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Collaborative Strategy As Tool For Effective Secondary Schools Students' Achievement On Written Essays In English Language In Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the Effects of Collaborative Instructional Strategy on Students' Achievement on Written Essay in Ogoja Educational zone The general purpose of the study was to determine the effects of collaborative instructional strategy on the achievement of students in written essay. The population of the study included all the senior secondary school two (SS 2) students in Ogoja Educational zone in Cross River State. There are (98) public secondary schools in Ogoja Educational zone with total number of six thousand, seven hundred and ninety-seven (6,797) senior secondary two (SS 2) students. The sample of the study comprised 330 SS II students in six co-educational secondary schools in Ogoja Educational zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was a quasi-experimental study of pretest, posttest non-equivalent control group design. The collaborative strategy was assigned the experimental group while the lecture method was assigned to the control group. The English Essay writing Achievement Test (EEAT) was used for data collection. Three research questions and three hypotheses were used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while analysis of covariance ANCOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that students in collaborative strategy group performed better than those in lecture method group. The female students performed slightly better than the male students. However, male and female students in the collaborative group performed better than male and female students in the lecture method. Test of significance shows that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement of students taught using collaborative strategy and those taught with lecture method. There was no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students when taught with collaborative strategy. Based on the results and educational implications, recommendations were made which included: the collaborative instructional strategy should be adopted by teachers in secondary schools since it is more facilitating and yields better results for students.

Key words: Nigeria, Secondary Schools Students, English Language, Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross Rivers State, Learning

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Introduction

English language is a second language to many nations colonized by the whites, but has reached a high global position which other languages have not. The history of the English language in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era. It was then a language of high status and of great importance. It has since then continued to enjoy a very high status within the Nigerian society, fifty-five years after independence. As it stands now, it has become an international language. Since it has gained access into all aspects of life including, science, technology, international relations policy-making and administrative records. Widdowso (2000), states that it is practically used in publishing many learning resources globally because of its significance and equally a subject that appears in the school curriculum in most parts of the world.

The importance of English language cannot be overemphasized looking at its dominance in Nigeria. Notwithstanding the Nigerian multilingual situation, the English language is one of the core subjects in the secondary school curriculum, the role it plays, in the teaching-learning process in schools right from the primary to tertiary levels makes it very paramount to the academic success of the students. Examinations are conducted in English, textbooks recommended for students in every subject (except the mother tongue) are all written in English language. Aliyu (2014) in support of the above assertion states that English language enjoys a lot of prestige as a language over and above other Nigeria languages. It is important to note that English language proficiency facilitate essay writing.

Essay is a short piece of writing given to students. It is a part of a course of study in English language (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, 2015). Agwu and Nweke (2000) asserted that the organization and arrangement of ideas in a logical and sequential order to make a complete meaning is called an essay. Thus, essay must have a topic or subject matter which is developed in paragraphs with a coherent start or introduction, a well-arranged body and a short conclusion. Essay and letter writing skills are very paramount in the whole language development and learning it is expressing and long lasting than speaking and often less understanding by learners. Essay writing is the most important of language skills and determines to a great extent the success of students in both internal and external examinations.

Ghaith (2016) sees essay writing as a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete. It is therefore important that continuous efforts be made at enhancing the teaching and learning of essay writing among learners of English language. Looking at the importance, writing well is not just an option but a necessity. Otagburuagu (2012) stating the importance of essay writing observes that it has common influence on humanity because it is a common tool of spreading information. However, essay writing is of different types of argumentative, narrative, expository, descriptive and expository.

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Narrative essay is defined in different ways by different people. Oba (2015) defines narrative essay as relating to a number of events or narrating a story and it is used as means of explaining an idea when anecdote is introduced. However, narrative essay is just telling a story which gives account to the reader. In a writers' point of view, this story telling goes beyond having a beginning, middle and the end but must have a plot which should carry and develop throughout the story. This plot should be filled with major happenings of the story which will together give it a point or theme. In a nutshell, narrative is a story writing about a personal experience.

Narrative essay provides human interest, trigger our curiosity and bring us close to the storyteller. It provides entertainment, it also provides insights by helping individual to discover values, explore, options and examine motives it links people together by sharing history. Narrative essay also gives psychological healing. A good narrative essay must involve reading the story, arrange events in sequential order, include detailed, observations of people, places and happenings. It should also be told in writers point of view. Narrative essay should be written in first person e.g. 's' however third persons, also be used, it relies on concrete, sensory details. It should also include the solving setting, character, climax and ending.

Descriptive essay is a kind of essay that give the student the chance to desire a person, place, object, emotion experience situation etc. It allows the student to point the picture of what he has in mind in words. It also enables the student to illustrate something with words using the five senses Agwu (2000) states that descriptive essay does not stress on action but particular qualities of characteristic thus for a student to describe, he must be a good observer and can carefully select the detail at what one describing. To write a descriptive essay, one must take time to brainstorm, use clear and concise language, choose vivid language, use your senses, know what you are thinking, leave the reader with a clear impression and be organized.

According to Obah (2015), he states that exposition means explanation, an "exposing" of information and ideas. Decker in Obaj (2015) states that exposition is non-meant to convince or persuade but to explain Obah (2016:225) further defines exposition as its primary function is not to tell a story or relate a happening although exposition often uses narration as on out of many techniques. Its primary function is not to create vivid pictures for the reader although description too may at times be a valuable technique of expositions. The primary function of exposition is not to convince or persuade... but the primary function of exposition itself is merely to explain."

Looking at the above explanation one can say that expository essay combines the qualities of all the other types of essays. It investigates an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on ideas and also set argument about that idea in clear and concise manner. The aim of an expository essay is to explain a topic analogical and straightforward manner using some words like explain: "define" etc among others.

Argumentative essay is a kind of essay that expects the students to investigate a topic, collect, generate and evaluate evidence and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner (Anukam, 1999). A writer is expected in an argumentative essay to defend a position on a topic using evidence from personal experience, literature, historical examples and research to support any point made. According to Anasi (2015) argumentative essay as a passage mainly devotes to arguing out an issue, ideally looking at both sides and lastly coring to a rational and logical conclusion. Basing (2014) states that argumentative essay aims at persuading the reader to accept the writers point at view.

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Nigeria is not an exception to the above trend. In the national curriculum for senior secondary school English, FRN (2014) states that the curriculum is designed, to attain a high level of proficiency in the Nigerian students use of English language in preparing students for tertiary and vocational education for the world of work after leaving school. However, this dream cannot come true without achieving competency in the art of writing. Unfortunately, Nigerian students are far below this expectation in mastering the skills of written English. This has generated serious alarm for educators, parents and English teachers in particular.

Jowitt (2011) states that from the statistics of results published by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) since the end of the Nigerian civil war, there has been constant failure in the performance of students in English language. Banjo (2011) observes that there is general feeling of dissatisfaction with the level of proficiency in English among the products both in secondary and tertiary institutions.

Based on the separate research findings of Maduabum (2012) and Agwu (2012), there is still poor performance from our students of English in the West African School Certificate Examination and National Examination Council as measured by these bodies, 2019-2013.

Table 1: Shows percentage passes by grades for GCE English O/L (2019-2013)

Year	Period	Number sat	Total: A1-C6	Total: P7-D8	Fail: F9
2015	May/June	45312	29.0	19.0	42.0
	Nov./Dec.	28516	26.0	47.0	27.0
2016	May/June	45115	37.0	28.0	35.0
	Nov./Dec.	32223	33.0	47.0	20.0
2017	May/June	588460	21.06	44.23	34.71
	Nov./Dec.	453377	17.58	73.24	9.18
2018	May/June	632544	13.14	55.82	31.04
	Nov./Dec.	441132	40.06	58.83	1.11
2019	May/June	636113	17.20	42.97	39.83
	Nov./Dec.	396640	47.09	45.12	7.79

Source: WAEC Headquarters, Lagos (2013)

For the period of ten years, as reviewed by Maduabum (2012), there was no year that up to 50% of students who sat for the examination got grades 1-6 which is a prerequisite for higher education.

Educational research findings like physical strength, language and ability shows that gender also plays an important role in students' achievement. Shaycoff (1999) states that boys seem to acquire significantly more information than girls in such areas as Mathematics, Physical Science, Electricity and Electronics as well as Mechanics while girls' have significantly higher score gain than boys in interactive, grammar, memory for word, spelling and Home economics information, Jane (2012); Eze (2018) are of the view that girls show better behaviour to language and communication and in essay writing in particular and this leads to better achievement.

With the above discussion, there is no doubt that there is poor achievement of learners in English language especially in the aspect of essay writing generally and Cross River State is not

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an exception. This is traced to poor method of teaching. This has also given rise to debate on the right method to be used. A method that may enable the students to acquire and imbibe proper skills in essay writing. A method that may be students and activity-based and may remedy the conventional teaching method. That is why the researcher has raised the collaborative strategy as a possible remedy.

These methods are innovative and learner based to prepare learners with effective writing skills that may make them become better writers. It may also help the students to move from known to unknown while the students contribute, the teacher modifies and moderate.

According to Cohen (1986), collaborative method enables the students to dialogue and examine different perspectives that make students to discuss and examine various perspectives that make learners become knowledgeable, strategic, self-determined and emphatic. This takes care of large collaborative learning classes in a situation where there are insufficient number of teachers. In collaborative class, students are divided into smaller groups while the teacher encourages active participation and healthy interaction among students.

Since there is a saying that “two good heads are better than one”, collaborative method has a good advantage over the traditional method. It focuses on collective knowledge and things of the group and encourages students-students and teacher-student interaction, thus making student more relaxed and the task more real. No wonder, Akinsola (2017) points out that students learn faster when the teaching is skewed toward them and that is when they are allowed to participate and make contribution.

This strategy would enable students not only to perform better in English language but for general academic success. Collaborative technique is actually derived from a broad term of communicative language teaching (collaborative learning) approach. The communicative language teaching is an umbrella term used for a variety of approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. The collaborative technique is under the heading of collaborative learning approach because this technique absorbs the characteristics of the approach.

In this technique, students usually work in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions or meanings or creating a product (Smith & MacGregor, 2018); collaborative which refers to writing or other projects (Glencoe, 2011) and it is an essential component of contextual teaching and learning (Tolinson, 2010). Nunan (2012) terms collaboration as constructive and shared understanding in a second language classroom. The students in the collaborative conditions are significantly more pleased with their writing than other subjects where they worked independently. In this case, can collaborative technique be a solution in motivating students in essay writing process as well as improving their writing proficiency in the use of English language. It also helps them to work in pairs to produce co-authored paragraphs and well thought out written essays.

Another treatment level in this study is the lecture method. The philosophy behind a lecture method is that the knowledge the teacher has can be passed on to students. A lecture method resembles a demonstration method in the sense that a great number of points can be covered within a short time, and students tend to be passive listeners while the teacher does the talking (Agwu, 2012). This may explain why the method has been criticized as a teacher-centred method. One advantage, however of the lecture method is that it can be presented to a large audience. This method will be used as the control treatment in this study.

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Judging from the importance of English language in Nigerian, the problem of the present study was to find out if collaborative instructional strategy would be more facilitating for students than the lecture method in written essay.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

1. What is the mean achievement of senior secondary school students in written essay when taught with collaborative strategy and when taught with lecture method?
2. What is the mean achievement of male and female senior secondary school students when taught written essay with collaborative strategy and when taught with lecture method?

Hypotheses

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

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement of senior secondary school students in written essay when taught with collaborative strategy and lecture method.

Methodology

The research study adopted a quasi-experimental method. This is because existing intact group were used for the treatment; therefore, there was no randomization of subjects. The design was pretest, posttest non-equivalent control group design. Intact group were assigned to different treatment conditions. The collaborative strategy was assigned to the experimental group while the lecture method was assigned to the control group

The population of this study included all the senior secondary school two (SS 2) students in Ogoja Educational zone of Cross River state There are sixty-one (98) public secondary schools with total number of (6,797) senior secondary two (SS 2). Only public schools (co-educational) were used for this study because they served the purpose of this study by taking care of male and female students. Six senior secondary schools were used, three for each strategy as this number will be manageable and can yield a good result. The total of three hundred and thirty (330) students from the six schools were targeted as sample. The selection of schools for the strategies was done through simple random sampling technique with replacement while the classes were used as intact entities.

The instrument for data collection was English Essay writing Achievement Test (EEWAT) and students was required to write on an essay topic that was provided to cover: content, organization expression and mechanical accuracy. The result of English curriculum for senior secondary two (SS II) was used to ensure that the question reflects the content of English Essay curriculum content. Two instructional approaches were employed for the study. The first approach was the use of collaborative method while the second was the conventional (lecture) method. The two approaches were identical in terms of content coverage, time and mode of evaluation among others. The only difference was instructional activities where collaborative strategy deviated from the conventional (lecture) method by employing metacognitive principles and theories during the instructional process. The collaborative strategy was used for the treatment group (experimental group) while the conventional (lecture) method, was used for the control group.

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Pretest was administered to the two groups before the commencement of the treatment. The scores of the students in the pretest were recorded. Data collected from this study were analysed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The research questions will be answered using adjusted mean and standard deviation, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

Research Question 1

What is the achievement of students in written Essay when taught with collaborative strategy and when taught with lecture method?

Table 1: Mean Achievement of student based on teaching strategies

Strategies	No	\bar{x}	S.D
Collaborative strategy	106	72.79	7.42
Lecture method	224	52.18	7.60

Source: Field Data 2022

Based on the results in Table 1, students taught with collaborative strategy had a mean of 72.79 and a standard deviation of 7.42 while those taught with lecture method had a mean of 52.15 and a standard deviation of 7.60. Therefore, students in collaborative strategy group performed better than those in lecture method group. This means that collaborative strategy is more facilitating than the lecture method

Research Question 2

What is the achievement of male and female students when taught written essay with collaborative method and when taught with the lecture method.

Table 2: Mean Result of Students on Effects of Methods based on Gender

Strategies	No	\bar{x}	S.D	No	\bar{x}	S.D
Collaborative strategy	48	72.85	7.88	58	72.74	7.89
Lecture method	106	51.98	8.31	118	52.35	6.93

Source: Field Data 2022

The result in Table 2, show that male students in collaborative strategy had a mean score of 72.85 while female students had 72.74 as mean score. Hence, male students performed slightly better than female students. However, male students in lecture method group had a mean 51.95 compared with female students with a mean of 52.35. Therefore, female students performed slightly better than male students.

On the other hand, male and female students in collaborative strategies performed better than male and female students in lecture method.

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Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference written essay when taught with collaborative strategy and what taught with lecture method.

Table 3: ANCOVA Results of Students based on Teaching Methods

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean	F. cal	Sig of F	F.crit
Covariates	794.595	1	794.595	14.017	0.000	
Pre-test	794.595	1	794.595	14.017	0.000	
Main Effects	29905.335	1	29905.335	527.546	0.000	
Methods	29905.335	1	29905.335	527.546	0.000	3.84
Explained	30699.930	2	15349.965	270.781	0.000	
Residual	18536.870	327	56.688			
Total	49236.800	329	149.656			

Significant at $P < 0.05$

Source: Field Data 2022

Based on the results in Table 3, the $f - cal$ of 527.546 is greater than the H_{o1} is rejected, which stated that there was no significant difference in the mean achievement of students taught using collaborative strategy and those taught with lecture method. The researcher therefore concludes that there is a significant difference in the mean collaborative strategy and those taught using lecture method.

Sequel for the significant, a MCA was carried out to determine direction of significant

Table 4: Multiple classification Analysis on Testing Methods Grand Mean = 58.80

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Devin	Eta	Adjusted for independent + Beta covariated Devin
Methods				
Collaborative Strategy	106	13.99		14.20
Lecture Methods	224	-6.62		-6.72
				0.79
Multiple R Squared				0.89
Multiple R				0.624
				0.790

Source: Field Data 2022

The multiple classification analysis results as show in Table 4 reveal that students taught with collaborative strategy had an adjusted mean achievement score of 73.00 while the students taught mean achievement of 52.08.

The above results showed that the collaborative strategy is more facilitating than the lecture method. This also means students taught using collaborative method with perform better than those taught with lecture method.

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Hypothesis 2

There is no significant different in the achievement of male and female students when taught with collaborative method strategy in written essay.

Table 5: ANOVA Results of students based on Gender

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean	f. cal	Sig of f	f. crit
Covariates	794.595	1	794.595	5.365	.021	
Pre-test	794.595	1	794.595	5.365	.021	
Main Effects	13.248	1	13.248	.089	.765	
Methods	13.248	1	13.248	.089	.765	3.84
Explained	807.843	2		270.781		
Residual	48428.957	327	148.101			
Total	49236.800	329	149.656			

Significant at $P < 0.05$

Source: Field Data 2022

From the results as indicated in Table 5, the F. cal of 0.089 for gender is less than the F.crit of 3.84 (ie. $0.089 < 3.84$), therefore, H_0 is not rejected which states that there is no significant different in the mean achievement of male and female students when taught with collaborative strategy and when taught with lecture method. Sequel for the non-significant of the hypothesis, the multiple classifications Analysis was not carried out.

Discussion

5.1 Effects of collaborative strategy and students' Achievement in written Essay

The research Question 1 sought to find out the achievement of students that were taught written Essay with collaborative strategy and when taught with the lecture method. The results as presented in Table 3 of chapter 4 revealed that the collaborative strategy with an adjusted mean of 72.79 were more facilitating than the lecture method with a mean of 52.15. This means that students taught with collaborative strategy would perform better than those taught with the lecture method in written essay?

The above result is in agreement with Okonkwo (2013) who found collaborative strategy more facilitating than lecture methods in writing essay. The above could not have been otherwise because Johnson and Johnson (1986) and Slavice (1990) found out in their independent studies that collaborative strategy leads to higher achievement than the conventional method. Oluikpe (2011) found the same effect on expository essay writing average university students.

Using collaborative strategy is good because students learn better when they are in groups and also learn from one another. This method also allows students to interact with one another, air their minds, ask questions and above all share ideas. All these activities support Bandura social learning and Vygotsky learning theory where students learn in group socially. The students could have obtained better results with collaborative strategy than the lecture methods because working in group helped them to interact gain better understanding of the essay topic brainstorm to form sentences into paragraphs using appropriate works. It is common sense that teachers' instructional technique of collaborative has great influence on the students'

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achievement academically. This implied that the method adopted by the teacher was good and learner- centered, and therefore effective for the written essays.

On the test of significance of the null hypothesis 1 (HO_1), the results in Table 3 of chapter four (4) revealed a significant difference in the mean achievement of students taught with collaborative strategy and those taught with the lecture method. The significance tilted in the direction of the collaborative strategy because according to the multiple classification Analysis results in Table 4, the students under collaborative strategy had a better adjusted mean (37.00) than those under lecture method. Who had a lower adjusted mean (52.08). From the result, collaborative strategy is confirmed more facilitating to students' performance than the lecture method.

This type of results clearly show that collaborative learning ensures active exchange of ideas within the group, of end to increase internet and subsequently promotes critical thinking resulting into better or higher achievement.

5.2 Effect of Collaborative Strategy and Students' Achievement in Written Essay based on Gender

The research question 2 sought to determine the effects of collaborative strategy on the mean achievement of male and female students in written essay. The result in Table 5 in chapter 4 indicates that male students had almost the same results as the female students ($72.85 \sqrt{s} 72.74$). This shows a very slight or moderate effect on the males over the females. However, the female students did better than the female students. On a general note, the makes and female in collaborative strategy did better (had better) performance that the males and females in the lecture method.

The above result is in disagreement with Umeanyo (2013) who in research on verbs in English using written composition opined that boys commit more errors than girls. When applied in this study, the females were expected to have a higher achievement than the males. But it is not so, the strategy is favourable able to both sexes, because the performance at students did not vary in anyway.

On the test of significance of null hypothesis 2 (HO_2), the results in Table 5 shows that the f.cal of 0.089 is less than f.crit of 5.84, hence, HO_2 is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female's students when taught with collaborative strategy. This result agrees with Ogbi (2018) who found no significant effect difference on male and female student's achievement when taught with corporative learning strategy.

The above result could be attributed difference in geographical locations or courses whereby previous better performance is reversed to activities enjoyed in as suggested by Half (2011).

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of collaborative instructional strategy on students' achievement in written essay in Ogoja Educational zone This rationale for this study was as a result of consisted student's poor performance in SSCE English language Examinations of which essay writing is a major part, despite the facts that the area of the study commands of well

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exhibit secondary. In the course of reviewing literature, it was found that poor teaching methods adopted by the teachers were responsible for the downward travel of result output.

Major finding after the study revealed that students performed creditably well with collaborative instructional strategy than with the lecture method. Based on the educational implications of the findings, recommendations were made, which the researcher hopes that if they are implemented, the performance of students in their examinations in English language will become higher of not highest.

Recommendations

- The following recommendations were made based on the findings and their implications
1. The collaborative instructional strategy should be adopted by teachers and school English teachers since it is more facilitating and yields better results for the students.
 2. This finding should be exposed to teachers of English through conferences, seminars and school workshops by the researcher.

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