

Process and product method of teaching essay writing and students' organizational pattern in essay writing in public secondary schools in Port Harcourt and oyibo local government areas of rivers state

Enwere Kathryn Ify

Department of English and Communication Art, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

The study examined the effect of process and product methods of teaching essay writing on students' ability to generate ideas for topics in Senior Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt and Oyibo Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A pretest-posttest non-random and control group design was used for the study. 6706 Senior Secondary School (male and females) constituted the population of the study. 149 Senior Secondary Students from the four intact classes in the sampled schools were sampled for the study. An Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT) developed by the researcher was the main instrument used for the study. Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Variation) were used in answering the research questions while the hypotheses were tested with Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at .05 level of significance. The research findings revealed that students' ability to generate ideas for topics in essay writing does differ significantly using process and product methods; students' ability to generate ideas for topics in essay writing does differ significantly using process and product methods based on gender and location.

Keywords: process and product, essay, writing, ideas, ability

Introduction

Writing is one of the language skills which is important in our lives. Through writing, we can inform others, carry out transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell what we feel. However, we know that writing or learning to write especially in a second language is not simply a matter of "writing things down". It is one of the four basic skills that are very complex and difficult to learn. In Word Reference (2010), writing is one of the ways to give an idea or message which is in form of writing on a piece of paper. It is an act of making marks on certain surface. Specifically, writing is one kind of expression in language which is created by a particular language which is drawn up visually. In his discussion on writing, Jim (2010) explains that writing skill is complex and difficult to learn. Requiring mastery is not only grammatical patterns but also the rule of writing such as high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information and also choosing the appropriate vocabularies and sentence structure to create a style which is appropriate to subject matter. Given the view about the importance of learning to write, it is disturbing to discover that most researchers and educators agree, that, with rare exceptions, students do not write well.

Maduekwe (2007) ^[5] asserted that writing is a personal act as well as an expression of self, which draws on intuition as well as on reasoning, on sensation and emotions, facts and memory. One's writing could tell or reveal a person's background, experiences, co-ordination, composure or deficiency. Alo (2005) ^[1] cited in Eze (2005) reiterates that writing is a process of thinking and feeling in which certain abilities interplay in order to gain the product and accomplish the objective. Writing is an individual activity, thus, the writer determines the aims and gives valued judgment to the product. Every writer is unique and as his

stock of experience increases his writing skills increase as long as he continues to write. Writing is done in several forms which include essay writing.

In his view, Igwe (2006) posits that essay writing is an important branch of composition in prose. It is in itself an art as well as a test of a writer's power of expression, thinking capacity and consistency of thoughts. There is no room for digression, irrelevance and vagueness. An essayist has to select a topic, gather up ideas associated with it and analyze them in a relevant and systematic way. A writer who possesses these qualities and can effectively use appropriate organization pattern can be said to be a good essayist.

The arrangement of ideas, thoughts and feelings in any piece of writing is termed Organizational patterns in writing. These includes: paragraphing, styles and connectives. A paragraph is a self-contained unit of discourse in writing dealing with a particular point or idea. A paragraph consists of one or more sentences. Prakashan (1983) ^[7] states that a paragraph has its identity and significance with its distinct aspects. It is an integral part of the whole writing. Paragraph is a group of sentences possessing a unity of purpose. Thus, every paragraph has its own appeal, its own force; it is not the whole in itself but part of the whole. Thus, every writing should follow the principle of paragraph making, which includes the length of the paragraph. Although there are no strict rules regarding the length of a paragraph, it should have conciseness of expression and clarity of thought. Ayodele (2002) ^[2] states that another element in the development of a paragraph is emphasis. The balance of a paragraph depends on the emphasis of thought. Olatilo and Olooku (2006) ^[6] state that in essay writing, one should develop the points or ideas in a paragraph logically. Each paragraph contains a main idea. Other sentences are

supporting ideas, do not lump all your ideas in one paragraph.

Style in English includes colloquial styles, used between close friends or people of equal age or social standing. Informal styles are used by persons who know each other well and whose relationship is close. Formal style is used between people of different social standing, age or between persons meeting for the first time. Formal style is required in academic writings and discussions, official writing, reports, official documents, and business. Style include format or conventions.

Olatilo and Olooku (2006) ^[6] posits that in order to achieve unity and coherence, the sentences and paragraphs must be effectively linked by linking phrases or one-word linkers. If a paragraph or sentence adds facts or ideas to what is said in the previous paragraph or sentence, such paragraphs or sentences can be linked with the previous one with linkers like: moreover, furthermore, again, also, in addition.

The process approach of writing emphasize writing as a process of developing, organization as well as meaning. According to Brown and Hood (2009) ^[3] the basic stages of writing as a process are: planning, drafting, and revising. Seow (2002) ^[9] gives other classification to writing as a process which contains the following stages: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. In addition, other additional stages that are considered important after the draft stage, are responding, evaluating, and post writing (Richards & Renandya, 2002) ^[8].

Product oriented writing does not see writing as a recursive, back-and-forth movement through which thoughts are shaped by language. The product method has been dominated by a current traditional rhetoric. This approach is characterized by emphasis on the product of composition rather than the composing process, the analysis of discourse into words, sentences and paragraphs; the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition and argumentation, the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and style (economy, clarity, emphasis). Stewart (2008) stated that the product method places very high priority on superficial mechanical correctness not on communication. It does recognize the nature of writing task and base writing activities on a model suited to revision in the writing process.

Statement of the problem

Writing in the life of the student is expedient yet the performance of students in this very important area is disheartening. Writing is one language skill that requires patience on the part of the teacher to put the learner through. It is not a skill that can be acquired without painstaking effort. This explains why someone can learn to speak a language by interacting with members of that linguistic community, but can never learn to write such a language without formal tutoring.

Rather than follow the students on a step-by-step process through writing, what is seen in our secondary schools is a whitewash approach whereby the teacher in a bid to cover the syllabus introduces topics and leaves the students to figure out what to do. Proper organizational pattern in essay writing is not properly taught.

The teacher as well as the student must awake to new approaches. What if we use this method in which the teacher flows along with the students from brainstorming through the writing stage and up to the rewriting stage. That perhaps

could be an answer to the teething problem of poor writing skill among students in Rivers State, hence, the need for this research.

Research question

The following research questions guided the study

1. How does students' organizational pattern in essay writing differ using process and product methods?
2. How does student organizational pattern in essay writing differ using process and product methods based on gender and location?

Research hypotheses

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

1. Students' organizational patterns in essay writing do not differ significantly based on process and product methods of teaching.
2. Students' organizational pattern in essay writing does not differ significantly using process and product of methods of teaching based on gender and location.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is a quasi-experimental non-randomized pretest, post-test control group design. 6706 Senior Secondary School 2 (SS2) English Language students comprising 4348 males and 2358 females in the 12 public secondary schools in Port Harcourt and four public secondary schools in Oyibo Local Government Areas constituted the population of the study. The 2018/2019 academic session constituted the population (Rivers State Post Primary School Board, 2019). 149 SS2 English Language students in the 4 secondary schools both in Port Harcourt and Oyigbo Local Government Areas of Rivers State constituted the sample size for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools in each Local Government Area. The selected schools in each Local Government Area were randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions using just one arm of intact class in the selected schools. The instrument for data collection titled "Essay Writing Achievement Test" (EWAT) consisted of past WAEC essay writing questions. These were six essay questions structurally arranged to cover those topics captured by the syllabus. The instrument has been standardized and is employed by teachers of English for grading school certificate examinations and general certificate ordinary level examinations. Furthermore, six lesson plans developed by the researcher that focused on the guideline on which the treatment was administered were also employed for the study. WAEC standard marking scheme was used for marking of the students' pre-test and post-test scripts and were classified under the following; content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy. These measured students' ability to generate ideas for topics, students' organizational pattern, students' syntactic competence and students' expressive skills. The instrument EWAT was given to three experienced English Language Lecturers in the University of Uyo for expert inputs. Their constructive criticism, corrections and comments was used to modify the instrument to meet the expected standard both in face and content validity. The research instrument for the study, Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT) was trial tested with twenty (20) students which were randomly selected

from public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, who were not part of the main study. The test – retest method of an interval of two weeks was employed in establishing the reliability of the instrument. To calculate the reliability of the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT), the cronbach alpha was used to measure the internal consistency since it was not a multiple choice question. The reliability coefficient (r) was 0.83.

The collection of data was systematically organized in three different phases; Pre-reatment phase, Treatment phase and Post – treatment phase.

Pre-Treatment Phase: The intention of the researcher was made known to both the school management, English Language teachers and the students of the selected schools involved in the study. This was done to obtain their maximum support so as to carry out the research procedures. After the familiarization process, a special training was organized for research assistants who used the Process method. The researcher used two days to train these assistants. One day was used for each Local Government Area. Since the teachers were not used to the Process approach, the researcher took time to explain the lesson plans on the Process method, explaining each stage of the process. After the training, EWAT was distributed to all the students both in the experimental and control group as pretest. After the test, their scripts were collected for analysis. This was to obtain their baseline knowledge before

the treatment.

Treatment Phase: The treatment phase involved the teaching session for both the experimental and control groups. The experimental groups were taught writing composition concept using the process method while the control groups were taught the same concept using the product method. Three periods per week of 40 minutes/period for six weeks were used for both the experimental groups and the control groups. The treatment procedure lasted for six weeks and immediately after the treatment phase, the post treatment phase commenced.

Post-Treatment Phase

Post treatment phase involved collection of scripts, scoring and analysis of data.

Method of data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the inferential statistics of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Result of findings

Research Question one: How does students’ organizational pattern in essay writing differ using process and product methods?

Table 1: Mean and SD scores of students on pre-test and post-test classified by treatment

Treatment Group	Sample Size	Pre-test \bar{X} SD		Post-test \bar{X} SD		Mean Difference
Product Method (Control)	73	13.31	5.21	18.89	15.88	5.58
Process Method (Experimental)	76	21.44	20.04	47.69	22.21	26.25

In answer to the research question 1, the pre-test, post-test mean difference of 5.58 and 26.25 for the students in product and process method group respectively, displayed in Table 1 show the students taught organizational pattern in essay writing with process method performed better than

those taught using product method.

Research Question Two: How does student organizational pattern in essay writing differ using process and product methods based on gender and location?

Table 2: Mean and SD score of students on pre-test and post-test classified by treatment

Treatment Group	Location	Gender	Sample	Pre-test \bar{X} SD		Post-test \bar{X} SD		Mean Difference
Process (Experimental)	Urban	Male	24	13.75	4.94	15.12	17.96	1.37
		Female	17	9.52	4.01	27.05	11.59	17.53
		Male	14	14.28	5.13	18.07	14.49	3.79
	Rural	Female	18	15.55	5.11	16.83	15.90	1.28
Product(Control)	Urban	Male	21	19.76	17.49	37.14	23.64	17.38
		Female	27	15.74	15.73	53.14	20.94	37.4
		Male	10	19.00	15.95	60.00	15.45	14
	Rural	Female	18	33.33	26.29	45.00	21.00	11.67

In answer to research question 2, the pre–test, post-test mean difference of 1.37 and 17.53 for male and female students respectively in the urban location and 3.79 and 1.28 for their rural counterparts were obtained using the process method. This shows that female students taught organizational pattern in essay writing using the process method in the urban location performed better than the male students whereas the male students performed better in the rural location.

For the product group, the pre- test, post-test mean

difference of 17.38 and 37.40 for male and female students respectively in the urban location and 14.00 and 11.67 for those in rural location, were obtained. This shows that female students taught organizational pattern in essay writing using the product method performed better than their male counterparts both in rural and urban locations.

Hypothesis one: Students’ organizational patterns in essay writing do not differ significantly using process and product methods.

Table 3: Summary of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of students’ post-test scores in essay writing classified by treatment groups and learning style with pre-test as covariate.

Source of variation	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-Crit.	Decision at p<.05
Pre OP	1.14	1	1.14	.00	3.94	Ns
Treatment	28.84	1	28.84	75.66	3.94	S
Error	55.01	146	37.01			
Total	225.00	149				
Corrected Total	86.20	148				

Significant at alpha level=0.05

The result in Table 10 shows that, the calculated F-ratio for difference in students’ organizational pattern in essay writing at df 1 and 146 is 75.66, while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .000 alpha. The F-cal, 75.66 is greater than the F-crit, 3.94, at .05 alpha, indicating that the methods (process and product) used have a statistical significant effect on students’ organizational pattern in essay writing. Therefore, the null hypothesis that students’ organizational pattern in essay writing do not

significantly differ using process and product methods is rejected. The result means that the treatment has a significant effect on students’ organizational pattern in essay writing.

Hypothesis two: Students’ organizational pattern in essay writing does not differ significantly using process and product of methods based on gender and location.

Table 4: Summary of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of students’ post-test scores in essay writing classified by treatment groups and learning style with pre-test as covariate.

Source of variation	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-Crit.	Decision n at <.05
Pre OP	17.86	1	17.86	.49	3.94	Ns
Treatment	26.52	1	26.52	75.17	3.94	S
Gender	26.69	1	26.69	.75	3.94	S
Location	64.59	1	64.59	.18	3.94	S
Treatment*	24.60	1	24.60	.69	3.94	Ns
Gender						
Treatment*	95.36	1	95.36	2.73	3.94	Ns
Location						
Gender*	43.69	1	43.69	12.49	3.94	S
Location						
Treatment*	74.10	1	74.10	2.15	3.94	S
Gender*						
Location						
Error	48.10	140	34.67			
Total	25.00	149				
Corrected Total	86.20	148				

Table 4 reveals that, the calculated F-ratio for difference in students’ organizational pattern in essay writing at df 1 and 140 is 4.18, while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .144 alpha. The F-cal, 2.15 is less than the F-crit, 3.94, at .05 alpha, indicating that the methods (process and product) used had no statistical significant effect on students’ organizational pattern in essay writing based on gender and location. Therefore, the null hypothesis that students’ organizational pattern in essay writing do not differ significantly using process and product methods based on gender and location is retained. The result means that the treatment, gender and location have no interactive effect on students’ organizational pattern in essay writing.

Discussion of findings

The result in table 3 shows the calculated F - ratio (75.66) for students' organizational pattern in essay writing is greater than the F-art (3.94) at 1 and 140 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This implies that students' organizational pattern in essay writing differs significantly using the process and product method. The result indicated that the process method group had a higher mean score than the product method group. The result could be so because the style which the process method employs in the production of the essay has an upper hand to the product

approach. Using the process approach, writing is not ' once and for all' activity but even after the first draft has been drawn, comes responding, evaluating and post writing (Richard and Renadya, 2002). In the process of responding the teacher or even the peers will point out flaws which may have eluded the student and this will be corrected. But the product approach does not give room for such interaction and this has likely affected the performance of those taught organizational pattern using the product method.

The result in table 4 shows that the calculated F – ratio (2.15) for students’ organizational pattern in essay writing based in gender and location is less than the F – crit (3.89) at 1 and 140 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This implies that students’ organizational pattern in essay writing significantly using process and product method based on gender and location. The variation in pattern irrespective of the method employed could be attributed to teacher- related or environmental factor which would also be an impediment to any teaching learning process. The finding of the study however does not give gradient to the views of Richards and Renandya (2002) [8] who opined that process approach makes writing a conforious activity but ever after the first draft les to be drawn, responding, evaluating and post writing.

Conclusion

The process method enhances students' performance in essay writing by promoting interactive and self – regulated learning activities, encouraging students to become self – requested learners. The method is effective in advancing the capacity for essay writing. So, when students are enlightened on the effectiveness of the process method, they would be willing to use it in their essay writing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward for adoption:

1. Cooperate instructional strategies such as the process method should be incorporated as an essential part of the teachers' training programme for English Language teachers. In this way, the pre – service teachers who would teach the students eventually would understand the learning strategies students can acquire and use in coping with the school curriculum and solving problems they encounter in school and in the society.
2. Curriculum planners should revisit the secondary school English language curriculum with a view to paying attention to more co-operative instructional strategies that could help facilitate organizing pattern in essay writing.

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