



EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY ON SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN COMPOSITION WRITING IN QUA'AN PAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of cooperative learning strategy on senior secondary two students' achievement in composition writing. Four research questions guided the study and four hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level significance. The study adopted pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design. All the SS2 students in the study area in the 2021/2022 academic session constituted the population for the study. Using purposive sampling technique, a total of 80 SS2 students were sampled from two intact classes in the two out of the twenty-one government secondary schools. One school was assigned to the experimental group and was taught using cooperative learning strategy, while the other was assigned to the control group and was taught using discussion method. Composition Writing Achievement Test (CWAT) constructed by the researchers was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed significant difference in the mean achievement in composition writing of students who were exposed to cooperative learning method over and above their counterparts in the control group. This implies that cooperative learning strategy facilitates students' abilities to generate and logically organize ideas resulting in coherent composition writing by the students. It was thus, recommended among others that English language teachers should adopt cooperative learning strategy in teaching essay writing while curriculum planners and textbook writers should incorporate the strategy into the curriculum and the course books.

Keywords: cooperative learning strategy, learning strategy, writing, composition writing, achievement

Introduction

Essentially, writing is a form of communication and the primary purpose is to transmit ideas, feelings or thoughts or to send out information (Muodumogu & Yisa, 2013). Composition writing as an aspect of writing is a skill in which a writer uses his psychomotor skill to put down his thoughts or cognitive ideas on a paper. Composition writing can also be seen as the act of composing (putting together) letters and words on a paper, forming sentences or paragraphs, using a pen, pencil or other devices to make a meaning, in order to be read by a reader. The composition writing is one of the language skills that enable learners to think critically and creatively as they respond to academic discipline. Writing is a higher order skill in language development. Unlike, listening, speaking and reading, writing must be formally taught and learned using guided instructional strategies that will engage learners.

The writing requirements in the senior secondary school curriculum are typically comprehensive and demanding, designed to prepare students for higher education and professional life (Graham & Perin, 2007). These requirements generally include mastering various writing forms such as analytical essays, research papers, creative writing, and technical reports. According to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2022), students are expected to demonstrate sophisticated critical thinking skills, develop clear and coherent arguments, properly cite sources using standard citation formats, and show command of advanced vocabulary and complex sentence structures. The curriculum also emphasizes the importance of the writing process, including pre-writing activities, multiple drafts, peer review, and final editing (Gowon & Yashim, 2022). Furthermore, students are required to adapt their writing style and tone according to different purposes and audiences, integrate multimedia elements when appropriate, and effectively synthesize information from multiple sources.

Based on current educational assessments and research by the National Examinations Council and the West African Examinations

Council's Chief Examiners' reports 2019 to 2023, many students at the senior secondary level are struggling to meet these rigorous writing requirements. According to the reports, some of the areas of difficulty include generating and organizing ideas, developing well-supported arguments, maintaining coherent organization throughout longer pieces, integrating research effectively, and adhering to formal writing conventions. Several factors contribute to this gap, including reduced emphasis on writing in some curricula due to standardized testing pressures, insufficient individualized writing instruction due to large class sizes, and the increasing influence of informal communication styles through social media (Ebibi, Bako & Dung, 2021). While some students excel and meet or exceed writing requirements, the overall trend suggests a need for enhanced writing instruction and support at the secondary level to better prepare students for their future academic and professional endeavors.

The importance of composition writing is hinged on the fact that writing is the basis upon which communication, history, recordkeeping, art and information are preserved. In other words, writing is the framework for communication in any literate society. Writing is important because it can be used to give information, an opinion, ask questions or poetry. Words can take many forms within composition writing. The words one uses can show the personality of an individual; the things writing has done and will continue to do in people's lives and the world are profound (Obi-Okoye, 2004). Writing determines the success of students to a great extent, in both internal and external examinations. Writing is fundamental to success in academics, in the work place and in all literate professions. The ability to write well, that was a luxury is now a dire necessity (Gallagher, 2006; Muodumogu & Unwaha, 2013). Writing is vital to students' developing literacy skills.

Sadly, Gallagher (2006)'s observation typifies the public-school system in Nigeria where writing is hardly taught in any meaningful way. It is expected that the English language learner should be skillful in effective sentence and paragraph construction, and write good essays as

writing is the medium through which the academic performance of the learners are assessed. However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Thus, students' performance in written English affects their achievement not only in English language as a subject but also in the other subjects. WAEC Chief Examiners' Report (2019-2022) indicated that poor knowledge of the rules of grammar, inability to construct good sentences, lack of teachers' exposure to modern methods of teaching are some of causes of students' poor achievement in English language.

Studies have shown that teachers of English hardly teach writing and those who teach it handle it haphazardly with many of them using the traditional method which emphasizes the product instead of the process approach which is child-centred (Anyebe, 2019). Several reasons have been adduced for students' inability to write good composition but teacher's inappropriate teaching method appear to be the most prominent. Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) opine that teachers do not teach writing because they do not know how to teach it. Teachers should teach writing using the right methods in order for students master the fundamentals of writing as against the conventional approaches used by most teachers. The traditional methods employed by teachers do not provide students with much needed skills of discovering, exploring ideas and constructing frameworks with which to present ideas. This change is a move away from conventional mode of information transmission to that of knowledge construction. This change, Sun (2009) opines will improve the students' understanding of English language concepts which could lead to improving their performances in examinations. Some of the strategies which are learner-centred and could enhance students' writing skill are discovery learning, analogy, hands-on, mind-on, inquiry, concept mapping, conceptual change, cooperative or collaborative learning and amongst others.

Cooperative learning strategy, which is of interest to this study is based on the human instinct of cooperation (Johnson & Johnson, 2007). Cooperative learning is an instructional method of teaching in which students work in

small groups and are rewarded in some ways for performance as a group. The idea behind the cooperative learning strategy is that when groups rather than individuals are rewarded, students will be motivated to help one another to master academic materials (Panitz, 2007). Johnson and Johnson (2007) observe that cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. The use of cooperative strategy makes students build awareness of other view points as well as other ways of understanding; and as a result, they learn more. Current education research and reform focus on increasing students' participation according to real life needs of the students and discouraging individualistic learning styles. Thus, the problem of the study can interrogatively be stated as what will be the effects of cooperative learning strategy on senior secondary students' achievement in composition writing in Qua'an Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State?

Literature Review

Studies have shown that Cooperative learning enhances learning in different subject areas. For instance, Siddique and Singh (2016) examined the effectiveness of cooperative learning in enhancing students' essay writing skills in Pakistan colleges. The objective of the study was to ascertain whether there was significant difference between the essay writing skills of students exposed to cooperative learning and those who were not. The result indicated that students exposed to cooperative learning (experimental group) performed better than the control group. Also, Oni (2018) investigated the effect of cooperative learning strategy would have on students' achievement in and attitude to mathematics in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria and discovered that the cooperative group scored higher than the control group. Similarly, Otaikwu (2016) examined the effects of cooperative learning strategy on senior secondary II students' interest and achievement in essay writing and discovered that students in the experimental group who were exposed to cooperative learning

strategy had higher achievement mean scores in composition writing that their counterparts in the in the control group

Furthermore, Menakaya, Muazu and Mbegbu (2022) conducted a study titled effect of cooperative learning method on senior secondary II students' achievement in English reading comprehension in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that students exposed to cooperative learning method achieved better in English reading comprehension than those taught using the lecture method. Likewise, Anwer, Tatlal and Butt (2018) undertook a study to find out the effect of cooperative learning on secondary school students' achievement in English tenses. The result indicated that the performance of experimental group was significantly better than that of control group. In other words, students exposed to cooperative learning strategy performed better in English tenses than their counterparts who were not exposed to the strategy. Furthermore, Joshi and Mihret (2022) who investigated the effect of cooperative learning on students' writing ability and found that the students achieve better in the post-test compared to the pre-test after the exposure to cooperative learning in the writing classes. The findings lend credence to the positive effects of cooperative learning in enhancing writing achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the achievement mean score of students' abilities to generate ideas before and after being taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method?
2. What is the achievement mean score of students' abilities to organise ideas before and after being taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught idea generation writing using cooperative learning method and those taught using the discussion method.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught logical organization of idea using cooperative method and those exposed to discussion method.

Methodology

The design for the study was the quasi-experimental, non-equivalent, pre-test and post-test control groups. This design was adopted because intact classes were used since it was difficult to have complete randomization of the students into groups as such an arrangement would have disrupted normal school schedule. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the schools for the purpose of uniformity of standards. Using the simple random sampling technique, a sample of 80 SS II students drawn from two intact classes. Writing Achievement Test (CWAT) developed by the researchers was used to collect data. A reliability test was carried out on the CWAT and it yielded reliability coefficient of 0.87. School A was experimental while School B was assigned the control group. Pretest was administered to the respondents before the commencement of treatment. The treatment consisted of classroom instruction to the experimental group on the writing skills using the cooperative learning strategy while the control was taught the same thing using discussion method. The treatment lasted for six weeks. After the treatment a posttest was administered to both groups. The data generated were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One

What is the achievement mean score of students' abilities to generate ideas before and after being taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method?

Table 1: Students' Ability to Generate Ideas before and after Exposure to Cooperative Learning Strategy and Discussion Method

| Group | N | Pre-test | | Post-test | | Mean Gain | X-difference |
|--------------|----|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------------|
| | | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | | |
| Experimental | 44 | 35.89 | 13.46 | 74.89 | 10.24 | 39 | 35.81 |
| Control | 36 | 37.67 | 13.21 | 40.86 | 13.68 | 3.19 | |

Table 1 reveals the mean and standard deviation result on the extent students generate ideas before and after being taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method. The result for experimental group yielded a mean score of 35.89 with a standard deviation of 13.46 and control group had a mean score of 37.67 with a standard deviation of 13.21 before treatment. After treatment the results for experimental group yielded a higher mean score of 74.89 and a standard deviation of 10.24 than the

control group having a mean score of 40.86 and standard deviation of 13.68. It indicates that the mean gain score of experimental group is 39 and that of control group is 3.19 with a mean difference of 35.81. It means that students in the experimental group had a higher ability mean score to generate idea than the control group. This implies that the achievement mean scores of the students in idea generating can be improved when taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy.

Research Question Two

What is the achievement mean score of students' abilities to organise ideas before and after being taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method?

Table 2: Students' Ability to Logically Organise Ideas before and after Exposure to Cooperative Learning Strategy and Discussion Method.

| Group | N | Pre-test | | Post-test | | Mean Gain | X-difference |
|--------------|----|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------------|
| | | \bar{x} | SD | \bar{x} | SD | | |
| Experimental | 44 | 33.41 | 14.89 | 75.25 | 10.99 | 41.84 | 37.06 |
| Control | 36 | 34.25 | 14.95 | 39.03 | 16.08 | 4.78 | |

Table 2 reveals the mean and standard deviation result on students' ability to logically organise ideas before and after being taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method. The result for experimental group yielded a mean score of 33.41 with a standard deviation of 14.89 and control group had a mean score of 34.25 with a standard deviation of 14.95 before treatment, indicating that students had a low ability to logically organise ideas before

treatment. After treatment the results for experimental group yielded a higher mean score of 75.25 and a standard deviation of 10.99 than the control group having a mean score of 39.03 and standard deviation of 16.08. It indicates that the mean gain score of experimental group is 41.84 and that of control group is 4.78 with a mean difference of 37.06. It means that students in the experimental group had a higher ability mean score to organise idea than the control group. This

implies that student achievement mean scores in organising ideas can be improved by using

cooperative learning strategy to teach composition writing.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean achievement scores of students' abilities to generate ideas when taught composition writing using cooperative learning method and discussion method.

Table 3: ANCOVA Result on Posttest Achievement Mean Scores of Students to Generate Ideas in the Experimental and Control Groups

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P-value | Partial Eta Squared |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| Corrected Model | 23555.673 ^a | 2 | 11777.836 | 86.951 | .000 | .693 |
| Intercept | 22763.324 | 1 | 22763.324 | 168.053 | .000 | .686 |
| Pretest | 632.860 | 1 | 632.860 | 4.672 | .034 | .057 |
| Group | 23332.190 | 1 | 23332.190 | 172.253 | .000 | .691 |
| Error | 10429.877 | 77 | 135.453 | | | |
| Total | 317920.000 | 80 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 33985.550 | 79 | | | | |

a. R Squared =.693 (Adjusted R Squared =.685)

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine if a significant difference exist between the posttest achievement mean scores of students to generate ideas when taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method. The main effect of experimental group yielded (\bar{x} = 74.89; SD =10.24) and control group (\bar{x} = 40.86; SD = 13.68); F (1, 77) = 172.25, P < 0.05, partial η^2 = .691. Since the P-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance with effect size of 69%, the

null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the experimental group performed better than the control group in idea generating. The result further reveals an adjusted R squared value of .685, which means that 68.5 percent of the variation in the dependent variable which is students' ability to generate ideas in composition writing is explained by variation in the treatment of cooperative learning strategy, while the remaining 31.5% is due to other factors not included in this study.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean achievement scores of students' ability to logically organise ideas when taught composition writing using cooperative learning method and discussion method.

Table 4: ANCOVA Result on Posttest Achievement Mean Scores of Students Ability to Organise Ideas in the Experimental and Control Groups

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P-value | Partial Eta Squared |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| Corrected Model | 28747.044 ^a | 2 | 14373.522 | 96.452 | .000 | .715 |
| Intercept | 24238.609 | 1 | 24238.609 | 162.650 | .000 | .679 |
| pretest | 2768.467 | 1 | 2768.467 | 18.577 | .000 | .194 |
| Group | 26441.128 | 1 | 26441.128 | 177.430 | .000 | .697 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------|----|---------|
| Error | 11474.756 | 77 | 149.023 |
| Total | 318230.000 | 80 | |
| Corrected Total | 40221.800 | 79 | |

a. R Squared = .715 (Adjusted R Squared = .707)

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine if a significant difference exist between the posttest achievement mean scores of students to generate ideas when taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy and discussion method. The main effect of experimental group yielded ($\bar{x} = 75.25$; $SD = 10.99$) and control group ($\bar{x} = 39.03$; $SD = 16.08$); $F(1, 77) = 177.43$, $P < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = .697$. Since the P-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance with effect size of 70%, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the experimental group performed better than the control group in organizing ideas. The result further reveals an adjusted R squared value of .707, which means that 70.7 percent of the variation in the dependent variable which is students' ability to organise ideas in composition writing is explained by variation in the treatment of cooperative learning strategy, while the remaining 29.3% is due to other factors not included in this study

Discussion

The study investigated the effects of cooperative learning strategy on the composition writing achievement of Senior Secondary school students in Qua'anPan Local government area of Plateau State. The findings of the study showed that the cooperative learning strategy had significant effect on students' achievement in composition writing. Specifically, students in the experimental group had a higher ability mean score in ideas generation than those in the control group. The implication is that the achievement mean scores of the students in idea generating can be improved when taught composition writing using cooperative learning strategy. This implies that students taught with Cooperative Learning Strategy had higher mean score in idea generation than their counterparts who were exposed to Discussion method. This is because the learning activities and tasks were based on individual and group learning. This finding is in line with

Menakaya, Muazu and Mbegbu (2022) who examined conducted a study titled effect of cooperative learning method on senior secondary II students' achievement in English reading comprehension in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria and found that students exposed to cooperative learning method achieved better in English reading comprehension than those taught using the lecture method. The result is also in agreement with Joshi and Mihret (2022) who investigated the effect of cooperative learning on students' writing ability and found that the students achieve better in the post-test compared to the pre-test after the exposure to cooperative learning in the writing classes. The findings lend credence to the positive effects of cooperative learning in enhancing writing achievement.

The study also found that students in the experimental group had a higher ability mean score in organising ideas than those in the control group. This implies that student achievement mean scores in organising ideas can be improved by using cooperative learning strategy to teach composition writing. Consequently, it can be concluded that cooperative learning strategy does improve students' ability to organise ideas in composition writing. The superior performance of the experimental group could be attributed to their scores in the post-test increased was probably due to the opportunities provided by this approach for students of different levels to support, encourage, and give feedback to one another. The use of this approach created more interesting, comfortable, and funny learning environment in which students could share and exchange ideas to achieve their intended purpose. The significant improvement on the students' writing skills might have resulted from the processes that students experienced while working together in small groups. These processes included brainstorming, discussing, thinking, planning, drawing an outline, and finding solutions to certain problems in a group

instead of doing such processes individually or in a whole class context. The finding agrees with Otaikwu (2016) who examined the effects of cooperative learning strategy on senior secondary II students' interest and achievement in essay writing and discovered that students in the experimental group who were taught using cooperative learning strategy had higher achievement mean scores in composition writing than their counterparts in the control group. This finding also aligns with Anwer, Tatlah and Butt (2018) who studied the effect of cooperative learning on secondary school students' achievement in English tenses and discovered that the performance of experimental group was significantly better than that of control group. In other words, students exposed to cooperative learning strategy performed better in English tenses than their counterparts who were not exposed to the strategy.

Conclusion

Based on the data collected and analysed, it was concluded that cooperative learning strategy greatly enhanced students' achievement in composition writing. This implies that the method is a potent means of aiding students to achieve greatly in composition writing and should be employed by teachers of not only English (writing) but also teachers of other subjects. This is because the method made teaching more effective, efficient, meaningful, and interactive and result oriented as reveal in the students' high achievement. Besides, cooperative learning strategy is friendly to both teachers and students alike.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. That teachers of English language should employ the cooperative learning strategy in teaching their students.
2. Workshops and seminars should be organized by language educators in collaboration with federal and state ministries of Education and other relevant bodies to sensitize and train teachers on the use of the cooperative learning strategy in all

teaching learning activities.

3. The positive effect of cooperative learning strategy on achievement of learners should be brought to the knowledge of education policy makers, school proprietors, publishers of English language books with a view to including the method in their teachers' guide and the school curriculum.

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