Investigating the Impacts of IQ-Write Online Writing Program toward ESL Students’ Attitude and Interest in Learning Academic Writing

NORIAH ISMAIL, SUPYAN HUSSIN, AND SAADIYAH DARUS
The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies

www.thesocialsciences.com
ISSN (Print) 2327-011X
ISSN (Online) 2327-2570
doi:10.18848/2327-011X/CGP

First published in 2016 in Champaign, Illinois, USA by Common Ground Publishing
www.commongroundpublishing.com

The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies is a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal.

Editor
Gerassimos Kouzelis, University of Athens, Greece

Community Editor
Caitlyn Schmid, Common Ground Publishing

Advisory Board
Patrick Baert, Cambridge University, UK
Andrea Bubic, University of Split, Croatia
Norma Burgess, Syracuse University, USA
Hillel Goelman, University of British Columbia, Canada
Peter Harvey, Flinders University, South Australia
Vangelis Intzidis, University of the Aegean, Greece
Paul James, University of Western Sydney, Australia
Ivana Batarelo Kokie, University of Split, Croatia
Gerassimos Kouzelis, University of Athens, Greece
Alexandros-Andreas Kyrtsis, University of Athens, Greece
Massimo Leone, University of Turin, Italy
José Luis Ortega Martín, Universidad de Granada, Spain
Francisco Fernandez Palomares, Universidad de Granada, Spain
Constantine D. Skordoulis, University of Athens, Greece
Sanja Stanić, University of Split, Croatia

Associate Editors
Articles published in The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies are peer reviewed by scholars who are active participants of the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Knowledge Community or a thematically related Knowledge Community. This engagement with the Knowledge Community, as well as Common Ground Publishing’s criterion-referenced evaluation system, distinguishes our peer-review process.

In recognition of the valuable feedback and publication recommendations that they provide, reviewers are acknowledged as Associate Editors in the volume that includes the article(s) they have reviewed. The Associate Editors listed in the following link have contributed significantly to the overall editorial quality and content of the journal:
www.thesocialsciences.com/journals/editors.

Article Submission
The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies publishes quarterly (March, June, September, December). Please visit www.thesocialsciences.com/journals/call-for-articles to find out more about the submission process.

Knowledge Community Membership
Authors in The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies are members of the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Knowledge Community or a thematically related Knowledge Community. Members receive access to journal content. Please visit www.thesocialsciences.com/about/become-a-member to find out more about community membership.

Abstracting and Indexing
For a full list of databases in which this journal is indexed, please visit www.thesocialsciences.com/journals/collection.

Our Model
We are working to change the way in which knowledge is valued. Rather than focusing solely on acceptance rates and citation counts—standards that are seriously fraught—we measure quality by a criterion-based peer-review process, assessing the intellectual excellence and accessibility of the work against clearly articulated disciplinary standards. Please visit www.thesocialsciences.com/journals/model to find out more.

Subscriptions
The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies is available in electronic and print formats. Subscribe to gain access to content from the current year and the entire backlist. Contact us at cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com.

Ordering
Single articles and issues are available from the journal bookstore at www.ijiest.cgpublisher.com.

Hybrid Open Access
By publishing in The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies, authors have made their articles available to a large number of scholars who have individual subscriptions or whose institutions subscribe. The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies is Hybrid Open Access, meaning authors can also choose to make their articles open access. This allows their work to reach an even wider audience, broadening the dissemination of their research and potentially increasing the incidence of other scholars citing their work. Please visit www.thesocialsciences.com/journals/hybrid-open-access to find out more about our Open Access option.

Disclaimer
The authors, editors, and publisher will not accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may have been made in this publication. The publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

Copyright and Copying
© 2016 (individual papers), the author(s) Common Ground Publishing

All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism, or review, as permitted under the applicable copyright legislation, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com.

Common Ground Publishing is a member of crossRef.
Investigating the Impacts of IQ-Write Online Writing Program toward ESL Students’ Attitude and Interest in Learning Academic Writing

Noriah Ismail, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
Supyan Hussin, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
Saadiyah Darus, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract: The study investigates the use of an online writing program known as IQ-Write program designed to help ESL students learn academic writing. This case study was conducted for a period of eight weeks among eighteen ESL Tertiary level students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Johor. The students were taking an ESL English proficiency course which includes an academic writing module. IQ-Write program is a supplementary online writing program which was developed based on the target students’ writing needs analysis. The program which contains an eight-unit online academic writing module uses the Learning Management System known as EDU 2.0. The research tools include a set of survey questionnaires, students’ interview questions, and a reflective journal. The findings indicate that the IQ-Write program helped to change the students’ perspective and negative attitude toward learning academic writing. Moreover, the program also enhanced the students’ interest toward writing academic essays which helped them to improve their academic writing ability.

Keywords: ESL, Academic Writing, Writing Attitude, Writing Interest, Writing Ability, e-Learning, Online Learning, Online Writing Program

Introduction

In the context of education, online learning is rapidly growing in demand. This is due to the greater awareness of the importance of online learning for higher education. Cotterall (2004) claims that as more and more tertiary learners come with some knowledge in IT or technology, most traditional institutions struggle to implement a more advanced set of learning modules to accurately and successfully satisfy these unique educational needs. While not negating the importance in offering a quality classroom-based writing instruction, often some learning institutions can be governed by the mindset that believes that unless a student is sitting in front of a live writing instructor, he or she is not learning.

It takes a concerted effort on behalf of some writing instructors to break from the traditional mode of teaching and the familiar practice of spoon feeding the students with all the contents which then limit their thinking ability (Cotterall 2004; Yang 2010; Ismail, Safinas Albakri, and Mustapha 2014). A striking problem that needs to be looked into is that some ESL teachers tend to put aside the importance of students’ engagement and interest towards their writing activities and tasks (Peng 2010). Chuo (2007) reveals that one of the most prominent problems affecting students’ success in college academic compositions besides language areas difficulties are the students’ attitude towards their academic writing tasks. Studies found that many ESL tertiary level students view the academic writing instruction they received to be uninteresting and this leads to their lack of interest and negative attitudes toward the course (Nor AslahAdzmi 2009; Ismail, Singh, Elias, and Albakri 2015).

Review of Relevant Literature

The poor writing ability among ESL tertiary level students in Malaysia have been reported in various studies (AslahAdzmi, 2009; Ismail, Elias, Albakri, Perumal, and Muthusamy 2010). Recent studies conducted among students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for instance...
indicated that even though UiTM students are taught to write academic essays starting from the first semester, most students are unable to produce satisfactory academic essays and this has resulted in poor grades in English (Choo 2001; AslahAdzmi 2009; Ismail, Darus, and Supyan Hussin 2012; Ismail, Yoke, and Ismail 2015). Furthermore, the need to improve the students’ writing skill is even more profound as UiTM has the largest number of students compared to the other higher learning institutions in Malaysia with currently more than 100,000 students being enrolled every year. This is so as the university is the largest public university in Malaysia which consists of more than thirty campuses all over Malaysia.

A striking problem that needs to be looked into is that some ESL teachers tend to put aside the importance of students’ engagement and interest toward their writing activities and tasks. Studies reveal that one of the most prominent problems affecting students’ success in college academic compositions besides language areas difficulties are the students’ attitude towards their academic writing tasks (Ismail, Ismail, and Albakri, 2009; Chuo 2007). Presently, many ESL students view academic writing instructions to be dull and ineffective and are not interested to learn to write academic essays in class. This lack of interest as well as their negative attitude toward academic writing instruction has inhibited their writing progress (Ismail 2002; Ismail, Elias, and Albakri, 2006; Ismail and Albakri 2012). The results from the survey conducted among Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) lecturers and students show that both parties agree that the lecture method to teach English is the least favored and effective (Peng, 2010). Thus, they proposed that a more individualistic attention and online dialogue interaction with their lecturer and peers be applied such as through an e-forum (Ismail, Singh, and Abu, 2013) or web blog (Ismail, Albakri, and Elias 2013).

The negative attitudes which persist during writing among UiTM students are also reported in several studies (Choo 2001; Adzmi 2009; Ismail, Hussin, and Darus 2012b; Ismail, Hussin, and Darus 2012c). A study conducted on 200 UiTM students revealed some negative attitudes displayed by the students during writing. For instance, when composing the students were quite lazy to think about their contents, edit or even revise. In other words, they simply write without much concern or due regard to their writing steps or process (Ismail, Elias, Albakri, Perumal, and Muthusamy 2010). This is especially so during exam time when most of them would simply write and produce only one draft without attempting to at least come up with a brief outline, even when encouraged to do so by their lecturers. The students’ lack of care when writing is evident when most of the students would simply turn in their essay after only one hour of writing, even though they were given two and a half hours to complete their essay. Consequently, many of the students often failed to score well for essay writing as their essay lacks of in-depth content and is usually full of errors (Choo, 2001; Ismail, Singh, Elias, and Albakri 2015). When questioned regarding their careless attitude, the students would say that they did not have much idea on what to write and felt the urge to leave the exam hall because they saw many of their friends do so. Such a negative attitude and lack of interest to write well have been reported in other studies regarding writing among tertiary students (Osman and Bakar 2009; Ismail, Albakri, Ismail, and Hussin 2014).

The need to present language learners with a positive language learning environment through stimulating and interesting language learning tools and activities is in line with the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which stresses that affective variables such as learners’ learning motivation and interest play a role in second language acquisition. Krashen (1981) posits that learners’ emotional state is like an adjustable filter that can hinder or pass input necessary to acquisition. According to Krashen (1981) this filter accounts for the success or failure of acquiring a second language (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991). High affective filter hinders acquisition, whereas, low affective filter enhances it. Hence, second language learners with a low-level of anxiety are able to acquire the language and communicate it with more interest and confidence.
Significance of the Study

From the above discussion, it is evident that many ESL tertiary students have negative attitudes and lack of interest in writing particularly for academic writing. Hence, it is essential that the students are provided with the right writing instruction or module which is designed to cater to these particular writing problems and can enhance their writing interest (Ismail 2002; Ismail, Elias, Muthusamy, and Perumal 2014). Studies which focus specifically on the use of ESL online writing programs for tertiary level students are scarce (Ismail 2011; Ismail, Singh, Elias, and Albakri 2015). Chan and Han (2005, 2) stress that “In the Malaysian context, online learning which involves writing is therefore unsurprisingly still very much experimentation with researchers continually contributing to the effort of understanding what goes on in this new learning environment” and thus, focus should be placed upon this important field of study. In light of this, this study aims to investigate the use of a supplementary online writing program among tertiary level students in order to find out whether the online writing program designed for academic writing needs of the students is able to change their negative attitudes and increase their interest toward learning academic writing.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

a) To discover the students’ attitude regarding learning academic writing prior to and after their participation in IQ-Write Program

b) To analyze how IQ-Write program is able to enhance the students’ interest in learning academic essays which helped them to improve their academic writing ability.

Research Questions

This study intends to answer two research questions:

1) What are the students’ attitudes regarding learning academic writing prior to and after their participation in IQ-Write Program?

2) How can IQ-Write program enhance the students’ interest in learning academic essays?

Methodology

This research embarks on a case study which is mainly descriptive and qualitative in nature. Ashcroft and Palacio (1996, 11) justify this type of research as they maintain that there has been a “shift from respect for models of research based on scientific tradition of experimental and quasi-experimental toward qualitative, descriptive methods within naturalistic settings.”

The Participants

The participants were Diploma Part/Semester 3 students from Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor, Malaysia. There are two reasons why they were selected as the sample for this study. Firstly, it is due to accessibility as they were available to be involved in the study. Secondly, they were learning academic writing in a course known as BEL311 (English for Academic Purposes) which relates to this study. The students were categorized as intermediate group based on their test scores for Semester 2 General English language which is known as BEL 200 – Mainstream
English. Students enrolled in BEL 311 course have six credit hours of class. Two months before the IQ-Write program treatment, the students had learned BEL311 course for six hours using solely the prescribed textbook and the handouts provided by their instructor. Afterwards, the students received or participated in IQ-Write program treatment which lasted for eight weeks whereby, the students spent four hours learning BEL311 in the classroom and another two in the language lab using IQ-Write Program. In addition, the students were required to complete IQ-Write program module for four hours outside of class time autonomously.

**The Instructor**

The instructor has been teaching English as a second language for more than ten years and has had more than five years of teaching experience in BEL311 course. He obtained a master’s degree in English Language Studies and has some experience in CAI (computer-assisted instruction). His role in this research was to facilitate BEL311 students with the use of IQ-Write program module for learning academic writing.

**The Instruments**

The instruments used in this study include IQ-Write program, survey questionnaires, interview protocols, and the students’ reflective journal.

**a) IQ-Write Program**

IQ-Write program (see appendix A) is a supplementary online writing program for learning academic writing. IQ-Write program was designed based on a Framework for a Supplementary Online Writing Program developed by Noriah Ismail, Saadiyah Darus and Supyan Hussin (2012) which was derived from the previous needs analysis study conducted on ESL tertiary students learning academic writing course at Universiti Teknologi Mara Johor. The 4 main elements of the program are IQ-Write Online Composing Guide (IQ-WCG), IQ-Write Forum (IQ-WF), IQ-Write Blog (IQ-WB) and IQ-Write Links and Resources (IQ-WLR). IQ-Write program module was uploaded in a Learning Management System called EDU 2.0.

IQ-WCG is an online composing guide that consists of seven writing steps (See Appendix B). IQ-Write program participants need to follow the writing steps in a recursive manner as it employs the process writing approach. To help students during each of these writing steps, IQ-WCG comes with useful Guide Sheets and Tip Sheets which consist of important guides and tips related to the essential seven writing phases that IQ-Write participants had to go through. IQ-WCG had been tested on a group of BEL311 students in an experimental study conducted by Noriah Ismail, Supyan Hussin and Saadiyah Darus (2012b) and was found to be able to significantly enhance the students’ academic writing performance. The second important element of IQ-Write program is the IQ-WF which provides a platform for students to discuss their writing process and writing tasks. The forum topics and activities are structured and specified based on their assigned writing topics and the writing steps they have to go through when they used IQ-WCG. The program also has IQ-WB which provides students with posts on effective writing tips and sample essays. Students are required to follow IQ-WB posts and encouraged to respond to them. In addition, students have their own personal IQ-Write Blog which is used as a reflective journal to reflect on their writing process and activities, share their writing experiences as well as writing samples and activities with the other participants. Furthermore, students also make use of IQ-WLR which consists of various selected online writing links and materials that are recommended by experienced BEL311 lecturers. In this study, the participants had to make use of the four IQ-Write program elements for eight weeks.
b) Survey Questionnaire

The two sets of survey questionnaires used in this study were the preliminary and summative questionnaires. The questionnaires were first distributed to a sample of fifteen BEL311 students during the pilot study before they were deployed to the target subjects during the actual treatment of IQ-Write program. Preliminary questionnaire was used to gather the students’ background information as well as their interest and attitude toward writing in English especially academic writing. The summative questionnaire is meant to elicit the students’ attitude regarding writing and learning to write academic essays in BEL311 course after they had gone through IQ-Write program treatment.

c) Interview

In order to elicit substantial data for the study, an interview was also conducted among ten participants who were randomly chosen (from the eighteen students) and agreed to participate in the interview. This interview was conducted at the end of IQ-Write program treatment. The students were asked to describe their overall perception of the program for BEL311 course as well as their views regarding how IQ-Write program was able to affect their attitude and interest towards learning academic writing in comparison to the conventional way of learning to write academic essays before they had participated in the program.

d) Reflective Journal

Besides the questionnaire and interview, another means of collecting the data employed in this study was through the analysis of the students’ reflective journal entry from their personal IQ-WB. Students’ reflection is considered as an important element in the culmination of their thoughts and feelings regarding the use of IQ-Write program in learning academic writing for BEL311 students. Hallbach (1999) asserts that the students’ personal reflections in their journals or diaries which describe their thoughts or perceptions toward the course they participate provide important data which must be considered for course evaluation and improvement.

Research Procedures

At the beginning of the research project, Preliminary Survey Questionnaire was administered to the participants. During the IQ-Write program treatment, the students were required to complete IQ-Write program module which consists of eight units within the eight week treatment period. The students were required to spend two hours in the language lab and another four hours of their own time outside class for each unit. Each unit comprised some online learning activities including academic writing assignments and exercises which required the students to use the four important elements of the program which are IQ- WCG, IQ-WF, IQ-WB, and IQ-WLR. At the end of the program treatment, the students were required to reflect and post their thoughts on their attitude regarding writing and learning to write academic essays before and after they have participated in the program. In addition, ten of the participants were randomly chosen to answer the interview questions.

Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that IQ-Write program was able to change their negative to positive attitudes towards learning to write and increase their interest towards academic writing. Presented below are the results from the students’ interviews and reflective journals as well as Preliminary and Summative Questionnaires.
I) Interview

Below are some of the (unedited) excerpts illustrating the students’ responses for the interview question, “How does IQ-Write program affect your attitude towards writing in English, especially academic essays?” The data reveal that the students’ negative attitude toward learning to write academic essays in English (for BEL 311) have changed and improved after going through IQ-Write program for eight weeks:

S#01, L52-L56

Well this program has changed my negative attitude towards writing academic essays in English. If before I felt lazy and could not care less about getting better than B- now I feel I want to do better than that. Maybe because before I feel there is no hope to improve but now I feel I can do it because of the positive responses I got for my essays from my BEL lecturer recently.

S#04, L40-L42

I think I dislike writing academic essays because I often make a lot of mistakes and did not get good comments from the lecturer because I think not only my essays got many mistakes, but boring too. Now after this program I feel I have improved a bit and I think the lecturer have noticed this and that makes me feel better. Right now I am more interested to learn and have positive attitude for writing.

S#05, L39-L43

Well, you see… I used to feel dread when I have to write an essay. I felt fearful and often get stuck during writing so I dislike it. But this negative feeling and attitude slowly changed after the program…because I can now see clearly and understand better and follow the right way to improve my writing.

The data from the interview indicated that the students claimed their negative attitudes towards learning academic writing have changed to positive after their participation in the IQ-Write program. Before their involvement in this program, they were lazy and not interested to learn to write academic essays as they found the activity to be boring and difficult to do. However, IQ-Write program helped them to change their negative attitude towards academic writing and made them become more interested to write their essays as they find it easier to learn to write with the help of the program. In addition, they were also no longer lazy to edit or proofread their essays as the program guided them to be careful and critical when writing. Moreover, they also felt that the program helped them to enjoy learning to write academic essays.

i) To further inquire the ways IQ-Write program is able to improve the students’ attitude towards writing, they were asked to compare the two different means of learning to write in BEL311 class, with and without the program: “Can you compare the two different means of learning to write that you experienced in this class—without IQ-Write program and with the program?” The data elicited from this interview question revealed that the students clearly preferred learning to write via IQ-Write program as they found it to be more effective and interesting. Some of the students’ responses are shown in the (unedited) excerpts below:
I did not really enjoy learning to write in class before because personally I think it was not so interesting using the textbook and handouts…or even if we got to use the internet in class, as we were sometimes told to do that…it was not so interesting because no fun activities…with IQ-Write program it is much more exciting because of the forum and blog we use as well as the effective resources.

I think, well, before we just write manually you know…the lecturer discuss the points on the white board and use the textbook to teach, sometimes he gives some handouts which I personally think are not very effective…maybe because I find them boring and only do them because it is require of us. Most of the time, I just copy the answers from my friends. Now With IQ-Write we can learn online with this interesting program you know…and my mood totally changes because I love computers and learning writing online with this program. Yes, see…it has a good composing guide and other resources that make me like writing better too.

It was clear that when asked to compare the two different means of learning to write academic essays, with and without the use of IQ-Write program, the students claimed that they found learning to write academic essays in BEL311 with the program as a supplement is more interesting and effective and it has also helped to change their negative attitude towards academic writing to positive.

From the students’ (earlier) responses, it is evident that IQ-Write program had improved their attitude towards writing in English. Furthermore, it had resulted to a better interest and motivation towards learning to write in English, as illustrated in the (sample) data gathered from the interview question, “Do you think that learning to write online via IQ-Write program affect your interest or motivation to write in English? If so, how?”

Yes it affects my interest and motivation to write. Compared to before we just used the textbook and learning everything in class, so before participating in this program I felt so err…bored and not much motivated to write. Now with this program, I feel more like, you know…interested to learn to write because we no longer just depend on the textbook… but we have so many online tools which are interesting to use and help me to write better such as the IQ-WCG which is new and innovative way to approach writing.

The participants claimed that learning to write online via IQ-Write program helped to increase their interest and motivation to write in English. The program allowed them to learn to write academic writing more effectively through the use of its’ main elements. Furthermore, they also found the program to be enjoyable.

4.6.3 Preliminary and Summative Questionnaires

Under this section, the data obtained from two sets of questionnaires; Preliminary Questionnaire and Summative Questionnaire are discussed to further support the findings from the interview and reflective journals in order to answer the research question regarding the impacts of IQ-Write program on the students’ attitude toward writing in English. The frequency distributions of
positive responses to every item on the questionnaire were tabulated by collapsing the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” responses on the Likert scale in the questionnaires.

Table 1: Respondents’ Perception on Their Attitude Regarding Writing and Learning to Write in English before and after IQ-Write Program Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Before Treatment</th>
<th>After Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I think my writing is good.</td>
<td>28% (5)</td>
<td>72% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. *Writing in English is a pleasant experience for me.</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
<td>89% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I love to write in English.</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
<td>89% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. *Writing in English is not difficult.</td>
<td>33% (6)</td>
<td>67% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I like having the opportunity to write down and express my ideas in English.</td>
<td>44% (8)</td>
<td>56% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. *Learning to write academic English is interesting.</td>
<td>44% (8)</td>
<td>56% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My lecturer reacts positively at my writing.</td>
<td>39% (7)</td>
<td>61% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. *I often do not procrastinate when I have to write English essays because I do not get stuck while trying to write.</td>
<td>33% (6)</td>
<td>67% (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean | 26% (6) | 74% (12) | 81% (16) | 19% (2) |

* Statement was reversed

Table 1 illustrates the respondents’ perception in terms of their attitudes towards writing in English before and after they were introduced to IQ-Write program. As shown from the data, there was a positive change in the students’ attitudes towards writing. This can be seen from the significant increase of the overall score of 55 percent toward positive writing attitude. After IQ-Write program treatment, the students who perceived that their writing was good increased sharply from 28 percent to 67 percent. This suggests that the students had positive attitude toward learning to write via IQ-Write program and that they were confident with their writing quality and ability after going through the course for eight weeks. Furthermore, the students who viewed writing as a pleasant experience also increased by 67 percent and that the percentage of those who loved to write rose to 50 percent from 39 percent to 89 percent after going through the program for eight weeks. The findings further support the study carried out by Chan, Ain Nadzimah, and Tan (2003) which shows that attitude toward the language may be linked to writing behavior.

Moreover, from the frequency distribution shown in Table 1, the number of students who regarded writing in English as not a difficult task with the help of IQ-Write program increased substantially from 33 percent to 72 percent. Moreover, it was apparent that IQ-Write program reinforced the students’ positive attitude toward writing. This was evident from the significant increase of 56 percent in the percentage of the participants who felt that learning to write academic English as interesting and that they liked having the opportunity to write down or express their ideas in English after having experienced learning to write via IQ-Write. In addition, there was a great change in the students’ responses regarding the reactions of their
lecturer toward their writing with an increase of 50 percent reported to receive positive comments for their essays with the help of IQ-Write program.

Another aspect that promoted positive change in the students’ writing attitude was that more students no longer procrastinated when it comes to writing their English essays; the number of students who admitted that they did not procrastinate to write their essays because they no longer get stuck or have writers’ block increased from 33 percent to 83 percent.

Table 2: Respondents’ Perception on Their Attitude Regarding Learning and Writing Academic Essays before and after IQ-Write Program Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Before Treatment</th>
<th>After Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you perceive learning and writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Interesting and fun</td>
<td>33% (6)</td>
<td>100% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Dull and uninteresting</td>
<td>67% (12)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Difficult</td>
<td>56% (10)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Not difficult</td>
<td>44% (8)</td>
<td>88% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Effective</td>
<td>39% (7)</td>
<td>100% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Not effective</td>
<td>61% (11)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Important</td>
<td>67% (12)</td>
<td>100% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Unimportant</td>
<td>33% (6)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 demonstrates the participants’ perceptions regarding learning and writing academic essays for BEL 311 before and after they were introduced to IQ-Write program. In this table, the negative worded statements are reversed to positive ones as according to Singleton and Straits (2005) this should be done for data presentation in order to conform to the same direction.

As can be seen from the data, there was a positive change in the students’ attitudes and perceptions. This is evident from the significant differences in the percentages; after the treatment all of the students (100%) claimed that learning and writing academic essays were more interesting and fun, 88 percent of them stated that it was not difficult, all of them (100%) agreed that it was more effective and important.

To further strengthen the data regarding the participants’ positive views regarding the program’s effectiveness, they were asked to provide their perception of IQ-Write program as a whole. Generally, the findings revealed that the participants’ view IQ-Write program as a very good supplementary online writing program particularly for learning ESL academic writing. From the data provided, it can be seen that all of the students were satisfied with the program as they viewed it to be suitable with their level and needs (100%), helpful and effective (100%), as well as interesting (100%) in a sense that the features and interface were not only attractive but were also reliable and easy to use. These findings seem to concur with the another study in which the researchers Gau, Hermanson, Logar, and Smerek (2003) found that students’ favorable views and conviction of an online writing program’s effectiveness help to reinforce their positive attitude toward it and in turn motivate them to be actively engaged in the program which subsequently enhances their writing attitude and quality as well.

Finally, the result in the survey shows that many of the participants (88.8%) agree to promote the program to their other friends who did not participate in the program. The respondents claimed that were willing to do so as they were confident with the usefulness of IQ-Write program in improving their learning and writing in English.

Generally, the findings indicated some positive views regarding the use of IQ-Write program. The results show that the program has essentially changed the students’ negative
feelings and attitudes toward learning to write academic writing. The importance of learners’
attitude and interest toward online learning is also highlighted in Chan and Ain Nadzimah (2004)
who stress that learner motivation and attitude play important roles in shaping writing behavior.

Moreover, IQ-Write Program’s participants also favor the use of the program as all of them
were convinced that it is suitable to their writing level and needs, is effective and interesting to
use. In fact, they felt that they were fortunate to gain the opportunity to participate in the program
were willing to recommend it to their friends who have not gotten a chance to be involved in this
program so that they too can benefit from it. This is in line with the finding in Ranjit Kaur and
Amin Embi (2008) whereby, the TESL students from UKM who participated in the course
Learning Management System known as Virtual Learning System (VLS) “expressed gratitude
and considered themselves lucky and fortunate that they had been given the opportunity and
experience to become online learners as they knew this was the trend in the future” (Kaur and
Embi 2008, 7).

Conclusion

The findings of the study relates to the changes of IQ-Write program participants’ attitudes in
regards to academic writing. The data showed that the students’ negative attitude toward learning
to write academic essays in English (for BEL 311) had changed and improved after going
through IQ-Write program for eight weeks. This finding lend further support to a number of
previous studies (Chuo 2007; Yih and Nah 2009; Fang 2010) of which the students had favorable
views regarding web-enhanced writing program and felt that it has changed their negative
attitudes toward writing. Hence, the striking findings in this study lead to the conviction that ESL
tertiary students need a suitable and effective supplementary online writing program such as IQ-
Write program which can foster their interest in writing and change their negative attitude toward
learning to write academic essays. Other empirical studies have also revealed that students pose
an overall positive attitude toward learning if they are given the opportunity to experience an
effective and interesting web-based language learning environments (Ismail, Albakri, Ismail, and
Hussin 2014; Ismail et al. 2015) including those which focuses on the writing skill such as the

REFERENCES

Great Britain: Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King’s Lynn.
Aslah Adzmi, Nor. 2009. “The Academic English Language Needs of Industrial Design Students
Establishing Knowledge Bases, Attitudes and Processes.” Studies in Foreign Language
Education 18 (10): 143–56.
Online Academic Writing Course?” GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies 5 (2):
1–14.
Choo, Ng Kui. 2001. “The Case of Comprehensible Input in Teaching and Learning the Write
Stuff.” Proceedings of the FIFTH MELTA Biennial International Conference Petaling
Jaya, Malaysia, 11–21.


APPENDIX A: IQ-WRITE PROGRAM WELCOME PAGE

APPENDIX B: IQ-WRITE COMPOSING GUIDE (IQ-WCG)
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Noriah Ismail, PhD: Senior Lecturer, Institute of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Johor, Malaysia

Assoc. Prof. Supyan Hussin, PhD: Senior Lecturer, School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Assoc. Prof. Saadiyah Darus, PhD: Senior Lecturer, School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies is one of nine thematically focused journals in the family of journals that support the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences knowledge community—its journals, book series, conference, and online community. The journal explores the processes of learning about the social and social learning.

As well as papers of a traditional scholarly type, this journal invites case studies that take the form of presentations of practice—including documentation of socially-engaged practices and exegeses analyzing the effects of those practices.

The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.