Original Article

Challenges in Writing Formal English Letters among Native Filipino Speakers

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Abstract: *This study used descriptive research design with survey checklist as the main instrument to gather the required data. There are 40 native filipino speakers as respondents. The study explores the challenges experience by the respondents in writing formal English letters. Based from the findings, it concludes that the respondents, who primarily use Tagalog, find grammar challenging when writing formal English letters as a native Filipino speaker, but find vocabulary limitations, sentence structure, and cultural nuances slightly challenging.*

Keywords: *English Letters, Native Filipino Speakers.*

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Easterly, Myers, Lutz and Place (2022) formal English written communication plays a crucial role in academic, professional, and personal contexts. For native Filipino speakers, navigating the intricacies of formal English writing can present unique challenges. The need for this study arises from the fact that while the Philippines has a thriving English-speaking population, formal English writing skills often lag behind spoken proficiency. Limited exposure to formal English models and unfamiliarity with specific writing conventions can hinder Filipino students' success in academic and professional environments (Banda, 2017). Understanding the underlying challenges faced by Filipino speakers is crucial for developing effective instructional approaches and resources to equip them with the necessary writing skills. The Philippines has a thriving English-speaking population, yet formal English writing skills often lag behind spoken proficiency (Santos, Fernandez, & Ilustre, 2022).

Limited exposure to formal English models and unfamiliarity with specific writing conventions can hinder Filipino students' success in academic and professional writing (Lobo, 2023). Understanding the underlying challenges faced by Filipino speakers is crucial for developing effective instructional approaches and resources to equip them with the necessary writing skills (Delos Reyes, Tongkoh, & Chavez, 2023). The research will delve into the specific areas of grammar, vocabulary limitations, sentence structure and clarity, and cultural nuances and tone to gain a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties faced by Filipino students in writing formal English letters. This research aims to investigate the specific difficulties encountered by Filipino students when composing formal English letters. The study will focus on four key areas: grammar, vocabulary limitations, sentence structure and clarity, and cultural nuances and tone.

II. METHODS

The study used descriptive research design where survey checklist is the main instrument in gathering data. Convenience sampling was employed. There 40 students from a State University Iba Zambales that served as the respondents of the study. The study focused on the challenges that students experiences in writing formal English language documents in terms of grammar, vocabulary limitations, sentence structure and clarity, and nuances and tome.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Profile of the Respondents

The table presents the primary used language and language used outside amongst the students respondents.

Table 1: Primary Language Used and Language Used Outside among Respondents

Profile		Frequency	Percentage
Primary Used Language	English	0	0
	Tagalog	33	83
	Zambal	3	7

	Ilokano	4	10
Common Language Used Outside	English	0	0
	Tagalog	40	100
	Zambal	0	0
	Ilokano	0	0

a) Primary Used Language:

Based from the table, it revealed that almost all the respondents used Tagalog as their primary used language evident from the highest frequency of 33 or 83%.

b) Common Langauge Used Outside:

Based from the table, it revealed that all the residents used Tagalog as the language they commonly used outside evident from the frequency of 40 or 100%.

B. Challenges in Writing Formal English Letters (Native Filipino Speakers)

Table 2: Challenges in Writing Formal English Letters among Native Filipino Speakers in terms of Grammar

Statement	Mean	Verbal Description	Rank
1. I often struggle to use the correct verb tense in formal English letters.	2.32	Slightly Challenging	6
2. Ensuring proper subject-verb agreement in my writing is a challenge for me.	2.42	Slightly Challenging	4
3. Constructing complex sentences with correct grammatical structure feels difficult.	2.37	Slightly Challenging	5
4. Distinguishing between countable and uncountable nouns in English writing is confusing.	2.47	Slightly Challenging	3
5. I sometimes use incorrect sentence structures in formal English letters.	2.58	Challenging	1
6. Revising my writing to eliminate grammatical errors is time-consuming.	2.53	Challenging	2
Total	**2.45**	Slightly Challenging	

The table revealed that it is challenging for the student respondents to write formal English letters it terms of grammar because they sometimes used incorrect sentence structures evident from the highest mean of 2.58. However, it is only slightly challenging about the use of correct verb tense in formal English letters evident from the lowest mean of 2.32. Overall, writing formal English letters for them in terms of grammar is slightly challenging evident from the overall mean of 2.45.

Table 3: Challenges in Writing Formal English Letters among Native Filipino Speakers in terms of Vocabulary Limitations

Statements	Mean	Verbal Description	Rank
1. My knowledge of formal English vocabulary is limited compared to Tagalog.	2.53	Challenging	3.5
2. Finding the right words to express specific meanings in formal English is challenging.	2.58	Challenging	2
3. I often rely on informal Tagalog expressions that sound unprofessional in formal letters.	2.63	Challenging	1
4. Choosing appropriate synonyms for Filipino words in English can be difficult.	2.53	Challenging	3.5
5. Understanding the nuances of meaning in formal English vocabulary can be confusing.	2.37	Slightly Challenging	6
6. I struggle to avoid using Tagalog loanwords in my formal English writing.	2.43	Slightly Challenging	5
Total	**2.51**	Challenging	

The table revealed that it is challenging for the student respondents to write formal English letters it terms of vocabulary limitations because they often rely on informal Tagalog expressions that sound unprofessional in formal letters evident from the highest mean of 2.63. However, it is only slightly challenging in understanding the confusing meanings of formal English vocabularies evident from the lowest mean of 2.37. Overall, writing formal English letters for them in terms of vocabulary limitations is challenging evident from the overall mean of 2.51.

Table 4: Challenges in Writing Formal English Letters among Native Filipino Speakers in terms of Sentence Structure and Clarity

Statements	Mean	Verbal Description	Rank
1. I find it difficult to write complex and coherent sentences in formal English.	2.20	Slightly Challenging	6
2. Organizing my ideas in a logical and clear manner in formal writing is challenging.	2.26	Slightly Challenging	4
3. My sentences in formal letters are often short and fragmented.	2.47	Slightly Challenging	1
4. Ensuring clarity and avoiding ambiguity in my writing is a struggle.	2.37	Slightly Challenging	2
5. Conveying ideas concisely without unnecessary elaboration is difficult for me.	2.37	Slightly Challenging	3
6. Revising my writing to improve sentence flow and clarity is time-consuming.	2.21	Slightly Challenging	5
Total	**2.32**	Slightly Challenging	

The table revealed that it is slightly challenging for the student respondents to write formal English letters in terms of sentence structure and clarity because they often write short and fragmented sentences for formal letters evident from the highest mean of 2.47. Further, it is also slightly challenging writing complex and coherent sentences in formal English evident from the lowest mean of 2.20. Overall, writing formal English letters for them in terms of sentence structure and clarity is challenging evident from the overall mean of 2.32.

Table 5: Challenges in Writing Formal English Letters among Native Filipino Speakers in terms of Cultural Nuances and Tone

Statements	Mean	Verbal Description	Rank
1. Maintaining a consistently formal tone throughout a letter feels unnatural for me.	2.16	Slightly Challenging	6
2. Adjusting the level of formality based on the context and audience is challenging.	2.37	Slightly Challenging	5
3. Expressing respect and courtesy in formal English writing feels different than in Filipino.	2.32	Slightly Challenging	4
4. Western-style formal communication norms feel unfamiliar and difficult to adapt to.	2.58	Challenging	1
5. I worry about misinterpreting the formality and politeness expectations of my audience.	2.57	Challenging	2
6. Using idioms or metaphors specific to Filipino culture can be confusing in formal English settings.	2.47	Slightly Challenging	3
Total	**2.41**	Slightly Challenging	

The table revealed that it is challenging for the student respondents to write formal English letters in terms of cultural nuances and tone because Western-style formal communication norms feel unfamiliar and difficult to adapt to evident from the highest mean of 2.58. However, it is only slightly challenging maintaining a consistently formal tone throughout a letter feels evident from the lowest mean of 2.16. Overall, writing formal English letters for them in terms of cultural nuances and tone is challenging evident from the overall mean of 2.41.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based from the results, therefore it concludes the following;
1. All of the respondents use tagalog as primary and common used language.
2. They perceived that grammar is the most challenging when writing formal English letters as a native Filipino speaker. However, they only feel slightly challenging about vocabulary limitations, sentence structure and clarity, and cultural nuances and tone.

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