

# GRAFFITI AND MUSIC AS AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AND PANTOMIME AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS AS STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILLS

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is a follow-up to the group research on “Academic Success of Job Enabling English Proficiency (JEEP) of USTP graduates from 2017 to 2018.” As such, it aimed at offering remedies on the fair evaluation of writing skills; at the same time, it ventured into introducing graffiti and music as authentic materials, and pantomime and its interpretations as strategies to enhance the said skills designed for Grades 11 and 12. Operationally, the words, authentic materials, referred to “texts that are real and original but not produced specifically for language purposes.” The methodology used in the study was descriptive-qualitative, centered on content analysis of the authentic materials and strategies. Based on the comprehensive and exhaustive reading, the researchers have generated text graffiti and music as authentic materials and pantomime and its interpretations as strategies. Text graffiti are words or sentences written on walls by anonymous writers; while “music is composed of sounds together in a way that produces aesthetic experience. A piece of music is not a song until there are words attached.” Graffiti was used as materials and their analysis was considered as strategies. Enhancing writing skills, text graffiti were analyzed to trace grammar errors, a specific agreement between subject and verb, between pronoun and its antecedents, the proper sequence of tenses, word order, and misplaced modifier, while sentence errors which constitute sentence fragments, comma splice, run-on sentence, and wrong use of indefinite pronouns are the yardstick for the aforementioned analysis. Meanwhile, pantomime was utilized as materials and its interpretations serve as innovative strategies.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the preponderance of teaching pedagogies, utilizing graffiti and music as authentic materials and pantomime and its interpretations as strategies, have seemingly been uncommon, yet challenging on the grounds that the search for anything real and original is motivating and paramount in enhancing writing skills, and secondly, they incite “information hunger” aspects of the learner.

**Keywords:** authentic materials & strategies, content analysis, graffiti, music differentiated from song, grammar and sentence errors, writing skills, pantomime, and its interpretations

## Brief background

A study [1] was conducted “to evaluate the language competence of some students who had undergone the JEEP programs from 2017 to 2018 offered by the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines (USTP). The study succeeded through interviews and a structured questionnaire floated online. Consequently, the evaluation of the writing skills of JEEP Graduates showed that they manifested a “**Good** performance in both paragraph organization and paragraph writing. Nonetheless, the same graduates presented a **Fair** performance in grammar and sentence errors” [2], particularly on grammar errors which were prevailing on the agreement between subject and verb, pronoun and its antecedent, proper sequence of tenses, word order, and misplaced modifier. In juxtaposition, sentence errors are anchored on fragment sentences, comma splices, run-on or fused sentences, wrong use of indefinite pronouns, and parallelism.

## 1. Introduction

It is with this above-mentioned **fair** evaluation of grammar and sentence errors that this research is conceived. Generated from an exhaustive and comprehensive reading of varied sources, graffiti, and

music are introduced as authentic materials while pantomime and its interpretations as authentic strategies- all of which are targeted to offer remedies for grammar and sentence errors and eventually enhance the writing skills of Grades 11 and 12 learners of English. Specifically, English writing has been “an essential skill for success in the modern global economy” [3] Additionally, “writing as a learning tool . . . help (*sic.*) students think critically . . . (hence,) encouraging them to grasp,

organize, and integrate prior knowledge with new concepts [4] (as well as) “a way for students to express their idea and opinion.” [5] Evidently most of the activities, ranging from writing emails, invitations, application letters, and many more – all these “bring out the need to communicate. [6]. Having these skills “gives a person the confidence . . . to deduce meaning from a series of messages, and the ability to exchange information with others” [7] And among several facts, stressing the importance of writing to students: “it improves communication skills, widens knowledge base, increases levels of creativity, helps choose a career path, and it is vital to academic success.” (8) In effect, writing skills pave ways to develop speaking, reading, listening and critical thinking skills; hence, the process can be weighed and considered as “a win-win “case.

Aware of the maximum relevance of writing skills in the English language, teachers hopefully would be able to pick up striking ideas which they can apply in their own writing skill activities which, for all they know are just around the corner or a stone-thrown from them. Henceforth, they can innovate their own authenticity in stimulating the learners’ writing skills. Noticeably, teaching students to write is quite cumbersome because of the learners’ passive attitude towards the activity plus the fact that motivation might have been insufficient to inspire and ignite learners’ interest in writing meaningfully and realistically. In this study, the term, authentic, is used “operationally to mean texts not produced specifically for language teaching purposes. [9] Moreover,” authentic also means real and original . . . materials which are not simplified and . . . created for language teaching.” [10]

## 2. Methodology

The descriptive-qualitative method is used in this study. In so doing, it centers on content analysis [11]

[12] on the authentic materials and strategies, designed for Grades 11 and 12 level learners. Guided by the definition of authentic materials, stated in the introduction, the researchers base their choice of authentic materials and strategies on offshoots from their reading, understanding, synthesizing, and adapting main thoughts derived from the thesis, dissertations, articles published in newspapers, periodicals, graffiti on walls, [13] and “web-based materials such as music, songs, pictures, YouTube, movie clips...” (14) Thus, categorization into wall graffiti and music as authentic materials, while pantomime and its interpretations as strategies follow under study. With the presumptions that learners had already a background knowledge of the types and modes of paragraph development like description, narration, and exposition, and the elements of fiction like setting, characters, plot, and theme, the researchers divided the discussion into three main phases, namely, graffiti, music and pantomime, and its interpretations. And the approach to analyzing the graffiti as authentic materials includes tracing, correcting, and rephrasing grammar and sentence errors. As regards pantomime, interpretative and creative techniques are utilized. Sequentially, this process is thought about as enhancing writing skills. In sum, the foregoing statements and the number of strategies, presented, comprised the scope and limitation of the study.

### Analytical discussion on graffiti and music as authentic materials and pantomime and its interpretations as authentic strategies

#### *On Graffiti*

Graffiti which is singular in form, but plural in number in its usage [15] refers “to any wall writing, pictures, and symbols or markings of any kind on any surface anywhere no matter what motivates the anonymous writer.” [16] Albeit researchers and authors observe that students use graffiti as a form of written communication “when they feel other channels to express themselves have been blocked by those in authority” [17], graffiti contains grammar and sentence errors. Singularly, as authentic materials, graffiti can be applied by learners collating and copying them in any form like text, graphics or caricature, markings, and other forms. As a strategy, these text graffiti are segregated and analyzed based on the grammar and sentence errors found in them. Consequently, learners’ process of correcting and rephrasing this graffiti spontaneously enhances their writing skills. For instance, one text graffiti runs “Return the bottles from where you got it.” [18] Clearly, learners see that the preposition, “**from**,” is wrongly used as an adverb of place to agree with the verb, “**return**,” and the pronoun, “**it**,” singular in number, does not agree with its antecedent, “**bottles**,” plural in number. Corrected, the sentence would then be “**Return the bottles to where you got them.**” Another grammar error, states “Looking forward”, “DON’T”, and “CAN’T BE”, which are classified as sentence fragments, in contrast with “Fearless,” “Toxic”, “Savage,” “Stylish”, “Milky”, “Broken” [19], which are all adjectives with missing objects to be described. As a strategy, learners construct grammatically correct sentences using the given fragment and adjective- graffiti. Still, other text graffiti are seemingly correct at a quick glance, but after painstaking

analysis, sentence errors are found, such as “Everything has beauty But not all people see it.”

[20] This sentence has both grammar and sentence errors: first is the erroneous usage of agreement between subject, **people**, and the verb, **sees**; second is the use of a run-on or fused sentence and third is the omission of the needed comma before the conjunctive adverb, **but**. Corrected, the sentence appears “**Everything has beauty, but not all people see it.**”

A further example of text graffiti says “Brave people get **spooked** all the time. What made them brave was that they didn’t let their fears stop them.” [21] Here, there is no proper sequencing of tenses whereby the first line uses the present tense, **get**, and the second line uses the past tense, **made, was, & did**; agreement between pronoun, **it**, and its antecedent, **people**, is likewise erroneously used.

Corrected, the sentence runs “**Brave people get spooked all the time. What makes them brave is that they don’t let their fears stop them.**” As a reinforcement activity, learners exchange and correct their outputs. Furthermore, compiling text graffiti in a journal, correcting or rephrasing the wrong ones, and writing their own interpretations about them can be counted as Learning Outcomes. Learners, too, can compose their own grammatically well-constructed text graffiti and label them as gems of thought.

In recapitulation, the process of analyzing graffiti, based on grammar and sentence errors, can be applied both as an individual activity and group work which are tangibly crystallizing resourcefulness, reliance, and independence for the former, while sharing and exchanging ideas, brainstorming, cooperation, coordination and collaboration, rapport, among others, for the latter. These values are developed hand in hand with enhancing the writing skills of the learners. All these can be considered as the wonder of using graffiti as authentic materials.

#### *On Music*

As a material for enhancing writing skills in English, music in this study “is composed of sounds together in a way that produces an aesthetic experience”. [22] Differentiated from a song, . . . “a song has lyrics that are meant to be sung with our voice. A piece of music is not a song until there are words attached” [23] Musicologists confirmed that “music influences all, or lives in a wide variety of ways: . . . a pacifier of comfort in a sad time, solidarity in a breakup, an outlet for rage against a system, (and) a way to celebrate joy and resistance; we often turn to music at critical moments.

. . . and our students right now is one of those moments.”

(24) Moreover, music as an authentic material can be used to build and develop “activities in listening, sharing, storytelling, community building” (25), while reading, writing, and thinking skills can be counted as strategies. In connection with storytelling, “music can propel narrative swiftly forward, or slow it down. It often lifts mere dialogue into the realm of poetry.” (26) Thus, the “nine teaching ideas for using music to inspire student writing”, (geared towards acquisition of The second strategy, using music, encompasses learners listing down as many sounds they hear and listening to the same music played. Accordingly, they categorize the sounds into (1) water or liquid sounds like sprinkle, drizzle, splash, drip, and others, (2) a person’s sounds like giggle, murmur, groan, mumble, gurgle, gulp, and many more, (3) collision sounds

like bang, clang, crash, crunch, screech, jingle, knock, writing skills) are “activities which are categorized into three genres: creative and narrative writing, informative and explanatory writing, and persuasive and argumentative writing.” [27] Using music, too, in writing activities “develops communication skills, creativity, self-expression, character education, and values clarification in young people through reflection writing, discussion, and self-assessments.” [28] Other research yields findings stating that using music “impacted emotions which can be transferred into our writing.” [29] Rooted on and adapting the schools of thought, showcased in the preceding paragraph, the researchers use music to concretize pantomime as both material and strategy for narrative writing and its interpretation for descriptive writing.

#### *On Pantomime*

Operationally, pantomime, likewise called “the art of silence is acting without words. (in which) a character is portrayed through gestures, facial expressions, and movement.” [30] At this juncture, music which should be unfamiliar or old, functions as a material, and the pantomime is the strategy. Hence, the teacher tells the class to listen intently in terms of sounds, the pace of the beats, the volume of the instruments, the soothingness of the melody, and other elements of the music to be played. Eventually, learners discreetly identify their feelings and moods, reflect on scenes and experiences they envision, and imagine a story they can create - - - all from the old and unfamiliar music they hear and listen to. The teacher then instructs learners to choose the part of the played music that attracts them most, visualize and pantomime the significant human experience they can equate with it. A brainstorming session among them follows; after which, volunteers present their pantomime of the chosen scene. The remaining members watch and later give their own interpretative stories. Observing closely the activity, one sees the dynamic involvement of acting out and interpreting the silent show. The final product of this activity is for learners to write a reflection paper about the pantomimed scene in particular, and comment on the pantomime itself as an authentic material and its interpretations as a strategy.

smash, to mention a few, (4) air-blowing sounds like a gasp, swish, swoosh, whizz, whoosh, and more others, (5) animal sounds like arf, bray, buzz, chirp, cock-a-doodle-doo, cuckoo, honk, howl, purr, and (6) more sound words that learners are able to collect. Creatively, learners undergo narrative writing which uses appropriate sounds from their collection. Pursuing this writing activity gives richer avenues for learners to equate some of the sound collection with their own

feelings and experiences and write vivid and impressive descriptive paragraphs. And in terms of explanatory writing, learners inform or elucidate the readers who, which, why, and when certain and compartmentalized sounds are produced by respective doers. Indeed, music through sound can be a learning tool at the sametime a strategy for writing, over and above aestheticismimbibed in it.

### **3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, notwithstanding the preponderance of teaching pedagogies, graffiti and music as authentic materials and

pantomime and its interpretations as strategies have seemingly been uncommon, on enhancing writing skills. Nevertheless, these authentic materials and strategies are challenging and motivating to both the teachers and the learners on the grounds that : (1) the search for anything real and original is thought-provoking and paramount in language acquisition, particularly writing skills; (2) they incite “hunger information” [32] Aspects; (3) they define sense impressions which learners capture in the process of reading, listening and analyzing the given materials; (4) they open wider and richer avenues to write by using varied modes of paragraph development, and by composing original stories, and (5) they instill in the learners’ hearts and minds the values of confidence, aestheticism, creativity, and teambuilding, to name a few. Yet, neophytes in nature, this study is recommended to be enriched by:

1. undergoing further or related study to establish, and deepen its scholarly credibility,
2. generating more authentic materials and strategies whose advantages outweigh their weaknesses in classroom utilization for enhancing writing skills,
3. using other authentic materials and strategies in composing poems and essays,
4. researching the effectiveness of authentic materials and strategies on coping with the demands of acquiring English language competencies, and
5. synchronizing authentic materials and strategies with objectives on a specific lesson for the day.

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