



Modified Orwell's Six Rules: An Intervention to Improve Students' Writing Skills in English

Cathlea Justine S. Capalac

Western Mindanao State University, Philippines

Dennie Claire B. Mapo

Western Mindanao State University, Philippines

Divine Antonnette S. Magbanua

Western Mindanao State University, Philippines

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of Modified Orwell's Six Rules as an intervention to improve high school students' academic writing skills in English. Using a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, 14 average writers were identified through a diagnostic test from the pool of 50 students. They were exposed to three writing interventions focusing on grammar, clarity and simplicity using modified writing rules validated by experts. The paired samples t-test was used to analyze the data. Results revealed a statistically significant improvement in posttest scores indicating enhanced performance on students' essays. Findings support the use of simplified and structured writing guidelines to improve students' academic writing skills. Furthermore, the study recommends integrating the modified rules into classroom instruction to enhance clarity and cohesion in writing.

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*Corresponding author

E-mail: capalaccathlea@gmail.com



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Introduction

English is the most widely used language in the world, and developing competency in writing in English is fundamental. However, this skill has always been a major challenge for many students (Moses, 2019). They often struggle to express their ideas in writing due to limited grammatical knowledge and the complexity of sentence construction leading to anxiety that discourages them from improving their writing abilities. Mintz (2021) consider writing as a process in which ideas are created, not only as a way of communication but also as a force that makes us analyze and reflect. He describes it as a thought-provoking, multifaceted, and demanding task, which often leads to decreased student motivation and limited practice. Similarly, Carnegie Mellon University (2024) emphasizes that writing is a complex and intellectually challenging process involving multiple component skills, many of which students have yet to fully develop.

A local study conducted by Barredo & Saavedra (2020) reported four factors why elementary students have poor writing skills – lack of vocabulary, difficulty in organizing ideas, difficulty in grammar and difficulty in sentence construction. Similarly, Vacalares et al. (2023) also found out that constructing sentences poses a significant challenge for them. Moreover, a report by The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2020) reveals that students in senior high school can barely write in English. These particular problem is likewise observed among students at Zamboanga Sibugay National High School. Many students struggled to express their thoughts clearly and concisely in writing, which prompted the researchers to undertake this study.

Being able to write in a clear and concise manner is a crucial component of academic work to facilitate understanding, academic integrity, and effective communication (Newcastle University, 2023). Therefore, it is essential for students to have a clear objective and an additional writing set of writing guidelines to help them produce a readable written work



In recent years, existing literature has largely focused on the factors behind students lack motivation to write and the challenges they face in writing. There is limited empirical studies on the strategies, particularly, Orwell's six writing rules that can help them become better writers. Thus, this study aims to augment the writing skills of average learners using a modified version of Orwell's Six Writing Rules. This modified version offers a simpler and more comprehensive set of writing rules designed to serve as a stepping stone to motivate students and bring back their enthusiasm in writing. It also fills the gap caused by limited practice helping to prevent stagnation in the development of their writing skills.

Specifically, the researchers intend to apply the modified Orwell's six rules in writing to determine its effectiveness in enhancing the writing abilities of the students. Accordingly, this paper seeks to address the following questions:

1. What is the pretest score of the Grade 10 students?
2. What is the posttest score of the Grade 10 students after the intervention?
3. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the Grade 10 students?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we take into account the importance of metacognition proposed by J.H. Flavell. Metacognitive focus will help students use their prior knowledge to practice, and apply new strategies in writing. In which students can be able to reflect on their strengths and challenges during the task activity.



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Furthermore, metacognition means that a person will reflect and be aware of what they are doing when writing and why it is being done. As it involves being alert during the writing processes, learners can figure out what to do when faced with new writing situations. Among the learning strategies, metacognitive strategy is a higher-order thinking skill that involves planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In which, once learners have a good command of a metacognitive strategy, they will become more independent and autonomous and will be more capable of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning process and thus become efficient learners for improving their writing skills (Sword, 2021).

The second theory is the social cognitive theory of writing developed by Albert Bandura, a perspective on writing that focuses on the cognitive operations and representations and how social processes are influenced by cognitive operations. The process of communicating through discourse under specific social contexts and stresses learning from social environment learning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2023). This involves the integration of cognitive theories, context, student's behavior, and goals of writing (Cheung et al. 2021). According to Minnesota State University (2020) , this concept of writing is affected by cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. Hence, this will be a crucial aspect to consider in the learners' ability to write.

The third theory is Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding, a theory in writing developed by Lev Vygotsky, which focuses on the scaffolding of the students' needs to develop to write using advanced forms, and this allows for practical and individualization of writing, simply how students perform with proper guidance and help compared to when they write on their own (McLeod, 2024). This will be useful in the study as the basis for creating a systematic rule-based writing protocol. They are



exposed, taught, and they put the rules into practice with the teachers' guidance and, later, are made to write on their own.

Related Literature

George Orwell's six rules for writing, introduced in his 1945 essay *Politics and the English Language*, emphasize clarity, simplicity, and honesty in communication. He criticized the use of vague, inflated, and manipulative language, particularly in political writing, and proposed six practical rules to promote precise and truthful expression (Smart, 2022; Doe, 2023). These rules, though originally rooted in political commentary, have since been recognized as applicable across various forms of writing. Meyer (2024) emphasized their role in eliminating redundant expressions and promoting clarity, while Harrington (2023) noted their value in improving corporate communication. A lesson developed by the University of Texas at Austin (2024) showed how Orwell's principles could help students improve editing skills through focused instruction on precision and simplicity.

Despite recognition of Orwell's relevance, student writing continues to show persistent challenges. Studies reveal common difficulties such as grammatical errors, sentence structure issues, and vague idea expression (Dudu & Subanda, 2020; Abdelkarim, 2022). Al Fadda (2021) found that students struggle with constructing coherent paragraphs and avoiding language errors. These problems are consistent across educational levels and often go unaddressed due to the lack of explicit writing instruction. While students may receive feedback, they are rarely taught clear

rules or given structured strategies to improve their writing (Gupta, 2023; Moses, 2019).

The simplicity and directness of Orwell's rules make them highly suitable for instructional use. Rahman (2019) and Trautner (2019)



argued that Orwell's style exemplifies effective English prose and can help students write with greater precision. Orwell's emphasis on tone, logic, and flow also supports the development of writing that is both clear and purposeful. In educational contexts, these principles have been integrated into various curricula to encourage critical thinking and meaningful writing (Sisco, 2021; Sutton, 2018; Murphy, 2022). Writing centers and researchers further advocate for clarity and accessibility in writing, echoing Orwell's call for straightforward communication (Writing Center Theory and Research, 2023; Driscoll & Farag, 2024).

Rubrics developed around Orwellian principles have also been identified as useful tools in writing assessment. These rubrics prioritize clarity, structure, and meaningful communication—key aspects of Orwell's philosophy (Griffin & Francis, 2022; Ajjawi et al., 2019; Becker, 2021). They also encourage reflective thinking and help students understand the criteria for strong writing. Orwell's influence remains evident in various fields, including journalism and law, but their direct application to student writing remains limited (Setaide, 2019; Douglas, 2014; Billig, 2020).

While previous studies recognize the relevance of Orwell's ideas and the challenges students face in writing, few have explored the use of Orwell's six rules as a structured intervention in classroom practice. Many acknowledge writing difficulties but do not offer specific strategies to address them. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by applying Orwell's six rules for writing as a focused intervention to improve students' grammar, vocabulary, and overall writing clarity.

Method

A pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Modified Orwell's Six Rules for Writing in enhancing students' writing skills in this study. Fourteen Grade 10 students from Zamboanga Sibugay National High School were identified as the participants. A diagnostic test was initially



administered to a class of 50 students to identify those who fell within the “average” range in writing performance. Average range were those who garnered 7-12 points (equivalent to 81–85 grade point average) based on the standardized rubric made to score the initial diagnostic test of the students.

The primary data collection tool was an essay-type test designed to assess clarity, grammar, punctuation, and conciseness. Students were asked to write a 50- to 80-word essay within 20 minutes, responding to a MELC-aligned question from their English module. To ensure authenticity, mobile devices were collected during testing. The rubric used was validated by three English master teachers and was anchored on the Modified Orwell’s Six Rules: (1) *avoid using figures of speech when unnecessary*; (2) *use short words instead of long ones when possible*; (3) *eliminate unnecessary words*; (4) *prefer the active voice over the passive*; (5) *replace jargon, foreign, or scientific terms with everyday English*; and (6) *use proper punctuation and grammar*. This same rubric was used in both the pretest and posttest evaluations.

The 14 identified “average” writers were then exposed to three intervention sessions. In the first session, the modified rules were introduced and explained, followed by a guided writing activity. The second session involved a review of the rules and another writing task based on a new prompt related to the students’ English lesson. The third session included a final review and a final writing activity, again aligned with their MELCs. Each writing session followed the same format and time allocation as the diagnostic test.

To determine the impact of the intervention, a paired sample t-test was employed to compare the pretest and posttest scores. This statistical method is appropriate for repeated measures and was used to assess whether the mean difference between the students’ writing performance before and after the intervention was statistically significant. Mean scores and standard deviations were also computed to describe the trends and variation in students’ performance. This approach provided clear, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Modified Orwell’s Six Rules as a tool for improving student writing.

Results and Discussion



Pretest score of the students

The pretest results revealed that the 14 Grade 10 students demonstrated writing abilities that placed them within the "Average" proficiency level, with scores ranging from 10 to 12, mean of 11 ($SD = 0.78$), out of the maximum possible score of 30 points. Basing from the scoring rubric, this corresponds to a percentage range of 81–85%, indicating satisfactory but not exceptional writing skills. The statistical analysis yielded a significant difference from the benchmark value, $t(5) = 4.80$, $p < .001$, suggesting that the observed mean score was meaningfully higher than the set criterion for average performance.

This result implies that while the students were performing within the expected range for their level, there remained room for improvement, particularly in elevating their writing skills beyond the average proficiency band. Also, the relatively low standard deviation also indicates that the students' scores were clustered closely around the mean, suggesting a consistent average performance across the group. Similarly, Mohammad and Suryatin (2020) found that the majority of students in their study demonstrated low levels of writing proficiency during the pretest phase, with over 65% falling into the "weak" category. These findings provided a solid baseline for assessing the effectiveness of the subsequent intervention using the modified Orwell's Six Rules for Writing.

Posttest scores of the students

In the first intervention session, the writing scores of 14 Grade 10 students showed an improvement compared to the pre-test. Individual scores ranged from 15 to 26 ($M = 20.80$, $SD = 3.66$), was significantly higher than the benchmark value, $t(5) = 11.03$, $p <$



.001. The pooled standard deviation calculated from the pre-test and first intervention session scores was $sp = 2.54s$. The majority of students scored within the “Very Good” proficiency level, while a few achieved the “Excellent” level, and others remains within the “Good” level. This indicates a substantial improvement in writing performance following the first intervention session.

In the second intervention session, participant scores ranged from 20 to 26 ($M = 22.8$, $SD = 1.89$) was significantly higher than the benchmark value, $t(5) = 25.32$, $p < .001$ indicating that overall writing performance was clustered around the “Very Good” category. Most participants scored between 20 and 24, with three participants receiving scores of 25 or higher, categorized as “Excellent.”

In the third intervention session, participants scores ranged from 20-26 ($M = 23.6$, $SD = 2.46$), was significantly higher than the benchmark value, $t(5) = 19.58$, $p < .001$ suggesting that participants generally performed at the “Very Good” level. A majority of the students scored within the 22 to 26 range, with six participants receiving scores of 26, categorized as “Excellent.”

The final task scores ($M = 22.4$, $SD = 2.63$.) was significantly higher than the benchmark value, $t(5) = 17.64$, $p < .001$. Based on the rating scale, this average falls within the “Very Good” category. This indicates that most students demonstrated a high level of performance on the final task. These scores yielded a mean of 22.4 with a standard deviation of 2.63. Notably, the final task mean score is almost at the upper boundary of the “Very Good” category level of writing skill, surpassing the goal of this study of helping students go from an average writing level to a

good level. This implies the effectiveness of the modified Orwell’s six rules in writing.



The results across the intervention sessions and the final task suggest a clear, consistent, and statistically significant improvement in the writing performance of the Grade 10 students after the application of the modified Orwell's Six Rules for Writing. The statistically significant *t*-values in all three sessions indicate that the improvements observed were not due to chance but likely the result of the targeted writing intervention applied during the experimental periods. Furthermore, the shift in student performance from the "Average" proficiency level during the pre-test to predominantly "Very Good" and "Excellent" levels in subsequent sessions implies that the instructional strategy was effective in advancing writing competencies.

In parallel, the final task reinforces this sustained improvement, showing that the writing gains were not only immediate but also retained over time. These results imply that well-designed, focused writing interventions can lead to substantial and measurable improvements in student writing, supporting both academic achievement and long-term skill development. The present outcomes corroborate the findings of Rosário et al. (2019), wherein students who received structured writing interventions demonstrated significant improvements in the quality of their written compositions from pretest to posttest. Similar to the current study, Rosário et al. observed that students not only improved in the short term but also sustained their gains over time, particularly in areas such as organization, coherence, grammar, and idea development.

Test of difference between the pretest and posttest scores

The Paired samples T-Test result comparison between the diagnostic test (pre-test) and final task (post-test) scores of the experimental group revealed a statistically significant difference, as evidenced by a *t*-statistic of -9.28, a mean difference of -9.79,

and a *p*-value less than .001. This result indicates a meaningful improvement in the performance of the experimental group from the pre-test to the post-test. The substantial mean difference of 9.79



suggests that the instructional intervention implemented between the diagnostic and final assessments effectively enhanced students' learning outcomes. This finding supports the efficacy of the educational approach and highlights the importance of targeted instructional interventions in promoting academic progress (Koster, et al., 2007).

In the context of Orwell's Six Rules for Writing and drawing from the study of Meyer (2024), the students' performance across the three intervention sessions demonstrated that eliminating clichés and unnecessary words helped clarify the meaning and intent of their writing. The use of the modified rules provided students with a concrete framework for effective academic writing, guiding them on what to include and avoid. This approach also supported better word selection by encouraging the removal of vague and pretentious language—addressing one of the most common challenges students face: poor word choice.

The presented data showed that Orwell's six rules in writing, modified based on the needs of high school students, establish their effectiveness in helping to make writing clear, honest, and concise not only in the field of journalism and political writing but also inside the four walls of the classroom. It is a tool in assessing students writing skills as a writing rubric and an effective scaffolding that aligns to their needs and developmental frameworks that directly targets to eliminate primary writing problems like grammatical errors, poor punctuation, and inability to choose the right words.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Developing students' writing abilities continues to be a challenge, and students' still grapple putting their thoughts into words in a



clear and concise manner. This problem has not yet been solved, and an immediate solution is needed. Hence, the modified

Orwell's six rules in writing are proposed to act as a supplementary guide in helping learners develop their writing skills. This study showed a significant change among students who were exposed to the intervention, showing a positive improvement in writing a clear and coherent academic paper.

In essence, this study reaffirms that well-designed, learner-centered writing interventions, those grounded in clarity and simplicity, can serve as powerful tools in advancing students' academic writing proficiency. The integration of modified Orwell's rules in writing not only enhanced performance but also encouraged the development of mindful, purposeful writing habits, positioning students for continued academic success.

Based on the positive outcomes of this experimental study, it is hereby recommended that the modified version of Orwell's Six Rules for Writing be formally integrated into the English language curriculum at both junior and senior high school levels. The rules' clarity and practicality have proven effective in enhancing students' writing performance. Teachers may conduct bi-weekly writing sessions focused on applying each rule through guided practice, peer review, and teacher feedback. It is further suggested that these writing principles be gradually incorporated in other writing-intensive subjects such as Social Studies and Science, such as in research reports and reflection papers, to promote consistency in writing quality across disciplines. Lastly, further research is warranted to validate the broader applicability and long-term benefits of rule-based writing instruction across diverse educational settings and learner groups.

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About the authors:

Cathlea Justine S. Capalac is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in English at Western Mindanao State University – Ipil External Studies (ESU) Campus. She graduated Cum Laude and earned First Place in the Poster Research Presentation at the 2025 Regional Pre-Service Teachers' Summit. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Education Major in English Language Teaching.



Divine Antonnette S. Magbanua is a licensed professional teacher with a Master of Arts in Education, major in Science Education. She currently serves as an Instructor I at Western Mindanao State University – Ipil External Studies (ESU) Campus.

Dennie Claire Mapo is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary from Western Mindanao State University Ipil Campus, with a specialization in Secondary Education Major in English. Her research interests include language and education. She has presented at local, national, and international conferences.