

### Short Paper

# Pre-service Teachers' Performance and Difficulties in Literary Analysis: A Proposed Writing Model

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## Abstract

This paper is a quantitative-descriptive study. Its objectives are to evaluate the 41 English pre-service teachers' performance in writing literary analysis and their difficulties. A scoring rubric, which consists of 6 criteria, namely, focus, supporting reasons, reasoning, organization, convention, and integration, was used to assess the students' performance in literary analysis. Results showed that their performance in the following areas: focus, supporting reasons, convention, and integration, was at an "accomplished level." Meanwhile, reasoning and organization fall under the "developing level." Overall, their performance in writing literary analysis was at an "accomplished" level. Additionally, difficulties were prominent in the body section compared to the introduction and conclusion sections. Crafting a strong thesis statement, providing adequate context, creating an engaging hook, and creating a vague thesis statement were difficulties found in the introduction. Meanwhile, the body section presented notable difficulties, such as crafting concise and focused topic sentences, analyzing textual evidence, inconsistent depth across paragraphs, a lack of textual evidence, incorrect punctuation for textual evidence, and transitioning between paragraphs. Other difficulties were found in the conclusion sections, including restating the thesis without new insights, overemphasizing personal opinions, being overly redundant, and abrupt endings. A writing model in literary analysis was designed to guide students in crafting a literary analysis. The writing model consists of preliminary activities, before, during, and after writing. Moreover, this paper recommends that teachers conduct an intervention on the identified difficulties, expose students to various literary pieces and approaches, and use the writing model to test its effectiveness.



Keywords – literary criticism, literary analysis, writing performance, writing difficulties, proposed writing model, English pre-service teacher

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## INTRODUCTION

Literature provides a space for writers to express their emotions and feelings and share their insights and experiences. People express their inner truths, personal reflections, and criticisms through various literary genres, such as poetry, drama, fiction, and even personal essays, but it is through literary analysis that readers can analyze, interpret, and develop their critical and interpretative skills. In English language classrooms, literature integration is essential in contributing to the learners' language development and cultural understanding (Sharma et al., 2022). Using literary texts in the classroom, students can be more aware when learning a language, they develop their skills and strategies in applying them in different contexts, build their interest and motivation, and make the language learning process worthwhile (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012).

Undergraduate students at university encounter literature as one of their subjects in their academic journey (Abida, 2016). In Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 25, Series of 2017, one desired program outcome for students pursuing a Bachelor of Secondary Education majoring in English is cultivating a comprehensive understanding of language and literature. An important component of this curriculum is the inclusion of the foundational course, "Literary Criticism". This course provides pre-service teachers with opportunities to learn and explore different literary theories and approaches. This understanding equips students to improve their learning by critically analyzing specific literary works and applying relevant literary theories. Moreover, by mastering the skills in the literary criticism course, pre-service teachers can develop meaningful discussions and activities, and guide the students in learning and engaging with the text, especially in literature subjects.

In the context of English pre-service teachers, their skills in analyzing a literary text are crucial as they prepare to teach literature in the future. However, students, particularly those struggling to articulate their ideas and feelings, frequently perceive literature as daunting and challenging. For this reason, students face difficulties understanding and unravelling the intricacies of literary texts, including comprehending the connection between the author or poet, the historical context of the text, and the themes within the literary work. Furthermore, they struggle with interpreting literary devices within the texts they encounter (Yavuz, 2014). These challenges become more evident in Tei's study (2019), as students have negative attitudes toward studying literature. This is rooted in various factors, such as the selection of texts, the teacher's ability to teach literature, the chosen teaching approaches, and even the students' home

background. Also, the study highlights the negative attitude of students toward literature, which resulted from poor reading habits and limited exposure to literary forms. As a result, students find it difficult to identify the author's opinion, making inferences, summarizing, and paraphrasing the text (Erniwati et al., 2023). These difficulties encountered by students have crucial implications for literature teaching. It implies that teaching literature must go beyond reading the texts, and teachers must adopt scaffolded strategies that guide students in analyzing and interpreting a specific text. Without such interventions, these difficulties will continue to present in literature classes, which hinders the development of critical thinking and interpretative skills. As such, pre-service teachers may also face difficulties overcoming these barriers as they prepare to teach literature.

The writing performance and challenges of students have been the subject of some research studies (Totto & Ramos, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Domantay & Ramos, 2018; Galuardo, 2023). However, it is important to note that these studies mostly focus on academic writing and do not particularly focus on the context of literary analysis. Given that pre-service teachers are expected to teach various literary forms, it is vital to assess their performance in literary text analysis. This includes the knowledge needed to craft a clear thesis statement, a good introduction, body, and conclusion.

Assessing these areas will help determine their preparedness in teaching literature. As a result, pre-service teachers' outputs regarding literary analysis must be evaluated and examined to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, by identifying students' performance and difficulties regarding writing literary analysis, language teachers can innovate new teaching strategies to improve students' literary analysis skills.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literature creates an engaging environment where students share their insights, provide comments, and see themselves in reflection. Using literary text in the classroom, especially in language classes, can help students be more participative and motivated (Violetta-Irene, 2015). It also allows students to experience authentic language, improve their comprehension, and appreciate the culture, making students more culturally aware and sensitive when using words.

However, in order for the students to experience these benefits, they must develop competencies to understand and engage with the text entirely. Thus, competence in reading varied literary forms is crucial for students in the literature classroom (Mustofa & Hill, 2018). Moreover, having competence will help students gain a profound understanding of the text, inquire, think, and establish a connection between the text and themselves, which is crucial in their process of learning.

Studies have shown positive findings regarding teaching literature in the classroom. Abida (2016) found that literary texts can enhance students' critical thinking skills, as this requires the students to become more imaginative and creative. Also, it highlights that literary text assists students in learning a language, especially in acquiring language structure and linguistic devices. This means that when students are exposed to different literary forms, they will be able to analyze characters, themes, and various literary elements, which enhances their interpretative and appreciation skills and helps them connect to real-world experiences.

Accordingly, Magulod (2018) confirms that when students' appreciation skills improve, they manifest a higher level of knowledge in literature. Thus, it helps students better understand human emotions, insights, themes, ideas, and human experiences in literary texts. Further, the study of Nabillah et al. (2024) found that literature-based activities increase the students' confidence and reduce their anxiety. Further, these exercises aid the students in developing their interpersonal skills and build a supportive environment.

Despite these benefits of literature, students still encounter difficulties in literary texts. In the study of Largo and Bautista (2024), students faced challenges in understanding literary texts and non-literary terms. Also, they faced challenges in terms of the volume of information they needed to read, and they needed more examples to understand the text being presented. Similarly, Pasaribu et al. (2023) examined and identified the challenges of students in the Literature program and found that students struggle with material that is complex in terms of grammatical structure. Also, students struggle to understand unfamiliar words and interpret the meaning of the text. Moreover, they face challenges in concentration and focus, as well as difficulty retaining information. In line with these findings, Alshammari et al. (2020) also identified challenges that affect students' comprehension of literature, such as the students' inherent difficulty in literary texts, cultural misconceptions, negative attitudes, motivation to engage in literary texts, limited background knowledge, and instructional difficulties.

It is worth noting that the abovementioned studies focus solely on the cognitive and affective growth of the students, such as improving students' critical thinking skills, acquisition of language, and cultural awareness, even though the literature emphasizes the positive contribution of literary texts among students (Violetta-Irene, 2015; Mustofa & Hill, 2018; Abida, 2016). However, these studies did not explore the particular challenges of the students when analyzing a literary text, such as comprehending grammatical structures and the use of instructional strategies that can assist students in these challenges (Largo & Bautista, 2024; Pasaribu et al., 2023). Moreover, there is a gap in crafting a writing model that can aid students in their difficulties when analyzing literary texts, particularly English pre-service teachers.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is grounded in Bruner's (1996) constructivist learning theory, which states that learners reconstruct their knowledge based on previous learning experiences. In connection with this, English pre-service teachers' previous knowledge of studying literature and different literary approaches will aid them in writing literary analyses, as this experience will guide them in analyzing literary pieces and writing literary analyses. This study evaluated the students' performance in writing literary analysis and identified their difficulties. Furthermore, a writing model based on the identified difficulties was crafted. Figure 1 below illustrates the framework of the study.

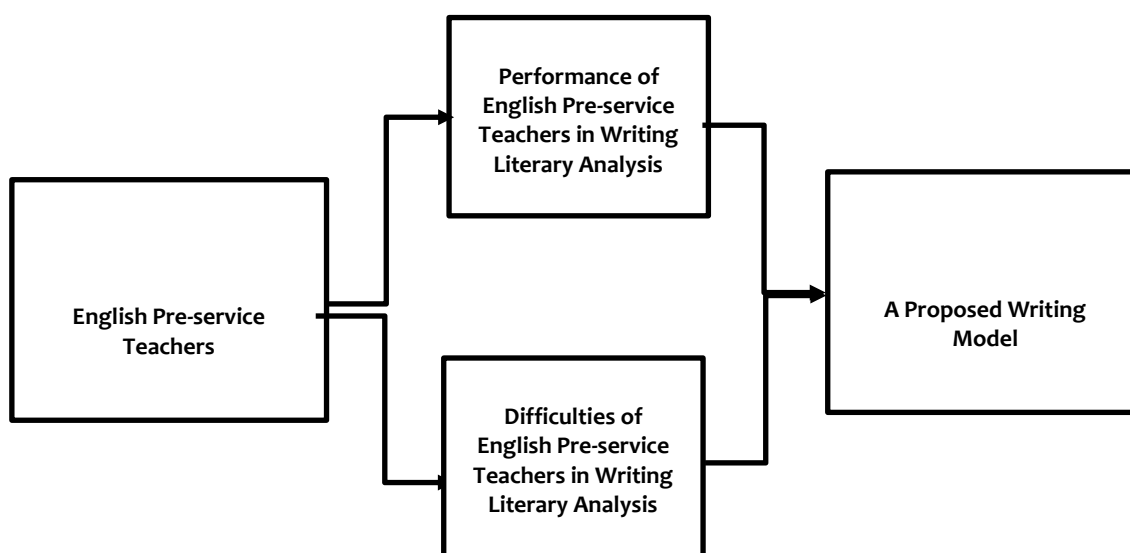


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Building insight from the literature and the conceptual framework, the research questions were crafted to address the gaps and follow the logical flow of the study. The literature highlights the difficulties students face in literary analysis. These gaps highlighted the need for understanding the performance and the specific challenges students face. Meanwhile, the conceptual framework illustrates how the study examines the performance and difficulties of English pre-service teachers in writing literary analysis, which then informs the development of a proposed writing model. Guided by these foundations, the study sought to answer the following questions: (1) How may the performance of English pre-service teachers in writing a literary analysis essay be described? (2) What are the difficulties faced by English pre-service teachers in writing a literary analysis essay? and (3) What writing model can be developed based on the study's findings to address the identified difficulties?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

This paper employed a “descriptive-quantitative research design” to evaluate the pre-service teachers' performance and difficulties in literary analysis. This design explains the features of the population or phenomenon under study. Additionally, this design emphasizes the "what" of the study topic more than the "why" of the topic. By applying this approach, this research offers a thorough comprehension of the performance and difficulties encountered by English pre-service teachers in writing literary analysis while also designing a useful writing model to help them become more proficient in different areas.

### ***Respondents***

The respondents in this study were 41 English pre-service teachers enrolled in one of the state universities in Pampanga, the Philippines, during the academic year 2023-2024. Total enumeration was used to select the respondents. The respondents are enrolled in the Literary Criticism course and have already crafted a literary analysis. Additionally, they have written literary analyses using different literary approaches.

### ***Research Instrument***

This paper used a scoring rubric, adopted from the study of Apriliadi and Surayman (2020), which was modified and adapted based on Finken and Ennis's (1993) study to identify the pre-service teachers' performance in writing literary analysis. The scoring rubric consists of six (6) criteria, namely, “focus,” “supporting reasons,” “reasoning,” “organization,” “convention,” and “integration.” Focus evaluates the student's ability to present the main point in the introduction part. Next, the supporting reasons evaluated the student's ability to analyse and interpret literary pieces backed by evidence. Response using personal insights and justifications was then evaluated by reasoning. Also, organizations assess students' ability to write cohesively. Convention pertains to students' grammar, mechanics, and spelling ability. Lastly, integration focuses on applying literary approaches to the literary piece.

On the other hand, the researcher used a researcher-made checklist to identify the difficulties of students in a literary analysis essay. The checklist was grounded in established writing components, which consisted of the introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction looks into the crafting of a thesis statement, providing adequate context, creating an engaging hook, and a vague thesis statement. Moreover, the body focuses on the topic sentences, textual evidence, and paragraphs. Lastly, the conclusion checks the new insights, personal opinions, and endings of the literary analysis. Additionally, the researcher-made checklist was validated by three (3) language

experts. The validators looked into the relevance and alignment of the checklist. Furthermore, the researchers conducted a pilot test on selected students to ensure the usability before gathering the needed data.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Before writing the literary analysis, the researcher instructed the students to research and review the provided literary piece as preparation for the writing activity. Subsequently, the researcher directed the students to compose a literary analysis focusing on one literary piece for analysis within three hours. This is to give the students time to reread the literary piece, plan their ideas, and develop arguments with textual evidence. This duration provided enough time for the students to plan, draft, write, and revise their outputs. Students were allowed to choose and employ a literary approach in their text analysis. Most of the students opted for the formalism and biographical approaches. The students had 41 literary analysis outputs, all of which were written in class.

To ensure the objectivity of the scoring process, the researcher involved one inter-rater in evaluating the outputs of the student. The inter-rater is a licensed English teacher with a Master's degree in English education. Both the researcher and inter-rater underwent orientation sessions in order to have a shared understanding of the scoring rubric. To ensure fairness, both of them independently rated each output. Subsequently, the ratings obtained by both raters were summed and averaged to obtain the final score per criterion of each student. Moreover, mean and standard deviation were used to determine the overall performance of the students in literary analysis.

Then, the researcher used a checklist to identify the specific writing difficulties of the students in literary analyses. In this phase, the researcher solely used the checklist, and the total number of students who demonstrated each difficulty was then recorded. Frequency counts and percentages were computed for every item on the checklist. Subsequently, a writing model was developed based on the study's findings.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This study followed ethical considerations throughout the process. This ensured that respondents' participation was handled with utmost respect and protected from any harm. This ensured that their participation was voluntary. Additionally, the researcher handled the respondents' personal information with strict confidentiality. To enhance the reliability of the analyzed data, an inter-rater was included.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows that the performance of English pre-service teachers in writing a literary analysis essay is assessed based on six (6) criteria. Firstly, the “Focus” falls under the “Accomplished level, with a mean score of 3.27 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.78. Similarly, the “Supporting Reasons” was placed under the “Accomplished” level, having a mean score of 2.83 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.92.

The “Reasoning” garnered a mean score of 2.59 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.81, placing it as a “Developing” level. In the same way, “Organization” has a mean score of 2.56 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.87, falling under the “Developing’ level. The “Convention” was placed under the “Accomplished” level with a mean score of 3.15 and a standard deviation (SD) of 1.01. Likewise, “Integration” falls under the “Accomplished” level, having a mean score of 3.00 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.81. In summary, the overall mean score of 2.88, with a standard deviation of 0.88, falls within the "Accomplished" category.

Table 1. Performance of English Pre-service Teachers in Writing a Literary Analysis

Criteria	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
Focus	3.27	0.78	Accomplished
Supporting Reasons	2.83	0.92	Accomplished
Reasoning	2.59	0.81	Developing
Organization	2.56	0.87	Developing
Convention	3.15	1.01	Accomplished
Integration	3.00	0.81	Accomplished
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>Accomplished</b>

Legend:

Numerical Rating	Descriptive Rating
4.21 - 5.00	Exemplary
3.41 - 4.20	Impressive
2.61 - 4.40	Accomplished
1.81 - 2.60	Developing
1.00 - 1.80	Limited

Table 2 shows the difficulties encountered by the participants in writing literary analysis. Participants primarily faced challenges in the introduction part. Crafting a strong thesis statement proves most problematic for 56.10% of participants, followed by providing adequate context at 48.78% and creating an engaging hook at 36.59%. A smaller percentage, 14.63%, struggles with vague thesis statements.

Meanwhile, crafting concise and focused topic sentences in the body part proves difficult for 41.07% of participants. Analysing textual evidence is a prevalent issue, with 60.98% expressing difficulty interpreting supporting quotes. Inconsistency in depth across paragraphs is noted by 29.27% of participants. Lack of textual evidence poses a

challenge for 56.10%, while 24.39% struggle with incorrect punctuation in incorporating quotes. Additionally, 53.66% find transitioning between paragraphs challenging.

In the conclusion phase of literary analysis essays, participants faced distinct challenges. Restating the thesis without introducing new insights is a difficulty for 26.83% of participants, indicating a need for enhanced summarization that goes beyond mere repetition. Overemphasizing personal opinions is identified by 7.32% of respondents, suggesting the importance of maintaining a balanced tone in the conclusion. Another challenge is being overly redundant, with 17.07% indicating a need for conciseness and avoiding unnecessary repetition. Additionally, 19.51% find abrupt endings problematic, emphasizing the importance of providing a well-rounded and smoothly concluded analysis.

Table 2. Difficulties Faced by English Pre-Service Teachers in Writing a Literary Analysis

	<b>Difficulties</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Introduction</b>			
	Crafting a strong thesis statement	23	56.10
	Providing adequate context	20	48.78
	Creating an engaging hook	15	36.59
	Vague thesis statement	6	14.63
<b>Body</b>			
	Crafting concise and focused topic sentences	23	41.07
	Analysing textual evidence	25	60.98
	Inconsistent depth across paragraphs	12	29.27
	Lack of textual evidence	23	56.10
	Incorrect punctuation for textual evidence	10	24.39
	Transitioning between paragraphs	22	53.66
<b>Conclusion</b>			
	Restating the thesis without new insights	11	26.83
	Overemphasizing personal opinions	3	7.32
	Being overly redundant	7	17.07
	Abrupt endings	8	19.51

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that English pre-service teachers have successfully demonstrated their ability to state the main point clearly, provide sub-topics for discussion, and convey an intention to support the main point from the beginning. Also,

students garnered an “accomplished” level in the supporting reasons, where students' ability to analyse and interpret literary pieces backed by evidence was evaluated. This implies that while there is an accomplished level in providing reasons supported by reasonable facts, there is room for improvement in this area. In terms of reasoning and organization, responses using personal insights and justifications need to be improved, and the clarity of writing in terms of coherence and cohesion needs improvement, which reflects a developing stage.

Interestingly, convention and integration fall under the “accomplished” level, which means that grammar, diction, spelling, and punctuation are generally effective, and the writing successfully aligns with the concept of literary criticism. This aligns with the findings of Domantay and Ramos (2018), who found that students perform well in writing, mechanics, vocabulary, and content. However, many introductions lacked a well-crafted thesis statement and sufficient context, while conclusions need to be improved, including the need for insightful restatements, balanced personal opinions, concise summaries, and well-crafted endings. This corroborates the findings of Hasegawa's (2013), which show that students demonstrated weakness in writing clear introductions and that the conclusion was unclear and incomplete.

Furthermore, displayed inconsistencies in topic sentence clarity, analysis of textual evidence, and paragraph transitions. These elements are important in order that the essay is logically connected, but the findings reveal that many pre-service teachers experience challenges in connecting their ideas and supporting their arguments.

Overall, the performance of the English pre-service teachers in writing literary analysis falls under the accomplished level, with strengths particularly evident in focus, conventions, and integration. Meanwhile, areas such as supporting reasons and reasoning show further development to improve the quality of their literary analysis writing.

## **A Proposed Writing Model**

Figure 2 presents a writing model based on the students' identified writing difficulties. Since the students' difficulties emerged across all components of the literary analysis, the proposed model consists of four major phases: preparatory activities, before writing, during writing, and after writing.

### **Phase 1. Preparatory Activities**

**1.1. Stimulating Curiosity and Prior Schema.** In this phase, students will be engaged by capturing their interest and activating their existing knowledge. This will prepare them to connect with the new information and their past experiences.

**1.2. Reviewing/Examining the Literary Piece.** Students will read and review the chosen literary piece in advance to understand its content thoroughly. This will guide students in their comprehension of the selected texts.

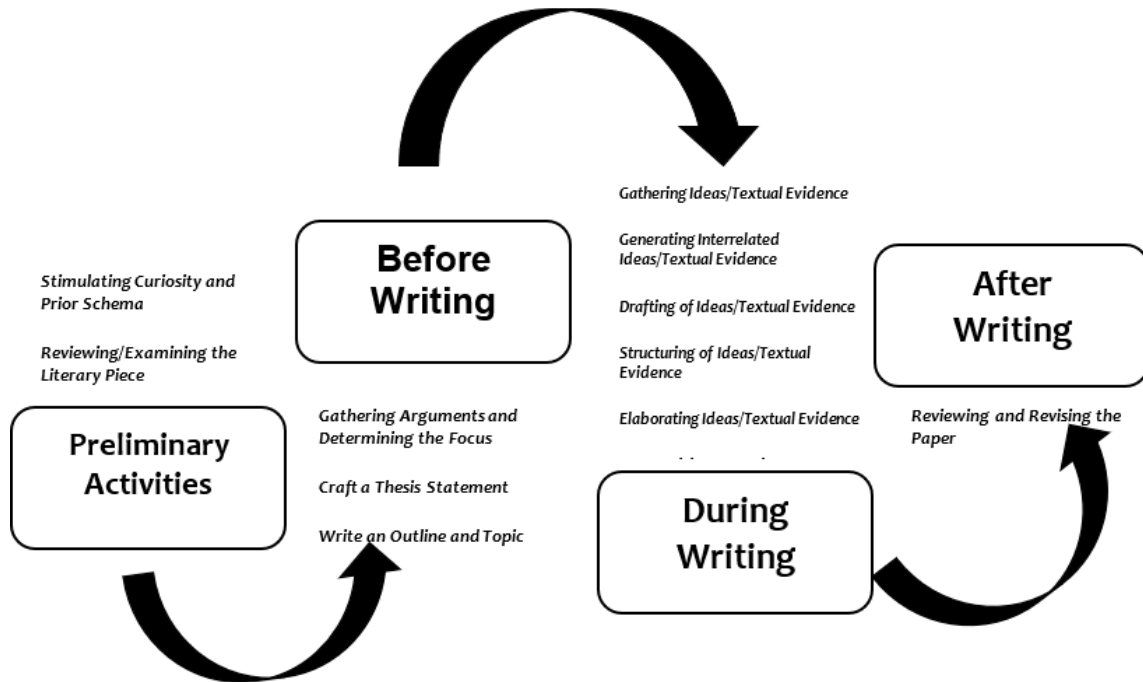


Figure 2. Literary Analysis Writing Model

## Phase 2. Before Writing

**2.1. Gathering Arguments and Determining the Focus.** In this stage, students will identify the central concept to guide their analysis. This will help them to have a good foundation for their analysis.

**2.2. Craft a Thesis Statement.** In crafting a thesis statement, students are guided in developing a concise statement that conveys the main point of the literary piece.

**2.3. Write an Outline and Topic.** Students will create a structured plan and outline the important elements of the literary piece. This will help them organize their thoughts throughout the process.

## Phase 3. During Writing

**3.1. Gathering Ideas/Textual Evidence.** In this phase, students will collect relevant information and evidence that supports their arguments in the text.

**3.2. Generating Interrelated Ideas/Textual Evidence.** Students will develop connections between different ideas and pieces of evidence that establish a connection to their thesis statement.

**3.3. Drafting of Ideas/Textual Evidence.** The students will begin the initial composition of their analysis.

**3.4. Structuring of Ideas/Textual Evidence.** In this phase, students will organize their content and arguments logically and coherently.

**3.5. Elaborating Ideas/Textual Evidence.** The students will expand their ideas and explain their evidence to provide depth and clarity.

**3.6. Summarizing Key Points.** The final phase will include recapping the main arguments and evidence to ensure a reasonable conclusion.

#### **Phase 4. After Writing**

**4.1. Reviewing and Revising the Paper.** Evaluate the completed work, checking for coherence and clarity. Make necessary revisions to improve it.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The performance of English pre-service teachers in composing literary analysis indicates an overall "Accomplished" level, with strengths in focus, conventions, and integration. Evidently, strengths include the clear articulation of main points, correct use of grammar and punctuation, and alignment with the principles of literary criticism. However, the study identifies areas for improvement, specifically in supporting reasons, reasoning, and organizational clarity.

Moreover, English pre-service teachers encountered difficulties in the introduction, body, and conclusion phases of their essays, particularly in crafting strong thesis statements, providing adequate context, and creating engaging hooks in the introduction. Additional challenges, such as composing concise topic sentences, interpreting textual evidence, and maintaining coherence across paragraphs, suggest targeted areas for improvement.

To address these difficulties, this paper recommends an intervention in thesis formulation to refine students' skills in creating solid opening statements, and interventions to enhance body paragraphs by improving topic sentence clarity, textual evidence analysis, and transitions between paragraphs. Guidance on conclusion writing is advised to refine skills in restating the thesis, maintaining various literary pieces, and approaches to Literary Criticism. Moreover, this study recommends using the designed writing model to test its effectiveness. These recommendations are based on the students' identified difficulties, ensuring that pre-service English teachers are well-prepared for the challenges of writing literary analyses in their future teaching jobs.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study show a prevalent implication for teacher education programs, especially in literature courses. There must be targeted instructional support

since students experienced difficulties in reasoning and organization, although they showed strong points in writing the main ideas and observing the mechanics.

Firstly, the curriculum should integrate inferential and evaluative comprehension strategies in literature instruction. Teachers should include an inquiry technique in their lessons that allows students to analyze specific questions related to the literary piece being analyzed. Additionally, literature instruction should include strategies where students can deepen their analysis of textual evidence. This will help students interpret and integrate evidence that supports their claims, rather than merely inserting it in their literary analysis essay.

Furthermore, there should be inclusion of a scaffolded strategy in literature courses that provides students with a step-by-step process in preparing for the reading activity, as well as for evaluating the text. Guiding writing tasks and peer review should be incorporated to help students become more aware of the improvements in their essays.

Overall, the need for strategically designed writing instruction in literature courses, specifically in teacher education programs, should be integrated, as these will prepare future literature teachers to model and teach these skills to their students.

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## **DECLARATIONS**

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author confirms that there are no conflicts of interest.

### ***Informed Consent***

The author declares that permission to collect the data was obtained, and prior to the study's completion, participants provided informed consent.

## Ethics Approval

This study has undergone review and approval from the researcher's affiliated institutions.

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## Author's Biography

Mr. Christian Comeo is a licensed language instructor at Pampanga State University and holds an MA in Education – English. At present, he is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics at the Philippine Normal University in Manila, the Philippines, and conducting individual and collaborative studies in applied linguistics and language education. Mr. Comeo has presented his research studies at various international conferences and is actively engaged in advancing linguistic research in education. His research interests include Philippine linguistics, English language studies, corpus studies, second language acquisition, L2 writing, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and bilingualism/multilingualism.