholl days. As he observed, all he could hear was "Miss Natalia is having Internet issues". "Jenny won't be able to attend because of power outage in her area". "Hold on second student," the teacher said with a laugh. "I'm still trying to navigate through this new normal". He also realized that whenever students are called on, either they refused to answer or they are not in class. His interest deflated.

In addition to improvements in the use of attention getters, participants also displayed noticeable improvements in the structure and inclusion of thesis statements in their writing. Five of the seven participants did not include thesis statements in the diagnostic test. Participants 1 and 13 attempted to provide thesis statements in the initial test, but they were not structurally sound. For instance, Participant13 included the following thesis statement, "I further imparted the necessary knowledge throughout my educational cycle: Kindergarten, Primary School and High School." Participants 5 and 6 included statements of intent in the diagnostic test, but no real thesis statements. For instance, Participant 6 wrote, "In this essay, I will be going in depth speaking about my experience with the English Language."

Conversely, for the expository essay, all participants included thesis statements. While some of the thesis statements had structural errors, an example of a correctly structured thesis statement was written by Participant 7, as seen in the following: "Three factors that contribute to good mental health include: getting adequate amount of rest, eating healthy meals and refraining from the consumption of harmful toxins in the body." Participant 5, on the other hand, had two sentences as the thesis in the essay outline, but in the essay had a run-on sentence instead. Participant 1 had sentence structure errors in the thesis statement, while Participant 2 had a weak transition to the thesis statement, but the statement itself was correct. Participant 4 transitioned effectively to the thesis statement and the statement was also structured well. Both Participants 6 and 13 had structurally sound thesis statements. See the thesis statements from the expository essays in Table 15.

**Table 15**

*Topics and Thesis Statements From Participants' Expository Essays*

| Participant | Expository Essay Topic | Thesis Statement |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Explain the influences of violent criminal behaviour in Jamaican youths. | To understand how criminals become the way they are; we will explore three major contributors to violent criminal behaviour: adverse or maladaptive childhood experiences, negative social environment and the lack of a support system; as well as, measures to help stem criminality in Jamaica. |
| 2 | Discuss three factors that causes child abuse. | Three causes of child abuse are the lack of parenting skills, financial stress, and alcohol addiction. |

(continued)

| Participant | Expository Essay Topic | Thesis Statement |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Discuss three disadvantages of online learning. | The lacks of teacher training, inability to focus on screen and technology issues are some disadvantages that are present in online learning. |
| 5 | The effects of violence against women. | With such abuse women are left with adverse effects that affects them, some of these are: the struggles of depression, abuse of hard liquor and drugs and sometimes death. |
| 6 | Discuss three factors that contribute to bad mental health amongst adolescents. | Three factors that contribute to bad mental health amongst adolescents are a failure mindset, overuse of social media, and poor sleeping habits. |
| 7 | Outline three factors that contribute to good mental health. | Three factors that contribute to good mental health include: getting adequate amount of rest, eating healthy meals and refraining from the consumption of harmful toxins in the body. |
| 13 | Types of unemployment in an economy. | Three types of unemployment in an economy are structural unemployment, cyclical unemployment and seasonal unemployment. |

Generally, all participants presented background information in the introductory paragraphs of the essays. However, Participant 13 presented information on the effects of unemployment, which was not in keeping with the essay's focus. The background information should have been on the types of unemployment based on the topic. All other participants

presented relevant background information. Generally, the background information led to the thesis statement in each essay. However, Participant 2 had a weak transition to the thesis statement. On a related note, most participants included appropriate transitional words and phrases at the beginning of paragraphs and within paragraphs. However, Participants 1 and 7 did not use as many transitional words within paragraphs as would have been necessary for a good flow of ideas. While Participant 6 used transitional words and phrases throughout the essay, she included three instances of inappropriate words and phrases to transition from one idea to the next. For instance, "In agreement, if they do not get enough sleep…" and "Dismally, adolescents are more susceptible to bad mental health issues.…" At other points, Participant 6, as well as the others, used transitional words and phrases such as, first, second, additionally, moreover, furthermore, as a result, and in conclusion.

In addition to the effective use of transitional words and phrases, participants incorporated topic sentences into the essays. All participants started the three body paragraphs of the essays using topic sentences. In the case of Participant 5 though, only one of the topic sentences was effective. While some participants included effective closing sentences for the body paragraphs, some failed to do so. In fact, Participant 13 ended two of the three body paragraphs citing sources. Participant 1 was not consistent in ending body paragraphs with summary statements, as there was no closure of the second point. Participant 4, on the other hand, had summary statements for two body paragraphs but one was lacking.

Furthermore, the concluding paragraphs were generally correctly structured. Participants started the conclusion with appropriate transitional words such as in conclusion or conclusively. The thesis points were restated, recommendations were made, and there was a call to action. While Participant 5 restated the thesis statement in the conclusion, it was structurally weak.

Participant 4's conclusion continued the anecdote that was introduced in paragraph 1 of the essay. The reference back to Jax's story helped to make connections in the essay. The essays ended with an air of finality.

   **Documentation.** Documentation was one of the areas of weakness seen in the essays. There were 15 instances of documentation problems that were identified in the expository essays. The diagnostic test, which was a reflective essay, did not require the inclusion of sources and so there were no significant documentation errors in that piece of writing. However, for the expository essay, participants were required to use sources to inform the essays. Participants were expected to conform to APA guidelines. There were observed deficiencies in the quality of the sources, in-text citations, and in the format of the reference lists.

   First, source quality was questionable in some of the essays. Participants seemingly relied heavily on popular sources and only online sources were seen referenced. Of 11 sources used by Participant 6, five were academic or scholarly sources; six were popular sources. Three of the sources that were listed by Participant 1 were scholarly sources, while Participant 2 listed four sources, all of which were scholarly. Participant 4, on the other hand, listed seven sources, two of which were scholarly sources. Sources such as the *Jamaica Observer* and the *Conversation*, which were news sources, were included. Participant 5 listed five sources, but three of them were popular sources. Participant 7 listed five sources, three of which were not scholarly sources. Of the five sources that were listed by Participant 13, four were not scholarly. Overall, 45% of the sources that were listed in the essays were from scholarly sources, while 55% of the sources that were listed were from popular sources such as news items and unsecured websites. See the types of sources used in Table 16.

**Table 16**

*Types of Sources Listed in the Research Essays*

| Participant | Number of Sources Listed | Number of Scholarly Sources | Number of Popular Sources |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 4 | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 6 | 11 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 13 | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 42 | 19 (45%) | 23 (55%) |

Another aspect of documentation that was a point of concern was the format of the in-text citations. In some instances, no source was included for information that was presented or the source was inaccurately cited. Participant 1, for instance, included a definition in the essay, but she did not cite a source. In terms of citing sources, Participant 1 cited, "According to statistica.com" and "According to beststart.org." Participant 2 presented, "According to an article by Humm SR (1991)" as an in-text citation and consistently started citations with the expression, "According to an article by.…" Participant 5 also included, "(Through Tragedy and Triumph: A Life Well Travelled, Hagir, E, 2019)" as an in-text citation. Participant 6 cited sources such as, "Ziad Abdelnour" and "Mandy Hale," which is the incorrect format. Participant 7 cited "(Reddy 2015)" and "(Selhub 2020)" without the required comma in each.

Despite the assignment being a research essay, the second claim in the essay that was written by Participant 1 was presented with no reference to research or supporting information. Participant 2 tended to present two citations in a row without commentary. Participant 4 stated, "Most students in the rural areas have not been able to access online classes…" without citing a source. Similarly, Participant 5 stated, "Statistics have shown that more than one in four women have experienced physical and sexual violence in their lifetime…," but no source was stated.

Additionally, participants had errors in the format of the reference list. Participants 2, 4, and 7 presented the heading "References" flushed left, while Participant 6 used the term "Reference List." Participants 2 and 5 incorrectly indented the first line of each source in the reference list. Participant 2 also included the term "source from," while Participant 13 used the term "retrieved from" in front of websites, neither of which was in keeping with the APA seventh edition. Participants 6, 7, and 13 did not use the hanging indent in the reference list. Participant 7 failed to use italics appropriately for titles of works, while Participant 13 used the incorrect format for author's names. For instance, "Beveridge, William" was used instead of the required initial for the first name of the author of the source. The weaknesses in documentation weakened the quality of the essays that were presented by the seven participants who wrote both the diagnostic test and the in-course expository essay.

### *Emerging Themes in the Writing of Participants Who Did the Expository Essay Only*

**Language Errors.** As observed in the work of the participants who did the diagnostic test as well as the expository essay, participants who did only the expository essay displayed a range of language errors in their writing. Errors in the choice of words, capitalization, subject and verb agreement, the use of punctuation marks, run-on sentences, pronoun antecedent agreement, tense, and contractions in formal writing occurred five times or higher in the

expository essays. Errors in number, verb form, sentence structure, the use of prepositions, and tense occurred fewer than five times for the total number of participants who wrote the expository essay only. See the language errors that were identified in these participants' writing in Table 17. Unlike for the group of students who did the diagnostic test, there were no errors in the use of the comma or the use of the article that were identified in the expository essays of participants who did not write the diagnostic test.

**Table 17**

*Major Error Types and Their Frequency of Occurrence in Participants' Writing*

| Error Type | Expository Essay | Participants |
|---|---|---|
| Word Choice | 6 | 3, 8, 10, 12 |
| Capitalization | 13 | 3, 9, 12, 14 |
| Subject Verb | 11 | 3, 10, 12, 14 |
| Punctuation | 15 | 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 |
| Run-on Sentences | 11 | 3, 10, 11, 12, 14 |
| Incomplete Information | 7 | 3, 9, 10, 11, 14 |
| Contraction | 5 | 3, 10, 12 |
| Pronoun-Antecedent | 6 | 3, 8, 10, 14 |
| Expression | 21 | 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 |
| Documentation | 13 | 3, 8, 10, 12, 14 |

The most frequently occurring error in the expository essay for the participants who wrote only the expository essay was in expression. There were 21 errors identified in this category, while 20 expression errors were identified in the expository essays of those who wrote the diagnostic test. Errors in expression occurred in all participants' work except Participant 11.

These seven participants had from one to eight occurrences of expression errors per participant. Participant 9 had eight expression errors, which was the highest number of occurrences in this category among the 14 participants. Examples of this error are, "Where results show base on research that 1 of every 4 Adolescents exposes to domestic violence is affected," and "Three ways in which domestic violence can affect adolescents are sleep, mental health, and learning…," as written by Participant 9. "An incident of this had occurred once where a girl by Alecia was being sexual abused and struggled for most of her childhood because she did not mentioned it to anyone," was an error in expression in Participant 10's essay.

The second most frequently occurring usage error was the use of punctuation marks. The most frequently misused punctuation mark was the semicolon. There were 15 punctuation errors in the use of the semicolon, full stops, the apostrophe, and quotation marks. Once more, the highest number of occurrences of the misuse of the semicolon was identified in the work of Participant 9. Participant 9 used quotation marks inappropriately two times, failed to use the full stop three times when it was needed, and failed to use the apostrophe to show ownership once. For instance, in this example, a full stop was needed to separate two sentences, "The ways in which domestic violence can affect adolescents are sleep, mental health, and learning This demonstrates.…" Participant 10 misused the semicolon as seen in "Three effects of child abuse on children are; interpersonal relationship problems, mental health problems and alcohol/drug use." A related error, contractions, also appeared in the essays of three participants. There were five occurrences of the inappropriate use of contractions in a formal essay. Words such as "don't," "doesn't," and "couldn't" were used by participants 3 and 10, respectively.

Capitalization was another area of concern in the expository essays. There were 13 capitalization errors in the seven participants' work. Participant 12 had six occurrences of this

error, while Participant 9 had four occurrences. Participant 12 displayed a tendency to capitalize words that followed the comma after transitional words and phrases, as seen in the following: "In addition, Some of these injuries…," and "Moreover, Thoughts of suicide.…" Both Participants 9 and 12 tended to capitalize the first letter in Domestic Violence when used within sentences. Participants 3 and 14 had one and two capitalization errors, respectively. Participants 8, 10, and 11 had no error in this category.

In addition to capitalization errors, participants displayed errors in subject and verb agreement. There were 11 occurrences of subject and verb agreement errors in four participants' work. Participant 10 had the highest number of subject and verb agreement errors, a total of six errors. Two such errors were seen in the following sentence from the essay that was written by Participant 10: "Most children that undergo abuse, experiences many trauma as statistics has shown that these children mostly experience this trauma in their household, by their parents or guardian." Another example used by Participant 10 was, "Thirdly, another effect of child abuse on children are alcohol/drug use." Participant 3 had two subject and verb agreement errors, one of which was, "These behaviors includes; speeding, running traffic lights.…" Participant 12 also had two subject and verb agreement errors, while Participant 14 had one such error. Participants 8, 9, and 11 had no subject verb agreement errors.

There were 11 run-on sentence errors that appeared in the work of five participants; in most cases, the error took the form of a comma splice. Participant 12 had four occurrences of this error, which was the highest number of occurrences. An example of this error, as seen in Participant 12's essay, was, "Our males need to stop suffering in silence they should speak out and get professional help." Participant 11, who had very few language errors in her work, had two run-on sentences in the essay. An example of this was seen in the following: "Poverty as a

result of gang violence is another major issue in Jamaican society, not only does it affect the individual, but it also significantly impacts economic development." Participants 3 and 14 each also had two run-on sentences in their work, while Participant 10 had one such error. Participants 8 and 9 had no run-on sentences that were identified in their work.

Additionally, four participants had six errors in relation to pronoun-antecedent agreement. Participant 10 had three errors in this category, which was the highest number of occurrences. An example of this is seen in the sentence, "This causes the child to not communicate with anyone in his/her surroundings which oftentimes affects their communication between their peers." Another example is, "When a child is abused, they will tend to think a lot to themselves.…" In addition, Participant 14 wrote, "There are only 24 hours in a day and how we use it is important." Participants 3 and 8 also had one error each in this category. Participants 9, 11, and 12 had no errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement.

**Content.** Generally, the essays that were written by participants who did not do the diagnostic test, had fair content. All except one of the seven essays were focused on the stated topics. Participants included citations from research, but some references were stronger than others were. There were seven instances in which words were missing from the text or the information seemed to have been incomplete. Shifts in focus and weak supporting details were the main content-related challenges seen in the participants' essays.

In general, the focus could have been better maintained in some of the expository essays. Participant 3 should have examined the effects of drug abuse on teenagers, but shifted the focus to the causes of drug abuse. At points, the content focus was on persons other than teenagers. For instance, "Many people who are addicted to drugs are also diagnosed with other mental disorders and vice versa," was generalized to all people. Similarly, Participant 11 indicated poverty as the

focus of paragraph 3, but the information that was presented related to gang violence and there was no link made to poverty. The third thesis point, premature mortality, also was not the focus of paragraph 4; instead, the writer suggested that premature mortality causes Jamaica to be an unappealing place in which to live. Participant 12 also had shifts in focus in the essay that was presented. For example, "However, People may consider suicide when they feel that they do not belong…," was stated when the promise was to focus on men who have been abused.

While all participants presented research to support the thesis points, the support could have been stronger. Participant 8 did a reasonable job of supporting the points made with research, but could have included statistics to show the prevalence of domestic violence by alcohol abusers for instance. "Several epidemiological studies have shown that experiencing abuse as a child increases the risk for substance abuse later in life…," was cited by Participant 10 as supporting information. Similarly, "Multiple studies have found that domestic violence survivors have higher-than-average rates of suicidal thoughts…," was cited by Participant 12 as supporting information. In both cases, specific reference to one or two such studies would have strengthened the support. Participant 10 also cited hypothetical situations of abuse. This was not as effective as the references to case studies that were in the work of Participants 8 and 9. While Participant 11 included research from six sources in the essay, there was no reference to research to support directly any of the three thesis points. Most of the sources provided only definitions. Content in Participant 11's essay was generally weak. Clearly, there were shifts in focus; stronger supporting details would have improved the content of the essays.

**Organization.** As obtained from the participants who had written the diagnostic test, participants who wrote only the expository essay demonstrated fair organization in the essays. The essays of six of the seven participants under review were written using the five-paragraph

essay structure. Participant 3 wrote seven, mostly long paragraphs that did not follow any particular organizational structure. Most participants included attention grabbers, background information, and incorporated transitional words and phrases effectively. As indicated in the outlines, the essays presented the thesis statement, topic sentences, and some supporting information.

Generally, participants started the introductory paragraphs with effective attention grabbers. Participants 3, 10, and 14 used statistics to engage their audience. A definition was used by Participant 8, an anecdote by Participant 9, a general statement by Participant 11, and Participant 12 used a quotation. While the anecdote that was used by Participant 9 was appropriate, it was a bit lengthy and, therefore, constituted the entire first paragraph. This made it difficult to decipher the background information and thesis statements that were presented in paragraph 2. This was how Annakay's story, the anecdote, started: "Annakay was a 13-year-old who had grown up witnessing domestic violence firsthand her entire life. At a young age, she was sexually abused by her uncle, until he passed away.…" The story of Annakay spanned the entire essay; however, it could have been better integrated into the concluding paragraph.

Additionally, all participants included a thesis statement in their expository essays. Despite this, Participant 9 wrote the thesis statement in paragraph 2 and so it was incorrectly placed. The thesis statement was also structurally weak, as seen in the following: "Three ways in which domestic violence can affect adolescents are sleep, mental health, and learning This demonstrates how much more inform and educated the public needs to be.…" The end punctuation was missing, and the expression was awkward. The thesis statements that were composed by Participants 10 and 11 also displayed language errors, and the statement by Participant 14 had only two points. On the other hand, Participants 3, 8, and 12 had reasonably

well-constructed thesis statements. "Violence against women can be caused by a lack of emotional control by the abuser, poverty and war being experienced in that country," which was written by Participant 8, is an example of one of the well-constructed thesis statements.

In addition to presenting reasonable thesis statements, the participants also did a fair job of presenting background information to establish the context of their discussion. However, Participant 3 needed to make the background information more concise, as the introduction was almost an entire page long. Participant 11 misplaced the definition of domestic violence, a term that was relevant to the entire essay, in paragraph 2 of the essay. In general, the transition from the background information to the thesis statement was well done. Transitional words and phrases were also used effectively to introduce paragraphs. While most participants sustained the use of transitional words and phrases within paragraphs, Participants 3 and 11 could have been more consistent in this regard.

Another area of strength in the essays was the inclusion of topic sentences at the start of the body paragraphs and concluding statements at the end of body paragraphs. All participants had topic sentences in the essays; however, Participant 14 did not have a clear topic sentence to introduce the point of the first body paragraph. Nonetheless, the other topic sentences were effectively done. Though Participant 9 included the thesis points, the topic sentences were all quotations or accompanied by sources. This was inappropriate. Evidently, not as strong as the use of topic sentences, was the inclusion of concluding sentences for body paragraphs. Participant 9 had no concluding sentences, while Participant 14 included only one such sentence. Participant 11 made an attempt at concluding the body paragraphs, but the sentences could have been more effective. Participants 3, 8, 10, and 12 did the best job of including effective concluding sentences. "Altogether, it is shown where abuse can affect a child's interpersonal

relationship between family members, friends, colleagues and romance partners," is an example of an effective concluding sentence. This was done by Participant 10.

All expository essays had well-structured concluding paragraphs. The paragraphs were introduced with appropriate transitional words, such as, in closing, to conclude, or in conclusion. Participant 8 did not use a transitional term to introduce the conclusion. Participant 12 did not use a transitional term to introduce the conclusion either and, in fact, incorrectly used headings for all paragraphs. Despite this, all participants restated their thesis statements in the concluding paragraphs, but only two participants included a call to action at the end of the essay. Nonetheless, the essays generally ended with an air of finality.

**Documentation.** Documentation was an area of concern in the essays that were written by the participants who wrote the expository essay only. There were 13 errors in documentation in relation to in-text citations and in the reference lists. Though participants were required to conform to APA guidelines; this was not always evident. Errors were identified in the work of five participants. In some cases, information was presented but no source was included. Overall, most participants acknowledged sources of information but there were errors in the format of in-text citations, and there were formatting errors in the reference page.

Most participants in this group acknowledged the sources of information that were presented in their essays; however, Participant 3 did not acknowledge all the sources that were consulted. The essay did not receive a grade, as it was a plagiarized essay; there were five documentation errors in the essay. Extensive information was provided on the physical effects of drug abuse on teenagers, but no source was cited. For instance, "The pleasure center of the brain develops faster than the parts responsible for planning and risk analysis," and other specialized information was presented without citing a source. While the reliability of some sources, such as

Wikipedia and other popular sources, was questionable, the other six participants cited sources

for the information that was presented. Of the 55 sources that were cited by these seven

participants, 60% was scholarly, and 40% was popular sources. See Table 18 for a representation

of the types of sources that were used.

**Table 18**

*Quality of Sources Used by Participants*

| Participant Number | Scholarly Sources | Popular Sources | Number of Sources Cited |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| 9 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| 10 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| 11 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| 12 | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| 14 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Total | 33 (60%) | 22 (40%) | 55 |

Additionally, there were errors in the format of in-text citations in some of the essays. For

instance, Participant 3 consistently placed sources outside of sentences, as seen in the following

example: "The social pressure to belong, accepted and be part of a social group, especially in

teenagers, prompts them to conform to their peer group, and start trying out drugs. (Dr Tam,

2010)." In addition, the name of the author was not presented according to APA guidelines.

Participant 8 also incorrectly cited the author's name in the following: "This statement is

clarified by Nina Verfaille (2013), who states that 'Economic stresses incite violence, and

economic stress stems from violence.…'" Similarly, "(Amanda Kippert,2018)" was incorrectly cited in-text by Participant 9. Participant 11 had no error in this category.

In addition to in-text citation errors, there were significant errors in the reference lists that were presented by the study participants. Participant 3 failed to list sources alphabetically and presented websites only for six of the eight sources that were listed. Participant 14 also failed to list sources alphabetically. Furthermore, hanging indents were not applied in the reference lists presented by Participants 3, 9, and 10. Participant 9, as seen in her use of in-text citations, formatted the authors' names incorrectly. For instance, in "Dutton et al (2017), Zaleski K, Johnson D, Klein J (2016)"; it was unclear whether all the authors listed wrote the same document. The authors of most of the sources that were listed by Participant 11 were not presented in the reference list. Participant 14 was the only one who submitted an acceptable reference list that generally conformed to APA standards. The six other submissions violated APA rules at varying levels. Overall, the errors in documentation were pervasive and weakened the quality of the research essays.

**Summary**

In Chapter 4, the researcher presented the findings of the study. Themes were identified in the interview responses and in the participants' written work. Remote learning, Internet connectivity, lecturer approach and student motivation, writing pedagogy, feedback and consultation, student interaction, self-regulation, outside of class support for online remote learning, and group work were the themes identified in the interview responses. The study participants' writing would have been influenced by challenges with Internet connectivity, limited student interaction, and slow pace of instructor feedback throughout the course. Conversely, participants' performance in writing would have been positively affected by the

lecturer's personality, instructional processes applied, and whether they were able to develop self-regulatory skills. Participants felt that group work should not be a part of the course.

The themes that were identified in participants' written work were language problems, content, organization, and documentation. The seven participants who wrote the diagnostic test showed significant improvement in the expository essays in organization. There were apparent weaknesses in content, language use, and documentation. The themes were common among participants who wrote the diagnostic essay and participants who wrote only the expository essay close to the end of the course. Analysis of the participants' written work supported their interview statements that they had developed a better understanding of the structure of the expository essay. In general, despite the challenges in remote learning, participants felt that it was a positive learning experience, and their writing has improved. However, most participants would not like to continue to learn remotely outside of a pandemic.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

It was determined from the findings of this study that participants' writing ability improved while they had mostly positive experiences in composition writing classes during synchronous online remote learning. Nonetheless, low levels of student interaction and slow feedback were areas of concern among participants. Additionally, participants experienced challenges with Internet connectivity, but this did not diminish the quality of their learning experience. Participants valued the general approach to teaching and motivation that were received from their lecturer. Improvements were observed in some aspects of language use and in the organization of participants' writing, but weaknesses in content, documentation, and aspects of language use persisted. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings of this study and the implications for the future of the teaching of composition writing, especially in online and remote contexts. This chapter also presents the limitations of this paper, areas for future research in terms of online remote teaching and learning, as well as the conclusion of this study.

In general, it was determined from this study's findings that participants preferred to produce written pieces and access online remote classes through laptops. This finding is different from the findings of Bridgewater (2014), that most students used smartphones to access online classes. In the remote online class, which was the focus of this study, most participants accessed classes through laptops, which they said led to positive learning experiences and positive writing outcomes. Participants who used tablets or smartphones indicated that those devices were alternatives and only used when there was no access to laptops. Even in the cases in which a tablet or a smartphone was used for classes, participants indicated that they wrote assignments such as their essays on their laptops. Evidently, participants appreciated the large screens of

laptops, and the use of the laptop eliminated the chances of lessons being disrupted by phone

calls on the devices being used for class. Participants also valued the laptop's long battery life,

the capacity to store large files, and they could carry out online searches on the same device

while in class. This ease of access to information through the laptop seemingly aided some

participants in their ability to make meaningful contributions to class activities. This finding

might provide some relief from concerns that were raised by Griffin and Minter (2013) about the

tools that students use to access online classes and to perform writing tasks. They posited that

tablets and smartphones are more effective for consumption than for production of writing. The

laptop is purported to be a more suitable tool to produce writing.

Interestingly, some participants preferred using the laptop to access classes, as it allowed

them to do other tasks at the same time. This is problematic, as it may be that some students who

logged on for classes were not necessarily present for the entire time. While students were

working on other courses, they were missing what was being done in the class. In fact, some

students admitted that they missed important information, but their peers filled them in.

Participant 12 said that she did poorly on her essay outline and that was a result of her not paying

attention while instruction was being given. The implication is that students who engage in such

practices need to develop a higher level of self-regulation. Stephen and Rockinson-Szapkiw

(2021) found that college students need guidance in time management, goal commitment, and

how to navigate the online space to do well in online learning. If they better manage their time

and devote adequate time to each course, they should not feel a need to multitask while in online

remote classes. Of note is that the students who worked part-time did not indicate that they did

other course work while in Communication Skills 1 classes. It could be that having to work and

study contributed to time management and other aspects of self-regulation among students who work and study.

Additionally, in this study, participants demonstrated a high level of self-regulation and a focus on improving their writing throughout the online remote learning experience. Glenn (2018) found that self-regulation was a key determiner of student success in online learning. Nonetheless, it was not clear whether participants had some of the skills before engaging in online remote learning, but some of the responses to the interview questions implied that some of the skills may have been challenged and improved during the semester. It is noteworthy that the three participants who worked and studied managed to balance class attendance and fulfilling their work requirements. Participants became aware of some of the vital skills for success in the online learning environment. Chief among these skills are time management, determination, and the ability to resist distractions such as those associated with social media. The participants who preferred online remote learning to face-to-face learning were, in fact, two of those who worked and indicated the convenience of being able to work and study as the reason for their preference.

Despite the participants' profession of having been engaged in online remote classes for Communication Skills 1, at points, some of them were distracted from learning. The finding that online learners become distracted at times corresponds with that of Nicklen et al. (2016), as they found that the students not turning on their cameras came with online learning and made it easier for students to lose focus and become distracted. Nonetheless, according to Imig (2010), challenges such as insufficient student writing as well as a lack of engagement that are experienced in the online classroom are, in fact, reminiscent of the challenges faced in the brick-and-mortar classroom. Mobile devices increase the avenues for distractions to enter any learning space. Participants can potentially get bored or fall asleep, as did Participant 9, in any learning

environment. Of note, when she stopped logging into classes in her room, the problem was solved. Despite the range of distractions and Internet challenges, participants generally attended classes well. No student missed more than three classes and, in most cases, the absence was because of Internet connectivity issues. This implies that the students might have had a high level of interest and commitment to achieving their goals.

It was also determined in this study that participants preferred face-to-face writing instruction to online remote learning. While participants valued the convenience and flexibility of online remote learning, there was greater appreciation of immediate feedback and the personal connection that participants perceived characterize the traditional classroom. Marley (2007) had similar findings about the convenience and flexibility of online learning and Palvia et al. (2018) also found that online students expressed that they felt isolated from their peers and instructors. Unlike in Palvia et al. (2018), where students felt that face-to-face instruction was more effective, participants in the current study generally perceived that outside of feedback, the quality of instruction was the same as that obtained in the face-to-face writing class. The participants' belief is supported by Nguyen (2015) who posited that 92% of studies on online and distance education programs have been interpreted to suggest that they are as effective as or even more effective than face-to-face instruction.

Even though 64% of the participants indicated that Internet connectivity challenges affected their access to Composition Writing classes at some point, participants expressed understanding, as they said that was a part of online learning. The problem of Internet and technology barriers affecting participants' learning experience was also found to be pervasive in a study that was carried out since the Covid-19 pandemic (Gillis & Krull, 2020). Participants sought various avenues to ensure that they connected to their online remote classes, but the

significant challenges with Internet connectivity resulted in some participants missing out on some classes. This has far-reaching implications for online remote teaching in general. Participants suggested that access to recordings of the lesson was helpful; however, participants hardly went back to view the recorded lessons, as Participant 13 indicated that it was too time consuming. Participants preferred short recordings of segments of the lessons through the WhatsApp group or they relied on screenshots and updates given through conversations with their peers.

In the interviews, eight of the 14 participants did not perceive that online remote learning was more demanding than face-to-face learning (see Appendix E). This is contrary to the findings of the surveys that were referenced by Griffin and Minter (2013) that found students were required to do more than twice the amount of reading that was required in face-to-face courses. Most of the participants felt that the readings and writing tasks that were required in the course would have also been required in the face-to-face mode of instruction. Others felt that videos and other tasks were added to make the students appear to be really working. This idea might have been rooted in a public perception that students do not do much work online.

Nonetheless, there seemed to be a general view among participants that not all courses could be effectively delivered in an online remote environment. While participants felt that the online platform was appropriate for theory-based courses such as Communication Skills 1, they felt that the platform was not suitable for technical courses. Most participants expressed that they were having difficulty in learning in another language course that they described as being technical. Evidently, participants felt that the online remote classroom could effectively facilitate the teaching and learning of concepts such as essay writing, comprehension, and grammar skills. While some participants expressed that there was room for improvement, all participants felt that

their speaking, comprehension, and writing skills had improved as a result of their participation in Communication Skills 1.

According to the study's findings, a major contributor to participants' perception that their language skills had improved was the lecturer's approach. The participants valued their lecturer's personality and ability to engage them. Unlike the findings of Smith and Haughton, (2021), it was found in this study that student engagement, excluding feedback, and communication were areas of strength in online remote teaching. Participants appreciated the personal touch and the interactive nature of their composition writing classes. The lecturer's approach to communication with students was in alignment with the suggestions of Ray (2020) that students must be able to contact the instructor through varying modes of communication. In this case, participants were able to reach their lecturer through email, WhatsApp, and off-line phone calls. Participants also appreciated that they were told how soon they would receive responses when they sent messages to their lecturer, and this commitment was honored. Furthermore, participants appreciated the lecturer having devotions with them and showing concern about them. Participants said that other lecturers did so, but the Communication Skills 1 lecturer was outstanding because she was consistent and genuine.

Additionally, participants indicated that the teaching strategies that were used by the Communication Skills 1 lecturer were also employed by lecturers in other courses, but the impact was different. According to the participants, the Communication Skills 1 lecturer used PowerPoint presentations, videos, and discussions, but used them effectively. This does not mean that participants did not learn in other courses, but they seemingly looked forward to Communication Skills 1 and they enjoyed the learning experience. Participants stated that it was the personality of the Communication Skills 1 lecturer that made the difference. Additionally,

participants appreciated the lecturer's probing to find out if they understood. She would not just ask if they understood and move on. Participants suggested that the lecturer established rapport with the class. Evidently, knowing the students and trying to help them to advance was not lost on students. Gillis and Krull (2020) found that knowing students is necessary for success in online remote teaching. The participants in this study clearly appreciated the interest that was shown in their learning and the lecturer's effort to help them to learn.

Furthermore, participants felt that the lecturer's open line of communication contributed to their positive experience in the writing course. This is in keeping with the ideas posited by Ray (2020) that emphasized that instructors must pay close attention to communication, time, and lesson design. These factors are likely to impact significantly the kind of experiences that students and educators will have in online remote learning. The Communication Skills 1 lecturer would let the students know when she was attending to teaching practice or in a meeting. Through this kind of communication, the students developed an understanding of the various demands that the lecturer had. The lecturer's consistent communication also made students appreciative of the efforts the lecturer made to assist them, especially outside of work hours. Participants also felt free to communicate with the lecturer. According to the participants, the lecturer was very approachable and so they felt free to share with her. Participants also felt free to ask and respond to questions without fear of ridicule even if their response was incorrect. Clearly, the lecturer's openness and encouraging way was a motivating force for the participants.

While concerns have been raised about instructors' competence in navigating online communication processes, strategies, and general use of the required technologies (Baran et al., 2011; Davidson-Shivers et al., 2018; Salmon, 2012), the finding in this study was that participants were quite pleased with their lecturer's ability to navigate the online platform and

associated technologies. Ballard (2018) asserted that the instructional competence of the online

teacher is important in online environments, as this will definitely impact students' learning

experience. Participants indicated that their lecturer was knowledgeable of the subject matter and

she employed strategies that they deemed effective. It was found in this study that the inclusion

of ice breakers such as individual and team games, online quizzes, and discussion were welcome

in classes. Such activities were interactive and successfully engaged students.

Instructional practices such as providing outlines, using model essays, repeating ideas for

emphasis, and calling on students randomly to respond to questions also were felt to have been

very effective. This approach corresponds with the ideas of Imig (2010) who suggested, "plenty

of background, writing done over time, modeling, opportunities for personal connections,

creativity, peer sharing" (para. 1) were necessary for the teaching of writing whether online or

face-to-face. Participants said they did not know when their lecturer would call on them and so

they tried to be ready. Accordingly, upon examining several research studies, Thalheimer (as

cited in Schlesselman, 2020) concluded that it is primarily the teaching method and not so much

the modality that determines the learning outcome. Despite this, at points, some participants were

attending to other course assignments or were distracted by social media. It is apparent that even

when students find the class to be interesting and effective, they tend to lose focus at times.

Additionally, it was found that participants were comfortable with the course content and

the structure of the composition writing course. Participants felt that the content and

corresponding skills were relevant to their goal, which was ultimately to become certified

teachers of English. In keeping with this, Nguyen (2015) posited that effective course design is

one of the critical features of online teaching, and factors heavily in students' satisfaction in

terms of their learning experience. Some participants felt that the course was fine as it was;

however, most participants felt that structured consultation could enhance the course. Invariably, consultations would facilitate increased communication in the course. According to Roblyer (2016), increased opportunities for more communication among students and between instructor and students contribute to the quality of the experience that students have in online programs. Group work could also provide more opportunities for peer interaction. While some participants contended that they did group work in other courses, others suggested that having group work in the writing course could lead to improvement in their writing.

Based on the analysis of the diagnostic test, participants had challenges in structuring an essay. While some of the weaknesses were still evident in the expository essays that were produced in the final weeks of the course, significant improvement was evident. The findings in the diagnostic essays corresponded with an earlier study that found that 1st-year college students tend to have trouble in composing the introduction, thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting sentences, and the conclusion of compositions (Cekiso et al., 2016). However, by the end of the course, there were improvements in all the areas identified. Participants felt that the breaking down of the essay into discrete sections aided their understanding. They, therefore, became conscious of topic sentences, supporting details, thesis statements, and in fact, everything that was required in each paragraph of the essay. The presentation of various aspects of the essay in parts corresponds with cognitive load theory, which promotes presenting content in manageable segments to facilitate understanding.

Another aspect of cognitive load theory speaks to presenting information by visual and auditory means (Poffenbarger, 2017). This was not always done in the course. According to Participant 6, if a board were available for the teacher to write examples that were created in class, it would have enhanced the experience. Nonetheless, participants also prepared essay

drafts that were reviewed by their peers and the lecturer. Based on the expository essays that were produced, this kind of deliberate approach, which one participant called baby steps, clearly aided 13 of the 14 participants in understanding the structure of the essay. While it might be seen as a time-consuming approach, the participants in this study felt that it was an effective way to teach essay writing. Participants even indicated that they transferred the skills learned and were producing better structured essays in other courses as well.

While 50% of the participants stated that they were satisfied with their writing development throughout the semester, most participants indicated a realization that they had a major role to play in continuing to improve their writing. Most participants utilized the material that was made available through the college's virtual learning environment. Some participants indicated that during the course, they started to conduct independent study. This involved watching YouTube videos and reading material online. Participants indicated that the additional tools aided their development as well. Perhaps because of the rapport that the lecturer fostered with the class, participants did not hold the lecturer responsible for any deficiency that they had in writing at the end of the course. It is apparent that once instructors teach well and maintain a good relationship with their classes, students may be inclined to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Participants also seemed very pleased with their development in public speaking. As a course requirement, students wrote an expository speech and were then required to deliver the speech to an audience. Participants indicated that the activity to create videos, through which they introduced themselves to the class, was very useful. While many of the participants said that they did not like public speaking, they came to appreciate that it was necessary for teachers in training to develop the skill. Participants subsequently viewed videos on YouTube that provided

tips on how to improve their public speaking skills. According to participants, the comments on their videos from their peers and the lecturer made them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the course, participants were confident in the content of their presentations and this, they felt, contributed to making them better public speakers.

Though participants generally expressed appreciation for the inclusion of instruction on the APA citation style in the course, this was an area of weakness in the expository essays. It was determined from an assessment of the expository essays that participants did not learn this topic as well as their interview responses suggested that they thought they did. The range of errors that were presented indicated that participants did not grasp the importance of correctly citing sources or the level of exposure to documentation through the course was inadequate. Some participants presented information without acknowledging the source, while others did not use the correct format in presenting the sources. Participants needed to pay more attention to the format of in-text citations within the essays as well as in the reference lists. Most participants also included popular sources, such as Wikipedia, which raised questions about whether the information could be trusted. Weaknesses in this area reduced the quality of the writing. This was an area that needed attention, as credibility and reliability are being treated with much scrutiny in academia given the proliferation of fake news and unreliable sources that are readily accessible online. One essay was plagiarized; this could lead to serious consequences if the issue is not given the level of focus that has become necessary in what is regarded as the information age.

Another area of concern was the slow pace of receiving feedback and limited opportunities for consultation. The lecturer provided feedback through WhatsApp, email, and in class. Though the participants indicated that the lecturer provided excellent feedback, it was apparent that participants had to wait for some time to receive such feedback. A study by

Achieve3000 (2020) found that some educators fail to sustain grading and providing adequate feedback in remote teaching. This is concerning, as John Hattie (as cited in Achieve3000, 2020) asserted that feedback is among the top 10 influences on achievement. Participants expressed the belief that the lecturer's workload was too heavy, and this reduced the lecturer's ability to provide feedback quickly. For instance, the expository essay that was submitted in April was graded in June. This allowed for students to receive feedback ahead of exams. Griffin and Minter (2013) made reference to surveys through which respondents suggested that consideration should be given to class size, instructor workload, the number of courses taught, and other duties of online writing instructors.

Interestingly, the participants who preferred face-to-face instruction indicated that access to feedback was one of the major benefits. Beach and Friedrich (2006) posited that according to 60 years of composition research, students tend not to understand the traditional written comments, and limited quality and quantity of communication is accomplished. This might explain why some students indicated a preference to receive feedback face-to-face. Despite this, if the lecturer carried out her duties as thoroughly as participants said she did, it would then suggest that the lecturer's workload was too much. The demands of the role seemed to have contributed to her inability to provide timely feedback, which experts say is vital for students to excel, especially in online modes of learning.

Despite the varying demands of the lecturer's role, participants in the study indicated that the lecturer was able to meet with a few of them outside of class. Participants expressed that the one-on-one consultation was very useful. Even participants who did not get the opportunity to consult with the lecturer said that they wished they had the opportunity. The lecturer apparently did not have adequate time to see all 34 students from the class. It was, therefore, not surprising

that most of the participants stated that structured consultation hours should be included in the course. Though arguable, participants felt that they would have received more feedback if the course were in a face-to-face mode. Noticeably, there was no writing center available to the students. Perhaps the creation of a writing center could compensate for the time that the instructor did not have to provide the needed guidance for students. Griffin and Minter (2013) found that fewer than 50% of college students had access to a writing center tutor. This is of concern, as the writing center can offer consultation services that can help college students to improve their writing. Additionally, 29% of the participants felt that seminars and writing workshops from specially invited guests could help them to improve their writing. Participants suggested that such sessions must ideally be planned for small groups. For the sessions to be effective, participants expressed that students must be able to ask and respond to questions.

Another area of concern in the online remote learning experience for the course Communication Skills 1, was student interaction. Generally, participants expressed that peer interaction was very limited and was the weakest aspect of the course. This find is supported by Jeffery and Bauer (2020), who found that when Chemistry lessons were moved into a remote learning environment, students reported that their communication among peers suffered. It was determined in another study that one of the greatest challenges faced in remote learning is students' lack of participation (Achieve3000, 2020). Participants determined that the limited peer interaction was on account of the online remote learning environment. Based on participants' statements, it was the WhatsApp group that enabled them to sustain the class spirit. Despite the use of online communication tools such as WhatsApp, Zoom, email, and phone calls, participants still felt that they did not really connect with their peers. There seemed to be a

perception that face-to-face classes would have allowed for a higher level of interaction and the fostering of a stronger class connection.

Furthermore, it was found that most of the friendships that were formed throughout the course were products of group work. Participants got to know those with whom they worked, and they developed trust. So significant were the relationships that participants indicated that they started to exchange assignments for editing. While opportunities were created for such relationships to have been formed through other courses, some participants perceived that having group work in Communication Skills 1 could have allowed some students to interact with some of their classmates with whom they had never worked. Even so, participants expressed that their peers helped them in areas such as grammar, correcting the essay outline, and to gain a better understanding of some topics in the course. Despite this, 71% of the participants did not think that group work should be included in the course. As with the findings of the current study, Barham (2016) found that most college students who were pursuing online programs indicated a preference for working alone. Interestingly though, Weimer (2013) found that when college students worked collaboratively, their academic scores improved by 4%. This suggests that though some students were averse to group work, there may be potential academic benefits.

Additionally, participants sought help outside of the college to improve their writing. Not only did participants conduct independent research and explore online videos, but there seemed to have been family support for some participants. The only participant who attained grade A for the expository essay spoke highly of the great help that she got from her sister, who was a writer. Others spoke of support from their mother, grandmother, or family, in general. The support that was received was not limited to academics but included making phone calls to sort out administrative issues as well. Participants who got support from their families seemed

appreciative of it. In their view, the support had contributed to their success in the course. Evidently, though college students may be seen as adults, they still need family support to help them through, especially the 1st year of college.

In addition, based on participant statements, it was apparent that the college library was also available to provide support to the learners, but it was not well utilized. Most participants seemed satisfied with the information that was obtained online or through the college's virtual learning environment. Some participants expressed that they did not know how to navigate the library's online platform. One participant revealed that training in how to use the online library platform was done during orientation at the start of the school year, but it was unclear how many students attended the session. The limited use of the college library may be linked to the kind of sources that participants used to inform their research essays. There was a heavy reliance on popular sources that could have potentially been reduced had participants consulted the library. The seeming ease of access to a great deal of information from online sources might limit students' willingness to read printed literature to access information that may be more credible.

In addition to the support that was provided by the class lecturer, participants also benefitted from the support of the head of the department through which the course was offered. While most participants said that they did not feel the impact of the college administration, they said that the head of the department was present. The presence of the head of the department came through her immediate response to email and phone calls as well as her hosting a monthly meeting with the group through which students shared their experiences and concerns in their program of study. Though some participants had problems with the office staff, most participants had no trouble with them. Where there were challenges, it was apparent that the support at the departmental level helped to alleviate some of the issues.

In relation to participants' performance in writing, 13 of the 14 participants demonstrated significant improvement in their writing and attained passing grades in the expository essays that were submitted close to the end of the course (see Appendix G). Yet, there were lingering weaknesses. Closely related to this finding is that Jones-McKenzie (2018) found that most students who sit for and pass college English Proficiency tests at the college level tend to display deficiencies in several aspects of writing and reading comprehension. There were noticeable deficiencies in the diagnostic test. Participants were generally unable to use effective attention grabbers, construct thesis statements, provide suitable background information, construct topic sentences, or include supporting details within paragraphs. It is important to note that the weaknesses were seen in the work of only 50% of the participants who were present at the start of the course. Evidently, some students commenced the semester late and so were not able to participate in all activities. This leads to questions about the diagnostic test and its function of informing planning. The students who started the program late would not be as informed of their areas of strength and weakness as those who started on time would be.

In any event, if the 50% who sat for the diagnostic test were to be taken as a sample, the areas of concern were characteristic of the writing of 1st-year college students. The finding corresponds with the work of Sharhan et al. (2020), who found that Iraqi college students displayed low language proficiency, limited reading and weak writing practice, and overgeneralization. In another corresponding study, Jiménez et al. (2013) found that college students' writing had errors in spelling, grammar, syntax, organization, and so on. As with the findings of Jiménez et al. (2013), it was determined in the current study that students had difficulty distinguishing important information from extraneous details, and students also failed to organize paragraphs effectively by not including topic sentences and supporting details

appropriately. The most dominant error in the work of the participants was in language use. Grammatical errors were present in all diagnostic essays examined. There were errors in the use of the article, number, fragments, capitalization, prepositions, pronoun antecedent agreement, and the use of tense. There were also instances of weak supporting material and irrelevant information in the expository essay.

Understandably, the diagnostic essay was not research based and so was treated with a lower degree of scrutiny than the expository essay was. Nonetheless, the errors that occurred in the diagnostic test revealed the level of competence at which the participants would have entered college. The range of errors that were identified was concerning, since the participants were future teachers of English. What was alarming was that some errors that did not appear in the diagnostic test were present in the expository essay. For instance, Participants 1 and 2 did not have pronoun-antecedent errors in their diagnostic test, but had such errors in their expository essays. This could be on account of the expository essay being longer. There is also the consideration that the expository essay was a formal piece and participants might have made more of an effort to be correct. Such an effort to apply newly learned skills can lead to overgeneralization of language rules. In fact, language learning theorists such as Selinker (1969) asserted that errors are sometimes indicative of learner's progress and are not necessarily negative. Conversely, there was a reduction in errors in the use of tenses. This may be a sign of improvement or that the diagnostic test was a reflective essay that required the use of the past tense and, thus, would have demanded greater attention to this aspect.

Overall, there was an increase in usage errors in the expository essays. Word choice errors were common to all participants. Although there were 23 word-choice errors that were identified in the diagnostic test and 19 such errors in the expository essay, it was apparent that

this was an area that needed improvement; all participants had errors in expression. The weakness in expression was also highlighted in the reports from CXC such as in 2014, which asserted that while candidates may have had content knowledge, their expression was weak. Of great concern also was subject-verb agreement errors and run-on sentences in participants' work. While some participants handled these areas quite well, they remained a challenge for some.

Of concern were the essays of Participants 2 and 4, who had all except one type of error and Participant 5 whose work had all the major categories of errors that were identified in the study. Participant 4 displayed errors in all but one category of errors. In the interview, Participant 4 stated that she had challenges in writing. However, she relied heavily on her sister and said that she had seen improvement in her writing. Of importance here is the observation that Participant 4 had the highest scoring essay. Additionally, mostly local, or grammatical errors, were seen in her essay, and not global errors related to content and organization. However, Participant 5 had expressed that she had personal challenges during the semester and her academic work was affected. She expressed an awareness of her weaknesses and a desire to apply herself more in subsequent semesters.

Participants also displayed errors in establishing sentence boundaries and subject-verb agreement. There was a significant increase in the occurrences of these errors in the expository essay in comparison to the diagnostic test. The 30 occurrences of run-on sentences, mostly comma splice and 26 subject-verb agreement errors, indicated that participants needed more practice in the two areas. While Participant 5 had the most occurrences of run-on sentences in her writing, Participant 2 had seven run-on sentences, as did Participant 5, in the expository essay. Participant 2 also had seven subject-verb agreement errors in the expository essay, which was the highest number of occurrences. Participant 2 was the only one who said that she used

Grammarly when preparing her essays. It was, therefore, unclear why so many errors would have appeared in her written work. Perhaps personal knowledge is required to complement the online tool. Alternatively, maybe the participant's performance would have been worse had she not used Grammarly, or the tool did not work as well as the student would have expected. It was apparent that students must have knowledge of rules of grammar to write effectively. On the other hand, Participants 4 and 6 had no run-on sentences in the expository essay. It may be that these two participants were competent in constructing sentences before the course or their knowledge could have been reinforced throughout the course. In general, participants demonstrated a need to work on their grammar skills, as this has implications for the quality of their writing.

Understandably, many of the errors that were seen in the work of the participants who did the diagnostic test were also displayed in the expository essays that were produced by participants who joined the course after the first test. It was unclear why there were no errors in the use of the comma or articles among the participants in this group, but all the other error types that were previously mentioned were seen in the essays. As for the other group of participants, errors in expression were one of the most dominant. Punctuation marks were also misused extensively in this group. Despite attending all Communication Skills 1 classes, Participant 9 had the highest number of errors in expression of all 14 participants; she was the participant with the most punctuation errors in her essay. Participant 9 had the unique situation of having started the course using a mobile phone but said that she could not participate in classes on that device. She later borrowed a tablet and used it for most of her classes but had challenges, as the device sometimes froze. Participant 9 also indicated that she did not participate much in online remote classes because of background noise at home. She admitted to having been distracted by social

media at times during classes as well. All the challenges identified might have contributed to the aspects of her work that were lacking.

Interestingly, Participant 3 displayed all categories of errors that were identified. This might have been on account of his essay being approximately twice the length of the other essays. There was failure to adhere to the format of the essay and the prescribed limit. Participant 3 volunteered at the library and would have been privy to information on plagiarism, and so it was unclear why he submitted a plagiarized paper. This participant also had the longest interview for this study, which was primarily because of his tendency to answer much more than that which was asked. There seemed to have been a difficulty on his part to get to the point. This seemingly affected his performance in the writing course as well. Conversely, Participant 11 had very few local errors in her writing but failed to support adequately the claims made in her essay. While her language and documentation were competent, the content of her essay scored 2/6 marks. All other participants produced reasonable content that enabled them to earn passing grades. Participant 12 had errors in most of the categories. She indicated that she used a phone for classes, as her laptop could not pick up the Wi-Fi. Similar to Participant 9, she said she was hampered in classes by distractions in her home environment. Participant 12 admitted that she needed to read more, and this would lead to improvement in her performance. Participant 10 also had most categories of errors but acknowledged that she was aware of some weaknesses she had and indicated that the course was helping her to improve. Clearly, continued effort would be required to improve in the areas of weakness.

There were strengths and weaknesses that were observed in terms of the content that was produced by the participants. In this regard, 13 of the 14 participants maintained the focus of their essays and presented some relevant research to support their claims; however, the focus

could have been better maintained in several of the essays. There were weaknesses in the quality of the support. Many of the supporting cases that were mentioned were hypothetical. This corresponds with Miller's (as cited in Milson-Whyte et al., 2019) finding that students use evidence and discourse conventions that are not appropriate for academic registers. In the context of research essays, verifiable cases would have strengthened the points made. Nonetheless, that Participants 4, 6, 8, and 9 referred to studies indicated that there was an awareness of the requirement, at least among some students. Participants also needed to avoid overgeneralizations, as this was seen in some essays. There were also some quotations used that did very little to advance the claims. Participants needed to be careful of presenting information that superficially supported their claim. Too many participants failed to include examples, statistics, and case studies that would have proved to be stronger support for the claims made. In addition, some participants presented the ideas of others as their own, and so there may be a lack of awareness of the consequences of plagiarism.

One of the major strengths in all 14 expository essays was in the level of organization. All except one participant evidently followed a clear structure and produced the five-paragraph essay. The essays generally had effective attention grabbers, background information, thesis statements, topic and supporting sentences, concluding sentences, and concluding paragraphs, which included the points covered in the essays. In the interviews, most participants commented that it was through the course that they learned about attention grabbers. They were quite excited about this aspect and said they could present effective attention grabbers. It was not clear why this seemed to have been their most celebrated accomplishment. Participants indicated that the required essay outlines helped them to frame the essays. This they said helped them to cover all the required elements and later develop the points in their essays. This corresponds with the ideas

of Jones-McKenzie (2018), who suggested that self and peer reviews, selection, reporting of broad and narrowed topics, preparation of essay outlines, and writing and rewriting of essay drafts are best practices in college writing. It was determined in this study that such practices were effective in aiding the participants to improve their writing.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several challenges encountered while conducting this study. Very few studies on online remote learning that were carried out in the Caribbean were available. Consequently, the Creole feature of the Caribbean linguistic background as it relates to the teaching of writing remotely has not been sufficiently documented to provide supporting literature for this discourse. Additionally, the search for standardized instruments to explore the learners' experiences in learning writing in online remote environments yielded limited results. The onus was then on the researcher to create an instrument, which might not have been the most appropriate measure of the experiences of 1st-year college students learning writing in an online remote environment.

Additionally, only a few studies that focused on college students' writing in Jamaica were identified. Consequently, studies carried out in first-world settings were relied upon to provide a frame for this research. One must, therefore, be cautious in examining the literature, as the seeming commonalities and disparities might not be reflective of the socioeconomic conditions and unique linguistic features that characterize the Caribbean. One must be conscious, for instance, of the difference in access to resources such as mobile devices in first-world countries, which might not pertain for some Caribbean students. The duties of college lecturers in American schools also may differ from those of the lecturer in the Caribbean, and so the level of teacher-student interaction might be different. Such factors are likely to impact the kind of experiences that college students have while learning writing remotely.

Furthermore, the relatively small number of participants was a limitation of this study. While 14 participants may reasonably inform a qualitative study, to understand truly a phenomenon, a larger number of participants would provide greater insight into the experiences of students who were learning synchronously in the online remote environment. A larger sample would have probably shared a wider range of experiences on the platform. Likewise, more study participants would have provided a stronger basis of comparison. Additional participants would have either supported claims and made them more reliable, or more participants could have shared different perspectives to shift possibly some views that were perhaps firmly established among the small group.

Accordingly, the imbalance in the distribution of males and females in the sample was also a limitation in this study. A larger number of males would have better informed the study of the unique perspectives that males may form while learning writing in an online remote environment. Nonetheless, the imbalance in the gender distribution was reflective of a significantly lower male population than females in the teacher training institution. The teaching profession tends to attract mostly females, and English as a specialization attracts even lower numbers; only two males were enrolled in the class of 34. Consequently, there was no basis for comparison of the male and female experience in online remote learning.

Another limitation of this study was that the researcher was unable to conduct the interviews in a face-to-face mode. Because of the pandemic that spanned the duration of this study, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or through telephone calls. The researcher was, therefore, unable in most cases to gauge participants' body language and pick up additional messages that might not have been verbalized. Consequently, the researcher could not be totally

sure that the students were honest in their responses. As is the case with any kind of research, the level of honesty of the participants will inevitably impact the actual results of the study.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the range of errors in participants' writing in this study, it is evident that 1st-year college students need to be engaged in activities that encourage them to edit their academic writing more. This will increase the possibility that learners will pick up on errors before submitting their work. It may also be useful to continue to include peer editing as an activity in the writing course. Accordingly, process theory supports the notion of students working in peers through which students also teach, review, brainstorm, and edit (Murray, 1972). This will allow both parties to benefit from the process, as well as it might enhance the experience learning writing at least for some students.

Even though some students are averse to group work, it should be considered for implementation into the writing course. Arbaugh and Benbunan-Finch, (2006) found that collaboration in online courses leads to positive student experiences and that which is positively correlated with improved learner outcomes. Furthermore, collaboration is a 21st century skill that should be fostered in all courses being pursued. Collaboration in writing is a very different experience that can be of benefit to the students, although some students contended that they did group work in other courses. Although many students are averse to collaboration, it usually results in students attaining higher grades.

Additionally, systems should be implemented to encourage the students to utilize the college library more. Since up to 50% of college students may begin the semester late, they may miss the orientation session. Perhaps orientation sessions should, therefore, be repeated a few times throughout the semester. Alternatively, instructional videos may be made available to

students on the library's website to aid students in understanding how to use the library. Lecturers could also encourage students to use the resources that are offered by the library and point out to students that such resources can lead to improvements in their work, especially in critical areas such as selection of sources, sifting through information, and documentation.

Accordingly, a great deal of emphasis needs to be placed on documentation in the writing course. There must be opportunities for students to practice documenting sources outside of the context of assessment. This will likely result in improvements in in-text citations and the format of the reference lists. Increased emphasis on documentation would also draw students' attention to source quality and selecting of appropriate information to support claims. A focus on documentation in this the digital era is critical. Students need to be conscious that the veracity of research essays depends heavily on sources and how they are presented to an audience. Seminars and workshops may be added to the program, through which documentation and other aspects of writing may be explored.

Finally, at the level of the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica, the duties of the lecturers should be revised so that there is adequate time for lecturers to grade assignments and provide consultation opportunities for students. In the meantime, lecturers need to devise ways to provide feedback to students on a more timely basis. In keeping with this, colleges may also benefit from adding writing centers to their program offering. According to Brooke (as cited in Holloway, 2016), students can best discover themselves as writers through interaction with their peers, writing instructors, or writing centers. A minimal fee may be charged for students to use the center each semester. This fee should help to fund the program.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Undoubtedly, the experiences of college students learning writing in online remote environments is worthy of further study. A longitudinal study on this same issue would be interesting. Such a study might provide useful insight into why students attain the grades that they do while learning remotely. The phenomenon may even be better informed by an action-type study that targets students who have previously learned in an online remote environment and compares their experience to that of participants in a course delivered through the same medium. There also may be a study in which students' experiences in learning writing online is compared with the experiences of students learning writing through an online remote format. It would also be interesting to compare the performance of 1st-year college students in writing after learning in the online remote environment with the performance of students who learned writing in the traditional face-to-face classroom.

Bridgewater (2014) also reported that students used mostly smartphones for online learning. A similar study exploring the type of devices used in online remote learning would be useful. It would be interesting to find out whether the device that is used to access online remote classes has any impact on students' learning outcomes. Griffin and Minter (2013) stated that educators have expressed fears that the use of smartphones and tablets may negatively impact students' writing. It would be instructive to find out if there are merits to such fears. Indeed, the students' access to online remote classes might be influenced by access to devices and Internet connectivity. Even at the college level, some students might not be able to afford such resources. Therefore, it might also be useful to explore the effects of socioeconomic status and parental involvement or family support in college students' writing attainments while learning in online remote learning environments.

Additionally, the increased access to online tools may impact students' writing. A study that explores the impact of the use of online tools such as Grammarly is necessary. The findings of this study implied that such tools might not be as useful as they are perceived to be. However, this is not conclusive, as the issue requires greater scrutiny to reach a more informed position. It might also be useful to examine the reading habits of 1st-year college students, especially in this the digital age. This could be scrutinized against their academic attainment. In addition, it would be useful to conduct a longitudinal study involving teachers in training who learned in the online remote learning format and their performance in teaching English after graduation from college.

Evidently, too, there is a need for further studies exploring the role of feedback in online remote learning. Does the mode of presenting feedback have an impact? Is delayed feedback still useful? How soon can lecturers reasonably provide feedback, and it is still useful? In keeping with this, a study that examines the role of student-to-student interaction in online remote learning could be instructive. While studies have been done on interaction in online learning, a study that focuses on the remote aspect of this relatively new approach would be useful.

Finally, it would be particularly relevant in a Caribbean context to investigate further the duties of lecturers in teacher training institutions. Certainly, it would be interesting to observe how much time is devoted to planning, instruction, teaching practice supervision, research supervision, and the administrative functions that the college lecturer must carry out. What would be very helpful is insight into how much time is available for lecturers to provide feedback to students. Furthermore, it would be useful to find out if the demands placed on lecturers when teaching in online remote settings are similar to the demands of teaching in the face-to-face setting. Further study in all areas identified can provide useful insight to inform the future of teaching and learning, especially in online remote learning environments.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to assess the experiences of 1st-year college composition writing students in a synchronous online remote learning environment and to evaluate the method of delivery and its impact on the learners' experiences in order to identify a more effective online protocol for teaching writing in an online remote learning environment. Question 1 posed in this study sought to find out how 1st-year students were engaged in composition writing classes in a synchronous online remote learning environment. In this study, it was determined that the lecturer used interactive strategies such as discussion, PowerPoint, handouts, videos, and other presentation tools to engage learners. Outside of class, learners were engaged through WhatsApp chat, email, and phone calls. Research questions 2 and 3, respectively, sought to find out what learning experiences and challenges 1st-year college students have in composition writing classes in synchronous online remote learning. It was also determined that participants had positive experiences with the lecturer through her warm personality and interactive and creative teaching style. The use of models and outlines helped learners to grasp expository writing. Conversely, it was determined that there were limited peer interactions, Internet connectivity challenges, and feedback from the lecturer was not received in a timely manner.

Consequently, it was concluded that 1st-year college students had a mixture of positive and negative learning experiences in the online remote learning environment. While these findings are not conclusive, it is evident that participants enjoyed their Communication Skills 1 classes that were delivered in a synchronous online remote format. Most students presented relevant content and demonstrated good organizational skills in their writing. While some improvements were displayed in the use of English, grammar and documentation showed high

levels of deficiency. Nonetheless, participants attained satisfactory scores for their course work

pieces. It is apparent that the gains made by participants were not on account of the online

remote learning platform; evidently, the instructor's competence significantly impacted learners

and inspired them to achieve.

REFERENCES

Achieve3000. (2020). *5 strategies to ensure student online engagement* [PDF]. Actively Learn.

  https://www.smartbrief.com/whitepapers/D632B835-A1EA-4CD3-9856-

  F57F77016A8D/5_Strategies_to_Ensure_Student_Online_Engagement.pdf

Alqurashi, E. (2019). Predicting student satisfaction and perceived learning within online

  learning environments. *Distance Education*, *40*(1), 133–148.

Anson, C. M. (1999). Distant voices: Teaching and writing in a culture of technology. *College

  English*, *61*(3), 261–280.

Arbaugh, J. B., & Benbunan-Finch, R. (2006). An investigation of epistemological and social

  dimensions of teaching in online learning environments. *Academy of Management

  Learning & Education*, *5*(4), 435–447.

Arizona State University. (2018, October 26). Clear thought, practice yield clear writing;

  American students begin their higher education with poor writing abilities and are seldom

  given reason to improve them. *Wall Street Journal*. https://www.wsj.com/articles/clear-

  thought-practice-yield-clear-writing-1540592782

Atkinson, D. (1997). A critical approach to critical thinking in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *31*(1),

  71–94.

Baleni, Z. G. (2015). Online formative assessment in higher education: Its pros and cons. *The

  Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, *13*(4), 1–9.

Ballard, W. W. (2018). *Student perception of online instructors at a Florida public university*

  (Publication No. 2051731762) [Doctoral dissertation, Florida Atlantic University].

  ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Banta, T. W., & Palomba, C. A. (2014). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Baran, E., Correia, A.-P., & Thompson, A. (2011). Transforming online teaching practice: Critical analysis of the literature on the roles and competencies of online teachers. *Distance Education*, *32*(3), 421–439.

Barham, J. L. (2016). *Examining community college student experiences with and attitudes toward collaboration in online courses* (Publication No. 1885065142) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Memphis]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Bates, T. (2016, January 17). Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the first fully online course. *Online Learning and Distance Education Resources*. https://www.tonybates.ca/2016/01/17/celebrating-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-first-fully-online-course/

Beach, R., & Friedrich, T. (2006). Response to writing. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.). *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 222–234). Guilford Press.

Beck, M. E. (2017). *Experiences of first-year online community college students on academic probation: A phenomenological study* (Publication No. 1889578883) [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Bell, R. E., & Tight, M. (1993). *Open universities: A British tradition?* Open University Press.

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. F. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Bondurant, L. M. (2010). *The roots of academic underachievement: Prediction from early difficulties with self -regulation* (Publication No. 752066704) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Dallas]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Bradley, B. (2020, October 13). *More than a million students disengaged from school at end of academic year, analysis suggests*. EDWEEK Market Brief. https://marketbrief.edweek .org/marketplace-k-12/million-students-disengaged-school-end-academic-year-analysis-suggests/

Bridgewater, M. (2014). *Writing in the age of mobile: Smartphone and tablet multiliteracies and their implications for writing as process* [Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University]. Bowling Green State Archive. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/eng_diss/74/

Bruffee, K. A., & Harvey, K. (2006). *Short course in writing: Composition, collaborative learning, and constructive reading* (4th ed.). Longman.

Burt, C. (2020, October 15). *Report: Only 20% of educators said schools were ready for remote*. District Administration. https://districtadministration.com/report-20-of-educators-say-they-were-fully-ready-for-virtual/

Caribbean Examinations Council. (2014, January). *Report on candidates' work in the Caribbean secondary education certificate examination. English A, general proficiency examination*. https://www.cxc.org/SiteAssets/2014SchoolReports/CSECJanuary2014EnglishA_SR.pdf

Caribbean Examination Council. (2017). *CSEC English syllabus specimen paper mark scheme, subject reports*. https://asjabcc.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/csec-english-syllabus.pdf

Caribbean National Weekly. (2020). *Only one-third of Jamaica's students accessing online classes, based on sample*. https://doi.org/https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/caribbean-breaking-news-featured/only-one-third-of-jamaicas-students-accessing-online-classes-based-on-sample/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20President%20of,of%20or%20poor%20internet%20connection

Caribbean Partners for Educational Progress. (2012). *Gender sensitive education policy and practice: The case of Jamaica*. https://www.mona.uwi.edu/cop/library/gender-sensitive-education-policy-and-practice-case-jamaica

Cazan, A.-M. (2014). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement in the context of online learning environments. *The International Scientific Conference eLearning and Software for Education*, *3*, 90–95.

Cekiso, M., Tshotsho, B., & Somniso, M. (2016). Exploring first-year university students' challenges with coherence writing strategies in essay writing in a South African university. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, *12*, 241–246. doi:10.1080/09751122.2016.11890431

Collet, V. S. (2016). Cloud-based tools for teaching writing as a process. *English Leadership Quarterly*, *38*(4), 2–4.

Collier, L. (2014, March). Listening to students: New insights on the college-writing expectations. *The Council Chronicle*, 10–12.

Conley, D. (2008). Rethinking college readiness. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *144*, 3–13. doi:10.1002/he.321

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

The Daring English Teacher. (2020). *How to teach writing during remote instruction*. The Secondary Coffee Shop. https://secondaryenglishcoffeeshop.blogspot.com/2020/09 /TeachingWritingRemoteInstruction.html

Davidson-Shivers, G. V., Rasmussen, K. L., & Lowenthal, P. R. (2018). *Web-based learning: Design, implementation, and evaluation* (2nd ed.). Springer.

Davies, C., & Birbili, M. (2000). What do people need to know about writing in order to write in their jobs? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *48*(4), 429–445.

Dockter, J., & Borgman, J. (2016). Minimizing the distance in online writing courses through student engagement. *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, *44*(2), 213–222.

Downs, D., & Wardle, E. (2007). Teaching about writing, righting misconceptions: (Re) envisioning "first-year composition" as "introduction to writing studies". *College Composition and Communication*, *58*(4), 552–584.

Eggen, P. D., & Kauchak, D. P. (2010). *Educational psychology: Windows on classrooms* (8th ed.). Prentice Hall.

Emig, J. (1968). *The composing processes of twelfth graders*. National Council of Teachers of English.

Ewell, P. T. (2002). An emerging scholarship: A brief history of assessment. In T. W. Banta (Ed.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 3–24). Jossey-Bass.

Eyman, D., & Ball, C. E. (2014). Composing for digital publication: Rhetoric, design, code. *Composition Studies*, *42*(1), 114–117, 155–156.

Feldman, J. (2020). To grade or not to grade. In a new reality: Getting remote learning right. *Educational Leadership*, *77*, 43–46.

Fennick, R., Peters, M., & Guyon, L. (1993). Solving problems in twenty-first century academic and workplace writing. *English Journal*, *82*(3), 46–53.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, *32*(4), 365–387.

Furness, R., & Paulson, E. J. (2018). Ideas in practice: Service learning to motivate college writers. *Journal of Developmental Education*, *42*(1), 16–21.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: competencies for analysis and application* (9th ed.). Merrill.

Gillis, A., & Krull, L. M. (2020). COVID-19 remote learning transition in spring 2020: Class structures, student perceptions, and inequality in college courses. *Teaching Sociology*, *48*(4), 283–299.

Glenn, I. (2018). *The role of self-efficacy in self-regulation learning in online college courses* (Publication No. 2043000277) [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Goldburg, G. L. (1996). Can assessment mirror instruction? A look at peer response and revision in a large-scale writing test. *Educational Assessment*, *3*(4), 287–314.

Grabill, J. T., & Hicks, T. (2005). Multiliteracies meet methods: The case for digital writing in English education. *English Education*, *37*(4), 301–311.

Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *99*, 445–476.

Granston, C. N. (2004). *Technology and teacher training: The systematic design and development of a framework for integrating technology into Jamaica's teacher training programs* (Publication No. 305122704) [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Griffin, J., & Minter, D. (2013). The rise of the online writing classroom: Reflecting on the material conditions of college composition teaching. *College Composition and Communication*, *65*(1), 140–161. https://doi.org/https://search.proquest.com/docview/1444162508?accountid=158450

Hart Research Associates. (2013). It takes more than a major: Employer priorities for college learning and student success. *Liberal Education*, *99*(2), 1–14.

Harting, K., & Erthal, M. J. (2005). History of distance learning. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, *23*(1), 35–44. https://search.proquest.com/docview/219815808?accountid=158450

Hesse, D. (2017, January 3). *We know what works in teaching composition*. Chronicle of higher education. http://www.chronicle.com/article/We-KnowWhat-Works-in-Teaching/238792?cid=at8iUtm_source=at&utm_medium=en&elqTrackId=465ba56acalf49eb9187ba8809c468da&elq=628c8196787d

Hewett, B. L. (2006). Synchronous online conference-based instruction: A study of whiteboard interactions and student writing. *Computers and Composition*, *23*(1), 4–31.

Holloway, K. M. (2016). *A qualitative study of graduate and professional studies students' writing identities: The role of writing centers in constructing identities* (Publication No. 1847036912) [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Holmberg, B. (2005). *The evolution, principles and practices of distance education*. Studien und Berichte der Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg [Studies and reports from the distance learning research unit at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg]; Bibliotheks-und Informations system der Universitat Oldenburg [Library and information system of the University of Oldenburg].

Hoppe, K. E. (2014). Postsecondary writing: First-year students' perceptions of college writing preparedness. *Education Student Publications*, *3*.

IGI Global. (2020). *What is digital tools?* https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/value-added-crowdsourcing/66587

Imig, S. (2010). Writing rewired: Teaching writing in an online setting. *English Journal*, *99*(3), 80–83. https://search.proquest.com/docview/237323113?accountid=158450

Jeffery, K. A., & Bauer, C. F. (2020). Students' responses to emergency remote online teaching reveal critical factors for all teaching. *Journal of Chemical Education*, *97*(9), 2472–2485.

Jiménez, A., Esmeralda, C., Mira, B., Cecilia, D., Rodríguez, & Sthephany, G. (2013). *An analysis of the writing skill difficulties of the english composition i students at the foreign language department of the university of El Salvador*. Repositorio Instituicional de la Universidad de El Salvador [Institutional Repository of the University of El Salvador]. http://ri.ues.edu.sv/id/eprint/5519/1/An%20analysis%20of%20the%20writing%20skill%20difficulties%20of%20the%20English%20Composition%20I%20students%20at%20the%20Foreign%20Language%20Department%20of%20the%20University%20of%20El%20Salvador.pdf

Jones-McKenzie, C. (2018). Tackling student inertia: Exploring graded participation as a means of increasing student involvement in academic writing classes. *The Journal of Arts Science and Technology*, *11*(1), 72–88.

Juele, L. R. (2017). *The use of authentic assessments by online instructors in online courses for college-level courses* (Publication No. 1925928211) [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2016). Higher education and the digital revolution: About MOOCs, SPOCs, social media, and the Cookie Monster. *Business Horizons*, *59*(4), 441–450.

Kent, T. (1999). *Post-process theory: Beyond the writing process paradigm* (1st ed.). Southern Illinois University.

Kidwell, K. S. (2005). Understanding the college first-year experience. *The Clearing House*, *78*(6), 253–255.

Kirschner, P. A., Sweller, J., Kirschner, F., & Zambrano R, J. (2018). From cognitive load theory to collaborative cognitive load theory. *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, *13*(2), 213–233.

Kirtman, L. (2009). Online versus in-class courses: An examination of differences in learning outcomes. *Issues in Teacher Education*, *18*(2), 103–116. https://search.proquest.com /docview/233320851?accountid=158450

Krajka, J. (2012). Web 2.0 online collaboration tools as environments for task-based writing instruction. *Egitim Bilimleri Fakultesi Dergisi*, *45*(2), 97–117. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1350277300?accountid=158450

Kramarae, C. (2001). *The third shift: Women learning online*. Eric.

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. (2006). The "academic literacies" model: Theory and applications. *Theory Into Practice*, *45*(4), 368–377.

Lederman, D. (2018). *Who is studying online (and where)*. Inside Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/01/05/new-us-data-show-continued-growth-college-students-studying

Lee, J., & Turner, J. (2017). The role of pre-service teachers' perceived instrumentality, goal commitment, and motivation in their self-regulation strategies for learning in teacher education courses. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *45*(3), 213–228.

Lever-Duffy, J., & McDonald, J. B. (2007). *Teaching and learning with technology* (3rd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Lillis, T. M. (2001). *Student writing: Access, regulation, desire*. Routledge.

Lister, M. (2014). Trends in the design of e-learning and online learning. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *10*(4), 671–679.

Long, K. (2020, October 18). *Covid-19 pandemic cuts enrollment at some Washington state colleges, forces others to reimagine higher ed*. https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/covid-19-pandemic-cuts-enrollment-at-some-washington-state-colleges-forces-others-to-reimagine-higher-ed/

Lowenthal, P. R., Shreaves, D., Gooding, M., & Kepka, J. (2019). Learning to teach online: An exploration of how universities with large online programs train and develop faculty to teach online. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, *20*(3), 1–9, 51. https://search.proquest.com/docview/2375713549?accountid=158450

Margaryan, A., Bianco, M., & Littlejohn, A. (2015). Instructional quality of massive open online courses (MOOCs). *Computers & Education*, *80*, 77–83.

Marley, J. (2007). Gender differences and distance education: Major research findings and implications for LIS education. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, *48*(1), 13–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40324317

Matuga, J. M. (2007). *Self-regulation and online learning. Theoretical issues and practical challenges to support lifelong learning.* In Y. Inoue (Ed.), *Online education for lifelong learning* (p. 149). Science Publishing.

McAnuff-Gumbs, M. (2011). "Virtually there": Making online training 'real' for Caribbean literacy coaches - what. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *7*(1), 134–145. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/virtually-there-making-online-training-real/docview/1497210867/se-2?accountid=158450

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, L. (2015). *Michigan State tests telepresence robots for online students*. https://campustechnology.com/articles/2015/02/24/michigan-state-tests-telepresence-robots-for-online-students.aspx

Miller, E. (2018). *Teacher development in the Caribbean*. https://oas.org/cotep/GetAttach.aspx?lang=es&cId=656&aid=981

Miller, N. (2019, May 1). *College writing courses are in trouble, but this isn't the solution*. The James G. Martin center for academic renewal. https://www.jamesgmartin.center/2019/05/college-writing-courses-are-in-trouble-but-this-isnt-the-solution/

Milson-Whyte, V., Oenbring, O., & Jaquette, B. (2019). *Creole composition: Academic writing and rhetoric in the Anglophone Caribbean*. Parlor Press.

Mower, R. (2011). Txt tlk: Language in the digital world. *Journal of Digital Research & Publishing*, 103–112. http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/8136/1/DRPJournal _1pm_S2_2011.pdf#page=58

Murray, D. (1972). Teach writing as a process not a product. Reprinted in. *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, Victor Villanueva. (2nd ed.). NCTE, 200.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2011). *Long-term trend: National trends in reading by performance levels*. http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ ltt /results2004/nat-reading-perf-asp

Nguyen, T. (2015). The effectiveness of online learning: Beyond no significant difference and future horizons. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *11*(2), 309–319.

Nicklen, P., Keating, J., Paynter, S., Storr, M., & Maloney, S. (2016). Remote-online case-based learning: A comparison of remote-online and face-to-face, case-based learning: A randomized controlled trial. *Education for Health*, *29*(3), 195–202.

Norris, B. L. (2010). *On the practices of writing centers: A comparative case analysis of two writing centers* (Publication No. 854982944) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Owens, J., Hardcastle, L., & Richardson, B. (2009). Learning from a distance: The experience of remote students. *Journal of Distance Education*, *25*(3), 53–74. http://www.jofde.ca/index .php/jde

Pacansky-Brock, M. (2017). *Best practices for teaching with emerging technologies* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Pajares, F., & Johnson, M. J. (1994). Confidence and competence in writing: The role of writing self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, and apprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *28*, 313–331.

Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (2003). *The virtual student: A profile and guide to working with online learners*. Jossey-Bass.

Palvia, S., Aeron, P., Gupta, P., Mahapatra, D., Parida, R., Rosner, R., & Sindhi, S. (2018). Online education: Worldwide status, challenges, trends, and implications. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, *21*(4), 233–241.

Parrado, S. (2008). *Case studies and their rationale*. https://www.academia.edu/2467248/Case_studies_and_their_rationale

Perry, W. (1977). *Open university: History and evaluation of a dynamic innovation in higher education*. Jossey-Bass.

Persky, H. R., Daane, M. C., & Jin, Y. (2003). *The nation's report card: Writing 2002*. National Center for Education Statistics.

Poffenbarger, H. (2017). Teaching tips based on cognitive load theory. *North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Journal*, *61*(3), 262–263.

Powell, L. M., Wimmer, H., Kilgus, L., & Force, C. (2017). Impact of online discussions on web based assessments. *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies*, *15*(4), 99–111.

Purdue online writing lab. (2013, April 25). *Stages of the writing process*. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english_as_a_second_language/esl_students/key_concepts_for_writing_in_north_american_colleges/stages_of_the_writing_process.html

Ramirez-Espinola, M. (2018). *Tutors' perceptions of an online writing consultation center*

    (Publication No. 2128021881) [Doctoral dissertation, Trident University International].

    ProQuest Central.

Ramsay, P. (2011). Much writing begets good writing: Some considerations for teaching writing

    in an Anglophone Creole context. *Caribbean Curriculum*, *18*, 27–42.

Ray, K. (2020, March 31). *What is remote learning?* https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/what

    -is-remote-learning

Reese, S. A. (2015). Online learning environments in higher education: Connectivism vs.

    dissociation. *Education Information Technology*, *20*, 579–588.

Reiser, R. A. (2012). *A history of instructional design and technology.* In R. Reisner & J.

    Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design* (3rd ed., pp. 17–34). Pearson

    Education.

*Remote teaching*. (2020, April 10). Top Hat. https://tophat.com/glossary/r/remote-teaching/

Rivenburg, C. R. (2015). *Instructional design strategies and their effect on self-directed learning

    in online learning* (Publication No. 1667768856) [Doctoral dissertation, Capella

    University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Rizga, K. (2020, April 6). *It's hard to teach writing online: A veteran educator's tips for

    reaching students remotely*. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive

    /2020/04/how-teach-writing-remotely/609448/

Roberts, J., Nardone, C. F., & Bridges, B. (2017). Examining differences in student writing

    proficiency as a function of student race and gender. *Research & Practice in Assessment*,

    *12*, 59–66. https://search.proquest.com/docview/2002129765?accountid=158450

Robinson, C. E. (2012). *The invisible woman and the silent university* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi]. University of Southern Mississippi Archive. https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations/538/

Roblyer, M. D. (2016). *Integrating educational technology into teaching* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

Rothblatt, S., Muller, D. K., Ringer, F., Simon, B., Bryant, M., Roach, J., Harte, N., Smith, B., & Symonds, R. (1988). Supply and demand: The "two histories" of english education. *History of Education Quarterly*, *28*(4), 627–644. https://doi.org/10.2307/368852

Salahu-Din, D., Persky, H., & Miller, J. (2008). *The nation's report card: Writing 2007*. National Center for Education Statistics.

Salmon, G. (2012). *E-moderating: The key to online teaching and learning*. Routledge.

Salmon-Ferguson, K., & Barrett, S. (2018). ICT in the curriculum: Review of a teacher education program in Jamaica. *Journal of Arts Science and Technology*, *11*(1), 46–54. http://www.utech.edu.jm/JAST/publications/journal-of-arts-science-and-technology-jast-vol-11-2018

Schlesselman, L. S. (2020). Perspective from a teaching and learning center during emergency remote teaching. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *84*(8), 1042–1044.

Schneider, K. (2010). *Ontario colleges in the digital age: Understanding the student experience, perceptions and attitudes of online learning at one Ontario college* (Publication No. 870410864) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Globlal.

Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case-selection techniques in case-study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly*, *61*(2), 294–308.

Selinker, L. (1969). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *3*, 114–132.

Sharhan, K., Al-Abedi, H., & Al-Hilu, M. (2020). Investigating college students' problems in writing English composition. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, *10*(2), 116–134.

Smith, T. A., & Haughton, S. A. (2021). Faculty of social sciences student satisfaction with emergency remote teaching at the UWI during the Covid-19 pandemic. *University of the West Indies Quality Education Forum*, *20*, 13–37.

Stephen, J. S., & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2021). A high-impact practice for online students: The use of a first-semester seminar course to promote self-regulation, self-direction, online learning self-efficacy. *Smart Learning Environments*, *8*(1), 1–18.

Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, *12*, 257–285.

Sweller, J. (2020). Cognitive load theory and educational technology. *Educational Technology, Research and Development*, *68*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-019-09701-3

Sweller, J., & Cooper, G. (1985). The use of worked examples as a substitute for problem solving in learning algebra. *Cognition & Instruction*, *2*, 59–89. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532690xci0201_3

Tait, A. (2003). Reflections on student support in open and distance learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *4*(1), 1–9.

Takeda-Tinker, B. (2018). Making higher education work for students and America. *EDUCAUSE Review*, *53*(3), 8. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2104172754?accountid=158450

Teegavarapu, S., Summers, & Mocko. (2008). Case study method for design research: A justification. *Proceedings of the ASME design engineering technical conference*, *4*, 495–503.

Trines, S. (2019, September 10). *Education in Jamaica*. World education news + reviews. https://wenr.wes.org/2019/09/education-in-jamaica

United Nations Children's Fund, Alam, A., & Tiwari, P. (2020, June 8). *Putting the 'learning' back in remote learning*. Unicef. https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/reports/putting-learning-back-remote-learning

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2020, October 29). *Children in poorest countries lost nearly four months of schooling since start of pandemic–UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank report finds*. https://en.unesco.org/news/children-poorest-countries-lost-nearly-four-months-schooling-start-pandemic-unesco-unicef-and

University of Southern California Libraries. (2020). *Research guides—definition*. https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/academicwriting

University Wire. (2020, April 17). *Students voice concern over fall semester in open letters, petitions*. https://www.proquest.com/wire-feeds/students-voice-concern-over-fall-semester-open/docview/2390420243/se-2?accountid=158450

Vonderwell, S. K., & Boboc, M. (2013). Promoting formative assessment in online teaching and learning. *TechTrends*, *57*(4), 22–27.

Warnock, S. (2009). *Teaching writing online: How & why*. NCTE.

Warrican, S. J. (2005). *Hard words: The challenge of reading and writing for Caribbean students and their teachers*. Ian Randle Publishers.

Weimer, M. (2013). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Wellington, J. (2010). More than a matter of cognition: An exploration of affective writing problems of post-graduate students and their possible solutions. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *15*(2), 135–150.

Whitford, E. (2018, July 31). *Minimal writing? No problem*. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/31/new-study-shows-few-students-see-need-more-writing-instruction

Williams, R. (2017). *Gov't targeting increased use of technology in education*. https://jis.gov.jm/govt-targeting-increased-use-technology-education/

Wilson, G. H. (2011). *The changing horizon of composition studies: An examination of the influences of collaborative and online pedagogies on first-year college writing* (Publication No. 900577747) [Doctoral dissertation, Texas Woman's University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Yalcin, Y. (2017). *Online learners' satisfaction: Investigating the structural relationships among self-regulation, self-efficacy, task value, learning design, and perceived learning* (Publication No. 2018825524) [Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Yoder, C. Y., Mancha, R., & Smith, P. (2014). Differences in belief-consistent and belief in consistent learning in traditional college students. *Behavior Development Bulletin*, *19*(4), 119–127.

APPENDIX A

Semistructured Interview Questions

*The researcher will pose questions orally to each participant during the interview.*

1.  Please state your gender        ☐ Male        ☐ Female

2.  What is your age range?        ☐ 16- 20 years old     ☐ 21- 25 years old

    ☐ 26 years old or over

3.  How many courses have you pursued online?

4.  For how long have you been attending classes remotely?

5.  Approximately how many Communication Skills 1 sessions have you attended remotely?

6.  Which device do you mostly use to access remote classes? Why?

7.  How do you communicate with peers for writing assignments?

8.  In which learning environment are you more engaged- face-to-face or in the remote learning environment? Explain

9.  How do you feel about your recent experience in learning composition writing remotely?

10. Do you think group-work should be included in this course?

11. Describe your most meaningful learning experiences in the remote learning environment.

12. Describe the greatest challenges that you have had while learning in the remote learning environment.

13. How would you describe your interactions in the remote learning environment? (a) Peers (b) Instructor (c) Office staff (d) Library

14. Outside of a pandemic, would you like to continue to learn remotely? Give reason(s) for your answer.

15. What were the most positive aspects of your composition writing course?

**16.** Compare how academically demanding the writing course taught remotely was in comparison to traditional classroom courses.

**17.** What qualities do you think students must have in order to succeed in a remote learning environment?

**18.** How can the designers of the writing course enhance the learning experience? (b) What should they change in relation to the course?

**19.** Would you recommend the writing course (delivered remotely) to a friend? Why?

**20.** When you compare the writing course to other courses that you have done remotely, what are the similarities? What are the differences?

**21.** What college systems supported your developing writing skills?

**22.** In what way(s) could the college better support your writing development?

**23.** Are you satisfied with your writing development this semester?

**24.** What factors might have contributed to your current progress or lack thereof in your writing development?

**25.** What do you think about the level of support provided by:

The course Lecturer

Library staff

The department office

College administration

**26.** Is there anything that you struggled with in the composition course that you would want changed so that other students do not struggle in the same way?

**27.** Consider the following: course content, teacher interaction/feedback, and interaction with other students. (a) Which aspect was strongest in the composition writing course?

(b) Which aspect was weakest in the composition writing course? Explain.

27. What aspects of the program were you most satisfied with?

28. How do you feel about remote learning in general?

APPENDIX B

Research Participants Suitability Survey

Survey to determine the suitability of research participants

*Instructions: Please respond honestly and appropriately to each question in this survey. Put a tick beside your response.*

Sex        Female ❑      Male ❑

1. Are you willing to participate in a study based on the topic 'the experiences of first-year college students in learning composition writing through synchronous online remote teaching'? Yes      ❑      No ❑

2. Is this your first-time pursuing Communication Skills 1? Yes ❑     No ❑

3. Indicate the number of Communication Skills classes that you attended remotely during semester 2, 2020/21.

   1-5 ❑       6-10 ❑       11-13 ❑

4. Which word best describes your internet connectivity during remote composition writing classes held during semester 2?

   Stable ❑     Fluctuating ❑      Unstable ❑   No Access ❑

5. How would you rate the extent of your participation in class activities throughout the Communication Skills 1 course?

   Consistent ❑   Moderate ❑   Inconsistent ❑      Other _____

6. Did you have access to a computer throughout the Communication Skills 1 course?

   Yes ❑      No ❑

7. Which of the following college students' support services did you utilize while pursuing the composition writing course?

Library ❑     Consultation ❑     Other _____

8. How would you describe your experience learning essay writing remotely?

Excellent ❑    Very Good ❑    Good ❑    Unsatisfactory ❑    Poor ❑

9. Please provide your contact information below: Phone number _____

    Email Address _____

10. What is your major in college? _____

Thanks for your participation!

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Letter/Form—ADP



A letter inviting the human subject(s) to participant in the project must accompany the *Informed Consent Form.*

<div style="text-align: right">

Tracy-Ann Beckford
Orangefield District
St. Catherine

</div>

[Name of Participant]
[Address]
[Date]
Dear [Participant's Name]:

Many educational institutions are in the process of change or at least considering some elements of change. Your organization has been selected as one of a number of organizations to participate in interviews assessing the experience of your students in online remote learning.

I am a Doctoral Student at William Howard Taft University conducting research regarding the experience of first-year college students learning composition writing through synchronous online remote teaching. This letter is an invitation for your contribution to my study/project.

Please indicate your willingness and availability to participate in an individual interview assessing the experience of first-year students in learning composition writing remotely. It will only take about one hour of your time for the interview. In the interview, you will be asked to respond to questions regarding your experience while pursuing the course Language Argument. Please indicate whether you can participate in the interview via email within 14 days of receiving this email. All responses will remain confidential and your anonymity will be ensured. Your responses will contribute to this timely research about the experiences of college students in learning composition writing through synchronous online remote teaching. A summary of the study/project will be sent to you by email upon completion of this study/project. Please also sign and return the enclosed "Informed Consent" form by email.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this research/project. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this study/project or the enclosures. I may be reached at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or by e-mail at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Sincerely,

Tracy-Ann Beckford (Miss)

**Informed Consent Form**

An important component to any submission to the IRB committee is the informed consent form. This form will be used by the researcher to document that the subject(s) were aware of the requirements of the study/project and that they were aware that they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time up until publication of the dissertation or project report. It is important that this document contain adequate information so that the subjects can make an informed decision regarding participation.
**NOTE:** The candidate and researcher must obtain IRB approval of the proposal before the candidate can begin the study/project.

**The Experiences of First-year College Students in Learning Composition Writing Through Synchronous Online Remote Teaching**

**Participant**

Participant Name

Participant Address

Participant Phone Number

Participant Email

**Prospective Research Subject**

Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study/project. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

You are invited to participate in a research study/project designed to investigate the quality of the experiences that first-year college students value and appreciate in learning composition writing in an online remote learning environment. The researcher will also identify challenges that participants encounter while learning composition writing remotely.

Tracy-Ann Beckford, a doctoral student at William Howard Taft University, is conducting this study/project. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student at the selected site of study and you have participated in the course under study, Language Argument, during the 2020/21 school-year, which is the period of the study.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate.
**Background Information**

This investigation is designed to find out about the perspectives of first-year college students on their

experiences in learning composition writing remotely. The study will be carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic while most students access instructions through online remote teaching methods. The researcher will seek information on how learning in a synchronous online remote environment impacts the experiences of freshmen college students.

**Procedures**

Participation entails an individual interview with each participant. Participants will also provide samples of their writing in the form of essays.

You will be asked to provide a pseudonym to replace your personal name. Only anonymous demographics would be used in this study. Provide your address or e-mail to make the findings of the study available to you once documented.

The results of this study will be used to meet the requirements of the doctoral degree in Educational Administration, with an emphasis on Technology at William, Howard Taft University. Furthermore, research findings may also be useful to the site of study in informing instructional practices, especially in relation to the teaching of composition writing in synchronous online remote settings.

**Confidentiality**

The records of this study/project will be considered private information. Private information herein means information ascertained by the investigator and constitutes research involving human subjects. Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect would not be made public. In any sort of report that might be published, no information will be included that would make it possible to identify a participant. Only the candidate/researcher will keep and safeguard the research records.

**Voluntary Nature of this Study**

Your decision whether to participate in this study/project will not affect your current or future relationship with the candidate-researcher or the associated University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. You will be provided with a copy of the concluded dissertation/project report so that you have an opportunity to examine the manner in which the data are being applied.

**Compensation**

Participation in this study/project is completely voluntary. You will not receive monetary compensation-reward for your participation. The personal benefits of your participation are as mentioned in the following section.

**Benefits of Participating in this Study**

The possible benefits to participating in this study/project are contributing to the field of education by enabling a greater understanding of instructional processes in online remote learning. This understanding

could potentially lead to improvements in the kinds of experiences that are provided for future college students who will pursue writing courses remotely. Your contribution will also help the researcher to meet the requirements of her course of study.

**Risks of Participating in this Study**

There is minimal risk to participating in this study/project, meaning that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. If you experience some emotional discomfort after your participation, you are invited to contact the student-researcher at the telephone number or e-mail address listed in the following section to discuss your reactions.

**Contacts and Questions**

You may ask any questions you have by contacting the researcher by telephone at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or by e-mail at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ .

**Participant Statement of Consent**

I have read the information herein, I have asked questions and received answers, and I have received a copy of this form. I consent to participate in this study/project.


Signed: _____  _____
        Type full name                                                                                    Date

**Researcher Statement**

I have provided the participant with a copy of this form.


Signed: _____  _____
        Type full name                                                                                    Date

APPENDIX D

Procedure of the Constant Comparative Method

In accordance with the guidelines that were suggested by Guba and Lincoln, Schneider (2010) applied the following guidelines that was utilized in the current study:

1. the frequency at which a particular item, issue or concern is mentioned;

2. those categories or themes deemed important or salient to the interviewees;

3. those concerns or issues that emerge due to their uniqueness should be retained; and

4. those issues or concerns that "have the property of opening up areas of inquiry is not otherwise recognized" should be retained. (p. 97).

The guidelines were used to develop and construct themes for this study.

APPENDIX E

Samples of Interview Notes

Participant 1

Date: May 13, 2021                    2. Age: over 26

Female

Internet- Fluctuates

Attendance- 6-10 sessions

Participation- Consistent

Device Used for class- Phone

College support service used- consultation

Overall experience in remote learning- Very good

3. Courses pursued online- approx. 17 (all from semester 1-2)

4. The student has been attending classes remotely since October 2020.

5. She has attended 6-10 sessions between February and May.

6. She uses a mobile phone to access classes as she does not always have internet access. She

however, does course work and assignments on her laptop.

7. There was no group work in the course but she consulted peers on assignments. Initially she

was not trusting of peers but found three friends in March. They consult on assignments. They

send work via email with a watts app message to alert peer that the work has been sent in order

to prompt a quick response. The students make phone calls where there is a delay in the

response, especially if the assignment is due.

8. Before having this experience learning virtually I preferred learning face-to-face but now I

don't see a difference between the two. This is especially because this is a theory based course. I

think that remote learning is fine for theory based courses. In terms of learning language courses, online is much easier to navigate. In face-to-face too much time is lost for the teacher to write on the board. Online, the slides are pre-prepared. The information is more rounded as the lecturer uses vidoes and it offers so much more than the text-book. There is also no need to find a projector or other resources.

9. The drawback with remote learning is that I don't get the same kind of feedback as I would in a face-to-face setting. Face-to-face allows for more immediate feedback and more feedback. The physical script would be easier for the teacher to correct and comment on immediately. Online, the response is not so timely. Also, students have less time to correct errors when peer review is done. In face-to-face classes, I get more clarity on errors.

10. The best thing about my experience in the remote learning environment is the lecturer. Some people say that she is 'spoon feeding' us but her method works. She repeats for emphasis and calls on students randomly to even answer a question that has been asked and answered. Her repetition of questions helps me to better understand. She makes the information basic and builds on it and she does not limit the information to the textbook. The students sometimes challenge the lecturer. She is very thorough. There has been a dramatic change in my writing style.

11. The main challenge is the internet connection. The lecturer's internet might drop in the middle of an important point. To counteract this, the lecturer repeats, posts the information in the watts app group, and sends it via email. Another challenge is that it is always the same set of students who are always responding in class. That is why the lecturer picks a student to respond in order to involve more students. In face-to-face classes, the lecturer can see blank faces.

12. Interaction- Peers- They are fine. Initially I did not know people but eventually I got comfortable with the students. If I am absent, I communicate with others in the class and they

update me on what I missed. She communicates with at least eight of her classmates.

Lecturer- She is very good. She is open, approachable and responds promptly to watts app messages and email. If she cannot address the issue immediately, she indicates that she is in a meeting or seeing a student on teaching practice but the response is sure to come.

Office staff- Good though virtual; IT department responds promptly. I had issues selecting modules and I was assisted quickly.

Head of department- She is active and present. She responds to messages within 24 hours at least. She will ask 'Can I call you back?' and she gets back to me. I have no issue with the Language Arts Department.

Library- No interaction. I once asked a friend to borrow a book from the library for me. I have used the online library that the college has but I don't fully understand how to navigate the platform.

13. I think we should continue with remote learning outside of a pandemic. It is convenient and facilitates the same kind of interaction. Alternatively, we could use a dual mode. Jamaica needs to move forward. Nonetheless, face-to-face classes is suited to practical classes.

14. The most positive aspects of the composition writing course is that the information is rounded and not limited to a text-book. The student values the participation through student presentations and the inclusion of YouTube videos. It is evident that student needs are considered. Shy students benefit as they feel comfortable talking behind a screen.

15. I cannot really compare having not done this course in a face-to-face mode. I think though that online might have more research, reading and writing.

16. In order to do well in remote learning, students must want to learn. They must have the discipline to ignore watts app. Success really depends on the individual student's goals.

17. The courses is rounded. Though technology slows down the presentations I would not want any change.

18. I would recommend this course taught remotely to a friend as based on what I have learnt, it is not a new course, but is building on what you already know.

19. The writing course is similar to other courses being done remotely. Some courses, however, have more presentations.

20. Lecturers make textbooks available through soft copies. 'They don't allow the online to be an issue'.

21. The student is not sure how the college can better support students' writing development. The college is doing a pretty good job. Lecturers have a lot of work to do.

22. I am satisfied with my writing development this semester. At first I thought it would have been an issue. I did not think I had issues but now understand how to write an expository essay. The lecturer helped tremendously.

23. The main contributing factor to my writing development is the lecturer. She provides timely feedback; gave accurate information and I do my share of the work.

24. Level of support- Lecturer- Amazing- she goes above and beyond. She loves what she does and wants her students to learn.

Library- no interaction

Dept. Office- No direct office support but the Head of Department responds in a timely manner. The lecturers are a great asset. My friends who are studying at other institutions don't get the level of support that we have.

College Admin- No interaction

25. In terms of struggle, it would be good if other lecturers indicate what students are to read or

prepare for the next class. Indicate topics week by week so students can come to class ready.

26. The strongest aspect of the course was the teacher interaction. There are not many out-spoken students in the class but the lecturer pulls them. The weakest aspect of the course was the interaction among students as it is the same set of students talking all the time.

27. I was most satisfied with the lecturer and her teaching style. She teaches for us to understand the subject. She often asks us if we understand and asks 'what don't you understand?'

28. I think remote learning in general is a step in the right direction as it is another avenue to reach students all over.

Participant 14    (Unstable internet- even during interview)

1. Female

2. Age range- 16-20

3. I pursued the last few months of high school remotely at the onset of Covid-19.

4. I have been studying remotely since March 2020.

5. I have missed one class due to internet connectivity problems.

6. I mostly access classes using the laptop because neither I nor my teacher can hear when I use my phone; there are audio problems with the phone.

7. My classmates and I communicate on watts app, Google classroom on schoolwork. We share documents and have group chats (watts app). We also meet face-to-face for those of us who are campus. There are internet problems on the campus. (Group work in the course- no).

8. I prefer learning face-to-face because with remote learning there are distractions. I may be in class and still be doing assignments. Due to internet issues, I cannot get my questions across, or I am unable to hear the response given by my lecturer.

9.  There are good and bad aspects of my experience learning Communication Skills remotely. I have learnt expository writing; however, the class is big and though the teacher tries to give feedback, it is hectic so we all do not know if we are on the right track.

10. The most meaningful experiences I have had include writing a reflective piece at the start of the course and the lecturer pointed out the errors such as run-on sentences. I learnt from the lecturer's going through the errors. Another meaningful experience was learning how to structure the expository essay.

11. The greatest challenges I had in remote learning are internet connectivity, device issues and to a lesser extent, time management.

12. Interactions in the remote environment- Peers- Until we began to have some face-to-face classes, since April, we had limited interaction. I recently met my classmates face-to-face. Lecturer- Good (inside and outside of class); Office staff- minimal interaction but okay; library- Good but not much interaction (I only used the library for printing).

13. Yes, outside of the pandemic I would want to continue with remote learning. I have grown comfortable with the teaching and learning remotely. I am learning.

14. The most positive aspects of the course are public speaking, speech writing and research as we had to do some research in the course.

15. The academic demand in each environment is just about the same.

16. To do well in remote learning, students must be willing to do independent learning, be self-motivated and they must know how to manage their time wisely.

17. No, the course is fine as it is.

18. Yes and no- I would recommend the course to only some people as not everyone learns the same,

19. Differences between Communication Skills and other courses- Communication Skills is less complex than other courses. It has less reading, and the focus is on different aspects of writing. This course benefits other courses through developing essay writing and comprehension skills. Similarities- They all tend to use videos, discussions, or some form of audio-visual aids in classes.

20. Systems that supported my writing development are consultation and the college's data base.

21. The college could better support my writing development by providing writing seminars.

22. Yes, I am satisfied with my writing development this semester.

23. The factors that contributed to my progress include being on campus and the course outline to know what is required and when, so I begin ahead of time.

24. Level of support- Lecturer- Good; Library staff- Not much; The department office- not much; College Administration- Good.

25. The area that I struggled with in the course that I would want to be changed so that others do not struggle in the same way I did is writing; they can provide more opportunities to practice writing.

26. The strongest aspect of the course is teacher interaction/feedback. Feedback is slow in coming but when we get it, it is very helpful. The weakest aspect of the course is interaction with other students.

27. I was most satisfied with the teaching aspect of the program.

28. Remote learning in general has good and bad attributes. There are connectivity and device issues but once you learn to work around those challenges it is good. (Duration- 1 hour and 5 minutes)

APPENDIX F

Sample of Completed Diagnostic Test

Participant 4

Communication Skills

February 25, 2021

**My Experience with the English Language**

Growing up, I wasn't entirely exposed to the English Language as my parents spoke the Jamaican dialect. It was when my sister started high school I started to get a field of it. She would carry home books from school, read them and used the English language fluently. It was very intriguing to me that I wanted to learn more and as a result I read a lot of books and watched movies and TV to listen to the language being spoken.

When I started primary school, I learnt about the language throughout my seven years. This was mostly grammar lessons. I didn't get books from school to read but I would read the ones I had but that wasn't very often. These lessons that I have learnt in primary school enabled me to speak the language a little better as I have learnt new words and phrases. In this area, I always obtain a high grade and because of that I grew an immense love for English Language.

When I began high school, I got exposed to new levels in English such as essay writing, summary writing and comprehension. There I realized that English was much more than just multiple choices and filling the blanks. I have to be honest that when I saw what I was getting into I was terrified and had small anxiety attacks. When I started writing I didn't want anyone to read it because I thought it didn't make sense but of course I had to give it to my teachers. Thankfully when I got back my results it wasn't what I expected it to be and so asked myself, what was the all this worrying for? Not getting a bad grade on my first piece of writing gave me

confidence in myself and my writing. I went beyond and started reading newspaper articles, novels, poetry and my textbooks. This improved my writing, reading and comprehension skills.

I was placed in the top class for English when I reached 4th form and again I was terrified of the students and even the teacher but I had to do it. In that level we started writing essay that were five paragraphs long. I questioned myself if I could really do this. Where am I going to get so much information? But it wasn't as hard as I thought it was. My teacher told me I had problems with my expression, I worked on it and I still had the problem until I was a little better with it. My English teacher at the time did a prediction of what grade the students in the class would obtain and she told me that I would get a grade 2. Of course I didn't want that and so I started practicing essay writing and other topics that I would've studied.

My English result for CSEC was straight A. I was overjoyed that all my hard work didn't go down the gutter. My love and passion for the subject grew and I decided that I want become an English Teacher. I joined the library, started reading books every day and practiced writing. When I started college I was honestly surprise with the content that will have to learn to become an English teacher. I realized that the English language goes way beyond than what I have learnt in high school. My experience with the language was a good one as I got to see the different levels of the English language and got to challenge myself with them.

APPENDIX G

Samples of Participants' Expository Essays

Sample 1- Participant 3

Topic: Health

Narrowed Topic: Drug Abuse

Essay Topic: Discuss three (3) effects drug abuse has on teenagers.

Thesis statement: Three (3) effects of drug abuse among teenagers are social, physical and psychological

**Essay Outline:**

Theme: Health

Narrowed Topic: Drug Abuse

Essay Topic: Discuss three (3) effects drug abuse has on teenagers.

Thesis statement: Three (3) effects of drug abuse among teenagers are social, physical and psychological

**Paragraph One:**

**Attention Grabber:** As indicated by a review in 2005 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), there are around 3.5 million drug abusers, and the numbers are rapidly increasing at a yearly rate of 7%. From one of the overviews of drug abusers among distinctive age group, 22.4 % of teenagers were involved in drug abuse (Ali et al, (2011)

**Thesis statement:** Three (3) effects of drug abuse among teenagers are social, physical and psychological

**Paragraph Two:**

**Topic Sentence:** The social effect of drug abuse on teenagers

**Paragraph Three:** The physical effect of drug abuse on teenagers

**Paragraph Four:** The psychological effect of drug abuse on teenagers

**Paragraph Five:** Conclusion of the social, physical and psychological effects of drug abuse on teenagers

As indicated by a review in 2005 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), there are around 3.5 million drug abusers, and the numbers are rapidly increasing at a yearly rate of 7%. From one of the overviews of drug abusers among distinctive age group, 22.4 % of teenagers were involved in drug abuse (Ali et al, (2011). Drug abuse is not a hallmark of moral failure or lack of willpower, instead it is a complicated disease that justifies long-term and extensive treatment, just like any other chronic illness. People who have not struggled with

substance abuse may perhaps find it difficult to comprehend why anyone would start using. Why would someone willingly put themselves in harm's way by taking dangerous substances? There are, in fact, many reasons why some people turn to or start abusing drugs, and unfortunately the consequences can be life-devastating. While every case is distinctive, there are general patterns that indicate why some people use drugs, how addiction develops, and the consequences of drug abuse. Drug abuse is defined as the consumption of harmful medical substances in excessive amounts disobeying the medical guidelines. It has a negative impact on health. Persons who misuse drugs have many social and health problems which lead to the consequence of addiction. Thus, drug abuse refers to a state, when a drug becomes an important part of a person's life and he/she is completely dependent on that drug. Drug abuse can affect the physiological and physical dependency of a person and even more damaging to a teenager as they transition to adulthood. Teenagers are faced with many obstacles and decisions as they make their way into adulthood. It is a heavy burden to bear, to know that every decision you make, could affect the rest of your life. For teenagers, one poor decision could have a negative effect year down the road and as such; drug abuse is one prominent negative decision with serious ramifications. Three (3) effects of drug abuse on teenagers are social, physical, and psychological which will be explored further.

Firstly, the social effect of drug abuse is that teenagers are more likely to see the alleged positive social benefits that can come from drug abuse versus the negative implications that can happen. Teenagers are more likely to want to participate in risk-taking behavior. So, experimenting with drugs during these years often reaches its climax. A study done by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that teens are more likely to act out risky behaviors if they know their friends are watching. These behaviors includes; speeding, running traffic lights and doing drugs. During the study, teenagers were not encouraged by friends to perform risky behaviors but did so anyway in many instances. The way participants calculated risk versus reward was shown to be the fundamental cause of these decisions. Functional magnetic resonance imaging showed that the friends' presence heightened activity in certain areas of the brain that are responsible for predicting and determining the value of reward. The resulting social effect of this process was that the teens made risky decisions. Simply knowing that their friends were watching stimulated these regions linked with reward, so they went ahead and took risks.

These same mechanisms come into play when a young person decides whether to take drugs. When with friends, just the mere fact that someone is watching may tip the scales into agreeing that using substances is a good idea. Regrettably, depending on what is being taken and how much, dangerous and harmful consequences can result. Since drug users like to spend time with people who share their habits, they may encourage teenagers to join in, so they have more people to socialize with. The peer pressure that occurs in these settings, and the risky chances teenagers take to experiment with substances, can be the precursors to a serious and long-term addiction.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) cites several other risk factors that may influence the development of a substance abuse problem. They include early aggressive behavior, lack of parental supervision, drug availability and poverty. Not everyone who identify with one or more of these risk factors are destined to develop a drug abuse or addiction, but they are at increased risk. If these factors are not addressed, a teenager's risk of developing a substance abuse problem will only increase further as they begin to experience negative consequences, such as social problems, issues at school, or the development of inappropriate coping mechanisms. Peer pressure and inquisitiveness are the top contributory factors to drug abuse. The social pressure to belong, accepted and be part of a social group, especially in teenagers, prompts them to conform to their peer group, and start trying out drugs. (Dr Tam, 2010). In Plateau State, drug abuse can be traced in Kabong community long before the period of colonial era. The general perception is that drug abuse is for motivation, intoxication, and adequate performance both physically and socially. Some equally belief that it gives them wonderful ideas and thoughts. Others said it is an ''oil of conversation'', which means when taken, it enables them to talk well and meaningfully or rationally. (Swaggart, 1984). An observation shows that this practice of drug abuse is prominent among both sexes, though this observation also indicated that most of the female who abuse drug do not openly indulge in this practice due to socio-cultural reasons. Drug abuse is indeed one of the major social problem being faced totally by the youth of Kabong community of Jos South, it accounts for a large portion of such problem and it has raised health and marital issues for social welfare agencies. The problem of drug abuse has become a trans-cultural phenomenon in the community as it has been observed in most communities in Plateau State. (Silverstein, 1990).

Secondly, the physical effects of drug abuse on teenagers are dangerous; particularly for them because their minds and bodies have not yet developed. There are many health effects of teen substance abuse, most of which are negative. As physical changes occur, the teenager's brain also develops but at different rates. The pleasure center of the brain develops faster than the parts responsible for planning and risk analysis. For this reason, teenagers can often be risk-takers who don't recognize the consequences of their actions. Experimentation with drugs are common during these formative years and, unfortunately, can have lasting effects on a teenager's health. Researchers found that a remarkable increase of both physical and intellectual growth occurs during adolescence. As a person grows older, certain brain functions develop at different rates. While the brain reaches its full physical size around 11 to 14 years old, it doesn't finish maturing until your mid- to late-20s. The last region of the brain to develop is called the prefrontal cortex, or the front part of the brain. This area is responsible for decision-making, prioritizing, and controlling impulses. These significant changes in the brain result in a time that many mental disorders start to emerge, such as schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and substance use disorders. A Teenager's brains also require more sleep than children and adults, something that can often be disturbed by substance abuse. Lack of sleep decreases one's attention span, increases impulsivity, irritability, and depression. Teenager's will often turn to drugs either to experiment or cope with their problems, both of which can cause short- and long-term effects to a teenager's health. Adolescent years are essential for the development of a healthy brain and cognitive functions as an adult, so healthy behavior is important during these years. Drug use can impact a teenager's health short-term as well as slow down or prevent growth and development of the body and mind. Many factors will influence a teen's decision to try drugs and that includes genetic disposition, personality traits, mental health conditions and of course, his or her environment. Teenagers who experience or witness violence, physical or emotional abuse, or drug use in the household are at a higher risk of substance abuse. Substance abuse affects the teenage brain by: reducing the ability to experience pleasure, interfering with neurotransmitters, causing damage to brain connections, creating memory loss, lowering IQ or learning potential, increasing the risk of alcoholism or substance use disorder all of which leads to psychological issues.

Psychological effects of drug abuse on teenagers are primarily a result of teenagers

struggling with emotional problems, they often turn to drugs to help them manage painful or difficult feelings. In this they are not different from adults. But because teenagers' brain are still developing, the results of teenage "self-medication" can be more immediately problematic. In the short term, substance use can help alleviate unwanted mental health symptoms like hopelessness, anxiety, irritability and negative thoughts. However, in the longer term it intensifies them, and often ends in abuse or dependence. Drug abuse escalates from experimentation to a serious disorder much faster in teenagers than it does in adults, and that progression is more likely to happen in teenagers with mental health disorders than in other teens. "The rule of thumb is that almost half of kids with mental health disorders, if they're not treated, will end up having a substance use disorder," explains Sarper Taskiran, MD, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at the Child Mind Institute. A 2016 study of 10,000 adolescents found that two-thirds of those who developed alcohol or substance use disorders had experienced at least one mental health disorder. Substance use also interferes with treatment for mental health disorders and worsens the long-term prognosis for a teenager struggling with one.

Chronic use of some drugs can lead to both short- and long-term changes in the brain, which can lead to mental health issues including paranoia, depression, anxiety, aggression, hallucinations, and other problems. Many people who are addicted to drugs are also diagnosed with other mental disorders and vice versa. Compared with the general population, people addicted to drugs are roughly twice as likely to suffer from mood and anxiety disorders, with the reverse also true. In 2015, an estimated 43.4 million (17.9 percent) adults ages 18 and older experienced some form of mental illness (other than a developmental or substance use disorder). Of these, 8.1 million had both a substance use disorder and another mental illness.[1] Although substance use disorders commonly occur with other mental illnesses, it's often unclear whether one helped cause the other or if common underlying risk factors contribute to both disorders.

In conclusion, drug abuse has no single cause and are not the result of a lack of discipline or self-control. There are several biological, psychological, and social factors, known as risk factors, which can increase an individual's vulnerability to developing a chemical use disorder. The regularity with which drug abuse occur within some families seems to be higher than could be explained by an addictive environment of the family. Therefore, most drug abuse professionals recognize a genetic aspect to the risk of drug addiction. Psychological associations

with drug abuse or addiction include mood disorders like early aggressive behaviors, depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder, thought disorders like schizophrenia, as well as personality disorders like antisocial personality disorder. Teenagers are at a greater risk due to their stage of development and a most vulnerable to the negative factors present within their society.

**Plagiarized paper**

**Sample 2- Participant 4**

Communication Skills (LA101GEB)

April 16, 2021

Theme: Education

Narrowed Topic: Online Learning

Essay Topic: Discuss three disadvantages of online learning.

Thesis Statement: The lack of teacher training, the inabilities to focus on screen and technology issues are disadvantages present in online learning.

Body Paragraph 1

Topic Sentence: First, the lack of teacher training is one of the main disadvantages in the online learning environment.

Quote: A survey conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF shows that 81% of primary school teachers and 75% of high school teachers worldwide barely meet the requirement to perform their duties. This demonstrates that they are unprepared to address the problems that confront them (Delgado 2020).

Body Paragraph 2

Topic Sentence: Second, the inability to focus on screen is also one of the disadvantages in online learning.

Quote: With online learning, there is a greater chance for students to become distracted by other sites and social media (Gautam, 2020).

Studies have shown that people of all age blink for less frequent when concentrating on a screen; this in turn causes the eyes to dry out (Eye Health, 2020).

Body Paragraph 3

Topic Sentence

Last, technology issues are also one disadvantage that is faced by students in online learning

According to the JTA President, only 36% of students have access to the virtual classroom

(Caribbean National Weekly, 2020).

Some of the students are left to deal with the undependable internet providers on the island

(Mpofu, 2020).

Jax a thirty six year old sat in his younger brother online class because he was fascinated about this new way of learning as this modality was not present in his high school days. As he observed, all he could hear was "Miss Natalia is having internet issues". "Jenny won't be able to attend because of power outage in her area". "Hold on second students," the teacher said with a laugh. "I'm still trying to navigate through this new normal". He also realized that whenever students are called on, either they refused to answer or they are not in class. His interest deflated. The term new normal is the most used term ever since the pandemic has hit the world. The Covid-19 pandemic has also triggered a new normal in the education system where schools across the world have resorted into online teaching and learning (Gautam, 2020). In Jamaican, the demand for online teaching and learning has increased immensely and is more than likely to be in demand for the future. We all know that Jamaica is a developing country and because of this new way of learning, many teachers as well as teachers are suffering trying to adapt to the changes. Even though it may be convenient for some Jamaicans, it also has its disadvantages that weaken the academic performance in the country and hinders children from pursuing an education. Most students in the rural areas have not been able to access online classes for number of reasons such as: electricity, and connectivity issues. The lacks of teacher training, inability to focus on screen and technology issues are some disadvantages that are present in online learning.

First, the lack of teacher training is one of the main disadvantages in the online learning environment. The capriciousness of the covid-19 has caused teachers to transit from a space where they had several years of experience to an unknown and strenuous world of online remote and socially distanced teaching (Mpofu, 2020). Most teachers are challenged with this modality as it requires new teaching strategies that differ from the ones that they have been using in the face-to-face classroom methods; teachers have narrow knowledge of designing teaching

strategies for online teaching as they are not sure which strategy will work in the online class. Online teaching requires teachers to have fundamental understanding of using digital forms of learning (Gautam, 2020); however, this is not always the case as some teachers are used to the face-to face environment and they are not technology savvy. Very frequent, they do not have the basic understanding of technology. As a result, teachers may not understand how to manipulate the systems to get on to their classes, how to access materials that is placed online for them and to post learning material for students. A survey conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF shows that 81% of primary school teachers and 75% of high school teachers worldwide barely meet the requirement to perform their duties (Delgado, 2020). This shows that teachers are not fully prepared to address the problems that face them in the online classes. It also demonstrates that teachers were not trained on some of the imperative requirements to be done in the online classes when the pandemic hit. Furthermore, the lack of teacher training for online classes may lead to students not being able to grasp the content that are being taught, they may feel isolated and not develop the communication skills needed.

Second, the inability to focus on screen is also one of the disadvantages in online learning. While some students seem to be excelling in online class, some are unable to engage, focus on lessons and some may be absent from classes because of the inability to focus. This may be due to distractions that are associated with screen which may seem impossible to avoid or eye health problems. In online classes students may not be able to focus on screen because of social media platforms and other sites. For example, they may be logged on to classes but they are unable to focus as they may have their phone or other tabs open in the class sessions. As a result of that, they are constantly checking for messages, social media and other sites. Moreover, for some students, sitting around the computer for almost the whole day without a choice can

cause them to become somnolent and does not participate in classes. Because of these distractions that students have in online learning, it may cause students to be fall short in their academics. Additionally, some students prefer to work with books as there are no distractions associated with it. When doing that, they are more focused and likely to excel than when using the online method for school. As it relates to health, studies have shown that people of all age blink for less frequent when concentrating on a screen; this in turn causes the eyes to dry out (Eye Health, 2020). This may result in students as well as teachers having eye problems which cause them to be unable to focus on screen which may be detrimental to the new way of teaching and learning. Moreover, many students face eye discomfort and vision problems when viewing digitals screens. Viewing screen very often makes the eyes work harder which also causes students to be susceptible to the development of vision- related symptoms. Additionally, students and teachers with hyperopia, a condition in which persons are able to see distant object. Consequently, they may experience blurry visions, headaches and tired eyes when viewing screen. Therefore, it is unlikely for them to be focus during online class (Kinshuck 2020). The inability to focus on screen is detrimental to the new way of learning.

Third, technology issues are also one disadvantage that is faced by students in online learning. Online learning is entirely dependent on adequate access to devices and internet connection. Without this, online learning will be ineffective and there can be a lack of continuity in online teaching and learning. Most students that are from low-income families and rural areas struggle to get access to devices and are mainly face connectivity issues. These issues cause students to be absent from classes and as a result, there is a possible class performance gap between the students who have access and those who do not. Additionally, there are students who have access to devices but are challenged with the slow and unstable internet. As a result,

teachers have challenges getting to students in the online environment as well as having them complete task that needs to be done. Moreover, they are always unable to fully access classes as they are easily bumped out or they are unable to hear what the teacher is saying. Therefore, this may result in students being left behind in classes, not understanding the contents that are being taught which may lead to failure in examinations. This in turn can be detrimental to the education system. Additionally, according to the JTA President, only 36% of students have access to the virtual classroom (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020). This left the other 64% of students struggling to attend the virtual classes due to the lack of internet connections and no access to devices. Furthermore, some of the students are left to deal with the undependable internet providers on the island (Mpofu, 2020). In the same way, students are faced with the lack of electricity. In the face to face class, the lack of electricity at home was not a high problem for student as they can get work done at school. Now that school is online, without electricity students are unable to connect to class. This may greatly reduce learning for students. Because of these issues, there can a strain on the cognitive development of the students.

In conclusion, what Jax saw in his brother's class were disadvantages of online learning. Teachers may lack the necessary computer skills that they are required to have in order to be more efficient in online classes. They may also be challenged with adapting to the changes and as a result they may be challenged with implementing new strategies to ensure that students understand what they are teaching. Secondly, there is the inability to focus on screen for online classes. Students may be faced with simply distractions like social media or they may be unable to focus because of eye health problems such as hyperopia where they can only see distant objects. Students may be unable to access the online space because of technology issues; little or no internet connection, no access to devices and electricity. This is mostly rampant in the rural

and inner city areas. It is important for people to note these challenges that are associated with the online learning as they will be able to understand the reasons for the absence and low performance in the online learning. Recognizing these negatives will help the government as well as teachers in implementing new ways of efficiently delivering lessons to students.