



## **Effects of the Collaborative Approach on Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Composition Writing in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State**

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**Abstract.** Writing in general is a very important skill that needs to be properly developed in the students. This study investigated the effects of the collaborative approach in senior secondary school students' achievement in English composition writing in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. The research was provoked by the continuous decline in students' achievement in English composition writing. The study employed the quasi-experimental research design. Two schools were randomly selected from the 20 public schools in the study area, one of the schools used as experimental group and the other as control group. A sample of 78 students was used for the experiment from the entire population of 16,219 students. Four research questions and four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Students Composition Writing Assessment Test (SCWAT) developed and validated by the researchers was used to collect research data. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test for independent samples. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the mean score achievements of the experimental and control groups in English composition writing. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that

teachers should teach English composition writing using the collaborative approach and school authorities should encourage English teachers to attend workshops and seminars that will expose them to innovative teaching strategies like the collaborative approach amongst others.

**Keywords:** Collaborative approach, English composition writing, Secondary schools

### **1. Introduction**

Writing in general is a very important skill that needs to be properly developed in the student. English composition writing in particular is an essential component of the educational curriculum of the Nigerian secondary school student, considering that English language is the language of instruction in Nigerian secondary schools. Secondary school students therefore need to master English composition writing skills, especially at the senior secondary school level which is the stage at which students are expected to possess adequate writing skills to help them become confident and independent writers in the course of their higher educational

activities as well as in social communication interactions within the society in general.

According to Enigeh and Afangideh (2001), 'writing is an art, the art of communication, and like other forms, it requires the acquisition of the necessary skills to attain excellence. Whereas, the pianist communicates through music and the sculptor through wood and stone, with chisel, the writer convey his message or feelings through the use of words, pen and paper. The art of writing therefore has its own peculiarity and requires some techniques'.

A good writing composition should include a rich content, proper organization, sentence fluency and mechanical accuracy. The rich content entails the writer generating enough ideas to form the content of his composition. The more ideas discussed in the piece of a written composition, the more conviction the pieces of communication, and the more marks it fetches for the student in the case of a test. Content should also include relevant examples which help to expatiate on the themes, illustrating same.

When talking about proper organization in composition writing, the generated ideas are to be properly organized into paragraphs. The composition should be organized in such a way that the paragraphs follow a proper sequence, with a smooth flow of ideas from one paragraph to the next. According to Ojo (2016) in describing the feature of effective writing, 'the writing must be carefully organized. Organization is the progression, relatedness and completeness of ideas.

Sentence Fluency on the other hand is achieved through the use of clarity of expression in the sentence. The sentences used should not be ambiguous. Also, the English composition writer must ensure that the sentences are syntactically and grammatically well- formed. Unity and coherence can be achieved in a piece of written composition if there is an intra-sentential and inter-sentential connection or links to provide a smooth flow of information. Economy of expression is another quality of sentence fluency. According to Ojo (2016), to meet the requirement of economy of expression,

you have to be concise. That is, you should say what should be said using only necessary words.

Mechanical accuracy in English composition writing is achieved through the proper use of English punctuation markers. Ojo (2016) submits that writing that is well punctuated not only enhances the reader's understanding of the message but also goes a long way in establishing the fluency of expression. Using full stops, commas, colons, semi-colons accurately, for example, indicates a break in transition. This can either be long enough to change the thought pattern or to clarify more of the ideas earlier explained.

The four elements of a good English composition writing as listed here above are the main things that the marker looks out for, while marking a piece of English composition. The standard marking scheme for the West African Examination Council allocates 6 marks for content (ideas) generated, 8 marks for clarity of expression in the sentences, 3 marks for punctuation marks and 3 marks for organization (paragraphs), giving a total of 20 marks.

In view of the foregoing, certain techniques, methods and approaches are employed by teachers of English language to develop English composition skills in students. Odide, (2011) supports this assertion by stating that 'writing as a practical activity is based on certain approaches, methods and techniques which interact with one another to provide direction both of a general and specific nature'. These methods, approaches and strategies form the tools by which the teacher develops English composition writing skills in his students. If English composition is well taught using an effective teaching method, the students of English will be helped to develop their English composition writing skills and go on to become expert and confident writers. The role of the English composition teacher, therefore, cannot be over emphasized.

According to Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999), 'the big challenge facing teachers is that of motivating students to write. One way of promoting writing among students is to make

writing classes lively and interesting'. It is in an attempt to promote the love of writing among students as encouraged in the foregoing statement that teachers make use of different methods and approaches in teaching English composition writing. It is for the same reason that the researchers conducted this experimental research using the collaborative approach in order to find out its effectiveness and comparative advantage as a tool in helping senior secondary school students become better English composition writers.

The collaborative approach is a student-centred approach of learning in which emphasis is shifted from the teacher to the students. It is a departure from the more traditional methods of teaching in which the teacher is the principal actor in the learning process. Oluikpe (2007) has defined collaborative learning thus: 'collaborative learning is an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves a group of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product'. The collaborative approach as the name implies allows for greater contribution and collaboration among learners. Suffice it to say here that the approach is adopted by the researchers for this experimental research by way of trying to address the poor performance of senior secondary school students in English composition writing.

## 2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of the collaborative approach on senior secondary school students' achievement in English composition writing in Jos South Local Government area of Plateau state. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Determine students' level of achievement in idea generation (content) before and after instruction using the collaborative approach.
- Determine students' level of achievement in sentence construction before and after instruction using the collaborative approach.

- Determine students' level of achievement in paragraph organization before and after instruction using the collaborative approach.
- Determine students' level of achievement in the use of punctuation marks before and after instruction using the collaborative approach.

## 3. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated by the researchers to guide the study:

- What is the mean difference between the achievement of students in English composition writing exposed to the collaborative approach and those that were not exposed to the approach in idea generation?
- What is the mean difference between the achievement of students who practiced English composition writing individually and those who practiced it collaboratively in expression?
- What is the mean difference between the achievement of students who were exposed to the collaborative approach and those not exposed to the approach in paragraph organization?
- What is the mean difference between the achievement of students who practiced English composition writing individually and those who practiced it collaboratively in punctuation?

## 4. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised to guide the study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in idea generation (content).

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control group in expression.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the post test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in paragraphing.

**Ho4:** There is no significant difference in the post test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in mechanical accuracy.

**5. Method**

**5.1 Research Design**

The quasi experimental research design was used for the study. This design was appropriate as the students were in intact groups and the researchers were not allowed by the school authorities to carry out randomization and random assignment to avoid disruption of the school’s activities.

**5.2 Participants**

The target population of the study consisted of all SSII students in the 20 public senior secondary schools within Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau state. The Public schools in the area has a population of 16, 219 students. Two schools were randomly selected from the 20 schools in the area. Two intact classes from the two schools comprising 78 students participated in the study. The experimental group was made up of 42 students while the control group had 36 students.

**6. Results**

The results as presented here are guided by the research questions and hypotheses.

**Research Question one:** What is the mean difference between the achievement of students in English composition writing exposed to the collaborative approach and those that were not exposed to the approach in idea generation?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations for Answering Research Questions One to Four**

Test	Skill	Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Post-test	Idea Generation	Experimental	42	3.79	0.98
		Control	36	2.58	3.32
Post-test	Expression	Experimental	42	3.92	0.71
		Control	36	2.81	0.57
Post-test	Paragraphing	experimental	42	3.93	0.71
		Control	36	2.44	0.80
Post-test	Punctuation	Experimental	42	3.71	0.70
		Control	36	2.47	0.91

In order to answer research question one, table one revealed that the experimental group had a higher mean of 3.79 (SD= 0.98) than the control group with a mean of 2.58(SD= 3.32) in idea generation. Hence, the treatment was effective.

**5.3 Instrument**

The instrument used for this study was tagged: Students’ Composition Writing Achievement Test (SCWAT). The instrument was developed and validated by the researchers. The content validity of the instrument was established by subjecting the instrument to expert judgment and the test-retest reliability to estimate the measure of stability was carried out. Hence the instrument was both valid and reliable for use.

**5.4 Procedure**

The researchers exposed both the experimental and control groups to four (4) weeks of English composition lectures and then a pre-test was administered. After the pre-test, another period of four (4) weeks were used for the experiment, in which the collaborative approach was used on the experimental group, while the control group was taught using the conventional method. At the end of the treatment, a post-test was administered to both groups to ascertain the effect of the treatment.

After the experiment, the data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test for independent samples.

**Research Question Two:** What is the mean difference between the achievement of students who practiced English composition writing individually and those who practiced it collaboratively in expression?

Table 1 also revealed that the mean score of the experimental group in expression was 3.92 (SD= 0.71) was higher than that of the control group with a mean score of 2.81 (SD= 0.57). Therefore, the treatment was effective as the mean performance of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group in Expression.

**Research Question Three:** What is the mean difference between the achievement of students who were exposed to the collaborative approach and those not exposed to the approach in paragraph organization?

Table 1 also revealed that the mean of the experimental group in paragraphing was higher than that of the control group. This means the treatment given to the experimental group was effective.

**Research Question Four:** What is the mean difference between the achievement of students who practiced English composition writing individually and those who practiced it collaboratively in punctuation?

Table one also revealed that the experimental group had a higher mean of 3.71 (SD= 0.70) than the control group with a mean of 2.47 (SD= 0.91) in punctuations. Hence, the treatment was effective.

**Hypothesis one**

There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in idea generation (content).

Table two shows that the *p*-value of 0.007 is less than the level of significance of 0.05, therefore, we fail to accept the null hypothesis one. Hence, there is a significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in idea generation (content). This shows that the treatment was effective.

**Table Two: Table Showing t-test Results for Hypotheses one to four.**

Skill	Group	N	Df	Mean	SD	t-value	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
Idea Generation (Content)	Experimental	42	76	3.50	0.69	2.87	0.007	Reject Ho <sub>1</sub>
	Control	36	76	2.85	0.75			
Paragraphing	Experimental	42	76	3.25	0.64	2.33	0.025	Reject Ho <sub>2</sub>
	Control	36	76	2.75	0.72			
Expression	Experimental	42	76	3.55	0.76	3.14	0.003	Reject Ho <sub>3</sub>
	Control	36	76	2.75	0.85			
Mechanical Accuracy	Experimental	42	76	3.50	0.61	4.58	0.000	Reject Ho <sub>4</sub>
	Control	36	76	2.45	0.83			

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control group in expression.

Table two also revealed that the *P*-value of the t-test of 0.003 for expression is less than the level of significance of 0.05, therefore, reject null hypothesis two. Hence, there is a significant difference in the post-test mean scores of the

experimental and control group in expression. This shows that the treatment was effective.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference in the post test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in paragraphing.

From table two, it can be clearly seen that the *p*-value of the t-test analysis for paragraphing of 0.025 is less than the level of significance of

0.05, therefore, hypotheses three was rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the post test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in paragraphing.

**Hypothesis Four:** There is no significant difference in the post test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in mechanical accuracy.

Table two also revealed that the p-value of the t-test analysis for mechanical accuracy of 0.000 is less than the level of significance of 0.05, therefore, reject hypothesis four. Hence, there is a significant difference in the post test mean scores of the experimental and control groups in mechanical accuracy. These shows the treatment in collaborative instruction was effective.

## 7. Discussion

The main aim of this study was to test the effect of the collaborative approach on senior secondary school students' achievement in English composition writing in Jos South Local Government area of Plateau state.

The results as presented in the result section revealed clearly that the treatment administered on the experimental group was significantly effective on them as against their counterparts in the control group that were not exposed to the treatment. Results from the research questions showed that in all the four skills assessed, that is, idea generation, paragraphing, expression and mechanical accuracy, the experimental group had higher mean score than the control group. Similarly, when the t-test was conducted to test the four hypotheses covering the four skills assessed, it showed clearly that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the four areas assessed.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- English language teachers should be encouraged to integrate collaborative approach in their teaching of English composition writing.

- English composition instruction should be learner-centred in such a way that learning materials are designed to encourage learners' active participation and responsibility –taking while the teachers' role is reduced to that of coordinator and guide.
- English language teachers should be encouraged by their school authorities to attend seminars and workshops where new methods and approaches to teaching English composition, such as the collaborative approach, are promoted so as to advance beyond the mere traditional methods of instruction.

## 9. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the use of collaborative approach in developing English composition writing of senior secondary school students is effective. This is because the experiment to test the effectiveness of the collaborative approach on senior secondary school students in Jos South local government area of plateau state had a significant effect on the students composition writing skills assessed at the end of the experiment.

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