

**EFFECTS OF IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
ACHIEVEMENT IN ESSAY WRITING IN LOKOJA EDUCATION ZONE**

BY

**Kate Ojomah Ukwumaka: Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education,
Federal University Lokoja; E-mail: kate.ukwumaka@fulokoja.edu.ng**

**Ikongshul, Gloria Ukongkwen: Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Faculty of Educational
Foundation Studies, University of Calabar; E-mail: gloriaikongshul123@gmail.com**

&

**Ushie Esther Iroushu: Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Faculty of Educational Foundation
Studies, University of Calabar; E-mail: mrsushie86@gmail.com**

Abstract

This study examined the effect of immediate feedback on senior secondary school two (SSSII) students achievement in essay writing. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Quasi-experimental design involving a pretest-post-test, non-equivalent non-randomised comparison with experimental and control groups was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of 1,735 senior secondary school two (SSSII) students from four co-educational secondary schools in Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State. A purposive sampling technique was used to draw four schools out of these schools. The schools were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Intact classes of the four schools were drawn for the study giving a total of four intact classes. Students in the intact classes constituted the sample of 173 used for the study. The treatment group was taught and assessed essay writing using the immediate feedback mode of assessment while the control group was taught and assessed the same essay writing using the delayed feedback mode of assessment. Data were collected using Narrative Essay in English Language Achievement Test (NEELAT). The instrument was validated by experts from both Arts and Science Education Departments, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability index of 0.93 determined through Kendall's coefficient of concordance was obtained. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings revealed that immediate feedback technique significantly improved the achievement of students in Essay writing, Gender was not a significant factor influencing students' achievement in Essay writing. It was recommended among others that, teachers should make use of immediate feedback as a mode of assessment in teaching essay writing while curriculum planners should incorporate the use of immediate feedback in teaching essay writing in the next review of curriculum.

Keywords: Immediate feedback, Achievement, Essay writing, Experimental and Control

Introduction

The indispensable roles played by English Language have made it necessary that students should try as much as possible to record positive achievement in language learning by acquiring the four basic skills. These skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is the highest and most complex of the language skills (Offorma, 2009). Through writing, messages are passed across from one person to another. Borode (2014) defined writing as a way of representing on paper or other materials what is spoken, heard, read or thought about. This is supported by Kroll (2003) that writing is a complex process that involves the mastery of multiple skills that contribute to the overall difficulty of writing for any language user. Thus, it is a challenging and difficult skill for both native and non-native speakers to acquire.

One very important way of determining students' ability to write is through essay writing, exercises, tests or examinations. Essay tests are tests administered to students in order to elicit responses from them in written form. They are subjectively and not objectively scored (Ugwuja & Igbokwe, 2009). The writer of an essay usually tries to make a point in an interesting way. Its main goal is to interests the readers to change their thinking, to get them involved in the ideas it presents and ultimately get them to adopt those ideas. An essay informs and persuades at the same time (Tagg, 2000). Essay writing can therefore be defined as a means of creatively putting down one's ideas and thought in order to persuade one's audience.

There are four major parameters used to measure the ability of students or candidates in essay writing. They are content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy. This means that the student should be able to provide the expected number of points (content), logically organize their points in paragraphs, put address or addresses where necessary (organization), use suitable sentences, relevant idiomatic expressions, with punctuation marks where appropriate (mechanical accuracy). This implies that essay writing cuts across other aspects of language study such as the grammar, phonology, semantics and syntax, hence its importance. Irrespective of the importance of essay writing, students find it difficult to get it right when it comes to the above four mentioned areas. A study conducted by Patrick, Sui, Disdam and Ojo (2014) revealed that apart from oral English, essay writing is another area of difficulty which contributes to students' poor achievement in essay writing is teachers' mode of assessment of students' written essays.

Assessment is very important in the teaching and learning process. It is an integral part of curriculum and it serves as feedback to the students (Ugwuja & Igbokwe, 2009). Assessment can be either formative or summative. It is formative when the teacher assesses students during instructions and summative when the teacher assesses students at the end of a course of study. Assessment helps the teacher and even the learner to know whether learning has taken place. It also helps the teacher to know whether the instructional strategies being employed in the classroom are effective. However, in spite of the importance of assessment in the teaching and learning process, teachers do not take the assessment of students' exercises seriously. This negligence negatively affects the students both in terms of academic achievement and acquisition of the relevant skills and competencies. According to National Teachers Institute (NTI, 2006), too much emphasis on the outcome of final (external) examination, leads teachers to concentrate on trying to cover the syllabus without regard to whether the students understand what is taught.

In other words, teachers' inability to give students feedback constantly during the teaching and learning process may have the effect of not correcting the mistakes students make and may lead to poor application of the rules of writing. Besides, it could lead the students to form many wrong concepts which are not detected in time. Since students are not usually given prompt or immediate feedback on the progress they are making in learning. Feedback is a very important part of the educational process. Feedback in communication, whether in or outside the classroom, is a useful technique for ensuring effective impartation and acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits (Sichinga; Mfuni, Nenti and Chakalisa, 2014). In supporting the view, Hattie & Timperley, (2007) maintained that feedback is a "consequence" of performance. Similarly, Archer (2010) discovered that feedback given immediately is more effective than delayed feedback.

Statement of the Problem

The performance of students in English Language especially in the area of essay writing in the West African School Certificate Examination has been low over the years. The weaknesses of students in this regard have been traced to poor application of the rules of writing as evident in the WAEC Chief Examiner's report. This poor application of the rules of writing includes incorrect use of punctuation marks, students' inability to spell words correctly, poor paragraph development and students' inability to observe the rules of subject-verb-agreement. It has been observed that most English Language teachers do not constantly and quickly give students feedback to enable them correct flaws they may have in writing. This is worrisome because since students are not given prompt or immediate feedback on the progress they are making in learning, they can hardly plan their learning and this could lead to lack of motivation. This could also be the reason for students' poor academic achievement in Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State over the years. This paper therefore, focuses on the "effects of immediate feedback on secondary school students' achievement in essay writing in Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State.

Research Questions

1. How does immediate feedback and delayed feedback affect students' achievement in essay writing?
2. How does interaction effect of technique and gender affect students' achievement in essay writing?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of students assessed with immediate feedback and those assessed with delayed feedback in essay writing.

Ho₂: There is no significant interaction effect of technique and gender on students’ achievement in essay writing.

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental design. Specifically, it employed pretest-post-test, non-equivalent, control group design. This design was made for the study because there was no randomization of subjects rather intact classes were used as experimental and control groups. The design is symbolically represented in the following figure:

A: O₁ X O₂
B: O₁ -X O₂

A = Experimental Group (use of immediate feedback)

B = Control Group (use of delayed feedback)

X = Treatment with the use of immediate feedback

-X = Treatment with delayed feedback

O₁ = Pretest (Achievement)

O₂ = Post-test (Achievement)

The study was carried out in Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State. Lokoja Education Zone comprises of three (3) Local Government Areas. The choice of Lokoja Education Zone is because of the poor performance in English Language. The population of this study consisted of 1,735 2020/2021 SS2 students in public secondary schools in Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State. Purposive sampling technique was used in drawing four schools from the population. The co-educational schools were stratified into urban (14 schools) and rural (10 schools). In each of the location, one school was randomly assigned to experimental group and the other was assigned to the control group by the tossing of coin. In each school, one intact class was randomly drawn for the study giving a total of four intact classes. Students in intact classes constituted the sample of 173 used for the study.

The instrument used for data collection was Narrative Essay in English Language Achievement Test (NEELAT) adopted by the researchers. The NEELAT has two sections – A and B. Section A contains the students’ personal data while section B contains one narrative essay question – “Write a story ending with words: I wish I had listened to my father”. The achievement test given to the students during the pre-test was different from the one that was given to them during the post-test. The instruments were validated by three experts, two from English Language Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. To establish the reliability of the instrument, the researchers administered the instrument on 20 SSII students from Community Secondary School, Obollo-Afor in Udenu Local Government Area in Enugu State, which is outside the researchers’ area of study. The scores obtained through this testing were used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument. After the administration of the test, the researchers and the English Language teacher marked the test and the two scores were correlated using Kendell’s Coefficient of concordance. This was found to be 0.93 for the instrument. The Narrative Essay in English Language Achievement Test (NEELAT) was administered as pre-test to both the experimental and control groups. Immediately after the administration of the pre-test, the marking was done after four days for experimental group while the control group was marked after four weeks. The reason for this is to know if the students given immediate assessment or feedback would perform better in essay writing than those whose assessment or feedback is delayed. The researchers used mean and standard deviation to provide answers to the research questions because mean is the most reliable measure of central tendency in a normal distribution. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question I: How does immediate feedback and delayed feedback affect students’ achievement in essay writing?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of students with immediate and delayed feedback

Method	N	Pretest		Post-test		Mean gain
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	

Immediate feedback	97	16.14	4.94	45.09	16.77	28.95
Delayed feedback	76	14.98	3.54	21.76	6.28	6.78

Table 1 shows that the students that were taught essay writing using immediate feedback technique had mean achievement score of 45.09 with a standard deviation of 16.77 for the post-test while those that were taught using delayed feedback technique had mean achievement score of 21.76 with standard deviation of 6.28. Mean gain score of 28.95 and 6.78 for the two groups respectively imply that the students who were exposed to immediate feedback teaching technique achieved higher than their counterparts.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of students assessed with immediate feedback and those assessed with delayed feedback in essay writing.

Table 2: Analysis of covariance of the effect of immediate feedback technique on students' achievement in essay writing

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Correlated model	23311.291*	2	11655.646	66.368	.000
Intercept	15859.700	1	15859.700	90.307	.000
Pre-test	118.407	1	118.407	.674	.413
Group	23217.703	1	23217.703	132.204	.000
Error	29855.485	170	175.621		
Total	263206.000	173			
Corrected total	53166.786	172			

a. R Squared = .438 (Adjusted R Squared = .430)

Table 2 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of F(132.204) for the effect of immediate feedback technique on students' achievement in essay writing is 0.000. Since the probability value of .000 is less than .05 level of significant (p<.05) the null hypothesis was rejected. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the achievement mean scores of students assessed with immediate feedback and those assessed with delayed feedback in essay writing is therefore rejected.

Research question 2: How does interaction effect of technique and gender affect students' achievement in essay writing?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of interaction effect of technique and gender in students' achievement in essay writing

Gender	Pretest			Post test		
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean gain
Male	89	15.91	4.30	35.96	18.50	20.05
Female	84	15.34	4.27	33.65	16.37	18.31

Table 3 reveals the mean achievement scores of male and female students in essay writing. The analysis shows that male students had post-test mean achievement score of 33.96 with a standard deviation of 18.50 while their female counterparts had post-test mean achievement score of 33.65 with a standard deviation of 16.37. Mean achievement gain score of 20.05 and 18.31 for the male and female students respectively may have indicated that male students had higher mean achievement score than their female counterparts.

Ho₂: There is no significant interaction effect of technique and gender on students' achievement in essay writing.

Table 4: Analysis of covariance of the effect of technique and gender on students' achievement in essay writing

Source	Type III of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected mode	24595.2839	4	6148.821	36.155	.000
Intercept	16379.317	1	16379.317	96.310	.000
Pre-test	170.880	1	170.820	1.004	.318
Group	23331.714	1	23331.714	137.190	.000
Gender	538.947	1	538.947	3.169	.077
Group gender	584.133	1	584.133	3.435	.066

Error	28571.503	168	170.068
Total	53166.786	173	
Corrected total		172	

a. R square = .463 (Adjusted R square = .450)

Table 4 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of F(3.169) for the influence of gender on students' achievement in essay writing is 0.077. Since the probability value of 0.077 is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($p > .05$), the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, gender has no significant influence on the achievement of students in essay writing.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the first hypothesis of this study indicated that there is a significant influence of students who were exposed to immediate feedback teaching technique than those with delayed feedback. The tendency of higher performance by the experimental group might be because immediate feedback allows the learner to make corrective modifications and prevents continued practice of the incorrect behaviour (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004). The findings is in agreement with that of Emaikwu (2012) whose study on effect of prompt feedback on students' achievement in Mathematics indicated that the students taught using prompt feedback performed better than those taught without using prompt feedback. The reason for this could be that maybe because the students given immediate evaluative feedback after test might be motivated to read more and prepare well for the subsequent test.

The second findings revealed that gender has no significant influence on the achievement of students in essay writing. This finding corroborates that of Odo (2008) which indicated that gender had no significant influence in the mean achievement scores of students in Oral English when taught with game technique. It follows therefore that gender has no influence on students' achievement in English Language.

Recommendations

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

1. Secondary school teachers should make use of immediate feedback as a mode of assessment in teaching essay writing in secondary schools.
2. Seminars, conferences, and workshops should be organized to train teachers on the use of immediate feedback to enhance effective teaching and learning process.
3. Textbook writers should consider as a priority the need to include in their texts ,the use and application of immediate feedback as a mode of assessment in the teaching and learning of essay writing so that the teachers and students would apply it in the classroom.
4. Curriculum planners should incorporate the use of immediate feedback in teaching essay writing in the next review of the curriculum, as well as explore other areas where immediate feedback could be useful in the teaching and learning of English language.
5. Teachers and school administrators in both the urban and rural areas should make the atmosphere conducive for learning and provide equal opportunities for boys and girls in order to enhance their achievement.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that immediate feedback has significant influence on students' achievement in essay writing in Lokoja Education Zone.

References

- Borode, B. J. (2014). Achievement of junior secondary school students in essay writing in French using activity based and lecture methods. *Journal of Sociology Research*, 5(2), 1-6.
- Eggen, P. & Kauchak, D. (2004). *Educational psychology: Windows, classrooms*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
- Emaikwu, S. O. (2012). Assessing the effect of prompt feedback as a motivational strategy on students' achievement in secondary school Mathematics. *Educational Research*, 3(4), 371-379.
- Hattie, J. and Timperly, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- Kroll, B. (2003). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- NTI (2006). *Manual for the retraining of primary school teachers*. Kaduna: Teacher's Institute.
- Odo, C. O. (2008). Effects of game technique and influence of gender on senior secondary school students' achievement in oral English in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Offorma, G. C. (2000). Overview of modern foreign language (MFL) methods and techniques. *International Journal of Arts and Technology*, 2(1), 217-234.
- Patrick, J. M., Sui, M., Didam, B. & Ojo, N. Y. (2014). An insight into factors militating against Nigerian students' attainment in English Language Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. *Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala*, 45, 107-120.
- Sichinga, K. T., Mfuni, J. H., Nenty, H. J. & Chakalisa, P. (2014). Factors influencing quality of feedback in teaching in Botswana secondary schools. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 4(1), 26-37.
- Tag, J. (2000). What is an essay? <http://daphne.palomer.edu/handbook/whatisessay.htm>.
- Ugwuga, J. & Igbokwe, U. L. (2009). Classroom assessment. In Igbokwe, U. L. & Eze, U. N. (Eds.). *Classroom management for curriculum implementation: Applying psychological principles*. Enugu: Timex Publishers.