

The Revolutionizing Effects of Journal Writing Strategy on Students' Writing Ability

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Abstract

Writing is one of the language skills, it is observed as a complex task and one of the most difficult skills in learning English. Writing is the best way to practice language because it can be used to communicate, explore other subjects, and show students' social identities. As explicit literacy skills are modelled through dialogue, the engagement of students needs to be considered. This research is aimed to obtain the empirical evidence about the revolutionizing effects of journal writing strategy on students' writing ability of narrative text at Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti South Senatorial District in Ekiti State. The researcher used quasi experimental research design which was classified into a quantitative research. The population of the research was 924 students from five schools in Ekiti South Senatorial District in Ekiti State. The sample was chosen by using purposive sampling technique which was selected into the experimental class and the control class. It consisted of 35 students in each school totaling 175 students in all. Moreover, the researcher used the pretest and the post-test as the instruments of the research. In the experimental class, the researcher taught the journal writing by using a social media Line Application in teaching writing of the narrative text. While in the controlled class, the researcher taught the students by implementing the conventional teaching technique such as asking the students to do the written exercises and answering ten reading comprehension questions based on the narrative text given. Also, the researcher collected the data of this research by following some steps, such as providing the pretest, providing the treatments while conducting the research and giving the post-test at the end of the research. The data from the research was calculated by using Microsoft Excel 2017 and then analyzed statistically by using SPSS version 23 with the significance level 0.05. Furthermore, the result showed that there was significant effects of journal writing strategy on students' writing ability. Therefore, it could be concluded that journal writing was effective in improving students' writing ability of narrative text. The study recommended that the use of journal writing strategy should be encouraged in teaching students' writing ability in Junior Secondary Schools so as to enhance better writing ability of students.

Keywords: Journal, Narrative Text, Students' Writing Ability, writing Strategy

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Introduction

English language is the official language in Nigeria, that its role in all sectors cannot be over emphasized. Oladigbo (2020) asserts that the four language skills are to be emphasized in order to ensure that the learners have good mastery of the language. Also, Obadare (2021) submits that English language plays a dominant role in Nigeria with over 500 indigenous languages. In addition, Harmer (2001) opines that learning English as a foreign language means that students should master four basics language skills which are; listening, reading, speaking and writing. Firstly, writing is a very important skill for academic purposes and through it, students can share their ideas and their knowledge about facts and opinions of what they have received.

The ability to read and write is a good measuring index of literacy. Writing is an art while effective writing skill is an art that is not easily acquired but has to be learnt, developed and mastered. Ogunmola (2003) submits that a writer's writing style or skill can be very revealing, because it shows the writer's technical mastery of the language as reflected in his mode of expression. Alonge, Obadare & Obateru (2017) opine that one of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in a school and go on to contribute actively in an increasingly literate society, is the level at which the child progresses in reading and writing.

In addition, writing is a reflection of the writer's mental power or reasoning ability, as proved in the content of his written piece. A good and proficient writer is purposeful and definite and has a clear-cut vision or idea of what he is writing about. It is a form of communication and the most complex because it is not inborn or innate. In some cases, we may struggle thinking out the meaning we want to share with our audience. The process becomes more challenging in second and foreign language situations, where a writer has limited vocabulary, idioms, cultural knowledge and less experience with rhetorical strategy.

Ogunyemi (2020) submits that writing occupies a central position in English language teaching and learning. Writing is a complex activity, a challenging task requiring, much mental effort. We engage in much conscious cognitive process simultaneously; we encode the meaning in our minds into words and sentences, while also attending to grammar, vocabulary, coherence, audience and appropriateness of the task. Fakeye & Ogunyemi (2010) submit that competence in writing is a prerequisite to students' academic success. Moreover, writing according to Dada & Bankole (2004) is one of the fascinating skills in language.

Furthermore, narrative texts are a form of discourse that have been fixed by writing. According to Sejnol & These (2010) narrative texts include any type of writing that relates to a series of events and includes both fiction (novels, short stories, poems) and non-fiction (memoirs, biographies, news stories). Both forms tell stories that use imaginative language and express emotion, often through the use of imagery, metaphors and symbols. It is aimed to entertain people about the events, legends or imaginative stories. It is also intended to put the moral value into the stories.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is a form of learning, as well as a communication technique in which students reflect on their reactions, ideas, and observations about topics that appeal to them and initiate them to write Linnell (2010). Depending on the purpose of their writing, students may write to think through their ideas before sharing them with others. When it is not graded, journal writing gives students the chance to write freely without being too anxious about their performance. This helps them capture their feelings, thoughts and emotions. It is different from other types of writing, in that it takes place regularly and continually over a school year or an academic semester, where students select topics that they would like to write about, according to their interests and needs. On the other hand, the teacher is an active partner, who responds to every journal entry that a student posts or writes. If the response time is going to burden the teacher, he or she can comment on students' journal entries once a week or every other week, as convenient Santos, (2012) Journal writing requires the students to map the students' progress and changes in their thinking about a subject or a topic or about the learning journey in which the students are engaged in. Also, a journal writing can be used as one of the techniques to assess the students' understanding of the learning materials given. It allows the students to think critically through different cognitive processes such as prediction, brainstorming, reflection and questioning (Rawahi & Balushi, 2015). Also, the journal writing encourages students to express their ideas and thinking about the world around them. Journal writing can be referred to "written documents that students create as they think about various concepts, events, or interactions over the period to gain insights into self-awareness and learning" (Mansor, 2011).

Also, the students would be asked to write in regular entries given by the teacher and which will have to be submitted and assessed using the rubric of narrative text writing. The students should answer the questions from the journal entries. In this research, the journal writing is used to examine the students' understanding of narrative text given to improve their writing ability. The teacher who assigns the students' journal writing often sees an increase in participation from their students, and participating in the classroom activities and discussions. Also, the teacher can know the concepts that students understand based on the text given and which concept should be revised.

Line Application is chosen as the media to write journal writing of the narrative text. The media is taken because Line Application can be an active way to have the students respond to the teachers' input, to gain the students' awareness of the subject matter with more detailed way in answering and showing the real world interaction and relevance to the questions (Gobard & Van, 2014). So far, there are very few research work that used Line Application as a media in writing journal even to help students in fostering their writing ability of narrative text.

Statement of the Problem

It is worthy to note that some students at all levels of education have problems with writing, especially in countries such as Nigeria where English is a second language (L2); this no doubt creates problems for them especially in writing. The ability to write in English, in Nigeria, is crucial and contributes to learner's proficiency in language. Mgbobile (1990) submits that English language skills, especially proficiency in writing are essential to humanity and also evidence of global knowledge and civilization. Abdullahi (2010) further identifies the relevance and competence in spoken and written halls being vital for linguistic, national and socio-cultural reasons. These and other observations of excellent English language skills have general consequences, particularly since the language has a significant role in our social and economic development, for the subsequent pedagogical expectations of Nigerian children.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study;

Does journal writing strategy have effects on the writing ability of Junior Secondary School students?

Research Hypothesis

Sequel to the research question raised above, the following hypothesis was formulated for the study;

H₀: There is no significant effect of journal writing strategy on the writing ability of Junior Secondary School students.

Methods

A quasi-experimental research design was adopted in this study. The population for the study consisted of five (5) Junior Secondary School (JSS II and III) students in secondary schools in the Ekiti South Senatorial districts in Ekiti State. To choose the sample of the research, the researcher used purposive sampling technique which selected the students into experimental class and controlled class. The sample for the study consisted of 175 Junior Secondary School II and III students that were selected from five (5) Junior Secondary Schools. Multistage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the samples.

Research Instrument

The process of collecting the data involved a written test as the instrument of the research. In this research, the writer used pre-test and post-test as the written test. The pre-test was intended to know the students' writing ability before the treatment given. On the other hand, the post-test was given to measure whether the journal writing had a significant effect toward the students' writing ability of narrative text. Also, the topics between pre-test and post-test were different. For the pre-test, the students were instructed to read a passage from a book entitled *Animal Farm* by George Orwell for about thirty minutes. Then, after reading the passages, they were allowed to write journal writing based on the guided questions. To examine the students' writing ability of narrative text after the treatments, the researcher chose a passage entitled *The Seven Commandments* for the posttest. Therefore, the procedure in writing the journal was similar to the pre-test procedure. The journal also should follow the writing guideline and answer the questions stated.

My Journal Writing

Name:

Class :

After reading the passage (based on the title during the test), please kindly write the journal based on these questions given.

1. During the hands-on-story entitled (based on the title), what information did you observe?
2. Which part did you like from the story and what made you like that part?
3. Which part did you dislike based on the story? Why did you dislike that part?
4. What have you learned from the story?
5. How is your feeling after reading the story?

The writer also provided the specific scoring to assess the students' writing performance. Regarding the use of scoring, it would serve the strengths and the weaknesses of the students in writing the journal. In this research, the scoring of the writing was adapted from PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of Collage and Careers) which specifically assessed the students' writing ability of narrative text (www.parcconline.com, 2017). There were four criteria showed to analyzed the students' writing ability of narrative text such as the development of ideas, organization, clarity of language and knowledge of language and conventions.

Technique of Data Collection

The researcher collected the data by giving pre-test, giving different treatments in experimental class and controlled class and giving post-test for investigating the revolutionizing effects of journal writing strategy on students' writing ability. Meanwhile, giving different treatment was useful activity to obtain the significant result between experimental class and controlled class. During the treatment, the researcher asked the students in the experimental class to write journal writing based on the guided questions. After they wrote the journal writing, they should submit their assignments on Line Application. Whereas, the students in the controlled class were asked to do written exercises and answered the questions based on the narrative text given. At the end of the research, the researcher gave post-test to examine the result whether the journal writing showed the significant effect on students' writing ability or not.

Results and Discussion

Research Question: Does journal writing strategy have effects on the writing ability of Junior Secondary School students?

In order to answer the question, the mean scores of students' performance in writing narrative text before and after being exposed to journal writing strategy and those in the conventional group were computed and compared. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' performance in writing ability before and after being exposed to journal writing strategy

Strategies	N	Pre-test Score		Post-test Score		Mean Difference
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Journal writing	90	51.23	19.11	67.02	11.93	15.79
Conventional	85	52.01	18.32	59.27	9.08	7.26

The result in Table 1 on students' performance in writing ability before and after being exposed to journal writing strategy showed that students in experimental group (journal writing) had performance mean of (51.23) and measure of variability of (19.11) while those in control group had performance mean of (52.01) and measure of variability of (18.32) before treatment. On exposure to treatment, students taught using journal writing strategy had performance mean of (67.02) and measure of variability of (11.93) while those taught using conventional methods had performance mean of (59.27) and measure of variability of (9.08). The differences between the performances mean before and after treatment also showed the effect of journal writing on students' performance in writing ability. The mean difference of journal writing group was (15.79) while the control group had (7.26). The table showed homogeneity between the groups during pretest stage while those in experimental group (journal writing) outperformed their counterparts in control group during the posttest stage. This indicated that there was positive effect of journal writing on students' performance in writing ability.

Hypothesis

There is no significant effect of journal writing strategy on the writing ability of Junior Secondary School students.

In order to test the hypothesis, mean performance scores of the experimental (journal writing) and control groups were computed and compared for statistical significance at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: ANOVA analysis showing students' performance score in writing ability in the experimental and control groups

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Between Group	241.378	2	120.689	3.937	0.011
Within Group	5425.400	173	30.652		
Total	5666.778	175			

The result in table 2 on ANOVA analysis test showing students' performance score in essay writing in the experimental and control groups. It was revealed that the significant value of the output (0.011) was less than the critical value of 0.05. As a result, it is concluded that there was significant effect of journal writing strategy on the writing ability of Junior Secondary School students. Hence, the null hypothesis was not upheld.

The findings from the descriptive analysis of the study showed that there was homogeneity among the groups during pretest stage. However, the use of the journal writing strategy had a positive effect on junior secondary school students' writing ability. This indicated that performance of students' writing ability was predicated on their ability to represent their thought in writing and their ability to decode and internalize facts read from texts. This is in line with the submission of Alonge et al., (2017) and Dada & Bankole (2004) that writing is one of the skills that are not amenable to mere memorization of a set of rules because it calls for development and application of composite skills in the writing process. Also, journal writing is a tool for self-improvement which gives voice to students' dreams and aspirations and also a creative medium and a way of giving one's feelings on outlet, which also support the position of Linnell (2010) who opined that not only does regular writing makes you feel good, it helps you relive the events you experienced in a safe environment. The findings also supported the position of Rawahi & Balushi (2015) who opined that journal writing strategy allows students to think critically through different cognitive processes such as prediction, brainstorming, reflection and questioning.

The inferential analysis of this study revealed that there was a significant effect of a of journal writing strategy on junior secondary school students' writing ability before and after treatment. This corroborated the result of Martinez-Lage (1992) who conducted a one semester study to investigate the effect of journal writing, based on students' personal selection of their writing entries versus teacher – assigned compositions, on students' writing in Spanish L2. He found that there was a significant difference in favor of the journal writing group in the accuracy ratio.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research was conducted in a quasi-experimental study with the purposes to know whether or not journal writing is effective in improving students' writing ability of narrative at Junior Secondary School level on the data description, statistical calculation, and hypothesis testing. It can be concluded that journal writing is one of the useful techniques to improve the students' writing ability. In other words, journal writing is effective in improving students' writing ability of narrative text. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended

that the use of journal writing strategy should be encouraged in teaching writing ability of students in junior secondary schools especially in narrative text.

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