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Special column

Text Transformation and Freewriting Methods as Determinants of Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing in Senior Secondary Schools in Ibadan, Oyo State

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine which of the two teaching strategies: text transformation and free writing could better enhance students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. A pretest, posttest, control group quasi experimental design with 3 * 2 * 2 factorial matrix was adopted for the study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select respondent in Ibadan north local government area in Ibadan metropolis. Forty students were randomly selected among the SS 2 students in the 3 selected schools. This study has 120 participants in all. Each of the schools was assigned to treatment at random. Data were collected using main instruments: Yoruba essay writing achievement test (YEWAT) and operational guide for instruction in text transformation, free writing and modified lecture methods, (OGITI, OGIFW, OGIMLM). One hypothesis, tested at 0.05 level of significance was formulated for this study. Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance and scheffe post hoc. The findings revealed that there was a significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ($F(2,109) = 76.205; p < 0.05$). Scheffe post hoc analysis shows that the text transformation method (tt) has the highest mean score of (398.025), free writing (FW) with higher mean score of (388.401) lecture method with high mean score of (319.001). The findings from the study show that text transformation method had a significant impact on students' writing achievement than other methods. It is recommended that teachers should affect the use of text transformation method in the teaching of Yoruba essay writing in the senior secondary schools while free writing should be used as pre-writing

skill to generate content knowledge. Also teachers should use relevant and familiar instructional materials to teach subject matters while parents and students should cultivate positive attitude to Yoruba language as a school subject to protect and preserve our cultural heritage and develop our society morally, socially and technologically.

Key words: Text transformation; Free writing, Determinant; Achievement; Yoruba essay writing

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, like many other countries of the world, has through her universal primary education programmes, provided equal educational opportunities to all her citizens. This is done in order to achieve the basic national objectives of primary education which is the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (2004). The primary level of education provides the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system. Okedara (1997), in recognition of the importance of literacy as identified and described by different people, found that literacy involves the basic learning skills of listening, reading and writing.

The national policy on education (2004) in Nigeria states that the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community is to be used for instruction in the first three years of primary education. This means intensive programme of consolidation of the audio-oral skills of the mother tongue, gradual development of a dialogic use at home and school varieties of the mother

tongue, a step by step development of the skills of reading and writing in the mother tongue study and the expression domains of mother tongue use in terms of register. English language is then expected to be introduced as a subject right from the first year of schooling and to become the language of instruction from the third year.

From the time the federal government declared in the National Policy on Education its intention to promote mother-tongue as medium of instruction in schools, academic and researchers have expressed their feelings about the policy. Reports of researches conducted in various fields confirmed that children learn best in their mother-tongue (UNESCO, 1963; Awoniyi, 1978; Fafunwa, 1982; Adeyinka, 1998). The child's ideas and thoughts are in his own native language and this implies that if he is to be encouraged to think for himself (as reflected in our aims of education) he must be assisted to think in his own language, (Adeyinka, 1998).

The importance of language in literacy development and the process of acquiring language is continuous and unending. This is because these skills grow from oral language development which involves a whole meaningful, supportive and continuous process. Some research findings by Idogo (2005), Ajayi (2004), Ajila (2003), and Jiboku (1998) have also indicated that literacy problem is as a result of the weak foundation at the primary school level. The effect of this weak foundation is not only evident in students' poor performance in English language but also in Yoruba language especially in essay writing.

Continuous writing refers to: ability to keep or sustain unbroken written communication both formally and informally. Continuous writing is used synonymously as composition or essay writing according to Adegbile (1996). It is one of the areas of difficulty of secondary school students. Adegbile further states that the perfect understanding of a language involves understanding the complex skills embedded in it. Yoruba language is taught and learnt through four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. A deficiency in any one of these skills may be an indication of deficiency in other areas. Teachers of essay are expected to teach and emphasize basic skills involved in writing in order to help students' acquire basic skills needed for effective writing. For example according to d' Angelo (1981); Myles, (2004) teachers need to understand that essay has principles and forms which they must understand and teach students, in order to help the students to overcome their writing problems. He identified paragraph development, sentence formation and appropriateness of words as the linguistic principles which must be developed.

Writing skill is acquired and perfected. It has to conform to certain conventional and grammatical rules that govern written communication. No short cut to it except by constant practice. Generally, writing involves composing. This implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narrative or descriptive or to transform information into new texts as in

expository or argumentative essays. Writing is best viewed as a continuum of activities that range from mechanical or formal aspect of "writing down" on the one hand to a more complex act of composing on the other end. The act of composing, no doubt, creates problems for students (especially those who are not fluent in the lower level writing skills). Essay writing requires conscious efforts and practice in composing, developing and analyzing ideas. Asaolu (1982) emphasized that competence in Yoruba essay writing involves logical thinking, coherence in organization of thought, correct use of the language which includes use of punctuations, tone marks, right use of proverbs, similes and other figures of speech that can enrich and beautify the essay. Ogunyemi (2010) also notes that competence in writing is a pre-requisite for students' academic success since examinations are conducted through the medium of writing, students must be able to respond clearly to examination questions through writing for them to record any meaningful success. For these great tasks, scholars' proffered solutions, among which are the need to have improved modern methods of teaching and help students to improve their writing skills (Kolawole, 1997). Therefore this study aims at investigating the effect of story transformation and free writing as strategies of teaching essay writing.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Various researches have shown that Nigerian students are poor users of Yoruba language specifically in continuous writing hence, unexpected percentage of failure is recorded in examinations even among those whose mother tongue is Yoruba. WAEC (2001, 2002, 2003).

The poor performance of students in reading and writing is traceable to many factors. This perhaps explains why Adegbile (1999) identifies teachers' choice of method as one of the main factors of poor performance in students' achievement in continuous writing. Scholars like Obemeata (1995), Ubahakwe (1991) found that the problem of learning essay writing in Nigerian schools is compounded by teachers' inability to improvise the necessary enrichment materials that can stimulate the desired intellectual development in writing.

Text transformation and free writing methods have been used in English language, French and other subjects like social studies and found to be highly helpful to learners. There are few researches on teaching methodology in Yoruba composition writing. Moreover, the effectiveness of test transformation and free writing has not been well examined in Yoruba composition writing.

This study therefore investigated the effect of test transformation and free writing on senior secondary students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

1.1 Hypothesis

One hypothesis was formulated for this study and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis is:

H1 There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study examined the effects of story/text transformation and free-writing methods on students' achievement in Yoruba composition writing in selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government in Oyo state. Specifically, the effectiveness of both story/text transformation and free writing methods on the following aspects of writing competence were determined: coherence, sequencing, generation of ideas, analyzing and synthesizing, explanation and detail. It involves Yoruba language students in Senior Secondary II schools in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria.

1.3 Literature Review

One of the objectives of teaching language in Nigerian schools is to enhance students' ability to communicate effectively when speaking or writing. Essay writing is one of the means through which students' ability to express their ideas are examined. It is therefore one of the courses in the language classroom instructions in which students are taught writing and speaking skills. If students' expression is to be enhanced, the method of presenting materials to them must be improved. Investigators have carried out researches on some different methods that could be used for the teaching of essay writing. Some of these include; study of models approach, Knudson (1991), activity method, Ote (1997), discussion method, Kolawole (1998), the topic method, Gomwalk (2000), writing-to-learn approach, Boscolo and Mason (2001), individualized method, Ogunsanwo (2003). Only few of such have been in use in teaching Yoruba essay writing in schools. Therefore this study investigated the effects of story transformation and free writing as strategies of teaching Yoruba essay writing.

Basically, text/story transformation as a strategy of teaching writing is not in itself a new idea, on the contrary, exercises where students are required to write a text on the basis of another can be found in various forms in many writing courses and writing examinations. Indeed, some of the most "traditional" of writing exercises, such as summary and translation, are types of text transformation. It is to draw attention to a type of learning task that combines the two types of activity – the reading and the writing of texts of different genres. Its use is well illustrated by Caudery (1998) and McGonigal (2005). Task of this type consists of reading and often discussing a text of one particular genre, and then using some or all of the information and ideas contained in that text to create a new text of a different genre. The texts chosen should be works of renowned authors or teachers, could even be ideas or stories narrated by students themselves which serve as models for learners to study and manipulate in order to perform their own writing task.

Models taken from poetry or prose can stimulate imagination, create interest, supplement experience, and

implant a feeling for words construction and rhythm into students whom their make-up or background or upbringing has deprived them of the beauties of language. For example, students might read a tourist brochure about a medium – sized town and use the information given in the tourist brochure to create an encyclopedia entry about the town. Or students might read part of a letter about business matters written to personal friend, and use the information in it to write a more formal business letter conveying the same information to a business contact who is not a personal friend. Or they might read an excerpt from a hand book on, say birds, and use the information given there to write a nature column for a local newspaper.

The second model used in this study is free writing by Elbow Peter who is currently a professor of English (Emeritus) at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the pioneer of theories and practices of free writing, editing and revising. Free writing according to Elbow, is an effective way to improve writing exercises. It encourages free flow of thought without penalty. It is all about continuous writing on any issue at hand without stopping, without editing, without sharing, without worrying about grammar, without thinking of its meaningfulness and without rushing. Normal free writing could be adapted to focus free writing and public or unfocused free writing. Focused free writing is trying to stay on a topic, for instance, when there is a specific assignment to do. Public free writing is geared toward being shared. It is useful in groups, especially where there is trust, and growth can occur. The goal of this exercise is to bring about a more natural language, while making the writing process easier and more comfortable to the student. In this exercise, learner is not given any outline to follow but left to approach the topic the way he likes. This method allows loose ends. It is based on the motivation and innate creative ability of the student.

Text transformation and free writing are not entirely new teaching methods. They have been used in English language, French (as 1st language) and even other subjects like social studies. Iyagba (1993) researched the use of reading and writing methods and discussion method and found reading-writing method which is text transformation helpful to learners than discussion method. Ajayi used text transformation (use of newspaper items) in 2002 and found it more enhancing. Knudson (1991) investigated "study of models" in teaching students' essay writing the report was significant and found to enhance quality of adolescent writing. Boscolo and mason (2001) use writing- to-learn approach (a sort of free writing) as a tool for enhancing students learning of content material. About 75% of the writing-to-learn studies analyze hard positive effect. Oyinloye and Gbenedio (2010), in a recent study, investigate the effect of different methods with linguistic packages on students' achievement in essay writing and found positive results. Opatotun (2003) asserts that the background and the culture help to shape the knowledge and truth that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process. Wealth of experiences gathered

by the learner overtime in his environment is a vital tool in transforming a body of knowledge. Furthermore, it is argued that the responsibilities of learning should reside increasingly with the learners (Glaserfeld, 1989) social constructivism thus emphasizes the importance of the learner being actively involved in the learning process, unlike some other educational viewpoints where the responsibility rested with the instructor to teach and where the learner played a passive, receptive role.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a pretest, posttest and control group quasi experimental design with a 3 * 2 * 2 factorial design matrix in which the three rows consist of the two treatment strategies (text transformation and free writing) and the control group (non-treatment group) the moderator variables are: attitude, which operates at two levels and language proficiency that exists at two levels.

Table 1
3 * 2 * 2 Factorial Matrix

Treatment	Students' language proficiency	Students' attitude	
		Positive	Negative
Text transformation	L		
	H		
Free-writing	L		
	H		
Modified lecture method (control)	L		
	H		

The factorial matrix shows that treatment was at three levels: Text transformation, Free writing and modified lecture method, student language proficiency at two levels: High and low and attitude of students towards Yoruba essay writing at two levels: positive and negative.

2.1 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises senior secondary school 2 students in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. These are those in SS 2 in the 2011/12 session.

2.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select Ibadan North Local Government out of five local government areas in Ibadan metropolis. Secondly, three schools in Ibadan North were also chosen and 40 students were randomly selected among the SS 2 students in each school (120 participants in all) and the selected schools were assigned to treatments at random.

2.3 Instruments

Two instruments were used for this study. The instruments were designed and duly validated by the researcher. They are as follows:

- Yoruba Essay Writing Achievement Test (YEWAT)

- Operational Guide for Instruction on Text Transformation Method, Free Writing Method And Modified Lecture Method.

2.4 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Yoruba Essay Writing Achievement Test (YEWAT) based on essay topics to be covered was designed by the researcher to collect information on students' achievement before and after the treatment. It was presented to experts in Yoruba language for face and content validity. Ambiguity and other technical faults were appropriately corrected.

The investigator made use of the Operational Guide for Instruction on: (a) Text Transformation Method, (b) Free writing Method, (c) modified lecture method, in developing appropriate lesson plans for experimental and control groups respectively on the essay topics covered during the six weeks of treatment. Experienced language teachers validated the lesson plans.

2.5 Treatment Procedure

The teachers used were the regular subject teachers for Yoruba language in SS 2 classes. Two teaching groups were used for the experiment. The week before the main treatment commenced was used to train the teachers for main treatment on the special requirements and demands of the text transformation and the free writing methods to essay writing.

The treatment in the experimental group consists of the researcher-made instructional package for teaching writing which was made available to the teachers to study. The treatment for the experimental groups was characterized by text-transformation and free writing methods to teaching essay in Yoruba while that of the control group involves the conventional lecture method of teaching. Four different essay topics were taught within the period of six weeks. The essay topic administered as pretest in the first week was re-administered in the sixth week as posttest.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data were subjected to analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the pretest scores as covariate. A significant means required using the Scheffe post hoc analysis to detect the direction of the differences between the groups of treatment.

2.7 Results

H1: there is no significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Table 2 reveals that there is a significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. ($f_{2,109} = 76.205, p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis writing is rejected. In order to provide some indications of the performance of each group, a Scheffe post hoc analysis was computed. The result is showed in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of 3 * 2 * 2 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	229985.260a	10			
Intercept	121659.136	1	22998.526		
Prescore	29642.054	1	121669.136	39.615	.000
Trtgroup	88483.140	2	29642.054	209.556	.000
Language proficiency	11140.577	1	44241.570	51.058	.000
Attituyor	13439.159	1	11140.577	76.205	.000
Trtgroup * lang. Prof.	4042.135	2	13439.159	19.189	.000
Trtgroup * Attituyor	2946.498	2	2021.067	23.149	.000
Lang. Prof. * Attituyor	9857.603	1	1473.249	3.481	.034
Trtgroup * lang. Prof * attituyor	.000	0	9857.603	2.538	.084
Error	63280.665	109		16.980	.000
Total	1.659e7	120	580.557		
Corrected total	293265.925	119			

Table 3
Scheffe Post-Hoc Analysis on Students' Achievement on Yoruba Essay Writing

	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Lecture method	40	319.000	
Free writing	40		388.400
Text transformation	40		398.025
Sig.		1.000	0.475

Table 3 Shows that the mean score (388.401) of participants exposed to free writing (FW) is significantly different from those exposed to the control (319.001). Also, the mean score (398.025) of participants exposed to text transformation (TT) is significantly different from those in the control group (319.001).

3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussions of the results are based on the variables examined in the study. The findings reveal that there is a significant (main) effect of treatment (text transformation, free writing and lecture methods) on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The students exposed to text transformation method of teaching essay writing in Yoruba language are best in their essay writing achievement than those in the free writing and lecture method (control group) respectively. This implies that though students' attitudinal disposition to Yoruba essay writing is very poor and their language proficiency very low, consistent effective treatment can enhance their attitude and language proficiency.

High level of performance in the use of text transformation corroborated the findings of Ajayi (2002), who discovered that students who were taught to read relevant portions of newspaper were able to generate ideas and express the ideas in desirable sentences when writing similar topics. Also Iyagba (1993) used reading-writing method among the junior secondary school students and found the method better than discussion method that is not accompanied with materials. Oyinloye and Gbenedio (2010) investigated the effects of reading-writing, discussion and lecture methods combined with packages of linguistic inputs on secondary school students'

academic achievement and attitudes in essay writing. The findings from the study show that, students who were taught reading-writing with a package of linguistic inputs had the best result in expression in essay writing. Abijo, (2009) examined the effectiveness of model-based method in teaching essay writing in senior secondary school and he found it more enhancing than lecture method.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should effect the use of text transformation method in classroom teaching of Yoruba essay writing, while free writing could be used as a pre-writing skills to generate content knowledge to achieve active participation and learning in their students. Teachers should teach learners lower-level writing skills and progress to higher level writing strategies. Teachers should motivate and guide low achieving writers by the time they are identified as needing help for prompt intervention, Brunning & Horn, 2000, Gralia & De Caso, (2004). Teachers should be at alert and sensitive in their choice of materials.

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