

Original Paper

The Outcomes of Multiple-Draft Method on the Performance of Secondary School Students in Continuous Writing

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Abstract

This study employed the Multiple-draft Method in the teaching of Continuous Writing in English Language. The intent was to determine if there could be significant difference in the performance of a group of students taught with the conventional method of Reading-Writing (a type of controlled writing) and another group taught with Multi-drafts method of writing. The study employed the pre-test and post-test controls and quasi-experimental research design. The sample consisted of 80 senior secondary school students. The instrument which was used to gather data which was the West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) English Language Essay Questions. The data generated were subjected to statistical analysis and the results of the analysis showed that at take-off the two groups were homogenous. There was significant difference in the post-test scores of the experimental outweighing the control group which came about as a result of treatment of the experimental group. There was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the control group. As evident from the out-come of the research, the Multiple- draft method (which allows students to practice with many drafts before the final writing) had significant effect on students' performance in Continuous Writing. Hence, the Multiple- draft Method was recommended for Continuous Writing.

Keywords

mentalist, process-approach, writing-pedagogy, second-language, free-expression, product-approach

1. Introduction

The writing skill, which is focused in this research work, has not received the right attention in schools, according to researchers like Odeh (2000) and Akinwamide (2007). There are multiplicity of factors and shortcomings for this poor attention. For instance, English language is a second language in Nigeria and there are limited resources in the teaching and learning of English Language. Added to these is the writing skill's complexity as a generative and productive language skill. All these have been

making performance in the skill a herculean task to accomplish before the students. Added to the above reasons is that the language teachers are mostly second language users as well, who also have their own limitations; it is against this background that the Nigerian student is expected to attain competency in the writing skill to pass examination and make way for him/her in professional callings in order to demonstrate proficiency in the writing skill for global acceptability.

Writing is a skill, which demands students to plan and organize their imagination clearly and in sequential order to fulfill the essence of writing. Composition teaching and writing is or are more difficult than teaching and practicing other language skills. This is in agreement with the views of Bell and Burnaby (1984) that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. By implication, it means the writer must plan the content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and formation of ideas.

Nunan David (2000) expresses his view that "Writing is not a natural activity. All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet all people have to be taught how to write" (pp 48-49). It is right from this perspective that the teaching and learning of writing should be organized and accompanied with concerted effort of the language teacher and careful approach of the students.

Akinwamide (2008) says complexity also arises in language teaching with regard to teachers' qualifications and the time allotted to the teaching of any of the macro skills of writing. He says further that the teacher may speak the language natively or he/she might have studied it on second language basis. It is therefore obvious that some teachers may either gloss over or ignore certain basic skills they find problematic themselves in the teaching processes (page 49). The technical nature of writing and the need to use writing to express a writer's thought in a logical and coherent manner call for it to be taught well. All the other macro-skills of language are taught without facing serious challenges on how to coordinate ideas, thoughts and the application of the mechanics as it is required in writing skill.

The dissatisfaction experienced with the traditional method made researchers to come out with the view that writing should be in multiple-draft as against mimicking a model given by a competent writer. The belief that outlines their view is itemized as follows:

- (1) Writing is a complex, unitary process that involves much more than the exercise of its component skills.
- (2) Writing requires an orderly integration of the random flow of thoughts and feelings.
- (3) Students should write at a level appropriate to their age and experience.
- (4) Frequent, guided writing experience is critical in a quality programme of composition.
- (5) Preparation for the act of writing is a decisive factor in the quality of the results.
- (6) Students can benefit by working from oral to written form.
- (7) Application of sound grammatical principles is essential to quality writing. These principles are best developed in the context of writing.

(8) Every writing act benefits from the assumption of a rhetorical stance, in which the writer makes deliberate decisions regarding voice, audience, purpose and form.

(9) Writing consists of the initial commitment to paper of a first draft, followed by a series of informed revisions.

(10) Writing "errors" are more likely to occur at the surface level in the conventions of standard written English than in the deep linguistic structure of basic thought.

(11) Students are capable of intelligent responses to each other's writing; educational value accrues to both the student writer and the reader from these editing experiences.

(12) Teacher response and evaluation are to enhance generative thinking in students

This present study, which aims at using multiple-draft method to developing the writing skill towards passing examination and meeting the global demand for writing, drew its strength from the creative attribute of the Process approach. This approach came out of the Cognitive/Expressive theory which believes in giving vent to imagination through Free-Expression. This could be traced to the earlier Mentalist theory as advocated by Noam Chomsky.

This approach was of significant relevance to this study because once the students are given the freedom of engaging in multiple-draft, write through imagination and observations of the world round about them and infer conclusion, creative attribute is established. Therefore, the students' ability to perform inside and outside the school with confidence is guaranteed.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised based on the statement of the problems:

- 1) Would there be any difference between the pre-test scores of students in the Control and Experimental groups?
- 2) Would treatment have any effect on the total performance in writing?
- 3) Would there be any difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the Experimental group?

1.2 Research Hypotheses

In order to answer the questions raised on this study, the following null-hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁ There would be no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the students in the Control and Experimental groups.

HO₂ Treatment would have no significant effect on total performance in essay writing.

HO₃ There would be no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students in the Experimental group.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

- 1) Earliest Theories about Writing
- 2) Some Basic Writing Techniques

1.4 Some Basic Writing Methods

Concerted efforts must be made by the language teachers so that the writing class does not become a source of frustration to both students and teachers as far as writing in English as a second language is concerned. The students are confronted with what is expected of them by conventions of written English to express themselves at a far more precise level of grammatical accuracy and rhetorical organization and so if care is not taken, they become confused and bored with composition writing. This is why the teachers must decide which approach, technique and method they must employ to get along with students. The first popular approach in the teaching of writing is the traditional 1 approach from where we have the reading-writing and controlled techniques.

The Reading-Writing Method focuses on the product - the written text that serves as the model for the learner. It was believed that if a model text written by an accomplished and competent writer is given to students to read, the students imbibe all the good qualities of writing and thus become good writers. This method emphasizes students' exposure to written sentences and paragraphs rather than grammatical roles or rhetorical patterns.

This method is from the Product approach. The proponents of the Product Approach hold the belief that students can learn how to write with minimal error when they are given the composition of a good writer to study before embarking on their own writing. The product approach focuses on writing tasks in which the learner copies and transforms from teacher supplied models. Adams (2006) sees the product approach following a linear pattern. This is what Bruton (2005) describes as single-draft think-plan-linear procedures with once-off correction grounded on product models of writing. The primary goal of this approach is an error-free coherent text.

In this approach, students would be given writing exercises that would reinforce language structure that they have learned through the imitation and manipulation of grammatical patterns. Examples of such writing tasks are shown in controlled compositions in which students would be given a paragraph and asked to perform substitutions, expansions or completion exercises.

The Multiple-Draft Writing Method

The multiple-draft method is an offshoot of the process approach to teaching writing. This technique focuses on what and how the students write. It presents writing in stages and gives room for feedback from others.

This method is in direct sharp contrast to the Reading-Writing method. It allows students to write out of their observations and experience. Emergent of errors at this level are quite possible as a result of self reflection which exposes the proficiency and performance levels of the students. Nevertheless, it opens avenue for analysis and correction of errors and students learn a lot from analysis of errors. Another point of interest on the exhibition of errors by the students is the peer editing paradigm.

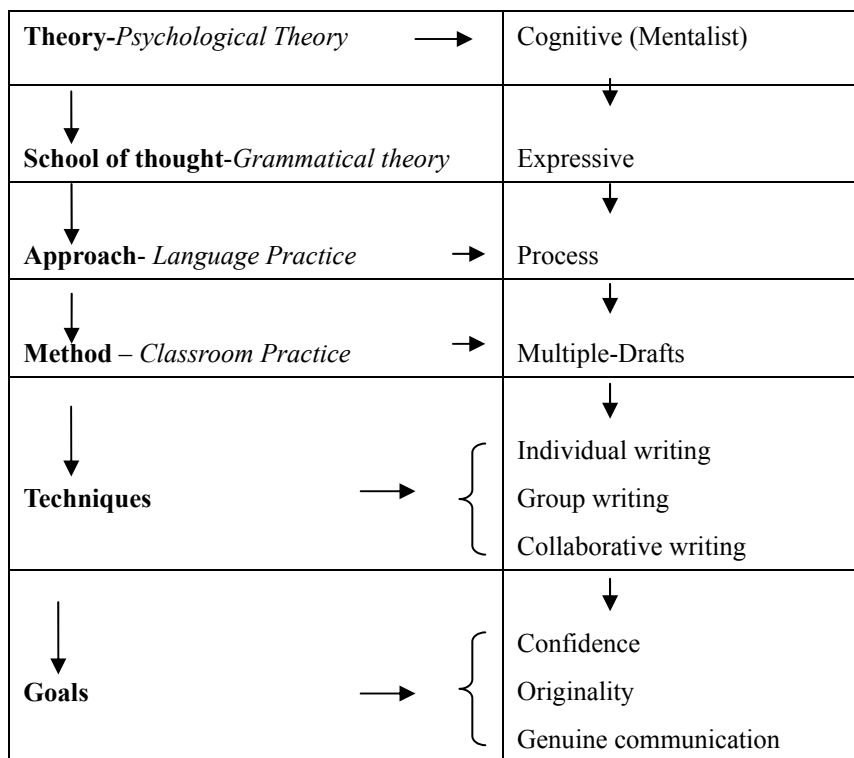


Figure 1. Tracing the background to the multiple draft method

The Method is traceable to the cognitive mentalist theorists which gave credence to Process Approach (an approach that is noted for multiple stages) in the teaching of Writing. Edition work (by peers and teachers) is like a recurring decimal to the multi-drafts method. The Expressive School of thought stresses the importance of self-development. To the Expressive School, the act of composing is a creative art; hence, the need to explore a method that fosters independent writing.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The pre-test, post-test and control with two-group-quasi- experimental design were used for this study. This allowed the application of treatment on the experimental group and comparison with the control group.

2.2 Population

The population of this study was made up of all the final year students of Ekiti and Ondo States Public Senior Secondary Schools. Both states belong to the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria. Capital city of Ekiti State is Ado-Ekiti while Ondo State's capital city is Akure.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The Sample for this study comprised 80 students selected into the experimental and control groups. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select two states. These are Ekiti and Ondo states. Two

schools were purposively selected. Ado-Grammar School, in Ekiti State and Christ's Apostolic Church Secondary School, in Ondo State. The locations of the two schools are state capital towns. An intact class was purposively selected from the arms of the SS3 classes in these schools. The Experimental school was Ado Grammar School, in Ekiti State and the students were in the boarding house. The Control group was Christ Apostolic Church Secondary school in Akure. The distance between the Experimental group in Ado Ekiti and the Control group in Akure is about 58 kilometers.

Research Instrument

One instrument was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT). This was an adapted WAEC Essay Writing past questions. The test was designed to cover those topics on which the pre-test and post-test observations were based. This instrument is of national and international status and currently in use by the two examination bodies. It has been standardized and is employed by teachers of English for grading School Certificate Examinations and General Certificate Ordinary Level Examinations.

Validity of the Instruments

For face, content analysis and editing, the instruments were given to experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation and Language Testing Experts for critical appraisal before administration. The instruments were of international standard and so its credibility and validity could be sustained and guaranteed.

Construct Validity

In ascertaining the construct validity of this instrument, a trial testing of the instrument was carried out on two groups of students and the results compared. A high validity coefficient of 0.93 was obtained.

Reliability of Instruments

The reliability coefficient was established before administration using the test retest method. In doing this, the instrument was personally administered to 80 students on two occasions in Ado Ekiti and after two weeks the same test was administered on the same respondents. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the coefficient (r) 0.93.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher first observed the two groups (Pre-test) after which the experimental group was treated. The experimental group was taught for six weeks (6 weeks) by the researcher. The students in the control group were not taught by the researcher. The researcher observed all the groups again for post-test. The students' essay work for pre-test and post-test were scored and the result subjected to statistical analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics like-arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The researcher employed t-test to compare pre-tests and post-tests of the two groups for all the hypotheses and to test whether there were significant differences between the means.

3. The Hypotheses

All generated hypotheses were tested with t-test and the decision was taken at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Here we have the analysis of the data, interpretations of the results and discussion on the findings. There are two groups in the study, one in the experimental and the other in the control group.

Testing of Hypotheses -Hypothesis One

HO₁: There was no significant difference between the pre-test scores of students in the Control and Experimental groups

Table 1. The t-test analysis on the pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups

Variable	Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-table
Content	Control	40	1.43	0.74	0.130	
	Experimental	40	1.40	0.96		
Organization	Control	40	1.68	0.76	0.653	1.980
	Experiment	40	1.58	0.59		
Expression	Control	40	2.45	1.04	0.206	
	Experimental	40	2.50	1.13		
Mechanic/Acc	Control	40	1.43	0.84	0.137	
	Experimental	40	1.45	0.78		

$P > 0.05$ N =80 df =78

The above table shows that t-cal (0.130, 0.653, 0.206, 0.137) was less than t-table (1.980) in each of the variables at 0.05 level of significance. The mean scores of the Control group bear no significant difference with the mean scores of the Experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is no significant difference between the pre-test scores of students in both control and experimental groups. This established the homogeneity of the two groups.

HO₂: Treatment had no significant effect on overall performance of the students in essay writing.

Table 2. The t-test analysis of the Post-test scores on the overall performance of the Control and Experimental groups

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-table
Control	40	6.85	1.211		
Experimental	40	10.0	1.35	35.499	1.980

The Experimental group performance is better than that of the Control group.

H₀₃: There is no significance difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the experimental group.

Table 3. The t-test analysis of the pre-test and post - test scores of the experimental group

Variable	Test Type	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t- table
Content	Pre-test	1.40	0.96	23.252	
	Post-test	5.63	0.95		
Organization	Pre-test	1.58	0.59	18.010	
	Post-test	4.98	1.05		
Experimental	Pre-test	2.50	1.13	16.114	2.024
	Post-test	9.78	2.51		
Mech./Accuracy	Pre-test	1.45	0.78	13.472	
	Post-test	4.05	1.33		

$P < 0.05$, $df = 39$ $N=40$, t -table = 2.024

Table 3 shows that t-calculated in each of the variables (23.259, 18.010, 16.114 and 13.472) is greater than t-table (2.024), hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post scores of the students in the experimental group. And this shows that, the performance of the Experimental group after treatment has changed for better and the change is significant.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a wide range of different performances as evident in the students' scores. The effects of the treatment on the Experimental group sparked off a notable significant difference between the Control and the Experimental groups. At take-off, there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the students in the Experimental and Control groups as evident in table one. This portrayed the homogeneity of the two groups. This was in line with the general out-cry of the nation about the mass failure recorded yearly in this subject. The previous results from

the schools showed their poor performance which came out in the results of the pre-test.

In the overall performances of the two groups, the treatment applied on the experimental group had a great impact as evident in Table 2. The multi-draft technique is given to the experimental class permits students to discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to appropriate meaning to their work. It recognizes writing as a systematic act that takes into cognizance some basic activities which bring about a good product.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the multi-drafts method was found pedagogically rewarding, revealing and reliable in the development of the writing skill. It is rewarding when students benefit from the contributions of others. Pre-writing and Peer-Editing stages reveal a lot of innate but relevant ideas from the students which may be unknown to the teacher and it is reliable because once the students are able to generate and compose ideas, the ability to write with confidence, inside and outside the school can be guaranteed. The most important factor in writing exercises is the students' freedom of writing from observation, meanings and interpretations they give to the fauna and flora of their environment. They must be personally involved in order to make the learning experience informative and original. The teacher should be clear on what other sub-skills he/she is trying to develop in the students. Next, the teacher needs to decide on what can be used (like pre-writing exercise) to facilitate writing.

The Process Approach from which the multi-draft method springs out; allows errors in the course of writing and re-writing but turns around at the close level of each basic stage to edit. This may explain why Content appropriateness could be ensured, Organization of ideas in logical sequential order could be sustained, grammaticality in Expression could be perfected, and mastering the use and usage of Writing-Mechanics could be ascertained. The multi-drafts method is learner centered. It exposes learners to a pool of ideas and the teacher as the facilitator or the moderator is always in the position to steer the students towards correction. The method treats all writing as a creative act which requires time and positive feedback to be done well.

5.1 Implications

Based on the outcomes of this research work, there appeared to be some observable implications for the following stake-holders.

- 1) Curriculum planners might find it necessary to see how the multi-draft nature of this approach could be planned and made fit into our serialized educational system.
- 2) Course writers and Task designers would come to the realizations that the learner-centeredness of this technique might call for different orientations and new approach in the planning of the course work as well as designing workable tasks that promote independent writings.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn with respect to this study.

- 1) In service training should be organized for secondary school teachers on how to use this technique in the language in writing classrooms.
- 2) Curriculum designers should incorporate tasks and writing activities in the bid to engage students on free writing exercise.
- 3) Enough time should be given to the writing classroom practices to enable students to participate well.

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