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Effect of Collaborative Teaching Strategy on Students' Essay Construction in College of Education in North Central Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

The poor state of students' writing is a source of concern for students, parents and teachers. Students' inability to write effectively is believed to contribute immensely to their poor performance in English language and other subjects. Consequent upon their poor performances in English language subject for instance, students longing to further their education are denied admission into institutions of higher learning. This paper therefore in the light of the foregoing tries to look at the roles of collaborative teaching methods in students' essay writing skills by highlighting the needs for collaborative teaching strategy, the concept of essay writing, the importance, state of the students essay writing at present, the roles of the collaborative teaching strategy on essay writing achievement, summary of the work and conclusion.

Keywords: Collaborative Teaching Strategy, Students, Essay Construction, College of Education, North Central Geo-Political Zone.

Introduction

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Writing is an important means of communicating information which involves translating thoughts, feelings, ideas and experience into a readable text using various writing skills. Writing is an essential skill especially in today's world as one's ability to write is critical for success in most aspect of human endeavor. For instant, in academics, writing is required in

the learning of all subject and is the primary medium by which students' academic achievement is assessed. Furthermore, writing is used for job application as well as for effective performance of one's task and even progress at most workplace. It is also used in maintaining social links and recording experiences. By implication, inability to write can limit a person's chance of reaching his/her potential academically, professionally, economically and socially. However, writing is a complex skill that is not naturally acquired but is usually learned in a formal education setting (Myles, 2002). This is why every serious education system should ensure that learners are taught to be proficient in the different forms of writing.

Essay writing is part of the English language skills that is taught in secondary schools in Nigeria. An essay is a piece of writing on a given topic presented in continuous prose format, well structured, and that communicates its message clearly to its reader (Ogbuehi, 2013). The expectation of the society is that students should be able to write the different types of essays before the end of their secondary school education. But, over the years, studies and experiences have shown that many of these students find it difficult to write essays efficiently at the level required of their classes due to poor knowledge of writing skills (Okotie, 2010). Cognitive collaboration strategies are associated with activity-based learner centered strategies which promote active participation of students in the learning process. They encourage social and cognitive interactions among collaborative learning group members. The strategies allow for students to operate in communicative groups where they engage in discussions and evaluation of one another's view in a bid to enhance their understanding of the content being learned (Langer, 2000). The role of the teacher here is that of a facilitator of learning. the teacher guides the student to participate in productive dialogues by eliciting deep thought provoking questions and contributions among students. The strategies also allow for the teacher students should learn as well as guide, monitor and give students feedback as they carry out tasks targeted at helping them develop specific writing skills. Cognitive collaboration strategies are obviously in line with current trends in language learning that support active learning process.

The poor state of students' writing is a source of concern for students, parents and teachers (Muodumogu & Unwaha, 2013). Students' inability to write effectively is believed to contribute immensely to their poor performance in English language and other subjects. Consequent upon their poor performance in English language subject for instance, students longing to further their education are denied admission into institutions of higher learning. Some indulge in different forms of examination malpractice in a bid to make at least a credit pass in the subject (Akinwamide, 2012).

It has been observed that teachers employ ineffective methods in teaching essay writing. These methods which are more product-based do not allow students to practice and develop essential writing skills in writing classes (Timayi, 2015). Consequently, students

are deprived of learning what the writing process involves and to master skills such as idea generation, outlining, sentence construction, paragraph development, editing and others. In addition, most teachers have difficulties in designing writing tasks and activities that enable students practice writing skills. The foregoing is further compounded by the fact that some teachers avoid teaching writing due to ignorance of how to teach it. Writing therefore becomes the most neglected among all the language skills.

Significance of the Study

There are reasons that have been advanced by researchers for college of Education students' inability to construct effective sentences. The researchers hope that this work will of benefit to college of Education school students of English language, teachers of English language at the College of Education level, Federal and State Ministries of Education, and school Administrators; authors and Publishers, Curriculum Planners and library users.

Specifically, it is hoped that the findings of this research will help Colleges of Education students of English to develop the skill to use collaborative strategy appropriately as they utilize various types of sentence structure s in their written work. They will also develop the aptitude for writing essays by themselves without the teacher having to always guide them.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will guide English language teachers in obtaining information on modern techniques of handling collaborative strategy instruction. It will also help them make writing activities more interesting and meaningful to students.

In addition, it is hoped that this research findings will benefit the Federal and State Ministries of Education, and Secondary School Administrators with the skills of organizing workshops, seminars and in- service training that will update and refresh beneficiaries' knowledge on collaborative strategy in effective essay writing.

It is also hoped that textbook writers will benefit from the findings of this study as many students are taught to write essays from textbooks. Both authors and publishers will find it necessary to include collaboraive strategy in their textbooks.

The researcher hopes that curriculum planners will also benefit from this work as they can include collaborative strategies into the senior secondary school curriculum. It will give them scope for innovation and integration of suitable strategies that will boost the learning of essay writing.

Research Question

The following research questions are raised to direct the study.

1. To what extent would the mean score of students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction and those taught using the conventional method differ?
2. To what extent would collaborative instruction strategy have effect on rural an urban students' mean score in essay writing?

3. To what extent would the effect of collaborative strategy have on male and female students' mean score in essay writing?
4. To what extent would there by a difference in the mean gain of high average and low ability students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of students taught essay using collaborative instruction and those taught using the conventional method.

H02: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of rural and urban students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction strategy.

H03: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of male and female students taught essay writing collaborative strategy.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of high, average and low ability students essay writing using collaborative strategy.

Keywords: Collaborative, instructional strategy, essay writing, writing skills, North Central Geo-political zone.

Collaborative: An approach, where two or more educators work together to achieve a common goal toward promoting students' engagement and learning outcomes.

Instructional strategy: A planned approach or method used by educators to deliver instruction and promote students learning.

Essay writing: A social act which reflects the writers communicative skills which is difficult to develop and learn.

Writing skills: The ability to effectively communicate, ideas, thoughts and opinions through written languages.

North central Geo- Political Zone: one of the geo- political zones in Nigeria that comprises: Niger, Plateau, Kogi, Kaduna, Kwara and Benue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In writing skills, there are many kinds of writing. One of them is essay writing. Ghaith & Fidelia (2018) said essay writing is exploring thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete in a computer process. Essay authors is required to write according to what is on his mind. In essay writing, it cannot be mastered easily. It must be studied and practiced continuously. Many students find difficulties in writing essay because they find it hard to finding and generating the ideas (Enyebe, 2017).

The less of writing skills for expressing ideas demonstrating knowledge negatively impacts struggling student' ability to maximize content learning opportunities (Mason, 2013). Index is the important thing to begin writing essay. In this skill, students are

required to manage their thought clearly and effectively (Fidelie, 2014). This is also influenced by differences in understanding in various countries. These skills make it difficult for students because of differences in academic understanding in various countries (Enyebe, 2014).

The teacher

- Providing a material, the teacher usually gives assignments which will be assessed as student achievement. From the achievements we knew the progress of students whether students understand the material the teacher provides or needs more guidance defining students achievements and factors that impact progress is critical to becoming a successful teacher.
- Various methods can be used during the teaching process, one method that can be used is collaborative instruction strategy, rather than complete use of the conventional method of teaching that has limitation. It makes students more active in finding learning resolved that are increasingly growing compared to conventional method that make students passion in finding ideas and learning resources.
- Conventional method also makes the experiences of students in writing to be reduced and even limited and makes students creativity low. Besides, this strategy can improve students achievement. Writing essays must be united and coherence between are sentence to the other sentence. Therefore, students have difficulty because they find it difficult to find diction. This treatment also helps students to make unity and coherent sentences in essay (Kinsler, 2016).
- Writing is one of language skills which has given an important contribution to human work. There are so many records or recent activities that we can read today, which can also be read in the future. Tarigan (2008) stated that writing is a skill language used to communicate indirectly not face to face with other people. Writing is communicating in a verbal way.
- Writing is also a process of discovering and organizing ideas, putting them on a paper and reforming and reviewing them. According to Oyetunde (2005) that writing is a way to produce language, which you do naturally when you speak. Based on the all statement above, writing is a skill to communicate indirectly or not dealing with others. Writing is also a process of finding ideas, then put his ideas on paper to be reviewed. Writing is also a process of finding ideas then put the ideas on paper to reviewed (Meyers, 2015).
- Writing has some purpose according to Akinade (2005). First, writing helps students to learn because it reinforces the grammatical structure, idioms and vocabulary that is being taught by the teacher. It also helps students to have a chance to be adventurous with a language to go beyond that they have just learnt to say, to take risk. Thirdly, in the process of writing, they necessarily become

very involved with the new language. From the statement above, purpose of writing such as strengthening vocabulary, provide s the opportunity to know the language and become familiar with the new language and it helps the students to learn.

- Overall, this skills is to train writers to think critically and creatively so that students dare to say their opinions. This skills also develops ways of writing and ads vocabulary.
- According to Saad & Ahmed (2015), social learning and language contexts writing are very important to improve creative thinking, writing style, vocabulary and allowing students to use their own opinion. This is a derivation of the concept of cooperative learning, collaborative instructional strategy is a teaching that the teacher is directly involved with students to work in groups to maximize learning, According to Jacob (2006) it is a student learning strategy activity in a small group (minimum of two people), each of which has an unequal level of ability to improve their mastery of the lesson. Graham & Oerim (2007) stated that collaborating is the teaching strategy that uses instructional settings where students work together to plan, arrange, revise and edit their work. Each group member has the responsibility of carrying out the learning process by learning that is taught and helping their group friends to learn and understand the lessons they are getting. It makes students more active in finding learning resources that are increasingly growing and help students express their ideas. This strategy requires effective communication and collaboration between teachers and students that involve students in real- world task and thinking of new information for prior knowledge (Adaobi Fidelia, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the study

The research design that will be used in this study is the true experimental design which uses pre- test, post- test, randomized control and experimental group,.

This design uses randomized control and pre-test measurement on the dependent variable to assure that the groups are equal and that only the experimental group experiences the independent variable (Edet, 2004).

The choice of the experimental design is based on the fact that the critical factors of random selection and assignment of subjects will be followed in the study.

In addition, the fact that there will be a treatment group to check the effect of treatment justifies the use of experimental design. The design uses in procedure comparison, manipulation and control to establish the effect of an independent variable on dependent variable (Awotunde, Ugodulunwa & Ozoji 2008).

Population

The population of this study consists of all English students in Federal College of Education in North central Zone of Nigeria.

List of Federal Colleges of Education in North- Central Zone.

1. Federal College of Education, Kontagora
2. Federal College of Education, Zuba, Abuja
3. Federal College of Education, Okene
4. Federal College of Education, Pankshin

Sample and Sampling

The sample for the study will consist of 40 NCE students in two federal College of Education within North Central Zone. The sample size of fourty is considered representative of students in the two sampled College because it represents about fourty percent of the students. This is in line with recommended size of 10 percent for a population of few thousand (Eze, as cite din Ozoji, 2010). Furthermore, the choice of sample size of fourty is in line with the view that for an experimental study, " a minimum sample of fifteen per group can give some confidence that conclusions reached concerning differences between groups are valid (Gay, as cited in Ozoji, 2010).

Instrument of Data collection

An instrument will be used for data collection in this study, which is tagged: Essay Construction Achievement Test (ECAT) adopted by the researchers. This instrument will comprise two sections, section A, on students' personal information such as: School, Class and group, section B will comprise of two section of two sections of questions namely: essay construction questions where students will be asked 4 types of essay on every type of essay which will give a total score of 180 marks x 25 marks each.

Validation and Reliability of Instrument

To establish the conflict of the instruments, the components of the instruments (ECAT) was subjected to the scrutiny of three experts as follows: one in research, measurement and evaluation until in educational foundations department and two experts in English language in the department of English education, to scrutinize the terms, ascertain the appropriateness, instruments, the study's objectives, research questions and hypotheses with the collaborative instrument curriculum programme. The table of specification and lesson notes for the study were equally submitted to the experts for scrutiny. This means that the researchers will make corrections based on the suggestions and modifications of the experts.

For the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was establish by using Cronbach Alpha method to measure the internal consistency. This was done by conducting pilot study in a college with 40 students outside the main study but with the dame characteristics. Cronbach Alpha provides a reliability estimate the reliability of scores from a test that is scored pass or fail (1 or 0) (Ugodulunma, 2020).

Administration of the Instruments

The ECAT will be administered by the researchers and research assistants. The method of administration will be through face to face contact method to make sure that none of the question papers got lost. The presence of the researchers and the research assistants through the face to face method of administration will help clarify misconception issues.

Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis will be used in this study are: mean, standard deviation and t-test. Mean and standard deviation will be used to answer the research questions while t-test statistical method will be adopted in testing the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The data used to answer the questions and test the hypothesis were obtained from the score of research instrument.

Table 1: Mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) of students' achievement in essay writing (by method)

Method		Pre-test	Post test	Mean gain	Diff. b/w group
Mini lesson N	N	170	170		
	X	11.03	20.93	9.9	
	SD	4.52	6.63		5.5
	N	172	172		
	X	10.55	14.95	4.4	
	SD	3.83	4.51		

Table 1 shows that the experimental group taught with mini lesson has a mean gain of 9.9 while the control group taught with the conventional method has a mean gain of 4.4. The mean score difference between the group is 5.5. This implies that the experimental group had a higher score in the post test.

Research 2: Mean and standard deviation of students' achievement by location

Location		Pre-test	Post test	Mean gain	Diff. b/w group
Urban	N	96	170		
	X	9.88	19.16	9.28	
	SD	4.06	6.10		1
Rural	N	74	74		
	X	12.72	23.00	10.28	
	SD	4.62	6.66		

Looking at the mean gain of the data in table 2, the urban students had a gain of 9.28 while the rural students had 10.28 and then between groups difference of 1, meaning that the students in the rural area achieved more than their counterparts in the urban areas.

Research question 3: To what extent would the effect of collaborative strategy have on male and female students' mean score in essay writing.

Gender		Pre-test/post	Mean gain	Diff. b/w group
Male	N	85	85	
	X	10.83	20.43	9.6
	SD	4.06	6.10	
Female	85		85	
	X	11.41	21.23	9.82
	SD	4.8	6.9	

Table 3 shows that the main gain (that is the difference between the pre- and post test scores) for the male is 9.6 while the female have a slightly higher man gain of 9.82. Therefore, collaborative instruction strategy had more effect on the female than the males.

Research question 4: To what extent would there be a difference in the mean gain of high average and low ability students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction?

Table 4: Extent of effect of sentence combining strategy on low, average and high ability students in essay writing.

Ability		Pre-test	Post- test	Gain score
High	N	6	6	
	X	15.66	24.50	8.84
	SD	7.96	9.31	
Average	N	102	102	
	X	11.17	21.15	9,.98
	SD	4.94	6.95	
Low	N	66	66	
	X	10.59	19.95	9.36
	SD	3.35	5.50	

Table 4 reveals that the high ability group has a mean of 8.84; average ability group has a mean gain of 9.98 while the mean gain of the low ability group is 9.36.

Through students with varying abilities were influenced by this strategy as improved achievement was recorded across all levels, the effect on the achievement on students with average ability is more. Students with low ability were less affected and students with high ability were affected. Hypothesis 4 is used to further examine the extent of the effect of collaborative on students with carrying abilities.

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of students taught essay using collaborative instruction and those taught using the conventional method.

Table 5: t-test of mean gain of students taught essay writing using strategy and the conventional method.

Method	N	X	SD	T	Df	Sig/p
Mini lesson	170	9.90	3.37			
				18.335	340	.000
	172	4.40	2.01			

Table 5 reveals that the difference between high ability and average ability group is not significant between high ability and average ability groups are not significant, between high ability and low ability is significant and the difference between average ability and low ability is also significant. though, ANOVA reveals a significant difference among the three groups, the direction of significant is in group 2 and 3. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean gain of students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction strategy with regard to their ability levels is not accepted.

H02: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of rural and urban students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction strategy.

Table 6: t-test of mean gain of urban and rural students aught essay writing using strategy

Location	N	X	SD	T	Df	Sig/p
Urban	96	10.10	3.21			
				.899	.168	.370
Rural	74	9.63	3.57			

Table 6 shows that t- calculated is 0.899, df is 0.168 and p is 0.370. this means that the probability level is greater than the specified alpha level of 0.05 (P> 0.05). The calculated t value is lesser than the table value at o.05. The calculated t value is therefore not significant. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted, implying that there is no significant difference between the man gain of urban and rural students in essay writing.

H03: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of male and female students taught using collaborative strategy.

Table 7: t- test of mean gain of male and female students taught essay writing using sentence collaborative strategy.

Gender	N	X	SD	T	Df	Sig/p
Male	85	10.20	3.64			

				1.16	168	.247
Female	85	9.60	3.07			

Table 7 shows that the t calculated is 1.16, df is 0.168 and p is 0.247. This mean that the probability level is greater than the specified alpha level of 0.05 (P>0.05). The calculated t value is lesser than the table value at 0.05. This implies therefore that there is significant difference between the mean gain of the male and female students taught essay writing using collaborative instruction strategy. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the mean gain of students taught essay writing using strategy with regard to their ability levels.

Table 8: Scheffe test on direction of significance

Grouping	Ability level	X	Mean diff (1-J)	Sig	Remark
1	High ability	13.00	258.450	30.7	.000
2	High ability	1.92	.295	N.S average ability	11.08
3	Low ability	7.64	.000	Sig.	
	Average	11.08			
	Ability	3.44			
	Low ability	7.64	.000	Sig.	

Table 8 reveals that the difference between high ability and average ability groups is not significant, between high ability and low ability is significant and the difference between average ability and low ability is also significant. though ANOVA reveals a significant difference among the three groups, the direction of significant difference in the mean gain of students taught essay writing using mini lesson strategy with regard to their ability levels is not accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The evidence of the findings of this study reveals that students taught essay writing using strategy have higher mean gain in their written task than those taught with the conventional method. The findings agree with findings in earlier researches of Anizoba (2004), B03 (2008), Jibowo (2010) and Komolafe and Yara (2010). These studies report a positive effect on students' writing when teachers adopt an interactive strategy in teaching essay writing. Bos (2008) research stresses that the collaborative approaches hold a lot of promise for the development of writing skills. Jibowo, (2010); Komolafe and Yara's (2010) studies show a positive correlation between the interactive strategies used and students' achievement in essay writing like the process oriented approaches to teaching writing is built on an interactive model of composition which is undertaken in overlapping

and recursive stages. The interactive and recursive stages employed in this study must have enhanced the achievement of the students in the experimental group. One can infer that the experimental group was able to acquire skills as they were through the writing process and made proper use of the many activities that comprise the act of writing. In addition, teachers' readiness to assist the students at their point of need also helped to improve the students' active participation, clear and creative thinking and this no doubt accounted for the significant effect on students' achievement.

The study reveals that there is no significant difference in writing achievement between students in urban and rural area. This agrees with the findings of Anizoba (2004) and Uzoegwu (2005) whose studies reveal that there is no significant difference in the achievement of students located either in the rural or urban area. Though students in the urban area have a slightly higher mean gain, the difference tends not to be significant the poor facilities in the rural area. This shows that collaborative transcends boundaries as an effective strategy. It contradicts the findings in Mkpugbc (1998), Okoye (2009) and Aduwa Ogiegbaem and lyamu (2010) who found that students in urban schools perform better in language learning because of the developed environment and facilities than schools in the rural areas with limited human and material resources that could enhance learning.

The result of this study shows that there is no significant difference in achievement between the male and female students taught essay writing using strategy. The finding implies that both male and female students benefitted from the treatment. The result is in agreement with the findings of Anizoba (2010), Jibowo (2010) and Komolafe and Yara (2010). These studies report that there is no significant effect on gender on students' achievement in essay writing. It contradicts, however, the findings of Nnachi (2007) which reports that females have an edge over tha males in writing task and that of Ikegbunam (1998) which revealed that male students performed better than the females.

The study revealed a significant effect of the strategy on students with high , average and low ability level but the direction of significance was between high and low ability; average and low ability groups. The strategy thus impacted positively on all levels of students. Students with high, average and low abilities improved in their achievement aher treatment. This agrees with the findings of Uzoegwu (2005) that ability level has no significant effect on the achievement of students in essay writing. Rather, there is a relationship between instructional methods/strategy and students' achievement in a particular subject.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is often believed that of all professions, teaching is the most idiosyncratic, where the teachers behave the way he feels is right. But the individual teacher makes the difference. He is "the teacher" who approaches the classroom and the child in the right spirit. The

teacher should not take writing for granted or as a minor time consuming problem. He should have a perspective for writing and make time to write. This is because the teacher's attitude is more important than giving the practice excuses. The teacher should struggle to be a solution not a hindrance to students as writers. Mustapha quoted in Jibril et at (2007) in support of the above that:

> It is more likely that the teacher's attitude feelings and behaviour would be the determining factors in the success or failure of creative writing in their classroom rather than the exercise and activities.

Finally, the teachers should give all the necessary instructions and details to the students but never to think for them. He should let them write independently acts brainstorming. He should also know his students by name and their individual writing problems.

CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the importance of an ideal English teaching strategy as the collaborative teaching strategy, to enhance the effectiveness of the students' essay construction ad mist other methods. It therefore implies that English Language teachers as well as content area teachers are encouraged to develop students essay writing skills through the collaborative teaching method to improve their essay writing skills towards their academic achievement. The collaborative instruction method can consolidate students' essay writing abilities by enabling them access various passages and be able to correct them.

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