
LITERACY COUCHING: EFFECTIVENESS OF USING MENTORING STRATEGY TO UPGRADE STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY AND PERFORMANCE IN POETRY.

By

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Abstract

Mentoring as a coaching aid could be a critical personal development and empowerment tool for enhancing poetry and literature generally. Many students believe that poetry is too abstract, and difficult to comprehend. This study therefore investigated the effectiveness of using mentoring strategy to upgrade students' self-efficacy and performance in poetry in Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study while two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design, specifically the non-randomised design using intact classes. The sample consisted of 40 senior secondary one students drawn from two schools through purposive and simple random techniques. Data were collected through researchers' developed "Questionnaire on Students' Self-efficacy in Poetry" (QSSP) and Poetry Performance Test (PPT). Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyse the hypotheses at 0.05

level of significance. Findings of the study indicated a significant difference in the mean rating levels of self-efficacy of mentored and non-mentored students. Further finding showed that students who were mentored significantly performed higher in poetry than those who were not mentored. The study therefore recommended that Literature-in-English teachers should be specially trained on the use of mentoring teaching strategy to upgrade students' self-efficacy and performance in poetry.

Key words: Mentoring, Self-efficacy, Literature-in-English, Poetry, and Performance

Introduction

Literature as a subject in the school curriculum is also used as a tool for bringing desirable changes in any society. The centrality of literature in the development of literacy cannot be over-emphasised as it is a subject that provides critical opportunities for students to express meaning. Ukume, Ochogwu and Chen (2013) posit that literature is indispensable to the achievement of critical literacy which can be seen as a viable tool or medium that can be used to raise the level of literacy in any society. Literature and literacy therefore obviously have a symbiotic relationship in contributing to educational and sustainable national development. It is a platform through which many literary artists express their creative imaginations in ideas, feelings, experiences and situations especially as they affect the society.

Literature can be looked at from different dimensions. Ako (2006) sees literature as a product of creative imagination which uses language as its medium or vehicle of expression. Odey (2012) explains that language is the fulcrum on which literature thrives. The author further notes that literature is not just informative and aesthetic, but also emotive and brings language use to bear directly on a writer's and reader's personality. The implication therefore is that language and literature are inseparable and are the main ingredients for literacy development. Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) add that literature provides the means for continued learning of the language outside the classroom as well as serves as important demonstration of the language. Literature can therefore be used as a meaning-based or language experience approach to the development of literacy.

The centrality of literature in attaining the major educational goals in Nigeria cannot therefore be over-emphasised. Williams (2004) supports this by noting that literature plays a central role in the realisation of our educational objectives. This is because, the study of literature leads to acquisition of a broad-minded approach to a people's cultural milieu (Effumbe & Uguma, 2009), and critical values as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (2014). This can be summed in the fact that literature inculcates national unity, consciousness, values, and moral soundness that make an effective citizen who can develop appropriate skills, mental, social abilities and competencies that will make an individual contribute positively to the society. Literature-in-English as a subject taught at the secondary school level is critical to those who desire to study courses or disciplines in the humanities such as Law, English and Literary Studies, Education Arts and Mass Communication. A pass at credit level or above is therefore required at the Senior School Certificate Examination.

In spite of the importance of Literature-in-English in the Nigerian school curriculum, there has been persistent poor performance, achievement and decline of interest by students over the years as reported in the Chief Examiners' Reports of the WAEC (2017-2019). Literature-in-English has three genres namely: prose, drama and poetry. The poetry genre is often seen as the most difficult of the three genres. Poetry is defined as a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling or thinking recollected in tranquility or an exposition of one's inner feeling when the mind is at rest (Smith, 2010). It is also seen as a systematic flow of emotions and feelings with the use of metrical structures and stanzas to deliver the needed message. Generally, poetry has to do with feelings and the senses. The National Policy on Education (2014) and the Literature-in-English curriculum state that poetry has the potential to develop the mental, physical and social abilities of the individual. Poetry also broadens and deepens one's knowledge of life as a whole. Krashen (2004) observes that poetry helps people to share their experiences, feelings, ideas, knowledge, hopes and aspirations with others. The roles of teaching and learning poetry are therefore critical to literacy and language development. Williams (2004), notes that the main purpose of teaching poetry is to make students aware of the riches and beauty of language.

In spite of the benefits students stand to gain in language learning and literacy development in poetry, many of them who offer Literature-in-English as a subject often complain of the complexity of the language of poetry as compared to prose and drama. Ayanniya (2009), notes that poetry is not easily understood by many. Inyang (2009) equally observes that poetry seems the most difficult among the three genres of literature because of the ambiguity, obscurity, unfamiliarity of words and its elliptical nature. Fakeye (2011) and Atoyebi (2011) note that many students achieve poorly in poetry in both internal and external examinations. The report of Chief Examiners in the West African Examinations Council's May/June 2017-2019 on Literature-in-English shows that many candidates did not generally achieve well in the three genres especially in poetry where the achievement was worst. The many years experience of one of the researchers in the present study as Chief Examiner in Literature-in-English in the National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB), also observed that many candidates achieve abysmally poor in poetry section of the examination.

This consistent low achievement in Literature-in-English and the particular misconception of students about poetry can be traced to poor teaching strategies by teachers, as well as low self-efficacy of students. The major problem of this disturbing trend could be largely attributed to the conventional ineffective ways of teaching poetry. Uguma (2016) found out that this conventional method of teaching where learners in a class are made to read one after the other while the teacher and other learners listen does not lead to good performance in Literature-in-English. Besides, many students' lack of confidence and their inability to comprehend poetry have not been yielding improvement in students' performance and achievement. Ferguson (2014) observes that many Teachers of Literature-in-English adopt strategies that tend to minimize students' participation because they teach poetry as finished product instead of taking learners through a process. Some teachers think that poems should be studied through line-by-line interpretation which makes many students to always memorise without critically and creatively analysing to arrive at meaning. This rote method of teaching and learning poetry do not help many students of Literature-in-English to understand and appreciate poetry. This could also make them to lose interest and exhibit lack of confidence in themselves, as far as poetry is

concerned. This situation therefore calls for urgent need to adopt effective strategies of teaching that could propel students' active participation in learning and cognitive mechanism such as self-efficacy to improve students' performance in poetry and Literature-in-English generally.

Mentoring strategy, self-efficacy and performance in poetry

One teaching strategy that is rarely used in teaching literature is mentoring. Mentoring is defined by Achor and Duguryil (2014) as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee's performance and development. Mentoring can include peer mentoring where participants or learners are of the same level of seniority but have different knowledge or experiences. It could also be a teacher and a learner. Mentoring could be a coaching skill that can be used to improve literacy in any society. Literacy development can therefore be attained and sustained through the use of mentoring. Mentoring is all about supporting individuals to help them develop more effectively. The principles of mentoring are anchored on Vygotsky social learning constructive theory where a More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) and Less Knowledgeable Others (LKO) are some of the principles underlying effective teaching and learning. Mentoring is the act of supporting and encouraging younger learners or Less Knowledgeable Others (LKO) to manage and sustain their learning behaviours like self-efficacy for higher performance. Mentoring could therefore be seen as an effective coaching aid across all subject areas in the secondary school curriculum of Nigeria especially in poetry aspect of Literature-in-English.

Anagbogu and Nwokolo (2015) explain that mentoring occurs when individuals decide to work together to achieve specific outcomes for skills growth and development. One individual may have some skills, knowledge and experiences that the other individual needs to acquire. Mentoring as a teaching strategy deals with ensuring that learners' needs agree with pedagogical practices. During mentoring process, students are given the opportunity to ask questions for better comprehension of concepts and ideas. It is a useful strategy that helps young ones to develop new ways of communicating information, making decisions, interacting effectively and responding better in a

particular learning content. Achor and Duguryil (2014) also explain that mentoring is a means of helping a novice to be properly guided on the rudiments of curriculum, teaching and learning.

According to Ankeli (2019), the role of the mentor is to guide, tutor, pilot and counsel a mentee who can find the right direction to develop interest, self efficacy and solutions to issues and problems in learning a particular skill. A mentor usually helps a mentee to believe in him or herself to overcome certain difficulties. In a mentoring process, learners (mentees) take the position of dependence on the mentor. They scarcely have any idea about how to remedy the gaps in knowledge. Mentoring therefore provides a mechanism to review and re-orient learning environments including teaching and learning practices in which students had not achieved success. The mentoring process enables reflections to be shared with the teacher (mentor) and provide avenues for feedback information that would develop between the teacher (mentor) and the learners (mentees).

Achor and Duguryil (2014) summarise the roles of the mentor to include:

- i. Listening actively with interest and holding the focus on the mentee's agenda.
- ii. Managing the framework of the mentoring sessions while encouraging the mentee to take responsibility for the content.
- iii. Helping a mentee to see the bigger and longer term picture of which he or she is concerned only about the present and future.
- iv. A mentor also helps a mentee to reframe how he or she views something or to consider a different perspective.

On the side of the mentee, he or she is expected to show commitment in the mentoring process by attending planned sessions, prepared to be challenged, punctual, talk openly and honestly with the mentor. According to Lepi (2013), the ideal mentor should have a general and sincere interest in the mentee's progress. Some of the activities involved in mentoring process are, setting a goal to identify areas that will work effectively, referring mentees to other professional colleagues for more information, making commitment to nurturing and supporting students' development. Mentors also share ideas and

wisdom with mentees. Lepi (2013) states that there is always a satisfaction in helping students to understand unfamiliar and difficult concepts expressed in poetry. There is always a valuable practice to help develop coaching and leadership skills. Generally, therefore, mentoring as a coaching process could heighten self-awareness and self-efficacy that can be a springboard to improving literacy especially in helping students overcome difficult concepts across school curriculum like poetry in Literature-in-English.

Inasmuch as students might think poetry is too difficult, teachers can adopt unique strategies like mentoring as a springboard to ginger their self-efficacy and performance. Fakeye (2010) advocates that teachers of Literature-in-English should employ creative ways to make students not to just like poetry but to foster comprehension and allow students to analyse poems to arrive at meaning. Fergusn (2014) explains that poetry must be taught in ways that allow students to use critical thinking and comprehension skills such as activating prior knowledge, questioning, visualizing, inferencing, summarising and synthesizing. All these could be achieved through mentoring process.

Mentoring students to perform better in poetry could also enhance their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy means to believe in one's own ability to successfully accomplish a task. Self-efficacy has become an important cognitive topic for both psychologists and educators. Bandura (1997) believes that self-efficacy can have impact on behaviours, interest and performance. A strong sense of self-efficacy enhances accomplishments. People with a strong sense of efficacy believe they can accomplish even difficult tasks. Bandura (1997) asserts that efficacious people set challenging goals and maintain commitment to them. Kendra (2016) believes that students with strong sense of self-efficacy have the ability to demonstrate the following: view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered; develop deeper interest in a concept they are learning from a stronger sense of commitment to their interest and task and recover quickly from setbacks and failures. Some studies have proved that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of learning and performance thereby enhancing achievement. On the other hand a student with a weak sense of self efficacy avoids challenging tasks. More often than not, they focus on negative outcomes and quickly lose confidence. If these perspectives are upgraded through mentoring

process, students with weak sense of self-efficacy may be capable of improving their learning outcome and performance (Bandura, 1997).

According to Kirk (2017), the most effective way of creating a strong sense of self-efficacy is through mastery experiences. This could be achieved through a mentor who is usually experienced in a particular task. When students are mentored, they are likely to view their state of affective arousal as an energizing facilitator of performance. In some researches conducted in science subjects like Physics and Biology, difficult concepts using mentoring strategy yielded positive results (Ankeli, 2019; Olu-Ajayi, 2017). Using diverse and creative interactive strategies to teach poetry had also often yielded positive results (Ukume & Uguma, 2020). Al-Masri and Al-Sharaideh (2011) investigated the use of response-based strategy in teaching English poetry. Findings of the study indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the response-based strategy scores and the conventional strategy in favour of the response-based strategy. Fakeye and Temitayo (2013) also examined the effects of instruction in stylistic and thematic approaches on students' achievement in poetic literature. Results revealed a significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in poetry. In a related study, Iorkighir (2017) established a significant effect of reading purpose setting strategy on students' achievement and interest in poetry. On self-efficacy, Meera and Jummana (2015) proved in a study that there was a significant difference in the academic performance in English language and self-efficacy among urban and rural students. However, Tseng (2013) found that there was no significant correlation between students' English proficiency levels and their self-efficacy levels. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the effectiveness of using mentoring strategy to upgrade students' self-efficacy and performance in poetry.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What is the mean rating level of self-efficacy of students exposed to mentoring and non-mentoring strategy in poetry?
2. What will be the difference in the mean performance scores of students exposed to mentoring and non-mentoring strategy in poetry?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating levels of self-efficacy of mentored and non-mentored students in poetry.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean scores between mentored and non-mentored students in Poetry Performance Test (PPT).

Research method

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design, specifically, the pre-test, post-test of non-randomised and equivalent group design. This design was appropriate because, the researchers used Senior Secondary One (SS 1), Arts students, in two different classes from two schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The two classes were assigned to experimental and control groups. The choice of SS 1 students was because, it was better to mentor students in poetry early in order to establish their self-efficacy in poetry which would enhance their performance in Literature-in-English especially in poetry where many students shy away from. The sample of the study comprised 40 students who offered Literature-in-English using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The researchers selected schools that had experienced and qualified graduate teachers in English language Education, teaching Literature-in-English. The instruments for data collection were researchers' made Questionnaire on Students Self-Efficacy in Poetry (QSSP) and Poetry Performance Test (PPT). The QSSP was a 10-item instrument eliciting information on students' self-efficacy. This was subjected to face and content validity. The validity was carried out by experts in measurement and evaluation. The instrument was further subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a reliability estimate of 0.72. The Poetry Performance (PPT) was a 20-item multiple choice objective test which also yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.76, using Kuder Richardson K-R21 for analysis. The QSSP consisted of two sections. Section 'A' elicited information on respondents while section 'B' covered 10 statements on students' self-efficacy ratings. It was a four-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1 for the positive

statements and vice-versa for the negative statements. Respondents were required to indicate their level of self-efficacy by ticking [√]. The Poetry Performance Test (PPT) also consisted of sections 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' sought information on respondents' bio-data, while section 'B' consisted of two poems – one African poem “The leader and the led” by Niyi Osundare, and one non-African poem – “The journey of the Magi” by T.S. Eliot in line with the West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) format. The poems were followed by a 20-item multiple choice test. The questions were based on themes, setting, figures of speech and language style. Respondents were to read the poems critically and answer the questions. The researchers prepared a mentoring information guide that was used for the training of the research assistants. The Mentoring Guide (MG) contained the training schedules and components of the mentoring processes. It also contained what was expected of the mentor and the mentees in terms of personal attributes, commitments, self-awareness, mentoring relationship, time availability, confidentiality, willingness, enthusiasm, mutual interaction and encouragement. The experimental class was exposed to the mentoring treatment by assigning students offering Literature-in-English to different Literature-in-English teachers as well as other senior students who were doing well in the subject especially in the area of poetry. The control group was exposed to the conventional way of teaching poetry. Before the treatment both groups were administered with the pre-test before the treatment which lasted for four weeks. Thereafter, both groups took the post-test which was similar to the pre-test in terms of content. Scores collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of the study were based on the research questions and the null hypotheses.

Research question 1

What is the mean rating level of self-efficacy of students exposed to mentoring and non-mentoring strategies in poetry?

Table 1: Mean Difference Rating Level of Self-Efficacy of Students Exposed to Mentoring Strategy and Non-Mentoring Strategy in Poetry

Attitude	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mentoring	20	30.45	5.558
Non-Mentoring	20	22.35	5.314
Mean Difference		8.1	0.244

Table 1 shows the difference in the mean rating level of self-efficacy of students exposed to mentoring and non-mentoring strategy in poetry. Students exposed to mentoring strategy have a mean rating level of 30.45 while those non-mentored students have a mean rating level of 22.35. This gives a mean difference of 8.1 in favour of students exposed to mentoring strategy.

Research question 2

What will be the difference in the mean performance scores of students exposed to mentoring strategy and non-mentoring strategy in poetry?

Table 2: Mean Difference in the Performance scores of Students Exposed to Mentoring Strategy and Non-Mentoring Strategy in Poetry

Group	N	Pre-Test	Std. Deviation	Post-Test Mean	Std. Deviation
Mentoring	20	8.55	1,572	12.70	1.750
Non-Mentoring	20	8.75	1.888	9.80	1.881
Mean Difference		0.2	0.316	2.9	0.131

Table 2 shows the difference in the mean performance scores of students exposed to mentoring strategy and non-mentoring strategy in poetry. Students exposed to mentoring strategy have a mean of 12.70 while those of non-mentored students have a mean of 9.80. This gives a mean difference of 2.9 in favour of students exposed to mentoring strategy

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean rating levels of self-efficacy of mentored and non-mentored students in Poetry.

Table 3: ANCOVA for the Significant Difference in the Mean Levels of Self-Efficacy of Mentored and Non-Mentored Students in Poetry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
Corrected Model	656.100	1	656.100	22.191	.000
Intercept	27878.400	1	27878.400	942,928	.000
Pre	656.100	1	656.100	22.191	.000
Error	29658.000	40			
Total	1779	39			

Table 3 is ANCOVA table for the significant difference in the mean rating levels of self-efficacy of mentored and non-mentored students in poetry. The table gives $F_{(2,38)} =$ and $p = 0.000$. Since p is less than 0.05 (alpha level), the null hypothesis is rejected. The meaning is that, there is a significant difference in the mean rating levels of self-efficacy of mentored and non-mentored students in poetry.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean scores between mentored and non-mentored students in Poetry Performance Test (PPT)

Table 4: ANCOVA for the Significant Difference in the Mean Scores between Mentored and Non-Mentored Students in Poetry Performance Test (PPT)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Corrected Model	86.416	2	43.208	12.989	.000
Intercept	148.251	1	148.251	44.556	.000
Pre	2.316	1	2.316	.696	.409
Error	123.084	37	3.327		
Total	5272.000	40			

Table 4 is ANCOVA table for the significant difference in the mean scores between mentored and non-mentored students in Poetry Performance Test (PPT). The table gives $F_{(2,37)} = 25.690$, and $p = 0.000$. Since p is less than 0.05 (alpha level), the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a significant difference in the mean scores between mentored and non-mentored students in Poetry Performance Test (PPT).

Discussing of findings

Findings of this study revealed that there was significant difference in the mean rating levels of self-efficacy of mentored and non-mentored students in poetry in favour of the mentored ones. This finding implies that exposing students to mentoring strategy as a coaching skill has positive effect on students' level of self-efficacy. The improvement of the level of students' self-efficacy could be attributed to the mentoring programme, time and attention allotted to the respondents. Self-efficacy therefore directly affects subject performance. This could also mean that mentoring programmes have positive effect on students as they enable the students to plan and organise learning experiences that became a springboard for higher performance. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Meera and Jummana (2015) who established in a study that there was a significant difference in the academic performance in English language and self-efficacy among urban and rural students. According to Kirk (2017), one of the most effective ways of creating a strong sense of self-efficacy in students is through mastery experiences. This must have been achieved from mastering higher knowledge of

mentors' experiences which the mentees positively benefited from. When students are mentored, they are likely to view their state of affective arousal (negative perspective) as an energizing facilitator of performance. However, the result of this same study disagrees with the finding of Tseng (2013) who found no significant correlation between students' English proficiency levels and their self-efficacy levels. However, Tseng (2013) notes that self-efficacy as a psychological construct could change learners' perspective about difficult concepts and improve their proficiency.

Another finding of this study revealed that mentoring strategy had significant effect on students' performance in poetry when compared with students' performance in the conventional class. Students in the treatment group significantly performed better than their counterparts who were taught poetry using the conventional strategy. The improvement of students' performance in poetry could be attributed to their exposure to mentoring activities which improved their performance. The mentoring process gave room for activity-based learning for the learners (mentees). The mentoring process must have also provided a mechanism for mentees to review and reorient their learning perspective towards poetry. Besides, the mentoring strategy must have enabled students to reflect on and share a collaborative system and feedback loops to develop their skills of analysis in poetry. This findings is in agreement with the findings of Iorkighir (2017), Fakeye and Temitayo (2013) and Al-Masri and Al-Sharaideh (2011). Iorkighir (2017) found that setting up reading purpose for students improved their achievement in poetry. Fakeye and Temitayo (2013) also established that stylistic and thematic approaches to teaching poetry improved students' achievement. In the same vein, Al-Masri and Al-Sharaideh (2011) affirmed that teaching students English poetry using response-based strategy was more effective than the conventional strategy of teaching poetry. Purpose setting and response-base, just like mentoring strategy, helps in providing sense of direction for students to think critically and analyse poems to arrive at meaning. This is unlike the conventional way of teaching poetry line by line which encourages rote learning without activating students' prior knowledge that brings about effective comprehension skills. It is based on this that Fakeye (2013) notes that active interactive strategies usually have significant and positive effects on students achievement in Literature-in-English.

This implies that when students are mentored by More Knowledgeable Other (mentors), it would help to stir up a sensorial response for the Less Knowledgeable Others (mentees) to do better in poetry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has proven that the effective use of mentoring strategy as a coaching aid affects students' self-efficacy and performance positively. This study therefore concluded that the mentoring strategy which was active and interactive process between the mentor and the mentee built up students' confidence and self-efficacy which became a springboard for a better perception and higher performance in poetry. Base on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended that more of mentoring strategy should be incorporated into the Literature-in-English teachers' curriculum especially poetry. Moreover, Literature-in-English teachers should be encouraged to employ this strategy in teaching poetry and other genres of literature for literacy development. In addition, language educators should organise special seminars to train teachers on mentoring guide to improve on poetry teaching and learning.

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