Enhancing College Students' Proficiency in Business Writing Via *Schoology*

Alvin S. Sicat, M.A. Ed.
Faculty, School of Education, Liberal Arts, Music and Social Work-International Languages
Centro Escolar University (CEU), Makati City, Philippines

Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to determine the effectiveness of the Learning Management System (LMS) Schoology as regards enhancing the proficiency of the college students in business writing. Adopting the experimental method of investigation, the study has involved one hundred thirty-five (135) college students enrolled in Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes during the Second Semester, School Year 2013-2014 at Centro Escolar University, Makati City, Philippines. The researcher chose the said subjects using the purposive sampling technique based from the inclusion criteria formulated. A teacher-made test duly validated by several experts in the field of English language teaching served as the primary instrument of this study. Midterm Grades and Pre-test results of the subjects were found comparable prior to the conduct of the experimentation. In addition, the Final Class Participation, Final Examination Grades and Post-tests of the subjects were compared for both control and experimental groups after the experimentation. Results showed a slight difference in their mean grades in favor of the control group implying that the traditional method remains to be more effective in the teaching of Business Writing. However, when the Pre-test and Post-tests were administered for both control and experimental groups and compared their results separately, results yielded a very significant difference in their mean scores in favor of the experimental group. This confirms that the proficiency of the subjects in Business Writing can be further enhanced through the LMS Schoology. Overall, the findings suggest that teachers should utilize the LMS Schoology only as a supplement to the traditional method of teaching to enhance the college students' proficiency in Business writing.

Key Words: Learning Management Systems, *Schoology*, Effectiveness of LMS, Business Writing

1. Introduction

Good communication is essential for life in general but in business settings, it is critical (Velez, 2014).

The aforesaid statement clearly presages the vital role of Business Writing among professionals. Business Writing is one of the subjects in higher education that aims to develop the students' ability to convey or transmit relevant business information in and out of the organization through the discussion of various forms of correspondence such as reports, memoranda, proposals and other forms of writing intended for business pursuits. The subject comes in several nomenclatures such as Business Communication, Business Correspondence, Writing for Business and the like depending on the institution where it is offered. Most of the time, the subject is embedded in the Technical Writing course in most higher education institutions as an essential component of the General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirement prior to graduation as approved by the Commission on Higher Education (CMO No. 48, 2012).

Phillip L. Velez (2014), a writer/blogger and communication professional strongly believes that writing well is important for the success of any business or organization. Business owners and their employees who can write clearly and concisely have a competitive edge over others who are still struggling to communicate.

Having multiple sets of eyes on business documents can prevent poorly written material from reaching one's target audience.

Moreover, learning and honing business writing skills can have a positive impact on an individual's career advancement. Effective channels of communication make an organization run smoothly. Professional quality writing being sent through these channels improves productivity and the ability of all functional areas to work together, particularly in an increasingly global workplace where collaboration is the norm (Hill, 2014). Undoubtedly, the ability to compose or write all forms of business communication opens the doors of countless opportunities to aspiring professionals of the 21st century.

Along with the need to enhance the writing skills of the students is the need to increase the level of their familiarity in the English language. Bindu Rana (2014) in her article entitled, "Enhancing Students' English Proficiency" clearly stated: "English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and its value has expanded enormously in the past decade due to increasing demand of English language in jobs, growing social mobility and global competitiveness." Individuals who have a good command of the English language as manifested in their oral and written communication are highly sought after by companies of international repute (Rana, 2014).

Technology has made everyone in the workplace a writer, and writing is a highly visible skill. When you send an email or other written communication, it is out there for people to see. It reflects on you and, if you are an administrative professional, it also reflects on your boss, so it's essential to get it right. Today, your reputation and success in business are increasingly dependent on your ability to communicate well (Business Management Daily, 2013).

As a result, educators strongly suggest that business writing must be taught effectively among the students in schools to ensure that they will obtain the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to cope with the demands of their respective professions. This is to ensure that the writing competency of the students will be further enhanced.

Writing is a core job competency that falls under the broader category of communication and is required in numerous careers world-wide. Due to the prevalence of new technologies, which often require an abundance of writing, solid competencies are sought after more than ever before (Professional Writing Certificate specializing in Business and Technical Writing, 2014).

With regard to pedagogies associated with the teaching of business writing, the traditional method of teaching seems to be popular. Traditional teaching is described as a typical class having one teacher who directs all activities, and presents knowledge in discrete parts to be passively ingested by students and to be recalled later on a test. Garcia (1997) characterizes traditional teaching as follows:
1. This method calls for teacher's monopoly of the teaching-learning process.
2. This usually limits the class activity within the four walls of the classroom.
3. It opts for conformity, thus expecting each student to come up with the predetermined learning results.
4. Stresses the "what" of learning, thus capitalizing on the use of memory work, question and answer method, etc.
5. Problems seem to be insurmountable causing the teacher to bog down in his teaching
6. Stresses the acquisition of knowledge among other things; hence, the instruction becomes subject-matter oriented (www.openuni-clsu.edu.ph/openfiles/modules/ed710/lesson5-1.doc)

Meanwhile, in their research entitled, "Traditional vs Modern Teaching Methods. Advantages and Disadvantages," Mahira Hadžimehmedagić and Azamat Akbarov (2013), imparted that the central factor in

the choice of methods is the learner's need and character. A teacher must be a good pedagogy to see and understand all the students' individual abilities. Some methods work for one person well, but the same one might not work for another person at all. Understanding the student help you choose the way of teaching.

The counterpart of the traditional method of instruction is innovative teaching. Innovative teaching strategies play a vital role in the enhancement of competencies in business writing among students who will soon become professionals. One of the popular, innovative modes of teaching employed nowadays in the 21st century is the blended learning.

In the website www.learnnc.org, Hogbood (2014) cited the definition given by R. Garrison & H. Kanuka (2004) on blended learning. According to the said authors, blended learning is a student-centered approach to creating a learning experience whereby the learner interacts with other students, with the instructor, and with content through thoughtful integration of online and face-to-face environments.

Further, Hogbood (2014) noted that communication and collaboration are necessary functions of a blended approach. Because formative assessment is embedded throughout learning events, the learner assumes responsibility for his or her learning.

Through blended learning, the students develop personal responsibility as they are challenged to create meaning based from the content and processes they encounter. Likewise, critical thinking as well as creativity and resourcefulness are demonstrated as the individuals attempt to transfer the learning experiences into another context or setting.

Over the past decade or so, powerful software for managing complex databases has been combined with digital frameworks for managing curriculum, training materials, and evaluation tools particularly in blended learning. The result is a technology known as the Learning Management System or LMS (Mindflash, 2013).

A learning management system (LMS) is a software application or Web-based technology used to plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. Typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. A learning management system may also provide students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing, and discussion forums (Rouse, 2005).

The LMS has become a powerful tool even for consulting companies that specialize in staffing and training, extension schools, and any corporation looking to get a better grasp on the continuing education of its workforce. Its impact has been felt mostly outside of traditional education institutions, though the same technological and market forces are dramatically changing today's classroom as well (Mindflash, 2013).

Various Learning Management Systems (LMS) came out in the market to cater to the academic needs of both teachers and students across disciplines. Some of them are *Moodle, Edmodo, Blackboard, Sumtotal, Skillsoft, Cornerstone, Desire2Learn, Schoology, NetDimensions, Collaborize Classroom, Iteractyx, Docebo, Instructure, Meridian Knowledge Sol., Latitude Learning, Sakal, Eduneering, Mzinga, Epsilen and Inquisiq r3* (20 Most Popular Learning Management Systems [INFOGRAPHIC], 2013).

The use of learning management systems in the classroom may enable the faculty members to enhance their tools for working-the use of information and communication technologies, one of the 21st century teaching skills enumerated by Vivien Stewart, Senior Education Advisor of the Asia Society during her talk in the Philippine Education Conference 2013 held last December 2-3, 2013 at SMX Convention Center, Pasay City.

One of the popular learning management systems gaining popularity nowadays in the field of blended or online learning is the *Schoology*. The researcher, who is a strong advocate of pedagogical strategies in the field of language learning, would like to investigate on the possibility of using the said Learning Management System (LMS) in the effective delivery of Business Writing lessons among his students in the university.

Schoology, a collaboration and learning tool, is a web based K-12 learning environment that will give students, parents, and teachers 24/7 access to class materials and information via the internet. *Schoology* is free and allows for teacher to teacher, teacher to student, and even student to student online collaboration in a user friendly and secure environment. It offers the possibilities of adopting this collaboration and learning tool to customize learning for each student (Farmington *Schoology,* 2014).

The design of *Schoology* is parallel to that of *Facebook* in which conversations take place, messages are sent, statuses are updated and information and other media are shared within a classroom network. *Schoology* consists of two main contexts 1) interactive communication and 2) academic information exchange. Teachers can create discussion questions, collaborative groups, or boards for assignments that allow for dynamic interaction between students and their teachers. For example, students participating in reading workshop can ask questions and post comments about classmates' book choices. Teachers can participate in and monitor these student-led discussions. The second aspect that *Schoology* has capitalized on is the ability to deliver academic information to students. Within *Schoology*, students are able to access their grades, attendance records, and teacher feedback on electronically-submitted assignments. Access to this information increases communication between teachers and students and holds students accountable for their academic responsibilities (Manning, C. et. al, 2011).

Schoology offers much more than just the *Facebook* factor. It is a robust learning management system with apps available for iPad, iPhone, Android, and Kindle mobile devices. Students find that submitting assignments, taking tests, making comments, and asking questions is smooth and intuitive for them, and they retain access to resources in their courses after the semester ends (Wall, 2014).

Overall, the design of *Schoology* encourages voluntary submission of the learners to the activities being done in and out of the classroom. Instead of relying too much in the old methods of teaching and learning, incorporating teaching in this digital age may help the students to be more involved in their studies.

Several attempts to explore on *Schoology's* effectiveness have been made. In the early 2011, a large number of teachers in Palo Alto Unified School District were no longer using the district supported learning management system (LMS). A server crash caused a loss of data while a system upgrade in 2009 reduced rather than enhanced functionality of the system. Teachers were frustrated so the district decided it was the right time to adopt a new LMS. Ann started to research their options. She was immediately drawn to *Schoology* because of its intuitive interface. "We didn't want a system that required extensive training. With *Schoology*, students and teachers could both start using it immediately without training." *Schoology's* flexibility was also very attractive to Ann. "I liked that we could choose the features we wanted to use and that the open, cloud-based platform made it much easier and faster for *Schoology* to implement enhancements based on our needs" (In Search of an Easy-to-Implement, Scalable Learning Management System, 2014).

Likewise, Greenwich Public Schools in Connecticut, U.S.A. has decided to implement *Schoology* recently. According to Phillip Dunn, director of technology and digital learning of the said institution, the new system will support communications among teachers, students, parents and administrators; store digital assignments and assessments so they can be easily used in the classroom when teaching; enable teachers to set up online

groups to share best practices and allow students to submit homework online and get feedback from their teachers (Jenkins, 2014).

Matt Bury, an e-learning consultant and software developer based in Guelph, Canada believed that there are many more that will not be immediately apparent until one starts getting more deeply involved in running online communities of learning and teaching (Why use a Learning Management System for elearning?, 2014). His words truly challenge the educators to experiment on the various Learning Management Systems available.

In the midst of the positive reviews about *Schoology*, the researcher wants to investigate further in particular its effectiveness in enhancing the proficiency of the college students in Business Writing who are enrolled in Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes at Centro Escolar University Makati.

2. Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to determine the effectiveness of the Learning Management System (LMS) *Schoology* as regards enhancing the proficiency of the college students in Business Writing.

Specifically, this research sought answers to the following questions:

1. How did the subjects perform in the following:
        1.1   Pre-test
        1.2   Midterm Grade?
2. How comparable were the control and experimental groups in the pre-test results and in their midterm grades?
3. How did the subjects in the control and experimental groups perform in the following:
        3.1 Final Class Participation Grade
        3.2 Final Examination Grade
        3.3 Post-test?
4. How did the subjects from the control and experimental groups compare with regard to their:
        4.1 Pre-test
        4.2 Final Class Participation Grade
        4.3 Final Examination Grade
        4.4 Post-test?
5. How did the subjects' Pre-test and Post-test scores compare?
6. How effective is *Schoology* in the teaching of Business Writing?

3. Literature Review

Business Writing as a course aims to teach individuals to prepare reports, summarize the results of one's research for use by internal clients in accomplishing business goals. One specific example of such a report is the report that presents information about a potential customer to enable account representatives, marketing specialists, and strategic planners to enhance or develop a business relationship with the potential customer (Business Writing Center, 2014).

Almost all business activities are envisioned, planned, implemented and analyzed in some form of the written word. These forms include reports, and reports, summaries, letters, memos, and email, any document, in fact, that communicates something about business. Collectively, they are the hard-copy paper trails recording the proposals, activities and results of countless business transactions (Business Writing: An Introduction, 2014).

The aforementioned articles simply talk about the usual contents of a Business Writing course. In Centro Escolar University, as stated in its syllabus prepared and approved by the Department of International Languages, the said subject carries the descriptive title Writing Skills or Specific Purposes which reinforces writing skills for academic purposes, integrating skills for occupational purposes and emphasizes writing technical communication using professional courses as bases. It includes business communications, research writing, scientific papers, feasibility studies, case studies and other pertinent technical-oriented writing. With regard to Business Writing alone, the course expects the learners to demonstrate ability to write formal communication, construct business correspondence following the accepted form and substance. Likewise, the students are expected to write effective letters of application by receiving a reply and finally, showing confidence in sending out letters to address concerns of the community and government as a whole (Go et al., 2013).

With a closer look at the strategies being employed in the teaching of the topics concerning Business Writing at Centro Escolar University (CEU), the researcher discovered that the methodologies or techniques utilized by the teachers as stipulated in the syllabus are mostly the traditional ones like writing and sending different forms of business letters, e.g. application letters, letter of inquiry, curriculum vitae, complaint letter among others, reflection essays and revision of letters after critiquing process. Though there is a simulation activity included as well as downloading of online business correspondence, still, the researcher considers these activities not enough to cater to the demands of the 21st century teaching-learning particularly to the needs of the digital natives.

This is where the researcher's intention to conduct a study involving *Schoology* was conceived. The effectiveness of the said Learning Management System (LMS) might contribute significantly to the teaching of Business Writing among future professionals in addition to the traditional method being utilized by the classroom.

The results of the study might enable the educators handling Business Writing to plan relevant, timely and appropriate lessons in accordance with the standards of blended learning. Likewise, the findings may add to the reservoir of knowledge about modern pedagogical strategies such as the effective use of learning management systems (LMSs) and how they can be fully maximized in most schools. The school administrators, on the other hand, may obtain insights or ideas on the provision, upgrading and maintenance of devices, equipment and physical facilities in line with blended learning. This is aside from the relevant and timely workshops for their faculty members who serve as facilitators of learning. Finally, the learners' exposure to a different mode of teaching might result to an improved academic performance in the area of business writing.

Several pieces of literature and studies have noted the potential of technological advances in the field of education such as blended or online learning including the so-called Learning Management Systems (LMS) in developing the students' competencies which have bearing in the current research.

"Our students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach" (Prensky, 2001, p.1).

Such bold, striking statements came from Marc Prensky, a notable American writer and speaker on learning and education. He made a brief account on how the learners have not just changed *incrementally* over the years but have undergone *discontinuity*-a state which he rather called *singularity*-a series of events marked by "no turning back." This so-called "singularity" is the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the 20th century. This is highlighted by the birth of the students who grow up to the said new technology (Prensky, 2001).

According to Prensky, these individuals are better known as N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen or simply "digital natives." They are individuals who are born after 1980s (Palfrey & Gasser, 2013). These learners possess different ways of thinking, reacting, responding and getting motivated and with new traits of independence, creativity, open-mindedness, and enterprising minds (Roscue, 2013). More specifically, digital natives are more adept at incorporating technology in their personal and professional lives than previous generations, and will bring new ways of working and culture with them to the workplace. Companies can leverage the technological experience and expectations of this new generation of workers to improve processes, efficiency and motivation. Such characteristics of individuals are relevant for the 21st century employment.

The insights presented previously create a resemblance in the current study for they both introduce the characteristics of the digital learners who are the target recipients of various Learning Management Systems such as *Schoology*. Like the article mentioned, the present research will involve the digital natives who may have been familiar with the rudiments of blended learning specifically the use of LMS.

Digital natives have been exposed to computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age. Today's average college graduates have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV). Computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging have become integral parts of their lives (Prensky, 2001).

The information stated previously is somewhat related to the assumption of the researcher in his present study that his respondents are also hooked into the said technologies using the internet. This can be attributed to the fact that his target respondents are certified digital natives who are indeed familiar in various computer applications, devices and gadgets for online and mobile communication.

Similar to the digital environment described by Prensky is Marshall McLuhan's "Global Village." In *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan states that we live in a Global Village, a simultaneous happening where time and space has vanished. The electronic media involves everyone simultaneously. He states that the electronic media are beginning to put us back in touch with the tribal emotions which print had divorced us from (McLuhan's Global Village, 2013).

When McLuhan articulated his vision, the WEB did not even exist. However, considering the WEB and its features, it could be concluded that McLuhan's vision came true. The WEB, accessed through the Internet offers multisensory view part of the world. It serves as an effective means for people to communicate to each other in all parts of the world in just one click.

The theory of McLuhan truly makes sense in the current study for it proves that the technology evolves as in the case of the Learning Management Systems such as *Schoology*, which enables collaboration among individuals bringing them together in one high-tech community. This is entirely different from the traditional mode of learning that gives emphasis on rote memorization obtained from the lecture or "the chalk and talk" method. At present, learning focuses in the so called collaboration among students and teachers at any point in time and place.

On the other hand, Jeff Dun (2012) in his article entitled, "20 Surprising Stats About Technology Use in College," reported that with technology, the landscape of college education has done a complete turnaround. Gone are the days of notebooks, printed syllabi and textbooks. Now it's IPads, smartphones and ebooks. He revealed based from a sample size of 500 college students that 73 percent of them cannot study without technology while 70 percent use keyboards to take down notes. On the other hand, 38 percent of the students cannot go 10 minutes without checking their email, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Surprisingly, 91 percent of

the college students used email as a form of communication to their professors while 98 percent who own an ereader read etextbooks. Finally, 65 percent use digital devices to create presentations. It was also reported in 2009, students spent 13 billion U.S. dollars on electronics.

Similarly, the present research opens its doors to the use of tablets among the students to access the *Schoology* anytime, anywhere as manifested in their inclinations to internet and mobile technologies. The findings stated previously indicate the paradigm shift in terms of learning which is associated with the internet and digital media.

Digital natives are accustomed and exposed to the so-called emerging technologies that enable them to engage actively in the activities in the classroom and fully participate in a rapidly evolving information society.

While the old pedagogy of learning still exists, it could be noted that learning theories for the digital age are introduced by modern education scholars making the tasks of modern day teachers even more challenging. This could be the reason why the researcher aims to investigate the claim whether *Schoology* is effective or not in the teaching of business writing.

Prensky (2005) in his article entitled, "Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning," accentuated that teachers should prepare their students for their long-term future—as well as for tomorrow—while at the same time preserving the important legacy of the past. The way for teachers to succeed under such conditions is not to focus only on the changing technology, but rather to conceptualize learning in a new way, with adults and young people each taking on new and different roles from the past. Young people (students) need to focus on using new tools, finding information, making meaning, and creating. Adults (teachers) must focus on questioning, coaching and guiding, providing context, ensuring rigor and meaning and ensuring quality results. It could be implied from the insights provided by Prensky that educational success cannot be attained in the mere use of modern technologies but rather a more systematic and meaningful approach in the delivery of instruction is a requirement towards that end.

It was reported that the leading software and technical services provider, SunGard K-12 Education, has selected *Schoology* as its premier learning management solutions provider. The alliance pairs eSchoolPLUS's award-winning Teacher Access Center with *Schoology's* award-winning platform for managing instruction, communication, and collaboration (New Alliance Between Sungard K-12 Education and *Schoology* Allows the Teachers to Manage Classroom and Student Learning Experiences in Single Solution, 2014).

With these realities, it is the aim of this study to examine the potential of the LMS Schoology in achieving proficiency in Business Writing among college students so as to prepare them for global employment.

4. Methodology

4.1 Setting of the Study

The researcher chose Centro Escolar University, Gil Puyat Unit as the location of the research. It is because he is currently teaching in the said institution whereby giving him a lot of opportunities to explore and investigate thoroughly the effectiveness of *Schoology* in the teaching of Business Writing which is embedded in their Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes subject.

Centro Escolar University is located at 259 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City, Philippines. Formerly known as Centro Escolar de Señoritas, the institution saw its beginnings on June 3, 1907 when a group of civic-

spirited women under the leadership of Librada Avelino and Carmen de Luna worked towards the establishment of an adequate center of learning for Filipino women focused in teachings on ideal womanhood, intelligent citizenry and democratic leadership under the twin philosophy of "ciencia y virtud."

It was in 1930 when the school began to operate as a university. Because of the immediate need to cope with the difficulties of the times and the need to expand the school, the institution was converted into a corporation in 1932. Immediately after the death of Miss Avelino in November 1934, the school was reorganized and incorporated as Centro Escolar University, with Carmen de Luna elected as president by the Board of Directors.

Centro Escolar University has expanded its campuses to serve the needs of the students in the rural areas and to comply with the urban decongestion policy of the State. In 1954, a branch was established in Tambo, Paranaque, then still part of Rizal province.

The birth of CEU-Malolos came at a time when the national government was making educational opportunities available outside the heavily congested Metro Manila area. CEU Malolos at Km. 44 McArthur Highway, Malolos, Bulacan was established as the University's expansion site in June 1978.

CEU since them obtained a lot of prestige such as the accreditation of its college programs by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) and the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU), gaining for the University the distinction of having the highest number of accredited courses among private higher educational institutions in the country.

In the year 2005, two years before CEU's centennial celebration, the community witnessed the birth of a campus conveniently located at Sen. Gil Puyat Makati City. After two years of operation, CEU conceived a campus at Esteban Street, Legazpi Village, Makati City on 2007-2008. The CEU-Makati campuses were established to meet the growing demand for higher education from Metro Manila and from the Laguna populace and to continuously strengthen the expanding university services (Olaer et al., 2010).

4.2 Subjects of the Study

The students of Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology as well as the Associate in Arts in Preparatory Dentistry enrolled in Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes for the second semester, school year 2013-2014 served as the subjects of the study. Out of 135 total subjects, 87 or 64.44 percent belonged to the control group while the remaining 48 or 35.56 percent composed the experimental group. The said groups were comparable as indicated by the t-test result of "No Significant Differences" in their Midterm Grades as well as Pre-test results prior to the experimentation.

4.3 Method of Research

Of the various methods of research, the researcher has employed the experimental design. The said method attempts to maintain control over all factors that may affect the result of an experiment. In doing this, the researcher attempts to determine or predict what may occur (Experimental Research, 2014). Furthermore, the experimental is a blueprint of the procedure that enables the researcher to test his hypothesis by reaching valid conclusions about relationships between independent and dependent variables. It refers to the conceptual framework within which the experiment is conducted. In addition, the qualitative method was also utilized to provide supplementary discussions of the topic under study based from the interviews conducted among the subjects.

4.4 Data Gathering Instrument

Initially, the researcher has prepared a teacher-made test consisting of fifty (50) multiple choice- type questions with four options written in the English language about the business writing lessons stipulated in the syllabus of Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes made by the professors of the CEU International Languages Department.

The said test intended for pre-test and post-test was constructed using the Table of Specifications (TOS) with respect to Bloom's Taxonomy hierarchy which consists of Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating and Creating. Lastly, interviews were also conducted to most of the subjects to provide further discussions on the results of the study.

4.5 Validation of the Instrument

The researcher has requested experts in the field of English language teaching to perform the face and content validation of the 50-item teacher-made test. The researcher eventually examined the corrections as well as the suggestions made and given by the said experts and prepared another copy which was subjected for dry run among the non-participants composed of Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy students from Mendiola, Manila Campus of Centro Escolar University (CEU), Philippines. The results of the dry run administered among the 67 non-participants taking Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes were subjected for item analysis to determine which items will be retained, deleted or simply be revised. The results of the item analysis prompted the researcher to modify and delete some items. Of the original number of 50 questions from the test, it was reduced to 40 items. Thereafter, the researcher has come up with a final copy of the questionnaire and then administered it among the target respondents on two different occasions: one before the experimentation (pre-test) and the other one after the experimentation (post-test). The said experiment covered the entire Final Grading Period of the course, approximately 4 weeks.

4.6 Sampling Technique

The researcher opted to use the purposive sampling technique. As a result, he chose his respondents based on the so-called inclusion criteria. Hence, the following were observed in the selection of his samples:

1. The subjects must be enrolled in Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes under the researcher for the Second Semester, School Year 2013-2014.
2. The subjects must be in the Final Grading Period in the aforementioned subject where Business Writing lessons are discussed.
3. The subjects must create a *Schoology* account in the web. (Separate Guidelines for Registration will be given to the subjects prior to the start of the experimentation.)
4. The subjects must find time to visit their *Schoology* accounts for updates and activities given or assigned by the professor.

The above mentioned criteria must be met prior to the conduct of the said experiment.

4.7 Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher has prepared numerous activities in the form of written and online exercises for the respondents. In particular, the control group was only exposed to the traditional teaching using the textbook prescribed by the CEU International Languages Department as the main reference. Some handouts were also given to the group for them to study in line with the lessons in business writing which include business

correspondence, formal letters, letter layouts, memoranda and business reports. In addition, the researcher used pure lecture method in teaching the control group. On the other hand, the experimental group was required to visit *Schoology* regularly within the 3-week period of experimentation for them to obtain the presentations in *Powerpoint* about the lessons in Business Writing which were prepared and uploaded by the researcher himself. Several online exercises/activities were also developed to serve as drills/exercises for the students pertaining to business writing. Then, both the traditional and experimental groups were given series of graded written activities/quizzes involving various topics in the class during the 3-week period. The scores obtained by the subjects were accurately recorded which were subjected for statistical computations which yielded answers to the problems stated.

The data obtained from the subjects were tabulated and treated accordingly with the assistance of a statistician from the CEU Research and Development Office.

5. Results and Discussion

The study yielded the following findings:

Table 1. Midterm Grades and Pre-test Results of the Subjects

	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Midterm	1.3707*	.26099	1.46*	.282
Pre-test	27.46	4.722	26.27	4.721

*The grades obtained by the subjects are based from the university grading system found below:

Grade Point Equivalence	Remarks	Equivalence
1.00	Excellent	98-100
1.25-1.50	Superior	92-97
1.75-2.00	Very Satisfactory	86-91
2.25-2.50	Satisfactory	80-85
2.75	Fairly Satisfactory	77-79
3.00	Barely Satisfactory	75-76
5.00	Failed	74 and below

As viewed in Table 1, the control group obtained an average midterm grade of 1.37 with a standard deviation of .26099 while the experimental group garnered an average midterm grade of 1.46 and a standard deviation of .282. With regard to the results of the Pre-test, the control recorded a mean grade of 27.46 with a standard deviation of 4.722. Finally, the experimental group garnered a mean of 26.27 and a standard deviation of 4.721 for their pre-test. Analyzing the figures, it could be noted that the mean scores of the control groups for both Midterm Grades and Pre-tests are slightly higher compared to the experimental groups. The grades and scores were then compared.

Table 2. Comparison of the Control and Experimental Groups in the Midterm Grades and Pre-test Results

VI	Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value	Sig.
Midterm Grade-Control	1.3707	.26099			
Midterm Grade-Experimental	1.4635	.28242	-1.922	P = 0.057 > 0.05	NS
Pre-test-Control	27.46	4.722			
Pre-test-Experimental	26.27	4.721	1.401	P = 0.165 > 0.05	NS

Prior to the experimentation, the midterm grades of the subjects in Communication Skills 14- Writing Skills for Specific Purposes and pre-test results in Business Writing for both control and experimental groups were compared using t-test. As exhibited in Table 2, both control and experimental groups were initially comparable as indicated by the t-test results. In particular, the control and experimental groups for the midterm grades garnered a t-value of -1.922 with a P-value of 0.057 which is greater than 0.05 yielding no significant differences in their grades though. Hence, initially, both groups are truly comparable statistically.

As regards to their pre-test results, the scores of both control and experimental groups are likewise comparable as indicated by the t-value of 1.401 and a P-value of 0.165 which is also greater than 0.05 interpreted as no significant difference.

Due to the no significant differences recorded in their midterm grades and pre-test scores, it could be said that both groups therefore have established comparability prior to the experimentation. This means that there is no relationship existing between the midterm grades and pre-test scores of the subjects from the control and experimental groups. This implies that the subjects do perform uniformly in Communication Skills 14- Writing Skills for Specific Purposes.

Table 3. Performance of the Control and Experimental Groups in their Final Class Participation Grades, Final Examination Grades and Post-tests

	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Final Class Participation Grades	1.7615	.27992	2.042	.4072
Final Examination Grades	1.776	.3145	1.9115	.34398
Post-tests	30.85	4.360	30.46	4.959

As exhibited in Table 3, the control group garnered a mean grade a bit higher than the experimental group using *Schoology* in terms of Final Class Participation Grades after the several activities conducted in line with Business Writing. This was proven by the average grade of 1.7615 with a standard deviation of .27992 by the control group. On the other hand, the experimental group obtained a mean grade of 2.042 and a standard deviation of .4072. However, according to the university's grading system, both the control and

experimental groups have earned a "Very Satisfactory" performance in their grades in Final Class Participation.

With regard to the subjects' Final Examination Grades, similarly, the control group also showed a slight difference in terms of performance compared to the experimental group in their Final Examination Grades using *Schoology*. The experimental group only obtained a mean grade 1.9115 and a standard deviation of .34398. This is slightly lower compared to the mean grade obtained by the control group which is 1.776 and a standard deviation of .3145. Based from the grading system of the university, however, the grades of the subjects in the Final Examination are both considered "Very Satisfactory."

On the other hand, in terms of Post-test results, a slight difference in the grades obtained by the two groups was also recorded. The control group garnered a mean rating of 30.85 with a standard deviation of 4.360 while the experimental group obtained only a mean score of 30.46 and a standard deviation of 4.959.

A slight difference recorded in their mean grades in favor of the control group in their Final Class Participation, Final Examination and Post-test suggests that the subjects cannot depart entirely from the influence of traditional teaching as most of the respondents are still dependent on the direct instruction provided by the instructors in the classroom. Since Business Writing involves various topics which include business correspondence such as memoranda, application letters and resumes, business reports and the like that need more elaborate discussion and period of consultation, the assistance of the instructor is greatly needed. This finding coincides with the article published in the Education Portal which states that "Traditional classes may be a better choice for students who aren't very savvy with technology or who enjoy interacting with teachers and professors face-to-face."

Further, traditional method might have been preferred by most learners in the teaching of business writing compared to the modern methods of teaching such as the use of the LMS *Schoology* probably due to the kind of the topic being discussed. Writing in English, in particular, appears to be complicated for most Filipinos considering that English is just a second language for them. According to Paduraru (2014), some ESL students' social and cultural background prevents them from writing about subjects they consider taboo, like politics or religion. Students may also experience difficulties with form, morphology, vocabulary and syntax that are different in English and their native language. With regard to the college students who were involved in the study, some of them admitted that the lack of vocabulary hinders them from being independent thus relying so much from the instruction provided by the teachers face-to-face. They prefer elaborate discussions and step-by-step explanation of most lessons in Business Writing particularly the topics on application letters and resumes. Surprisingly, some respondents admitted that they failed to understand even the basics of business correspondence in their high school years. It is in college that they have understood how important to familiarize themselves on lessons such as parts of a business letter among others. In addition, according to the subjects interviewed, the heavy workload that they have in other subjects does not give them sufficient time to visit or open their *Schoology* account as often as possible. Another is the slow or unreliable Wi-Fi connection in the school where they attempt to connect during their free time. Lastly, the researcher has observed the presence of minimalist type of digital learners. Minimalists realize that technology is a part of today's world, and they try to engage with it minimally and only when they perceive it is necessary. They *Google* for information if they have to and purchase online only if they cannot do so in a local store. While they may have a *Facebook* account, they may check it only once a day or every couple of days. They will ask for directions to a friend's house instead of simply getting the address and looking it up on Google maps. If absolutely necessary, they will use *Skype* or a GPS system, but they are not eager to do so (http://www.zurinstitute.com/digital_divide.html).

However, since the differences recorded in the average grades of both control and experimental groups are not that enormous with regard to the subjects' Final Class Participation, Final Examination and Post-tests, it

can be concluded that *Schoology* also made an impact in the subjects' performance in Business Writing. In an interview with the subjects especially the so-called "highly motivated learners", they preferred the said LMS for it is very fast and accessible through its downloadable mobile application. Some of them are also categorized as "enthusiastic participants" type of digital learners. They make up most of the digital natives, enjoy and thrive on technology and gadgets. Further, they enjoy tweeting, all of them are online in some capacity (*YouTube*, watching TV shows or movies online, *Facebook*, surfing, etc.) all day long or as much as possible (http://www.zurinstitute.com/digital_divide.html). Moreover, the subjects revealed that using LMS made them more self-confident and responsible since the instructor does not tell exactly when the materials will be uploaded. Finally, according to them, the activities that they are assigned have encouraged them to think more critically and make appropriate decisions.

Thus, it can be concluded that the LMS *Schoology* in addition to the traditional method of teaching can help facilitate in enhancing the college students' proficiency in Business Writing.

Table 4. Comparison of the Control and Experimental Groups in their Final Class Participation Grades, Final Examination Grades and Post-tests

VI	Mean	S.D.	t-value	p-value	Sig.
Final Class Participation Grade-Control	1.7615	.27992	-4.246	P = 0.000 < 0.01	VS
Final Class Participation Grade-Experimental	2.0417	.40716			
Final Examination Grade-Control	1.776	.3145	-2.319	P = 0.022 < 0.05	S
Final Examination Grade-Experimental	1.911	.3440			
Post-test-Control	30.85	4.360	.476	P = 0.635 > 0.05	NS
Post-test-Experimental	30.46	4.959			

Table 4 shows the comparison of the Final Class Participation Grades, Final Examination Grades and Post-tests of the subjects after the experiment using t-test.

When compared statistically, the results revealed that there was a very significant difference in the Final Class Participation Grades of both groups as indicated by the t-value of -4.246 and a P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.01. It means that a change truly exists upon the conduct of the experimentation involving the traditional manner of teaching and the use of the LMS *Schoology*. In particular, the finding implies that the subjects find the traditional teaching more favorable than *Schoology* as indicated by the mean Final Class Participation Grade of 1.7615 with a standard deviation of .27992 of the control group which is slightly higher than that of the experimental group that garnered a mean of 2.0417 and a standard deviation of .40716.

Likewise, there was a significant difference recorded in the scores of the subjects in their Final Examination Grades. As seen in the table, the t-value obtained was -2.319 while the P-value was 0.022, a value less than .05. Since the control group obtained an average Final Examination Grade of 1.776 and a standard deviation

of .3145 a little higher compared to the experimental group which is 1.911 with a standard deviation of .3440, the result can suggest that the traditional method is more advantageous than the LMS *Schoology* in the teaching of Business Writing.

Finally, in terms of the Post-test results, it was noted that there was "No Significant Difference" that exists in both the experimental and control group in their scores. They both obtained a t-value of .476 and a P-value of 0.635 which is greater than 0.05. It only implies that neither the traditional nor the use of *Schoology* alone is effective in the teaching of Business Writing among college students. Further, it suggests that both methods may contribute to the subjects' performance in Business Writing. However, based from the data gathered, since the average Post-test (30.85) of the control group is slightly higher than the experimental group (30.46), it implies that the traditional teaching seems to be more favorable than the use of the LMS *Schoology* in the teaching of Business Writing.

As a whole, the traditional teaching appears to be more favorable than the use of LMS *Schoology* as in shown in the subjects' Final Class Participation, Final Examination and Post-Test results. Traditional teaching which includes lecturing is preferred by the students due to the following advantages: gives the instructor the chance to expose students to unpublished or not readily available material, allows the instructor to precisely determine the aims, content, organization, pace and direction of a presentation. (http://www.cirtl.net/node/2570). Furthermore, this supports the idea of Theroux (2002) as well as Johnson and Johnson (1991) that learning is chiefly associated within the classroom and is often competitive. The lesson's content and delivery are considered to be most important and students master knowledge through drill and practice (such as rote learning). Content need not be learned in context (http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/DLiT/2002/environs/scott/tradteac.htm).

However, despite the subjects' fondness towards the traditional method of teaching, the idea of blended learning such as the use of the LMS *Schoology* still exists as a means to achieve proficiency in Business Writing among the college students as evidenced by the performance of the experimental group not far from the control group in terms of their Final Class Participation Grade, Final Examination Grade and Post-test ratings. Blended learning is generally applied to the practice of using both online and in-person learning experiences when teaching students. In a blended-learning course, for example, students might attend a class taught by a teacher in a traditional classroom setting, while also independently completing online components of the course outside of the classroom (http://edglossary.org/blended-learning/). Despite the influx of modern technologies of the 21st century, some students are probably reluctant in the use of LMS such as *Schoology* due to issues like access to internet, stable connections, inadequate computer knowledge and skills, personal issues such as motivation, responsibility and the like.

Table 5. Comparison of the Control and Experimental Groups in their Pre-test and Post-test

		Mean	**S.D.**	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Sig**
Control Group	PRE-TEST	27.46	4.722	-7.669	P = 0.000 <0.01	VS
	POST-TEST	30.85	4.360			
Experimental Group	PRE-TEST	26.27	4.721	-7.097	P = 0.000 < 0.01	VS
	POST-TEST	30.46	4.959			

Table 5 shows the results of comparison between the pre-test and the post-test of both control and experimental groups. As exhibited therein, the control group as regards their pre-test and post-test yielded a t-value of -7.699 and a P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.01 verbally interpreted as "Very Significant".

Statistically speaking, a relationship truly exists between the pre-test and post-test in the control group. The results indicate that the use of *Schoology* may have contributed to the differences in their performance in business writing as shown in the marked increase of their ratings for pre-test and post-test. As reflected in the table, from the average score of 27.46 and a standard deviation of 4.722 in the pre-test, the control group garnered a mean score of 30.85 with a standard deviation of 4.360 in the post-test.

Correspondingly, there was a "Very Significant" difference in the Pre-test and Post-test ratings of the experimental group. The data evidently showed that the experimental group earned a t-value of -7.097 and a P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.01. The results clearly suggest as well that using *Schoology* might have contributed to the differences in their scores obtained in their Pre-test and Post-tests as supported by the increase of mean grades. From the pre-test of 26.27 and a standard deviation of 4.721, the experimental group obtained an average post-test of 30.46 and a standard deviation of 4.959.

Overall, the findings revealed that the LMS *Schoology* has shown a potential in enhancing the proficiency of college students in Business Writing as evidenced by the performance of the subjects from the control and experimental groups during their Pre-test and Post-test. The key advantage to using *Schoology* probably is the increase in engagement between the instructor and the students anytime and anywhere especially in their Business Writing lessons. *Schoology* engages students more in learning since both parties can send and reply to messages instantly made possible through the popular mobile gadgets such as laptops, mobile phones, tablets etc. Unlike the traditional method, *Schoology* enables the teachers to monitor the progress of their students even outside the classroom regularly thus establishing a more consistent performance in Business Writing. Innovative methods such as the use of the LMS *Schoology* are more student-centered giving more opportunities for the learners to explore more of their skills at their own pace beyond the walls of the classroom hence developing their creativity, resourcefulness and critical thinking skills among others which are pertinent to the 21st century skills.

Likewise, the results of the study showed that the majority of the subjects are still in the state of familiarizing themselves as regards the use of Learning Management Systems like *Schoology*. Though most of them are considered digital learners, they still need the direct assistance of the instructors as they make business correspondence hence preferring the traditional method of instruction.

Despite of this, the LMS *Schoology* has proven its potential in enhancing the proficiency in Business Writing among the students in college since the subjects in the experimental group had exhibited a performance not far from control group.

6. Conclusions

Based from the findings of the researcher, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The subjects from the control and experimental groups employed in the study have the same performance in Communication Skills 14-Writing Skills for Specific Purposes prior to the experimentation.
2. The traditional method of teaching (more specifically the lecture method) is more advantageous in the teaching of Business Writing among college students.
3. Blended learning (a combination of the traditional method and the use of the LMS *Schoology)* can contribute significantly in the enhancement of the Business Writing skills of the college students.
4. The use of the LMS *Schoology* can address the diverse needs of the modern day learners also known as the "digital natives" with regard to Business Writing. The interface and other features of the LMS similar to the social networking site *Facebook* capture the interest of the learners as compared to other learning management systems (LMS) available online.

5. *Schoology* is an effective means of teaching Business Writing among college students when used as a supplement to the traditional method.

7. Recommendations

With the findings and conclusions, the researcher hereby presents the following recommendations:

1. The teachers should attempt to apply blended learning (not pure online method) in the teaching of Business Writing as well as other topics in Communication Skills to further enhance the proficiency of the learners in communication particularly in writing.
2. The conduct of seminars, trainings or workshops about innovative teaching strategies involving the use of learning management systems (LMS) such as *Schoology* together with the guidelines of blended learning may be organized in various schools to help assist the teachers who are dealing with diverse types of learners in the 21st century.
3. Specific guidelines about the use of the LMS *Schoology* must be formulated by the teachers to ensure smooth implementation of the activities online vis a vis traditional teaching in their classes.
4. More materials (e.g. activities or exercises) on Business Writing intended for blended learning should be designed, developed and validated from time to time.
5. Future researchers may conduct studies involving more subjects from various courses along this line to investigate further the potential of the LMS *Schoology* in other academic subjects especially those that are considered intricate.

8. Acknowledgments

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