

Effects of Product and Process Approaches on SS 11 Students' Achievement in Essay Writing in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria

NAGA, Doofan Joyce, Prof. (Mrs) O. O. Olukunle and Dr. (Mrs.) C. D. S. Vande-Gum

Department of English Education
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

Abstract: *The study investigated the effects of product and process approaches on students' academic achievement in essay writing in secondary schools in Makurdi LGA, Benue State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two specific objectives, research questions and hypotheses. The study adopted the non-randomized pre-test, post-test control group quasi experimental design. The population of the study was all the 1,773 senior secondary school two (SS2) students in the 21 public secondary schools in Makurdi LGA. The sample for the study was 66 students drawn from two intact classes using random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT), which had a reliability coefficient of 0.96. The data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The findings revealed that the students taught using the process approach had a higher mean achievement score when compared with those who were taught essay writing using the product approach. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the use of the process approach was more effective in enhancing student's academic achievement in essay writing. The researcher recommends that English Language teachers should combine the use of the process approach in teaching essay writing and that they should avoid the use of the product approach which has been found to have less effect on students' achievement in essay writing.*

Keywords: *Process, product, Academic Achievement and Essay Writing*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Writing is a form of communication; its primary purpose is to transmit ideas, information, thoughts or feelings in the written form to the reader. The process of communication involves a sender, a medium and a receiver. In a writing situation, the writer is the sender, the medium is the written symbol and graphics or words and the receiver is the reader/audience for whom the writing is intended (Nwogu, 2008). Writing is a higher-order skill in language development, which unlike listening and speaking cannot be acquired naturally, but must be formally taught using guided instructional strategies that will

motivate and engage learners in writing skill practice. In the view of Elashri (2013), there are four basic skills of English language namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among these skills, writing seems to be the most neglected in the teaching and learning of English language.

As a skill, writing demands the proper organization of thoughts to be clear and effective, since there is more to the art of writing than mere learning of grammar. This is because it does not come natural as speaking, but it is an activity that teachers and learners cannot shy away from. English Language teachers should bear in mind that effective teaching and learning of writing involve enhancing and scaffolding learners' writing abilities to higher levels in life. Murray (2004) mentions the following as writing skills: rehearsal, drafting, revising and editing. All these involve collection of enough information, creating more points in connection with the topic as well as targeting the readers or audience using appropriate words in organizing the writing.

Composition writing is a way of expressing oneself and demonstrating one's ability to communicate effectively by writing in a logical and coherent manner that is appropriate to the purpose/aim, readers/audience, subject-matter and the situation. It also involves writing on a wide-range of topics and variety of techniques of writings such as argument, descriptive, exposition and narrative. Sonya (2013) posits composition as the act of composing, or putting together a whole by combining parts. Writing a good composition demands the ability to use language appropriately and effectively too. Moreover, the writer needs to know certain parameters by which essay development is assessed as effective. The writer generates ideas and details by approaching the topic with questions such as what? when? where? how? and why? (Nwogu, 2008). After these he/she can scrutinize and arrange the ideas into groups that will represent major ideas in the essay and discard the irrelevant ones.

Students tend to have difficulty sustaining the effort needed to write well, the problem is worsened if the student has difficulty with writing mechanics (handwriting, spelling). It is an established fact that writing is a technical skill that cannot be acquired by chance but via teaching. Fauziah and Rahim (2015) affirmed that writing as a skill is of paramount importance for many reasons. The first reason is that writing involves much more than the transcription of speech. The second reason is that writing is a surer way of mastering the written code. Writing is thus potentially a powerful means of developing one's own understanding of the topic about which one is writing.

Regardless of the importance of composition writing, there are reports that most students do not know how to do free writing and they do not possess the strategies for composing texts independently (Agnes and Reonal, 2015; Ali, 2010). Furthermore, most of them do not enjoy writing and lack skills in writing on their own. Lack of writing skills results in poor performance in English language generally (Atanda & Jaiyeoba, 2011). Supporting this view, Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) observe the school system is failing in its responsibility to make learners proficient in English language, that the teaching and learning of writing in our secondary schools has lost its taste and has deprived students of the proper acquisition of the many benefits it brings. The authors went further to state that writing is hardly taught in Nigerian schools and when it is taught, it is taught as a product and not as a process which could be the cause of mass failure in English language and other subjects because students' inability to write well affects their achievement in academics. The major methods of essay writing include, the product

approach also called the conventional approach (a traditional approach to teaching writing in which teachers provide model essay for students to mimic in order to produce a similar product); process approach (in this, the teachers present essay writing as comprising a step by step process, allow students to think and manage their writing by themselves; that is selecting a topic, brainstorming, producing a draft copy, re-writing, editing and producing the final copy. It focuses on the process a writer engages in when constructing meaning).

The product approach is an approach to writing instruction which focuses on written products (Adeyemi, 2011). Teachers evaluate the written product, judge its form and content, according to set criteria. It was also traditionally believed that writing was something that teachers expected learners to do in class without giving any prior thought to the meaning of the finished product (Adeyemi, 2011). The product approach limits the writers to a single production of text as opposed to the multiple rewrites allowed in process writing, and while allowing for a certain amount of revision; product writing seriously underestimates the importance of rewriting generally. Adeyemi (2011) further asserts that in the product classroom, the teacher is not only pre-occupied with grammatical accuracy, but also acts as a judge of students' writing rather than a facilitator. The teacher assigns a composition topic, discusses it with the students, asks them to write within a specified time limit and finally collects the work for marking. The writing exercises applied in this approach typically deal with sentence-level writing and paragraph-level organization. Students are often given a framework which illustrates a pattern of rhetorical organization; then, they are asked to fit their ideas into this framework. Both the content and the form which the students deal with are largely controlled by the teacher. Since the main focus of this approach is on written form, grammar is emphasized and a particular effort is made to avoid errors. This approach helps to reduce errors in secondary school students' written essay and meet the needs of students.

The product approach to teaching has therefore not given students much assistance and part of the reason for this as stated by Chokwe (2011) is that writing is one of the skills that is not amenable to mere memorization of a set of rules, because it calls for development and application of composition skills in the writing process. Just as Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) declare that teachers are to be blamed for students' poor writing achievement as they teach writing as a product and not as a process. Not until teachers start teaching students to see writing as a process, discovery, exploration of construction of sentences to present meaning, there will be little or no improvement in students' essays.

In teaching composition, Oyedele and Chikwature (2016) advocate process as an approach which motivates students to improve their writing because it presents the teaching and learning of writing as a task comprising series of activities requiring multiple writing sessions and students' reflection. Alabere and Aspalila (2017) suggested the use of process approach to the teaching of composition writing and discouraged the use of the traditional product approach of teaching writing. However, controversy occurs occasionally among researchers (Cheng, 2011) concerning which is better. The controversy occurs mainly because there is yet a definite and universally accepted definition for the process approach to writing although some features for the approach have been discussed. According to Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) the process

approach treats all writing as a creative act which requires time and positive feedback to be done well.

In process writing, the teacher moves away from being someone who gives students a topic and receives the finished product for correction without any intervention in the writing process itself (Hakimeh, 2017). The process approach as explained by Alabere and Aspalila (2017) focused more on presenting varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use such as brainstorming, group discussion, jotting of major ideas, organisation of points, draft-writing and re-writing. Murray (2008) clearly states that the process approach focuses on the steps involved in creating a piece of work and the process approach allows for the fact that no text can be perfect, but that a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text. Reyes (2009) acknowledges that process writing evolved as a reaction to the product approach, in that it met the need to match the writing processes inherent in writing in one's mother tongue, and consequently allow learners to express themselves better as individuals. The process approach identifies stages of the writing process such as: prewriting, writing and re-writing. Once the rough draft has been created, it is polished into subsequent drafts with the assistance of peer and teacher conferencing. Final editing and publication can follow if the author chooses to publish the writing.

The aim of the process oriented approach is to train students on how to generate ideas for writing, plan these ideas, take into account the type of audience, draft and re-draft in order to produce a final written paper that is likely to communicate their own ideas (Daze and Ebibi, 2014). Teachers who use this approach give students time to get ideas and feedback on the content of what they write in the draft. As such, "writing becomes a process of discovery for the students as they discover new ideas and new language forms to express themselves" (Belinda, 2006). Furthermore, learning to write is seen as a developmental process that helps students write as professional authors do, choosing their own topics and writing from their own experiences or observations" (Reyes, 2009). Process approach requires that teachers give students greater responsibility for self-learning (Brown, 2001). Students make decisions about genre and choice of topics, and collaborate as they write.

Researchers such as Hassan and Umaru (2014), Oyetunde (2009) attributed the low achievement of students in writing over the years to the approaches teachers adopt in teaching essay writing. The way a teacher presents the content to be taught to the learners may make the learners like or dislike both the teacher and the subject. This explains why English language teachers need to select appropriate approaches for effective teaching and learning of essay writing. In any case, the situation in many Nigerian schools is that writing is taught as a product in which case, the teacher assigns a composition topic, discusses it with the students, asks them to write within a specified time limit and finally collects the work for marking. Chunling (2008) described this method of teaching as "product-oriented". Both the content and the form which the students deal with are largely controlled by the teacher. Since the main focus of this approach is on written form, grammar is emphasized and a particular effort is made to avoid errors. This approach helps to reduce errors in secondary school students' written essay and meet the needs of students.

The average Nigerian secondary school student is confronted with enormous writing problems in English language. The learner at this stage has need for written English to express his/her various communicative needs. To express adequately in written English, the student has to go beyond disjointed sentences in order to communicate through continuous writing. He/she also has to learn how to give an adequate description, develop an argument, convince a reader, and report accurately in written English (Nwogu, 2008). Students' low achievement in essay writing is a probable signal that the product approach may not be the best approach to teaching/learning essay writing. This study undertakes to determine the effect of product approach and process oriented on students' achievement in essay writing.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

English language is an important subject at all levels of education in Nigeria and as such, a lot is required in the teaching and learning of the subject. However, the achievement of students in English Language most especially in external examination has been a source of concern to parents, teachers, educators and researchers. There has been a decline in the level of students' academic achievement in Nigeria. The West African Examinations Council's (2013) report on the low achievement of students in English language especially in writing shows that the weaknesses observed in the scripts of the candidates are mainly as a result of inadequate exposure to the skill of writing, lack of familiarity with the required format and construction of loose sentences. Poor performance of students in writing over the years has been attributed to the approaches teachers adopt in teaching essay writing. The fact that many students cannot effectively express themselves in writing, has affected their performance in other subjects. This results into mass failure in English language and other subjects. The researcher believes that if more effective approaches such as the process and genre approaches are employed to teach composition writing, students' writing skills may be enhanced and a better result may be achieved. It is on this basis that the researcher investigated the effect of product and process approaches on students' achievement in essay writing.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the effect of product and process approaches students' academic achievement in writing.

1. determine the effect of the product approach on students' achievement in essay writing.
2. determine the effect of the process approach on students' achievement in essay writing.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to help guide the study:

1. What is the effect of product approach on students' achievement in essay writing?
2. What is the effect of process approach on students' achievement in essay writing?

1.5 Statement of Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using product approach and those taught using process approach.

2.0

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was quasi-experimental design with particular reference to non-equivalent group design in which intact classes were used for the study. The area of study was Makurdi Local Government Area. The target population of this study was all the 1,773 SSS II students in the 21 government-owned and grant-aided schools in Makurdi Local Government Area. The sample for the study comprises 66 senior secondary two students from two schools. The random sampling technique was used to select two secondary schools. In each of the two schools selected, one intact class was randomly selected. The two intact classes have a total of 66 students which form the sample for the study. The study used one major test instrument titled: Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT) and one minor (instructional package) instrument, which comprises lesson plans. EWAT is the researcher-made instrument that consists of four essay questions drawn using Table of specification. The instruments were validated by three experts. Two of the experts were from English Language Education while one was from test and measurement, all from the Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, Joseph Saawuan Tarka University, Makurdi. The corrections and suggestions made by the experts who validated the instrument were effected accordingly to improve the validity of the instruments. Test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient index of 0.967 which is an indication that the instrument was reliable. Data were collected using Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT) with the aid of three trained research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis formulated at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

3.0

RESULTS

The results are presented according to the research questions and hypothesis.

Research Question 1

What is the effect of Product approach on students' achievement in essay writing?

Table 1: Effect of Product Approach on Students' Achievement in Essay Writing

| Product Group | N | Mean | SD |
|------------------|----|--------------|------|
| Pre-test | 27 | 49.20 | 10.9 |
| Post test | 27 | 63.96 | 13.0 |
| Mean gain | | 14.76 | |

The result of data presented in Table 1 shows that in the pre-test, students taught essay writing using product approach have a mean achievement score of 49.20 and a standard deviation of 10.9. In the post-test, students taught essay writing using product approach have a mean achievement score of 63.96 and standard deviation of 13.0. The mean gain between the pre-test and the post-test is 14.76. This implies that after teaching the students essay writing using the product approach the students gained by 14.76 in mean achievement scores. Thus, the effect of product approach on students' achievement in essay writing in this study is that it has increased students' achievement by 14.76.

Research Question 2

What is the effect of Process approach on students' achievement in essay writing?

Table 2: Effect of Process Approach on Students' Achievement in Essay Writing

| Process Group | N | Mean | SD |
|------------------|----|--------------|-------|
| Pre-test | 39 | 48.22 | 11.24 |
| Post test | 39 | 77.63 | 10.62 |
| Mean gain | | 29.41 | |

The result of data presented in Table 2 shows that in the pre-test, students taught essay writing using process approach have a mean achievement score of 48.22 and a standard deviation of 11.24. In the post-test, students taught essay writing using process approach have a mean achievement score of 77.63 and standard deviation of 10.62. The mean gain between the pre-test and the post-test scores is 29.41. This implies that after teaching the students essay writing using the process approach, the students gained by 29.41 in mean achievement scores. Thus, the effect of process approach on students' achievement in essay writing in this study is that it has increased students' mean achievement scores by 29.41.

Research Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using product approach and those taught using process approach.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance of the Mean Achievement Scores of Students taught Essay Writing using Product and Process Approaches

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Corrected Model | 11678.22 ^a | 2 | 5839.11 | 161.07 | .00 |
| Intercept | 568.53 | 1 | 568.53 | 15.68 | .00 |
| Pretest | 4853.50 | 1 | 4853.50 | 133.88 | .10 |
| Process | 1199.70 | 1 | 1199.70 | 33.09 | .00 |
| Error | 1993.85 | 55 | 36.25 | | |
| Total | 345042.00 | 58 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 13672.07 | 57 | | | |

The result of the Analysis of Covariance presented in Table 3 shows that the P-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 level of significance at 1 degree of freedom. This shows that the test is significant. The result implies that there is a statistical significant difference

between the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using product approach. Students who were taught using process approach have higher mean achievement scores than those taught using product approach. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found that students taught essay writing using the process approach achieved higher than those taught using product approach. This finding is possible because the process approach engages students in complex writing processes such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. These activities enable the students to perfect their essay writing. This finding agrees with that of Belinda (2006), Daze and Ebibi (2014) who found that process approach is an effective teaching approach even at a lower level such as primary school. The finding also corroborates that of Hakimeh (2017) whose finding revealed that process approach significantly affected learners' writing achievement. This finding further affirms the claim by Brown (2001) that the process approach is advantageous to students in language learning because students are the creators of language, they need to focus on content and message, and their own intrinsic motives are valued.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the process approach is most effective in enhancing students' academic achievement in essay writing. As an approach to writing, process incorporates the writing process with ordered systematic steps and shows the features of writing and its communicative purpose.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. English language teachers should employ the use of process approach in teaching essay writing.
2. English language teachers should avoid the use of the product approach which is found to have less effect on students' achievement in essay writing.

REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, D.A (2011). *Approaches to composition writing: the case of junior secondary schools in Botswana. International Journal of Learning and Development*, 2(1), 23-28.
- Alabere, R. A. & Aspalila, B. S. (2017). Process approach for teaching writing in tertiary institutions. *International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(7), 2658-2663.
- Ali Grami, G. M. (2010). The effects of integrating peer feedback into university level ESL writing curriculum: A comparative study in a Saudi context. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Newcastle University.
- Atanda, A.I & Jaiyeoba, A.O. (2011). Effects of school-based quality factors on secondary school students' achievement in English language in south-western and north-

central Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)* 2 (2), 93-99.

- Belinda, H. (2006). Effectiveness of using the process approach to teach writing in six Hong Kong primary classrooms. *Perspectives: Working Papers in English and Communication*, 17(1) 1-52.
- Brown, C. (2001). Toward a solution of the learning paradox. *Review of Educational Research*, 55 (2), 201-226.
- Cheng, M. C. (2011). *Improving interaction and feedback improving interaction and feedback with computer mediated communication in Asian EFL composition classes: A Case Study National Chengchi University*. Chengchi: University Press
- Chokwe, M. J. (2011). Academic writing in English second language contexts: perceptions and experiences of first year university students and tutors. Unpublished Thesis.
- Chunling, S. (2008). Process approach to teaching writing applied in different teaching models. Retrieved on 23/4/2017 from www.ccsenet.org/journal.html.
- Daze, M. O. & Ebibi. B. H. (2014). A systematic study of process approach and its implications for the teaching reforms of college English writing. *Foreign Language Education*, 6(1), 301-307.
- Elashin, J. (2013). Orienting teaching toward the learning process. *Academic Medicine* , 79 (3), 219-228.
- Fauziah, B. I., & Rahim, B. S. (2015). Role of model essays in developing students writing skills in Malaysian schools: a review of literature. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(2), 67-73.
- Hassan, MK and Umaru, M.M (2014). Approaches to writing in EFL/ESL context. *Journal of NELTA*, 15(2) 77-88
- Muodumogu, C. A. & Unwaha, C. O. (2013). Improving students' achievement in essay writing: What will be the impact of mini-lesson strategy?. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2(6),111-120.
- Murray D. M. (2012). Teaching the other self: The writer's first reader. *College Composition and Communication*, 33, 2: 140-147.
- Nwogu, N. O. (2008). Helping students learn in a learner centered environment. Ibadan: University Press PLC.
- Oyedele, V. & Chikwature, W. (2016). English composition writing skills at ordinary level and its effect on students' performance in three day secondary schools in

Mutare District, Manicaland. *European Journal of English Language, Linguistics and Literature*, 3(3): 1-13.

Reyes, M. D. L. L. (2009). A process approach to literacy using dialogue journals and literature logs with second language learners. *Research in the Teaching of English* 25,(3), 291-313.

Sonya, M. (2013). *A Philosophy of second language acquisition*. London: Yale University Press.

West African Examinations Council Report (2013)