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Learning Obstacles of Bachelor of Science in Office Administration Students in Shorthand

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the learning challenges Bachelor of Science in Office Administration (BSOA) students face at Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges face in mastering shorthand, a vital skill for efficient transcription in professional settings. Guided by the Skill Acquisition Theory of Fitts and Posner, the research identifies difficulties in dictation and transcription and suggests ways to improve student proficiency. Despite technological advancements, shorthand remains relevant, though students often struggle due to limited practice and inadequate instructional support. Using a descriptive approach, the researchers surveyed 187 second-year BSOA students through questionnaires, with data analyzed using weighted mean and percentage techniques. Results show that while students demonstrate strong skills in dictation and transcription, they still encounter key challenges. These include difficulty with unfamiliar words, lack of focus during dictation, and poor penmanship, leading to inaccurate strokes. These obstacles hinder mastery of shorthand. The study concludes that these issues are primarily due to insufficient exposure and practice. To address this, the researchers recommend implementing specialized training programs, incorporating real-life scenarios in instruction, organizing student focus groups, and conducting frequent assessments to monitor progress.

Keywords
Dictation
Higher Education
Learning Obstacles
Shorthand
Transcription

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Introduction

Stenography is the practice of writing in shorthand, either by hand or using a specialized machine called a stenograph. Throughout the twentieth century, this skill was essential for secretaries, reporters, and others who needed to record information quickly and accurately. Although stenography is used less frequently today, it still holds significant value in specific contexts, such as courtrooms, where the need for real-time transcription of events is essential and mandated by law [1]. Its precision and speed make it a vital skill for ensuring accurate legal proceedings. Shorthand writing is a valuable skill that allows for efficient recording of spoken material, making it particularly useful for tasks such as note-taking, reporting, and transcribing. Executive assistants and administrative professionals often use shorthand to document meeting minutes and interviews.

A study by Johnson [2] highlights the importance of shorthand for administrative assistants and court reporters. It significantly boosts efficiency and accuracy for administrative professionals, while court reporters rely on it for real-time legal transcription. Lee and Chen [3] stress the necessity of consistent practice to master shorthand. Stenography employs abbreviations and phonetic representations to record spoken words, providing an essential tool for efficient note-taking in legal and medical fields. In the Philippines, stenographers produce official court transcripts, as noted by Ridoloso [4], enabling rapid and accurate capture of spoken language for legal documentation.

CMO 19, Series of 2017, is a memorandum from CHED aimed at enhancing the Office Administration field. The Bachelor of Science in Office Administration (BSOA) program prepares students for technology-driven professional environments, with stenography as a key component. This program equips graduates with the skills needed for success in various industries and global markets.

At Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges, first-year BSOA students face challenges in learning shorthand writing, with some having a basic understanding while others start from scratch. This lack of familiarity leads to difficulties in mastering shorthand skills, including common errors such as misspellings, misplaced words, incorrect punctuation, and poor penmanship, which result in inaccurate strokes. Given the importance of stenography within the BSOA program, many students struggle to keep pace with coursework.

The researchers aimed to investigate these learning obstacles and assess students' proficiency in Manual Shorthand, identifying factors affecting their performance to develop better employment preparation strategies. Introductory courses are vital for establishing a solid foundation, and early exposure can help mitigate challenges. Proficiency in shorthand requires commitment and practice, which can be difficult to maintain when progress seems slow. The study emphasizes the importance of supporting BSOA students in overcoming these challenges and identifies effective strategies to motivate regular practice. By implementing these strategies, students can enhance their shorthand skills, ultimately benefiting their future careers in stenography and various administrative roles.

Materials and Methods

A. Research Design

The descriptive method is used as the research design of this study. The descriptive method is a purposeful process of gathering, analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data and accurately interpreting such data with or without statistical treatment. Descriptive research aims to precisely and methodically characterize a population, circumstance, or phenomenon. This responds by answering factual questions focusing on the "what," "where," "when," and "how," providing precise, verifiable information.

B. Respondents

The study's respondents are essential for gathering the necessary information and data. It includes 187 second-year Bachelor of Science in Office Administration students from Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges for the Academic Year 2024-2025, selected using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. These students will provide the requested information by responding to a questionnaire (See Fig. 1).

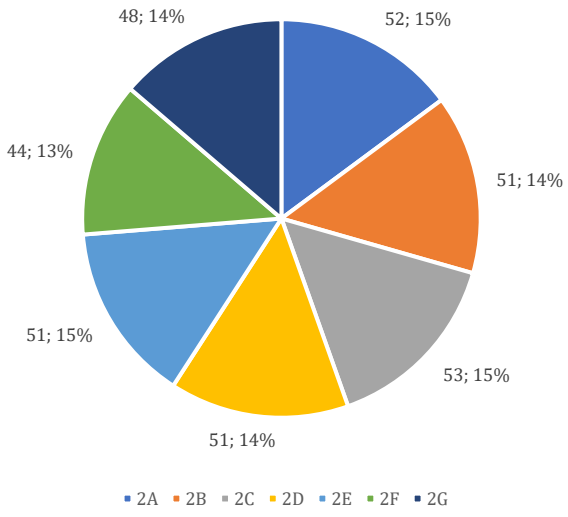


Fig. 1. The Respondents of the Study (n=350)

C. Research Instrument

The research study explored the experiences and learning obstacles faced by BSOA students in Shorthand, specifically in dictation and transcription. A structured survey questionnaire was created using Google Forms for efficient data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first assessed the skills of BSOA students, while the second focused on identifying specific learning obstacles in stenography, particularly in shorthand writing.

The researchers structured clear, concise questions to align the questionnaire with the research objectives. They gathered information from books, articles, and online sources to ensure thoroughness. The study adhered to ethical principles by obtaining informed consent from participants and prioritizing the confidentiality and anonymity of their data to protect their rights throughout the research process.

D. Documentary Analysis and Statistical Treatment of Data

In addition to the questionnaires, a comprehensive records review was conducted as a supplementary data-gathering tool. Relevant documents were thoroughly analyzed, including textbooks, research papers, teaching materials, and institutional records related to shorthand education within the BSOA program. The following statistical tools will aid the researchers in analyzing and interpreting the data.

- Slovin's Formula. The researchers used a formula to calculate the sample size of second-year BSOA students for the Academic Year 2024-2025, determining the total number of respondents.
- Percentage technique. The researchers applied to assess and interpret the profiles of student aides accurately.
- Weighted Mean. The researchers utilized to evaluate the extent of responses from the participants.
- Ranking Method. This method will be implemented to identify learning obstacles BSOA students face in Shorthand, where respondents rank obstacles from 1 (highest) to 10 (lowest).

Results and Discussion

A. Skills possessed by BSOA students in shorthand

This section includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the shorthand skills possessed by BS in Office Administration students in terms of dictation and transcription.

1. Dictation

Table 1 shows that BSOA students excel in strong active listening, with a weighted mean of 3.00 indicating proficiency. In contrast, their ability to take dictation at a speed of 85-100 words per minute ranks lowest, with a weighted mean of 2.41, classified as "moderately skilled."

Table 1. Skills possessed in terms of Dictation

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Able to take dictation in a noisy or distracting environment.	2.5	Skilled	8.5
2. Able to recall dictated data.	2.73	Skilled	2
3. Acquire strong and active listening skills.	3.00	Skilled	1
4. Proficiency in using shorthand symbols and abbreviations correctly and consistently.	2.63	Skilled	5
5. Able to maintain legible strokes and Shorthand outlines.	2.60	Skilled	7
6. Capable of constructing new words during stroke dictation.	2.61	Skilled	6
7. Able to take dictation 85-100 words per minute.	2.41	Moderately skilled	10
8. Able to know the proper way of omitting an alphabet in a word during dictation.	2.68	Skilled	4
9. Can comprehend what is being dictated.	2.70	Skilled	3
10. Confident in how to write and transcribe the dictated words.	2.57	Skilled	8.5
Average weighted Mean	**2.65**		**Skilled**

The study on BSOA students' shorthand skills reveals their strong active listening proficiency, rated at a weighted mean of 3.00, which is crucial for effective dictation. However, they struggle with dictation speed at 85-100 words per minute, achieving only a mean of 2.41, classified as "moderately skilled." This gap highlights the need for targeted practice in speed.

The study recommends peer collaboration, regular feedback, and assessments to improve transcription efficiency. Expanding vocabulary is also essential, as students face challenges with unfamiliar terms and accents. Research by Fry [5] and Ribling [6] underscores the importance of vocabulary and maintaining dictation pace, while McClelland & Thurlow [7] emphasize developing manual skills. A combination of strong listening skills, a broad vocabulary, and speed training is vital for BSOA students' success in fast-paced professional environments.

2. Transcription

Table 2 highlights the transcription skills of BSOA students. The highest-ranked skills are "Able to read the transcribed words" and "Can review and correct transcriptions for accuracy and completeness," with a weighted mean of 2.73, indicating that students are

skilled in these areas. Conversely, the lowest-ranked skill is "Able to transcribe unfamiliar words during dictation," which has a weighted mean of 2.42, suggesting that students are moderately skilled. Overall, the findings reveal significant insights into the transcription abilities of BSOA students.

Table 2. Skills possessed in terms of Transcription

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Can easily combine words and phrases in writing shorthand.	2.55	Skilled	6
2. Ability to focus on details to ensure transcripts are error-free.	2.64	Skilled	4
3. Able to read the transcribed words.	2.73	Skilled	1.5
4. Can review and correct transcriptions for accuracy and completeness.	2.73	Skilled	1.5
5. Having high-speed and accurate transcription skills in steno writing.	2.46	Moderately skilled	8
6. Able to transcribe unfamiliar words during dictation.	2.42	Moderately skilled	10
7. Skilled in mastery of the steno alphabet's strokes, brief forms, derivatives, and phrases.	2.56	Skilled	5
8. Can transcribe 10-30 words per minute.	2.44	Moderately skilled	9
9. Knows how to use accurate punctuation and grammar.	2.69	Skilled	3
10. Can transcribe without using guides or learning materials.	2.55	Skilled	7
Average weighted Mean	**2.58**		**Skilled**

The study on BSOA students' shorthand skills highlights their strong transcription abilities, particularly in reading transcribed words and reviewing for accuracy, both were rated as "skilled" with a weighted mean of 2.73. However, their ability to transcribe unfamiliar words ranked lowest at a weighted mean of 2.42, indicating "moderate" skill. This gap suggests that while students perform well in familiar contexts, they face challenges with complex terminology. The findings underscore the need for targeted training to enhance their proficiency with unfamiliar words, emphasizing the importance of expanding vocabulary and developing strategies for encountering new terms to ensure professional readiness.

Recent studies support these findings, noting the significance of shorthand skills for effective transcription. Abdul-Kahar [8] emphasizes the importance of accurate note-taking, while Olufunke [9] points out barriers to mastering shorthand that must be addressed. Fidler [10] discusses the diverse abilities required for effective shorthand, including attentive listening. Additionally, Jensen [11] stresses the need for error correction in transcription training, while Jochim [12] highlights the benefits of personalized techniques to accommodate individual learning differences. Tailoring

training with varied learning materials can enhance students' adaptability in transcription tasks.

The study underscores the importance of improving BSOA students' skills in transcribing unfamiliar words. It suggests personalized, supportive educational strategies will better prepare them for real-world transcription challenges. The results indicate that BSOA students are proficient in dictation and transcription, showing slightly higher competency, with a weighted mean of 2.65 compared to 2.58 for transcription. This suggests that most BSOA students can effectively handle the demands of shorthand, particularly in listening and accurately recording dictated words. See Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the Skills possessed in terms of Dictation and Transcription

Skills	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Dictation	2.65	Skilled	1
Transcription	2.58	Skilled	2

The overall results categorized BSOA students as "skilled" in shorthand, indicating they possess the fundamental skills necessary for success. While dictation skills are more developed, transcription also shows competence, albeit to a slightly lesser degree. This slight difference highlights an opportunity for further improvement, particularly in transcription. The findings suggest that, although students have a solid foundation in shorthand, targeted efforts to enhance transcription skills could lead to greater proficiency. By focusing on this development area, instructors can better prepare students for future challenges in their academic and professional endeavors within the field of stenography.

B. Learning obstacles of BSOA Students in shorthand

This section includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the learning obstacles of BS in Office Administration students in Shorthand, along with dictation and transcription.

1. Dictation

In Table 4, the data present the learning obstacles encountered by BSOA students in shorthand, particularly in dictation. The table reveals that students' highest difficulty is feeling pressure during dictation practices, with a weighted mean (WM) of 2.97. On the other hand, the lowest ranking is Unable to obtain dictated data completely, with a WM of 2.64. Both are interpreted as occurring "Often," indicating the frequency of these challenges among the respondents.

The data reveal that BSOA students primarily struggle with emotional pressure during dictation exercises, which leads to anxiety and disrupts their focus and performance. This pressure is compounded by challenges in keeping up with required dictation speeds,

handling brief forms, and maintaining concentration. Although the lowest-ranked issue is the inability to capture dictated information completely, this technical challenge is influenced by limited vocabulary and focus, suggesting that emotional stress significantly impacts their performance.

Table 4. Learning Obstacles along with Dictation

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Having struggled with keeping pace with dictation speed during shorthand practice.	2.93	Often	2
2. Unable to obtain dictated data completely.	2.64	Often	10
3. Unable to understand what the speaker is dictating during shorthand practice.	2.78	Often	5
4. Poor understanding of accents/ intonations in the dictation process	2.72	Often	7
5. Unable to recall shorthand strokes, symbols, brief forms, and phrases during dictation.	2.72	Often	8
6. Having a lack of concentration during the dictation process.	2.76	Often	6
7. Unable to take 85-100 words per minute.	2.81	Often	3
8. Has poor and limited vocabulary proficiency.	2.68	Often	9
9. It is not easy to analyze whether the data that has been dictated has brief forms/ derivatives.	2.79	Often	4
10. Feeling pressure when having dictation practices.	2.97	Often	1
Average Weighted Mean	**2.78**		**Often**

While vocabulary issues exist, they are less detrimental than the pressure and speed-related challenges. The findings indicate that students possess the necessary vocabulary but struggle more with the pressure to perform quickly and accurately. To address these challenges, stress management and gradual speed adjustments are recommended.

Supporting studies, such as Agnas et al. [13], highlight similar difficulties in quick dictation, aligning with the significant challenges identified in the current study. Fry [5] also emphasizes students' comprehension issues at high speeds, particularly with accents or unfamiliar terms. Echipare et al. [14] note the challenge of mastering new shorthand symbols, which is echoed in the students' difficulties with recalling shorthand strokes and symbols. The findings underscore the need to alleviate emotional pressure and improve students' dictation skills.

2. Transcription

As shown in Table 5, the data revealed that BSOA students face difficulties in Shorthand, along with Transcription. The highest rank, with a weighted mean of 2.89, is *Difficulty transcribing unfamiliar words.* In contrast, the tenth or lowest rank is *Poor penmanship, causing inaccurate stroke*s, with a weighted mean of 2.66. Both are interpreted as often.

The study's findings indicate that BSOA students face significant challenges in shorthand and transcription, with the most notable difficulty being the transcription of unfamiliar words, which received the highest rank with a weighted mean of 2.89. This struggle reflects gaps in vocabulary acquisition and exposure to diverse topics, hindering transcription accuracy and efficiency. Conversely, the lowest-ranked difficulty, poor penmanship, has a weighted mean of 2.66 and can lead to misinterpretation of notes, compounding transcription issues.

Table 5. Learning Obstacles along with Transcription

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Poor penmanship causes inaccurate strokes.	2.66	Often	10
2. Incapacity to alter promptly or make corrections while dictating.	2.66	Often	9
3. Unable to transcribe accurately with minimal errors.	2.71	Often	6
4. Lack of mastery with the steno alphabet strokes, brief forms, derivatives, and phrases.	2.67	Often	8
5. Unable to instantly transcribe from dictation.	2.74	Often	4
6. Having difficulties recognizing when to combine brief forms and phrases.	2.73	Often	5
7. Difficulty in transcribing unfamiliar words.	2.89	Often	1
8. Easily forget how to transcribe legal and medical terminologies in shorthand.	2.82	Often	2
9. Unable to write a complete sentence in shorthand continuously.	2.80	Often	3
10. Poor knowledge of basic shorthand principles and elements of transcription	2.70	Often	7
Average Weighted Mean	**2.74**		**Often**

The interplay between unfamiliar vocabulary and poor penmanship exacerbates these challenges, emphasizing the need for vocabulary enhancement. Instructors are encouraged to incorporate vocabulary-building exercises and industry-specific dictation materials. Supporting literature, such as Balsley [15] and Okoduwa [16], underscores the importance of a strong command of English grammar and vocabulary in achieving proficiency in shorthand. Additionally, the pressure to write quickly can worsen issues related to penmanship. Jochim [12] highlights the need for tailored interventions, including handwriting practice, to address these challenges effectively.

As shown in Table 6, the results indicate that BSOA students frequently encounter challenges in shorthand, particularly in two key areas: dictation and transcription. Specifically, the weighted mean for dictation is 2.78, interpreted as often, while transcription has a slightly lower weighted mean of 2.74, interpreted as often.

Table 6. Summary of the Learning Obstacles along with Dictation and Transcription

Difficulties	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Dictation	2.78	Often	1
Transcription	2.74	Often	2

These findings underscore the necessity for targeted support and effective instructional strategies to enhance students' skills in shorthand. Particularly in dictation, many students need better vocabulary proficiency, which limits their ability to transcribe spoken material accurately. In transcription, adequate penmanship leads to accurate strokes, further complicating their understanding and execution of shorthand techniques.

Conclusion

In conclusion, BSOA students demonstrate solid skills in dictation and transcription, as evidenced by a weighted mean of 2.65 for dictation, indicating a greater proficiency in capturing spoken information than a mean of 2.58 for transcription. This distinction highlights the importance of ongoing practice and continuous education in enhancing their competencies. While students have established a commendable foundation in shorthand skills, the slightly lower performance in transcription suggests an opportunity for targeted improvement. Focusing specifically on enhancing transcription techniques could help bridge the gap between these two areas and significantly boost overall proficiency. Instructors must implement strategies emphasizing regular practice and provide additional resources tailored to transcription. This could include workshops, exercises, and personalized feedback to help students refine their skills.

The assessment of learning obstacles BSOA students face in shorthand reveals significant challenges in dictation and transcription, with weighted averages of 2.78 and 2.74, respectively. These difficulties stem from unfamiliarity with certain words, which disrupts transcription efficiency and undermines students' confidence. Additionally, the pressure during practice sessions can exacerbate these issues, leading to mistakes and heightened anxiety.

To address these challenges, educators should create a supportive learning environment by offering practice with unfamiliar vocabulary in a low-pressure setting and focusing on gradual skill development. This approach can help students build their confidence and competence in shorthand, preparing them for future academic and professional challenges.

Limitations and Suggestions

Based on the findings, the study recommends developing and implementing specialized training programs designed to enhance students' dictation and transcription skills. These programs should incorporate various teaching techniques that provide structured and

consistent practice, reinforcing skill development over time. Practice sessions should be goal-oriented to help students maintain concentration and improve focus during dictation and transcription tasks. Incorporating real-life scenarios—such as transcribing interviews or taking meeting notes—can further engage students by demonstrating the practical relevance of shorthand skills. To address performance anxiety and improve concentration, the integration of stress-management techniques, such as mindfulness exercises, is also recommended. Additionally, focused training sessions should emphasize both transcription techniques and vocabulary development. Creating a dedicated vocabulary list featuring commonly used shorthand words and phrases and encouraging regular practice can improve students' speed and word recognition. These strategies aim to overcome the key learning obstacles identified in the study, enabling instructors to foster a more supportive and effective learning environment that prepares BSOA students for future professional success.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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