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## End-of-Class Hurdle on Sentences: Its Effect on the Writing Skills of Creative Nonfiction Learner

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This research aimed to assess the writing skills of Grade 12 Creative Nonfiction learners at Pili National High School through the implementation of Program ECHOS (End-of-Class Hurdled On Sentences) during the 2024–2025 school year. Specifically, the study investigated students' experiences during the execution of Program ECHOS and examined how the intervention contributed to enhancing their nonfiction writing abilities.

**Methodology:** A sequential explanatory mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative (1<sup>st</sup> phase) and qualitative (2<sup>nd</sup> phase) approaches, was employed to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. The quantitative component used a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The qualitative component involved Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and daily observation notes, which were analyzed using thematic analysis.

**Result:** Quantitative data revealed a significant improvement in students' writing performance, with the mean score increasing from 31.11 (SD = 15.748) before the implementation—rated as *poor*—to 86.84 (SD = 9.974) after the program, which falls under the *outstanding* category. Qualitative data further supported these findings, revealing that students had positive experiences with Program ECHOS. Learners reported that the program not only enhanced their writing skills but also cultivated a more positive and motivated attitude toward writing tasks.

**Conclusion:** Based on these results, the researcher recommends the continued implementation and enhancement of Program ECHOS, along with the integration of structured writing workshops, peer review sessions, and personalized feedback mechanisms. These strategies aim to further address the diverse needs and skill levels of creative nonfiction learners.

**Keywords:** Program ECHOS, Grade 12 Creative Nonfiction Learners, Writing Skills

### INTRODUCTION

Creative nonfiction, as part of the senior high school curriculum in the Philippines, is taught across multiple strands, including the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS). This genre integrates literary elements traditionally associated with fiction—such as narrative arcs, character development, and dialogue—to present true, factual stories in an engaging way. However, despite its appeal, many learners struggle to master the form. Estacio et al. (2018) found that the overall performance of students in creative nonfiction writing remained at an average level, with both male and female students demonstrating comparable but limited proficiency. One major concern highlighted was the lack of structured, quantitative writing instruction within classroom contexts.

Writing, one of the four macro skills in language learning (along with listening, speaking, and reading), demands more time and effort to develop compared to the others. In the Philippine educational system, where English is taught as a second language, writing is particularly emphasized as a demonstration of academic proficiency



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(Amihan & Sanchez, 2023). It reflects a student's level of abstraction, concept development, and linguistic command (Daulet, 2019). Nonetheless, writing remains one of the most difficult and complex skills to teach and learn.

Numerous studies underscore the ongoing difficulties students face in writing. A review by the Center for Educational Measurement, Inc. (2020) reported that learners often struggle with content development, coherence, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Many students also lack an understanding of appropriate tone, formality, and proper citation practices. Teachers in the Philippines echo these challenges. According to Paurillo (2019), senior high school students are familiar with basic writing concepts, but many still encounter problems with syntax, paraphrasing, and source attribution due to a lack of effective teaching tools and instructional support.

The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted students' academic development, particularly in writing. Merga and Malpique (2021) noted that educational interruptions had a profound effect on writing instruction, especially among disadvantaged learners. Reduced classroom interaction, unequal access to resources, and limited parental support contributed to these setbacks. Though some educators observed increased collaboration among institutions during the pandemic, the overall effect on students' writing growth was largely negative.

Even with the introduction of the K–12 Basic Education Curriculum, many learners continue to face academic writing challenges in subjects like English for Academic and Professional Purposes and Practical Research. Roxas (2020) argued that there remains a significant gap between the curriculum's expectations and students' actual performance.

At Pili National High School, this gap is particularly evident. Teachers have repeatedly expressed concern over the writing abilities of Grade 12 students, many of whom demonstrate weak communication skills in both spoken and written forms. During the 2022–2023 school year, around 70% of senior high school students struggled to write even basic essays, frequently misspelling words and producing poorly structured paragraphs. These deficiencies can lead to reduced self-confidence and vulnerability to peer criticism or bullying.

To address these persistent issues, the researcher developed a classroom-based intervention called Program ECHOS (End-of-Class Hurdle on Sentences). This strategy aligns with the Department of Education's Basic Education Research Agenda, specifically under the theme of formative assessment. The goal of Program ECHOS is to improve learners' writing skills through short, structured writing tasks conducted at the end of each class. Students respond to thematic prompts based on personal experiences, encouraging reflective and experiential writing.

The intervention is rooted in Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) by David Kolb (1984/2014), which posits that knowledge is constructed through the transformation of lived experience. ELT moves beyond "learning by doing" by emphasizing intentional reflection as a means of deep learning. Writing tasks under Program ECHOS are designed to transform students' experiences into written expression, thereby building both technical skill and personal voice (Stoller et al., 2017; Boston University Teaching Writing, 2021).

Thus, this action research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of Program ECHOS as an intervention for improving the creative nonfiction writing skills of Grade 12 HUMSS learners at Pili National High School.

## Objectives

This study aimed to assess the impact of Program ECHOS (End-of-Class Hurdle on Sentences) on the nonfiction writing skills of Grade 12 HUMSS learners at Pili National High School, Schools Division of Iloilo, for the School Year 2024–2025.

Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of writing skills among Grade 12 Creative Nonfiction learners of Pili National High School before the implementation of Program ECHOS?
2. What are the learning experiences of the Grade 12 HUMSS learners during the implementation of Program ECHOS?
3. How can Program ECHOS be used to improve the nonfiction writing skills of the Grade 12 HUMSS learners?
4. What actions should be undertaken following the conduct of the study?



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## Methods

### Research Design

A sequential explanatory mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative (1<sup>st</sup> phase) and qualitative (2<sup>nd</sup> phase) approaches, was employed to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. The quantitative component used a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. The qualitative component involved Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and daily observation notes.

Quantitative research focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and identify relationships between variables. In this study, it was used to analyze the mean percentage scores from teacher-made questionnaires. Qualitative research, on the other hand, explores subjective experiences through non-numerical data such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and written documents (Amihan, et al., 2023). It aims to provide rich, detailed insights into participants' lived experiences and the meanings they ascribe to them (Creswell, 2014).

### Population and Sampling

The study involved 37 Grade 12 students enrolled in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand at Pili National High School, Fifth District, Schools Division of Iloilo, during the 2024–2025 school year. Of these, 14 were male and 23 were female, all officially listed in the Learner Information System.

For the qualitative component, participants were purposefully selected based on their active enrollment in the Creative Nonfiction course and consistent class attendance. Purposive sampling, as defined by Nikolopoulou (2022), is a non-probability method that intentionally selects individuals based on characteristics relevant to the research objectives.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select six participants for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD): three students with high scores and three with low scores. Additionally, the researcher maintained daily observation notes throughout the intervention period. With three years of experience teaching Creative Nonfiction, the researcher provided contextual and informed insights into the learners' progress and writing development.

### Instruments

The researcher employed a researcher-made instrument/rubric, which underwent validity testing by three professional experts. In addition to the written assessments which were analyzed through a rubric, the researcher used Focus Group Discussions (FGD) guide to gather qualitative data regarding the participants' learning experiences.

### Data Collection

Prior to implementation, approval and permits were secured from the School Head and Department of Education Region VI. Data collection was carried out across six weeks, with classes conducted three times per week—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The intervention began with a pre-test, where students were tasked to write a four-paragraph composition titled "Life", based on personal experience. Each paragraph required a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. The same prompt and structure were used for the post-test.

Throughout the intervention, learners participated in Program ECHOS, where they wrote one-paragraph reflections at the end of each class on teacher-assigned themes. These paragraphs were evaluated regularly using the rubric, and feedback was provided promptly. Motivational incentives were given to encourage engagement and effort.

In addition to written outputs, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with a sample of five students to explore their personal experiences during the intervention. The FGDs focused on two guiding questions:

1. What were your learning experiences during the implementation of Program ECHOS?
2. In what ways did Program ECHOS help improve your writing?

### Data Analyses

Scores from the pre-test and post-test were encoded using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2.2. Mean percentage scoring was used to determine and describe the level of writing competence. The classification scale used is outlined below:

Table 1. Writing Skill Level Scale





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Score Range      Writing Skill Level

81–100    Outstanding

61–80    Very Satisfactory

41–60    Average

21–40    Poor

0–20    Needs Improvement

Data from the FGDs and observation notes were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that involves identifying recurring patterns or themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a flexible qualitative method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning within data.

### Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical conduct of the study, several key steps were taken. First, approval was secured from relevant authorities, including the school principal, before conducting the research at Pili National High School. Next, informed consent was obtained from all participants and their parents or guardians, who were fully briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks or benefits. Furthermore, to protect participants' privacy, personal identifiers such as names were excluded from the data, and all collected information was kept confidential and securely stored, accessible only to the researcher. In addition, all materials used were properly attributed, with full citations included in the References section. Overall, these ethical measures—including informed consent, confidentiality, and proper citation—ensured that the study upheld high ethical standards, thereby protecting participants' rights and strengthening the integrity and credibility of the research.

### Results and Discussion

This section of the study presents the findings from the 15 sessions (spanning six weeks) of the intervention during the Creative Nonfiction class. Since Creative Nonfiction is offered in Senior High School, the class schedule varies, and the intervention was carried out on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for six weeks.

#### The Level of Creative Writing Skills of Grade 12 Creative Non-Fiction Learners under Project ECHOS Before and After the intervention integration

After administering the post-test, the participants' scores were tallied, summarized, and analyzed using computer-assisted software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The mean percentage scoring was used to describe the level of writing skills of the Grade 12 HUMSS students, as shown in the table below.

**Table 1.** The level of Creative Writing Skills of Grade 12 Creative Non-Fiction Learners under Project ECHOS Before and After the intervention integration

	N	Mean	SD	Description
<b>Pre- test</b>	37	31.11	15.748	Poor
<b>Post- test</b>	37	86.84	9.974	Outstanding

*Legend: Outstanding (81-100)    Very Satisfactory (61-80)    Average (41-60)    Poor (21-40)    Needs Improvement (0-20)*

The table shows that before the intervention, the creative writing skills of the Grade 12 Creative Nonfiction learners were categorized as "Poor," with a mean percentage of 31.11 and a standard deviation of 15.748. After the intervention, their writing skills significantly improved, with a mean percentage of 86.84 and a standard deviation of 9.974, which falls under the "Outstanding" category. This indicates that Program ECHOS effectively enhanced and developed the students' writing skills, particularly in creative nonfiction, with proper and intensive guidance.

This finding aligns with the study by Dyan (2010), which showed that guided writing can significantly improve students' writing abilities. The study found that through guided writing, students became more engaged, constructed sentences correctly, and expanded their vocabulary, demonstrating that such an approach is beneficial for improving writing skills. Also, Arif and Sukarno (2020) found that project-based learning significantly improved students' writing skills, including content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. This study employed project-based learning (PjBL) to enhance narrative writing skills among eighth-grade students. The



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research utilized a classroom action research method across two cycles, collecting data through qualitative observations and interviews, as well as quantitative pre- and post-test writing assessments. Findings indicated significant improvements in students' writing skills, including content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. These results underscore the effectiveness of PjBL in fostering active student involvement and peer feedback, which are integral elements of Program ECHOS

## The Learning Experiences of Grade 12 HUMSS Learners During the Implementation of Program ECHOS

Feedback from participants, gathered through formal conversations and structured feedback forms, revealed mixed reactions. While many students reported improvements in literacy skills and increased confidence, some expressed challenges or dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the intervention. During the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), all participants agreed that Program ECHOS was beneficial in enhancing their vocabulary and writing skills. They all provided positive feedback on the program's implementation. A study by Sasmita and Gurning (2012) examined the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to improve students' writing achievements. Conducted with 36 eighth-grade students, the research utilized classroom action research over two cycles. The findings indicated that students' writing achievements improved with each cycle, suggesting that FGDs can be effective in enhancing writing skills. Moreover, a cross-linguistic study published by Lu et al. (2024) explored the effects of writing feedback literacies on feedback engagement and writing performance. The research highlighted that students' ability to engage with and utilize feedback positively influenced their writing performance. This underscores the importance of developing feedback literacies to enhance writing skills. These studies collectively support the notion that structured discussions and effective feedback mechanisms can significantly improve literacy and writing skills, corroborating the positive outcomes observed in Program ECHOS.

However, despite the program's benefits, students faced challenges such as time limitations, insufficient vocabulary, and difficulty with sentence construction. Some students reflected that while the program was enjoyable, it could also be overwhelming, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*"During the implementation of Program ECHOS, I definitely learned new things about writing. I discovered areas I still need to improve on, such as spelling. I remember laughing when I got my paper back and saw words I had misspelled. Overall, Program ECHOS helped me improve my writing techniques, which I can now apply to my current novel."*

*"At first, writing an essay was really hard for me. The task felt huge, and I had trouble organizing my thoughts. If I had to choose between writing an essay or solving a Math problem, I would have chosen Math. But when our teacher introduced Program ECHOS, I realized that writing an essay is a step-by-step process. I found it helpful to outline before writing. With more practice, I became more comfortable with writing. I also learned that it's okay to make mistakes and that revising is a normal part of the process. Now, I see writing as a way to express my hidden thoughts and ideas."*

*"Writing an essay is beneficial because it helps me improve my writing skills. It also allows me to express my feelings and thoughts in specific situations. Writing has become a form of comfort, helping me express the unsaid thoughts I've been hiding. During Program ECHOS, I continued improving my writing skills, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. It was difficult at times because I couldn't always express myself clearly, but I found it fun."*

Early observations showed varying levels of student engagement. Some students were eager and responsive, while others seemed reluctant or disinterested, particularly at the beginning when they found essay writing difficult. This was evident in the pre-test results, where many participants failed to finish on time and constructed only one paragraph, falling short of the required number. Overall, their writing skills needed improvement. Learners showed improved writing through error correction and journal writing practices that supported their ability to self-correct and reflect on their learning. Her action research focused on enhancing writing skills through error correction and journal writing. The study revealed that learners significantly improved their writing through error correction, self-correction practices, and journal writing. Furthermore, it was found that error



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correction collaboratively helps learners understand common writing errors and gives them the opportunity to fix these errors before they become ingrained, while journal writing encourages their metacognitive skills and nurtures their self-awareness regarding self-correction skills (Delibas, 2023).

However, positive changes were observed as the program progressed. Students became more engaged and their literacy skills visibly improved, as reported in preliminary assessments. They looked forward to receiving feedback on their work and actively incorporated corrections and suggestions in subsequent assignments. Despite varying levels of prior knowledge, students made noticeable progress thanks to consistent support, regular feedback, and guidance from the teacher/researcher. Zaber (2023) and Carvajal, et al. (2025) emphasized that detailed and personalized teacher feedback significantly improves students' writing proficiency. His study explored the effectiveness of various forms of instructor feedback, including written, oral, and peer feedback, on students' writing proficiency. The results indicated that written comments were the most effective form of feedback for enhancing students' writing ability. However, the study also identified shortcomings in the feedback provided by instructors, such as a lack of pertinent and actionable criticism and insufficient attention to each student's unique writing process. These findings emphasize the need for more efficient feedback techniques that prioritize the needs of students and provide specific and relevant feedback that addresses the strengths and weaknesses of each student's writing, as well as considering their individual writing processes.

How Program ECHOS Can Improve Creative Nonfiction Writing Skills of Grade 12 HUMSS Learners

The post-test results showed a significant improvement in the students' writing skills, moving from a "Poor" level to an "Outstanding" level. This demonstrates that Program ECHOS can effectively improve the writing skills of Grade 12 HUMSS learners. The success of the program hinges on careful preparation, including topic planning and equipping students with the necessary knowledge on paragraph writing techniques, as well as consistent delivery and feedback of written outputs. Atwell (2014) emphasizes the importance of writing workshops in developing students' writing abilities. She advocates for environments that provide extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing—elements that mirror the structure of Program ECHOS. Implementing such a workshop approach can lead to improvements in student confidence and writing ability across various genres, including creative nonfiction. Learners also showed improved writing through error correction and journal writing practices that supported their ability to self-correct and reflect on their learning. Her study implemented a writer's workshop approach to teach the writing process, focusing on improving students' grammatical and mechanical skills. The findings highlighted the advantages of establishing workshops regarding time, ownership, feedback, and community. The study emphasized that student writing improves with practice and that the workshop format provides ample time for students to write, offering opportunities to explore genres and themes and experiment with organization, voice, and sentence choices. This approach increased students' involvement in their learning and led them to higher performance (Meisani 2022).

However, the study also highlighted several logistical challenges, such as scheduling conflicts and holidays, which affected the consistency of program implementation and feedback. These challenges need to be addressed through careful planning and the development of contingency strategies to minimize disruptions and ensure the integrity of the study.

In addition to the result, to help bridge and to continuously implement the research intervention and strategic processes as well as the recommendations, the following action plan was implemented:

Activities	Purpose	Persons Involved	Time Frame
School Learning Action Cell	To develop a habit of partaking personalized and innovative instructional materials.	Teachers	October 2024
School Reorientation	To encourage teachers to adopt Program ECHOS as one of their interventions in improving the writing skills of the students.	School Head Teachers, Learners, Parents	October 2024
	To renew awareness about the following:		





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	(a) the value of writing on present and future lives of the learners;(b) teachers and parents/guardians must work hand in hand in enhancing students writing skills.		
Parents Involvement	To convene with parents that they must give sufficient time when their children have writing task at home.	School Head Teachers, Parents	October 2024
Stakeholders Linkages	To launch and commence a strong partnership association to have their support in the literacy program of the school	School Head Teachers, External Stakeholders	November 2024
District Learning Action Cell	To present the planning, implementation of intervention, and result of the study.  To encourage teacher-researchers the use of the intervention in their classes.  To encourage teacher-researchers to conduct action research similar in nature.	Public School District Supervisor, District and School English Coordinators	November – December 2024
District Write Shop	To organize committees in creating manuals related to enhancing learners' writing skills.	Public School District Supervisor, District and School English Coordinators	November – December 2024
Congressional Action Research Presentation	To present the planning, implementation of intervention, and result of the study.  To encourage teacher-researchers the use of the intervention in their classes.  To encourage teacher-researchers to conduct action research similar in nature	Master Teacher, District Research Coordinators	January – April 2025
Division Action Research Presentation	To present the planning, implementation of intervention, and result of the study.  To encourage teacher-researchers the use of the intervention in their classes.  To encourage teacher-researchers to conduct action research similar in nature	Selected Public Schools District  Supervisors and School Heads, Master Teachers, Research Coordinators	January – April 2025

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there is a clear and pressing need for targeted and multifaceted interventions to strengthen the nonfiction writing skills of Grade 12 HUMSS learners. While the students demonstrated enthusiasm and potential, many struggled with key areas such as argumentation, coherence,



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and self-editing—indicating that a focused, comprehensive instructional approach is essential. The implementation of Program ECHOS proved to be highly effective in addressing these issues, as evidenced by the significant improvement in the learners' writing performance. The increase in mean percentage scores from the pre-test to the post-test highlights the program's positive impact on students' writing competence.

Furthermore, thematic analysis revealed that Program ECHOS not only improved students' technical writing skills but also transformed their attitudes toward writing. Initially viewed as a challenging and burdensome task, writing eventually became an enjoyable and even therapeutic activity for many learners. Some students expressed a newfound love for writing and recognized it as a powerful means of self-expression.

The success of Program ECHOS was also linked to the use of specific instructional strategies such as peer reviews and personalized feedback. These strategies played a crucial role in boosting students' confidence and refining the quality of their written outputs. However, sustaining these gains will require continuous support and the regular adaptation of teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of learners.

Ultimately, the study underscores the value of adopting a holistic approach to writing instruction. By continuously refining teaching strategies and maintaining a learner-centered focus, educators can foster meaningful academic progress and promote long-term success in writing among senior high school students.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

To begin with, it is highly recommended that a pre-intervention writing workshop be implemented. This preparatory step would focus on building students' foundational writing skills—particularly in areas such as vocabulary enhancement, spelling accuracy, punctuation, and proofreading. Strengthening these basic competencies will better equip learners to engage with the more advanced writing tasks presented during the implementation of Program ECHOS.

Moreover, to sustain the gains observed during the intervention, schools are encouraged to incorporate ongoing, targeted writing exercises and regular feedback sessions beyond the six-week duration of the program. These continued practices will help learners consistently refine their grammar, diction, and overall writing proficiency, ensuring long-term improvement and mastery.

In addition, to expand the reach of the program and maximize its impact, it is suggested that the District English Coordinator and Public District Supervisor formally recognize and endorse Program ECHOS for integration into English instruction across schools in the District of Ajuy. Given the program's proven success and the positive feedback from participants, its wider implementation could benefit more students struggling with nonfiction writing.

Furthermore, to support continuous literacy development, it is advisable for teachers and researchers to conduct further action research of a similar nature. Replicating this study in different settings will not only validate the effectiveness of Program ECHOS but may also generate new insights and innovations that can be adapted to different learner profiles.

Lastly, to ensure that all learners benefit from writing instruction, the adoption of personalized and differentiated teaching strategies is highly encouraged. Tailoring instruction to the unique needs and abilities of individual students will help address learning gaps more effectively and foster greater student engagement and confidence in writing.

By taking these steps, educators and administrators can build on the successes of Program ECHOS and work collaboratively to improve literacy outcomes for senior high school learners across the district and beyond.

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