

**International Journal of Arts and Humanities
(IJAH)
Bahir Dar- Ethiopia**

Vol. 3(4), S/No 12, September, 2014:47-59
ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v3i4.4>

**Effect of Process Approach to Writing on Senior Secondary
Students' Achievement in Writing (Plateau Central Senatorial
District)**

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Abstract

This study set out to ascertain the effect of process approach to writing on senior secondary students' achievement in writing in Plateau Central Senatorial District. The study also examined the differential effect of process approach to writing on male and female students' achievement in writing. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The sample consisted of 128 senior secondary students selected from two co-educational secondary schools from Plateau State using a random sampling technique. The study adopted a quasi-experimental non equivalent pretest-posttest research design. One intact class was assigned the experimental group and the other the control group. Data were generated using Students' Essay Writing Achievement Test (SEWAT) which was an instrument designed by the

researcher. Means and standard deviations were used to answer research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses tested revealed that students exposed to process approach to writing exhibited higher achievement ($p=0.00<0.05$) in writing than those who were taught writing using the conventional methods. In addition, male and female students taught using process approach to writing did not differ significantly in achievement ($p=0.95>0.05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers of English language should be encouraged to use process approach in teaching writing and that more emphasis should be placed on teaching strategies that will focus on building and developing students' writing skills.

Key words: *process approach, product approach, essay, writing, achievement.*

Introduction

Process approach to the teaching of writing has been advocated in contrast to the traditional product-oriented method which has predominantly been used by English teachers in the teaching of writing, though controversy occurs occasionally among researchers concerning which P is better; the process approach or the product method. The controversy occurs mainly because there IS not a definite and universally accepted definition for the process approach to writing. Some features of the approach according to Fujieda (2006) are that 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 sets students a writing topic and receives the finished product for correction, without any intervention in the writing process itself. Hyland (2003) defines the process approach as focusing more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing. Nunan (2009) states that the process approach focuses on the steps involved in creating a piece of work. Process writing believes in 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. Fowler (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.

Process writing is an approach to writing, where students learning English language focus on the process by which they produce their written products rather than on the products themselves. In the end, learners surely need to and are required to complete their products, yet the writing process itself is stressed more. By focusing on the writing process, learners come to understand themselves more, and find how to work through the writing. They may explore what strategies conform to their style of learning. Brown (2004) states that writing is a thinking process, a writer produces a

final written product based on their thinking after the writer goes through the thinking process. In addition, Brown (2004) notes that writing should be thought of as an organic, developmental process; not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message. Kroll (2009) also agrees that the process approach provides a way to think about writing in terms of what the writer does (planning, revising, and the like) instead of in terms of what the final product looks like (patterns of organization, spelling, and grammar).

In Process approach, learners are looked upon as central in learning, so that learners' needs, expectations, goals, learning styles, skills and knowledge are taken into consideration. Through the writing process, learners need to make the most of their abilities such as knowledge and skills by utilizing the appropriate help and cooperation of the teacher and the other learners. It encourages learners to feel free to convey their own thoughts or feelings in written messages by providing them with plenty of time and opportunity to reconsider and revise their writing and at each step seek assistance from outside resources like the instructor. The instructor acts as a guide and not as a judge.

The writing process usually involves several steps. A typical sequence comprised of three steps: prewriting, drafting, and, revising. Some sequences, however, use four steps, such as thinking, planning, writing, and editing, while others use five steps, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating. In other words, each writer has a preferred way of approaching the writing process, from simpler to more complex depending on the level of the learners, and the purpose of writing. These steps generally are implemented in sequence, but in process writing the writing process is not necessarily a linear learning process, rather more of a recursive or spiraling process as the learners move around these steps, sometimes going forward and retracing their steps. For example, brainstorming, one skill that is important particularly for the prewriting step, can be exercised again and again at different stages if the learner needs new ideas later in the process. Learners can achieve their writing goals through the process in different ways.

Literature Review

Until the 1980s, the focus of students studying English language writing was mainly accuracy. Reid (2003) buttresses this that the audio-lingual method (ALM) which emphasizes practice, punctuation, and grammatical structure was predominating. In this method, learners would have to copy sentence structures provided by the teacher until they acquired it. At this point, teachers and researchers had little knowledge about or experience in teaching writing, so those people had no choice but stick to the ALM. In the 90's, there was a gradual, but small change in this pattern. The classes still focused on grammar and accuracy, which stemmed from the ALM, but learners would copy the provided sentences, and change them where

necessary, or fill in the blanks which were called controlled writing. According to Silva (2010) controlled composition seems to have originated in Charles Fries's oral approach. Fries's approach is based on the notions that language is speech (from structural linguistics), and that learning is habit formation (from behaviorist psychology). This trend continued into the early 1980s with value placed on grammatical structure, or with language-based writing. Then some researchers started with a pattern-product approach or writing-based approach, which focuses on creative composition. In the 1980s, ESL writing moved from a language-based approach to the process approach. It is not clear what brought the process approach to ESL. Reid (2004) claims that it arose for two reasons: researchers' recognition of the newly developing field of Native English Speakers (NES) composition and teachers realization of the needs of English L2 students in the academic environment. During the 1980s, NES composition research conducted prior to ESL became accessible. Kroll (2009) points out that the introduction of the process approach to ESL composition seems to have been motivated by dissatisfaction with controlled composition and the current-traditional approach. Kroll (2009) goes on to say that neither approach fosters thought or its expression nor encourages creative thinking and writing. For those possible reasons, the process writing approach began to be embraced by various ESL researchers and teachers.

Since then various approaches and suggestions have been developed through laborious studies and research. More recently, some researchers have presented the post-process approach for L2 writing (Atkinson, 2003; Matsuda, 2003), which adds more social dimensions to writers (Fujieda, 2006), but the process approach seems to remain preferred and approved approach. Currently, the process approach to writing has been generally accepted, and has been widely used, even though many researchers are still doubtful of its effectiveness. Hyland (2003) states that despite considerable researches into process writing, there is still no comprehensive idea of how learners go about a writing task or how they learn to write. Hyland (2003) goes on to say that it also remains unclear whether an exclusive emphasis on psychological factors in writing will provide the whole picture, either theoretically or pedagogically. It is certain, therefore, that much more research should be completed in order to offer learners better teaching. In reality, classes cannot wait until a perfect approach or method becomes available. Teachers have to try to find more balanced and eclectic approaches which can motivate the students, and eventually improve their language abilities (Hyland, 2003).

For classes, a variety of writing textbooks introduce the process approach, and many writing teachers use the process approach to a varying degree. The advantage of the process approach is that it is possible to combine several approaches and also incorporate other skills. In order to make the writing class more effective, there are various aspects that teachers may have to consider, such as the proficiency

of each student, what the students need or what is necessary for them. For example, some students may need to focus on sentence-level practices, or need to learn how to organize their thoughts, feelings, and opinions logically. Leki (2012) notes that even if students were able to write grammar-based guided compositions, or even if students did have a fairly good grasp of grammar, they still produced peculiar, non-English sounding texts when asked to write more creatively. Grammatical accuracy including spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation does not appear to be enough to master the writing skill. Teachers generally tend to give only vocabulary or sentence level instruction in particular for those who have a low level of proficiency and confidence.

Gender and students' Achievement in Essay

Gender factor has been said to positively or negatively affect student's performance in various disciplines of education. Several studies have established a significant positive correlation between students' gender and performance in academic domain. In mathematics, for example, gender difference tends to favor male students in most studies (Okoye 2009) while in the language arts, many researchers have reported that girls are more favoured (Perin, 2007). Olajide (2013) observes that boys are superior in numerical aptitude, science, reasoning and spatial relationship, girls are superior in verbal fluency, perceptual speed, memory and manual dexterity. Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) also comment that gender is a variable important to learning. While some researchers suggest that females have an edge over males in linguistic aptitude, others are of the view that because of the biological differences in males and females (Okoye, 2009) the females perceive themselves as not able to do well in writing.

Process Writing Approach to Writing and Students' Achievement in Writing

Ho (2006) investigated the effectiveness of using the process approach to teaching writing in six primary classrooms in Hong Kong. This study used a sample of 200 students at upper primary and lower primary school levels gotten through a random sampling technique. Six primary school teachers, three in the lower primary and three in the upper primary level, each implemented an innovative two-month process writing programme in their schools. The effectiveness of the programme was investigated through post-interviews and the comparison, a pre-test and a post-test scores using ANCOVA. It was found that the programme brought about positive results across all classes in both the upper and lower primary school levels, though the results in each classroom differed slightly. Process writing seems to be a feasible solution to heightening the writing abilities and confidence of students, especially those who have higher English proficiency and those at the upper primary level.

Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) in a study titled improving students' achievement in essay writing focused on the impact of mini lesson strategy on senior

secondary II students' achievement in essay writing in Ankpa Local Government Area of Kogi State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 342 students located in eight intact classes in four schools. The eight classes were randomized into experimental and control groups and were exposed to pre-test and post-test. The experimental group was taught essay writing using mini lesson strategy, while the control group was taught using the conventional method. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. Essay Achievement Test (EAT) consisting of four questions was used to collect data. Using Spearman Rank Order Correlation, the reliability of EAT was found to be 0.86. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and t-test at 0.05 alpha level to test the hypotheses. Results revealed significant difference in the mean achievement scores between the experimental and the control groups ($P= 0.001 < 0.05$). However, there was no significant difference in achievement of male and female students.

Olajide (2013) investigation on effect of integrated approach on polytechnic students' achievement in essay writing also revealed that treatment significantly affected students' achievement ($F(3,275) = 113.720, P < 0.05$); while gender, professional training, and interaction of treatment with gender and professional training did not. The study was conducted to investigate the main effect of integrated approach and the moderating effects of gender and professional training on polytechnic students' achievements in essay writing. The Integrated Writing Approach, as the name implies, is a combination of the product, process and genre writing approaches. The study used 150 randomly selected first year Higher National Diploma students from two polytechnics in two South Western states in Nigeria. The research design was quasi experimental while the statistical tool used for data analysis was Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Methodology

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design of pre test-post test non-randomized group type. The design was adopted because it was the most appropriate in determining the effects of the independent variable (Process Approach) on the dependent variable (achievement). Secondly, it provided reasonable control over most sources of invalidity like suspicion on the part of the students, timing, anxiety, etc and, since it is often inconvenient to randomly assign students to groups in a school setting; already established intact classes were used. The study was conducted in two in co-educational secondary schools in the Central Senatorial District of Plateau State: Government College Pankshin and Government Secondary School Bwalbang, Gindiri selected through a random sampling technique. The sample was 128 students. Two intact classes made of 59 for the experimental and 69 students for the control groups were used. The groups were given the achievement test made by researcher at

the beginning of the experiment as pre-test. The experimental group was guided through a process approach to writing for a period of 3 weeks while the control group was taught writing using conventional approach. Both groups were given a post-test at the end of the third week through the help of research assistants. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyse the data generated at 0.05 confidence level.

Statement of the Problem

It is a public concern that most students cannot write even when writing remains an indispensable act. Students' poor performance in English language and in academics has been blamed on their abysmally low proficiency in writing (West African Examination Council Chief Examiners Report, 2010). The difficulty which students encounter could be traced to poor teaching method. Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) observe that the school system is failing in its responsibility to make learners proficient in English language skills. This has become the fate of students in Nigeria as a nation and Plateau State in particular. Considering the need to improve students' proficiency in the writing skills, it becomes necessary to explore alternative strategy of teaching essay writing. The researchers believe that if a more effective strategy is employed, students writing would improve. The statement of the problem of this study posed as a question is, what will be the effect of process approach on students' achievement in essay writing? Would the mean achievement scores of male and female students differ with the use of process approach?

Purpose of the Study

This study is set out to specifically;

1. Determine the extent the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method will differ.
2. Determine the extent to which the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method will differ.

Research Questions

The following research questions are answered in the study:

1. To what extent would the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method differ?
2. To what extent would the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using process approach differ?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using process approach.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Data collected were presented in tables according to research questions and hypotheses with interpretation below each table.

Research Question 1: To what extent would the mean achievement score of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method differ?

Table 1:

Means and Standard Deviations of Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre-SEWAT		Post-SEWAT		Mean
	N	δ	δ		Gain
Experimental	59	4.03 1.64	9.03 2.36		5.00
Control	69	3.64 1.79	6.55 2.65		2.48
Mean difference		0.07	2.48		2.52

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations of students' scores from the experimental and control group. The table shows the mean gain for the experimental group as 5.00 while the mean gain for the control group was 2.48. The mean gain difference between the two groups was 2.52 in favour of students in the experimental group.

Research Question 2: To what extent would the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using process approach differ?

Table 2:

Means and Standard Deviations of Male and Female Students in Experimental Groups

Group	Pre-SEWAT		Post-SEWAT		Mean	
	N	δ	δ		Gain	
Male Students	59	4.00	1.65	9.03	2.34	5.03
Female Students	69	4.07	1.65	9.04	2.43	4.97
Mean difference		0.07		0.01		0.06

Table 2 presents mean scores and standard deviations of male and female students' from the experimental group. The table shows the mean gain for the male students as 5.03 while the mean gain for the female students was 4.97. The mean gain difference between the two groups was 0.06.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement score of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method.

Table 3:

One-Way ANCOVA Table for Effect of Process Approach on Students' Achievement in Essay Writing

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean F Square	Sig	Remarks
Corrected Model	476.37	2	238.19	56.96	0.00
Intercept	423.44	1	423.44	101.25	0.00
Pretest	280.26	1	280.26	67.02	0.00
Method	143.75	1	143.75	34.37	0.00
Error	522.75	125	4.18		
Total	8579.00	128			
Corrected Total	999.17	127			

Table 3 presents an ANCOVA table for effect of process approach on students' achievement in essay writing. The table shows that $F_{1,125}=34.37$ and $p=0.00$. With $p<0.05$, the set significance level for the study, the difference observed between the mean gain scores of students in the experimental and control group was

considered significant. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean achievement score of students taught essay writing using process approach and those taught using the conventional method was not accepted. The conclusion drawn was that process approach to writing enhanced students' performance in essay writing more than the conventional method.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement score of male and female students taught essay writing using process approach.

Table 4:

One-Way ANCOVA Table for Effect of Process Approach on Male and Female Students' Achievement in Essay Writing

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean F Square	Sig	Remarks
Corrected Model	45.20	2	22.60	4.54	0.02
Intercept	387.43	1	387.43	77.84	0.00
Pretest	45.20	1	45.20	9.08	0.01
Sex	0.02	1	0.02	0.01	0.95 Not Significant
Error	278.74	56	4.98		
Total	5139.00	59			
Corrected Total	323.93	58			

Table 4 presents an ANCOVA table for effect of process approach on male and female students' achievement in essay writing. The table shows that $F_{1,56}=0.01$ and $p=0.95$. With $p>0.05$, the difference observed between the mean gain scores of male and female students in the experimental group was considered not significant. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean achievement score of male and female students taught essay writing using process approach was accepted. The conclusion drawn was that male and female students equally benefitted from process approach to writing.

Discussion

This study was set out to investigate effect of process approach to teaching writing on college of education students' achievement in writing in Plateau State. The study results revealed that students taught writing using process approach achieved significantly higher in essay writing than those taught using conventional approach. The study also found that male and female students' achievement in writing did not

differ when taught writing using process approach. This finding did not come as a surprise as process approach to writing seems to be a feasible solution to heightening the writing abilities and confidence of students, especially those who have higher English proficiency.

This finding agrees with the finding of Ho (2006) that the process approach brought about positive achievement across all classes in both the upper and lower primary school levels in essay writing. This finding also confirms the earlier finding of Olajide (2013) investigation on effect of integrated approach on polytechnic students' achievement in essay writing which included process approach to writing and found that treatment significantly affected students' achievement in essay writing. The study also found that gender was not a significant factor in determining students' achievement in essay writing when taught using process approach.

In the same vein, this study agrees with Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) results which revealed that experimental group significant gained higher mean achievement scores than the control groups while there was no significant difference in achievement male and female students in the treatment group when students were taught using mini lesson approach which included process approach to writing.

Recommendations

This study has shown that process approach to teaching writing is effective and has a positive effect on students' academic achievement in writing. The study thus recommend that Students should be taught writing using process approach to teaching writing to improve their achievement in writing. Process approach to teaching writing is not gender sensitive therefore both male and female students should be involved in the learning strategy to enhance their attainment in writing.

Conclusion

The study has confirmed the findings of other studies that the process approach to writing encouraged students to write better. It also builds and develops students' skills in writing. In conclusion it can be said that, process approach to teaching writing is a child centred strategy than improves students' creative ability to writing.

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