PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF ESSAY WRITING IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FAGGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis- titled: **Participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in selected secondary schools in Fagge Local Government,** by I**BRAHIM,**SunusiFagge- has been read and approved as meeting the requirements for the award of a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) by Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

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I declare that this study- **Participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in selected secondary schools in Fagge Local Government-** is my original research work and has not been presented anywhere for the award of a higher degree in any form. All citations and other sources of information have been acknowledged in the references.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the members of myfamily and everyone interested in fluent and error-free writing in English.

Acknowledgment

I wish to thank the Almighty Allah for everything. Peace and blessings to His Prophet, Muhammad,*peace be upon him*.

Special appreciation to the supervisors of this research Dr. SadiqMohammed, and Prof. I. A. Olaofe for the guidance, encouragement, and the time they devoted to correcting this work. My gratitude to Dr. Ramlatu J. Daura for thevaluable suggestions she offered during the course of conducting this study.

Definition of Operational Terms

Conferencing: a writing process that involves teachers listening to students talk about the writing task and asking questions that can guide students to discuss work in progress.

Participatory Approach: active pedagogic approach that involves all the learners talking and carrying out activities individually and in small groups

Revision: a writing process which involves asking questions that can lead to the amendment of parts or all ofthe essay.

Self-assessment a writing approach in which students assess their own essays.

Definition of abbreviations

ESL: English as a Second Language.

KERD: Kano Educational Resource Department.

L2: Second Language.

NECO: National Examinations Council.

SS: Senior Secondary.

SSCE: Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination.

WAEC: West African Examinations Council.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine the effects of participatory approaches on the teaching of essay writing in English among Class Two students of two public senior secondary schools in Fagge Local Government Area. In order to do this, fifty students apiece were selected from an SS II class in each of the two randomly selected senior secondary schools. The 2012 Senior Secondary Certificate Examination question paper was used as the treatment for the control and experimental groups. To conduct the study effectively, hypotheses- which correspond to the study's research questions- were formulated in an attempt to determine the role that participatory approaches, like conferencing, revision, and self-assessment, can play in the teaching of essay writing in Class Two of senior secondary schools. The hypotheses were formulated in an attempt to ascertain whether or not there was a significant difference in the performances of the students in the content, organization and expression components of their narrative, descriptive and argumentative essays. The T-test was used to test for significant differences, before and after the administration of the treatment, between the performances of the control and experimental groups. The findings of the study reveal that performances were significantly higher in the essays of students taught essay writing using participatory approaches than in the essays of students who were not. The findings positively suggest that participatory approaches can significantly improve students' essay writing. Recommendations, based on the findings of the study, were offered. These include: the need for teachers to encourage pre-writing activities that would make the essay writing a two-way one that involves the students; the need for teachers of essay writing to accentuate the cultural relevance of essay topics, in addition to providing model essays as a reading guide for the students.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Participatory approaches to teaching essay writing are active approaches that encourage students to think for themselves, work together, and get involved in all learning activities (Vernon, 2007). Conferencing, journaling, revision, interaction with the textbook are some of the many process-based participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools. The main focus of these approaches is the learners as they are mostly involved in the writing task (Auerbach, 1992).

A participatory approach sets out a clearly defined outcome (Massi, 2000). Essay writing is topic-based and does not accommodate extraneous or irrelevant material. It involves many skills that must be mastered and these cannot be taught all at once. In addition, most students, for many reasons, lack confidence and enthusiasm in writing and may never have written much either in their first language or in English (Harmer, 2007). Whatever the reason, there is the need to teach students how to build the correct writing habit as most of the poor performances in essay writing originate from the secondary schools which are the points of entry into higher education (Kamal, 2010), a level where near-perfect mastery of writing and all its skills is a pre-requisite.

Many approaches to the teaching of essay writing- such as the integrative approach, the communicative, direct, and notional approaches- are in existence in most places around the world, yet students` poor performance in this field persists with impunity. Recent advances in researches into the pedagogy of writing seem to suggest that the time for participatory approaches as an effective method of instilling the proper and correct writing habits has arrived. Hyland (2002, pp. 5-48) notes that the teaching of writing involves the theories of writing as a process and of learning to write- where the issue is whether students learn to write by writing or whether something else (such as analyzing a model piece of writing before one starts the writing of the essay) is needed to bring about writing.

The fact that most of the books on teaching writing that are available in many Nigerian secondary schools were not published with the participatory approaches (such as peer feedback, self-editing, conferencing, and many more) in mind nor do most teachers of essay writing employ these approaches in their teaching of writing inspired this study, to a large extent. This study is also concerned with the reality that most students find it difficult to write good essays, this is worrisome because the secondary school is the mastery stage for good essay writing in addition to the important fact that it is the gateway to higher education or gainful employment yet many students cannot write essays

that are meaningful and as error-free as possible and these disturbing facts corroborate the fact that writing is one of the most tasking aspects of English to teach, partly because most learners have not been taught about the writing skills that they need in their first language and partly because most students find essay writing a tedious task. The study believes that as a corollary to these concerns, participatory approaches can be successfully employed to make secondary school students better writers of all types of essays. This study is inspired by the fact that most of the essay writing textbooks adopt a holistic approach to essay writing tasks; rarely do they contain essay tasks that are not only participatory but also develop specific writing skills (i.e. content, organization, mechanics, and expression).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study investigates the role that participatory approaches play in the teaching of essay writing in selected secondary schools in Fagge Local Government Area. It examined the effects of participatory approaches on the teaching of narrative, descriptive, and argumentative essays in the schools selected. It also investigates the impact of these approaches on the improvement of the mastery of the skills of content, organization, mechanics, and expression in the subjects` essays. An essay is either well-written or it is not; the act of writing a cohesive essay is a difficult one. A well-written essay is judged by its accuracy in

description, narration as well as argument. Most of the time, students at the secondary school level are rushed into writing armed with nothing but their undeveloped L2 writing skills and are then expected to write a unified essay as an assignment within the half hour or so of the essay writing period. The problem of the neglect of pre-writing activities like brainstorming, conferencing- to mention a few- as well as the absence of attention to post-essay writing activities like revision and self-assessment constitute the problems for this study. Without going through the proper channels of writing an essay, students will `find themselves faced with a variety of problems to deal with` (Kilhefner, 2011). This study raised the problem of pre-writing activities involved in participatory approaches and their use or otherwise in the essay writing classrooms. Pre-writing activities, such as planning, brainstorming, and drafting, are central to any participatory pedagogy yet most essay writing lessons and textbooks ignore this vital component of participatory approach to the teaching of essay writing in senior secondary schools, and this neglect raised another problem for this study.. Before embarking on any writing assignment a writer must employ some pre-writing activities such as brainstorming (in groups) or some research to use within the essay.

The Chief Examiner reports each year, after the ‘O’ level English examination, that candidates continue to record low performances in the essay writing paper. The English language teachers in secondary schools in Kano have often made

similar complaints. It is not yet known whether the teachers employ participatory approaches in their essay writing classes and how much the lack of this has contributed to the poor performance in essay writing often complained about. This study is meant to ascertain whether participatory approaches can significantly improve the students' performances in essay writing in English

Another problem lies in the essay structure itself (Kamal,, 2010; Willingham, 2005). Are the essays structured in conformity with the specific essay task (i.e. narrative, descriptive or argumentative)? The essay`s structure originates directly from the pre-writing activities and gives the subject-matter unity and comprehension. Participatory approaches also emphasize correct grammar as nothing makes a good essay boring faster than bad grammar and spelling errors- areas which pose another problem regarding participatory approaches and essay writing. Students` written performance in English language examinations, as well as in other related academic tasks, has always been a cause of great concern among examiners, parents, the students themselves as well as teachers of English. This concern arises as a result of the students` inability to communicate effectively in the written word resulting in errors of content, mechanics, expression as well as semantic errors. Textbooks that prepare students to, primarily, pass the school-leaving examinations or make learners better writers abound and surprisingly many students still remain poor

writers (Nnamonu, 2011). This raises the problem of the paucity of textbooks on teaching essay writing using a participatory approach.

Many scholars (Krapels, 1990; Hedge,1989; White & Arndt, 1991;Hyland, 2003; Harmer, 2007; Richards & Renandya, 2002) have proffered various suggestions and approaches to make the teaching of essay writing a successful one that can produce better essays written easily by the learners. This is an indication that new approaches to the teaching of essay writing do exist and are still being refined for classroom pedagogy, yet there is still a paucity of literature on the role participatory approaches can play in the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools. In the light of the problems stated herein, this study examined some of these approaches along with the pedagogic contributions they can offer to the teaching and learning of essay writing.

Participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools can assist learners to become better essay writers. This is in view of the fact that writing is an integral part in the learning of English language, along with listening, speaking, and reading. This study addresses another problem of whether participatory approaches can succeed in producing learners who are adept in the art of writing good essays as `… written English deficiency and poor performances of learners not only disastrously affect the performance of

learners in the subject, but also affect other subjects learnt in schools. It is a current problem that almost defies solution`(Olaofe, 2010).

In summary, this study attempts to encourage teachers to find participatory approach solutions to students' essay writing difficulties and it is faced with the problem of determining the extent to which participatory approaches, such as conferencing, revision, and self-assessment can go in improving secondary school students` essays (argumentative, descriptive, and narrative) so that the essays are better in the skills of expression, mechanics, content, and organization.

1.3 Objectives

The major objectives of this study are to:

1. assess the effects of participatory approaches on the expression and mechanical skills in the narrative, argumentative, and descriptive essays of SS II students;
2. determine whether participatory approaches can improve the content and organization skills in SS II students` narrative, argumentative, and descriptive essays;
3. determine whether a significant difference exists in the essays of those subjects who were involved in participatory activities (the experimental group) and those students who were not (the control group);

4. determine whether pedagogy using participatory approaches can positively alter the general performance of the subjects at the post-test stage; and

1.4 Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the difference between the mean performances of the two groups of SS II students before pedagogy using participatory approaches?
2. What is the effect of participatory approaches on the performances of students in narrative essay writing?
3. What is the effect of participatory approaches on the performances of students in argumentative essay writing?
4. What is the effect of participatory approaches on the performances of students in descriptive essay writing?
5. What is the difference in the overall mean performances of students taught essay writing using participatory approaches and those who were not?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The study formulated the following null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean of essay writing scores of SS II students at the pre-test stage.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean performance, in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics, and expression, in the narrative essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean performance, in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics, and expression, in the descriptive essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not.
4. There is no significant difference between the mean performance- in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics, and expression- in the argumentative essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not.
5. There is no significant difference in the overall mean performances of students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Good writing can ensure success at all levels of education as well as secure good employment. These can be achieved through good teachers that can teach the students faultless essay writing techniques. The output of this study is one that, it is hoped, will be worthy of recommendation to teachers for use in their essay writing pedagogy.

The study would be further beneficial to the students as it hopes to provide useful information on the merits of pre-writing and post-writing activities that are involved in participatory approaches as they are strategies that would heighten students` awareness of the usefulness of the participatory activities in producing better essays.

The study can be an important contribution to the multiple solutions being offered for the perennial issue of poor performance in public examinations by most students in Nigeria.It is also hoped that this work will encourage further research on the topic- especially in the areas of handwriting and mechanics.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

The three participatory approaches of conferencing, revision, and self-assessment and their effects on the participatory teaching of argumentative, descriptive, and narrative essays in SS II classes constitute the scope of this study.

It was limited to this level of secondary school education because of the fact that the learners have gone through various types of essay writing instructions and exercises for a minimum of four years (3 years while at the JSS level and another year in their first year of senior secondary school). Moreover, these students at this level would write their promotion examinations to SS III, where the Senior Secondary School examinations await them, with a mandatory essay writing examination . This delimitation was also based on the fact that uniformity in the English language curriculum content exists among senior secondary schools nation-wide. The skills of content, organization, mechanical accuracy (mechanics), and expression form the standard marking scheme used by examining bodies such as WAEC and NECO. This study, therefore, found it necessary to limit itself to that standard.

The pre-test post-test experimental research design was employed. It was chosen because it is a true experiment that enables the manipulation of one variable and control or randomization of the rest of the variables (Friedrich, 2011). All the senior secondary schools of Fagge Local Government area of Kano state form the population of the study.

1.8 Basic Assumptions

The study assumes that participatory approaches can improve the teaching and learning of essay writing and it also assumed that the teachers of essay writing in English possess the minimum teaching qualification of NCE or a higher qualification.

The study also holds the basic assumption that the essay writing syllabus for SS II is the same in all the schools sampled and is in conformity with the national syllabus for SS II schools and students nationwide. Similarly, the study assumed that the level of the students remain the same SS II and that participatory approaches, being learner-centered, can heighten interest on the students` part and this could be exploited by teachers of essay writing to assist learners in the mastery of the four basic skills of essay writing (content, organization, mechanics, and expression).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the concept of issues, and types of strategies in participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing; it also reviews literature relating to the teaching of narrative, descriptive, and argumentative essays using participatory approaches, as essays range over a considerable field according to the kind of pedagogic matter treated. Teaching points like expression, essay content, and organization using participatory approaches are also reviewed along with product or traditional approaches to the teaching of essay writing. The chapter concludes with a summary of the reviews contained herein.

2.2 Concept of Participatory Approach to Teaching Essay Writing

It was not until the early 1980s that participatory approaches started to be widely discussed, though it originated in the 70s with the work of Paolo Freire, who developed a native language literacy programme for slum dwellers and peasants in Brazil (Bhatia, 1997; Beale, 2000; Marsh, 2000, Rich, 2010; Winkler, 2007). Freire suggests the use of participatory approaches in the ESL classroom through problem posing, a central operational mode of critical pedagogy in three cyclical stages of naming, reflection, and action- all representing stages in the

participatory approach which seek to focus on the learner as a central figure in the teaching of essay writing.

The goals of the participatory approaches are centered on experience and are related to students` real needs: students are motivated to feel themselves centered upon and experts in their own lives while teachers are co-learners, asking questions about students` everyday occupations (Hennigan, 1999; Leki, 1992; Malone, 2002) as a result, essay topics should be about familiar, rather than unfamiliar, thing, people, and events.

2.3 Issues in Participatory Approach to Teaching Essay Writing

Participatory approaches to teaching has its roots in critical pedagogy based on Freire`s beliefs (Malone, 2008) that both teachers and students establish important relationships with one another that can influence the way students reach academic goals as it enables both teachers and students to explore teaching and learning issues together because the lives of everyone in the classroom affect each other (Bain, 2002; Pennycook, 2000). It is a pedagogy that involves a `fundamental change in our (teachers`) attitude toward the act of teaching` (Pennycook, 1999).

Participatory approaches consider learning as a social and cultural process, not something that happens to learners in isolation. Badger and White (2000, p.75) note that:

> We often assume our own (teachers`) understanding of learning to be the standard for every student in our classes, but this is simply not the case. Every student brings his and her own social and cultural prism, through which they what is happening during the learning process…

Teachers in participatory classrooms are interested in what students understand and what they are learning, no matter who the students are. A participatory approach encourages students to initiate topics that are relevant to themselves and their own learning (Branson, 2003). It is also seen as one that encourages students to investigate individually or with peers and to reflect on what they are learning (Jamieson, 2004).

According to Auerbach, (2000), however, participatory teaching is neither a method nor an approach but a `co-operative learning` procedure where the relationship between the teacher and student is embraced as `ideal participatory classrooms probably do not actually exist, they are always in the process of becoming` (p. 149). This strengthens the concern of this study that participatory approaches lack much literature for their pedagogy. The researcher feels that learning should be collaborative for students to feel ownership over what they are learning; they need to feel concern for what they are learning. Most of the literature on the issues involved in participatory approach cannot fit each classroom, the teacher will therefore need to determine the best way to get students to learn

(Amish, 2000; Shandy, 2003; Silva and Matsuda, 2001; Soars and Soars, 1996; Travis, 2003). This researcher believes that helping students to develop appropriate learning strategies is crucial in any participatory approach because these strategies will be applied spontaneously and will come to the individual naturally, according to the situation. This study, therefore, borrowed the concept of learner-centered instruction through peer- centered as well as learner-centered instruction in the classroom and was used in the treatment to be administered to the subjects.

2.4 Types of Participatory Approaches

There are various participatory approaches in existence. This study intends to focus on three, namely: conferencing, revision, and self-assessment.

2.4.1 Conferencing

This is a central means of teaching the writing process (Tompkins, 1994), it is a meeting to discuss work in progress (Malawi Institute of Education, 2006) and involves the teachers listening to students talk about writing and helping them work through the process. Conference can occur at any given time in the writing process with the teacher asking questions that can guide students to discuss `work in progress` (Abubakar, 2010; Grant, 2007; Moore, 2006), discuss and ask questions about the task, talk about what they find confusing or interesting; balancing the amount of time teachers spend with students and allowing students to

take responsibility for discussing and thinking about their own writing are two important issues in conferencing. The works of Hayes (2006), Isaacs (2006) and James (2007) all stress the importance of exchanging ideas through brainstorming, questions and answers amongst learners in the classroom. It is widely postulated that conferencing is an important approach that can be used to facilitate the writing of good, coherent and legible essays as most students often do not get the chance to talk about the writing task given to them in class or as assignments(Harmer, 2004, Grant, 2007). With conferencing employed as a participatory approach, most of the fears about writing on the part of the learners will disappear. The researcher explored the effect of using conferencing in the teaching of argumentative, descriptive, and narrative essays. Most of the literature on conferencing (Kern, 2000; Tompkins, 1994; White and Arndt, 1991; Massi, 2000) suggest asking questions that` teach`; these questions are mostly based around asking students about their topic choice, about narrowing the topic down, about pre-writing tasks, gathering and organizing ideas and about writing the first draft in class before submitting a final copy. This study is interested in the part that stresses asking students about their topic choice and in pre-writing activities and has borrowed and included these in its data collection procedure.

2.4.2 Revision

It is widely believed that revision is an important participatory strategy that is much overlooked in the teaching of essay writing in most Nigerian schools. It involves asking questions and giving answers on both the teacher`s and the students` parts (Atkins, 2001; Defoe, 2006; Hamilton, 2002; Wallace, 2001). These questions generally focus on the how, what, and why of the revision of the essay task and are based on the specific writing task being taught and what the expected outcome is. Questions are asked before, during and, especially, after the composition has been written (Meyer, 2006, Bale, 2004; Runcie, 2000). The researcher feels that this approach would enhance participation as sample essays selected for scrutiny would generate keen interest on the learners` part and would also generate keen interest in self-editing. Some of the questions to be asked when revising, according to the Saskatchewan Department of Education (1997), include:

1. How do you plan to revise your writing?
2. What kind of revision did you make?
3. Are you ready to make your final copy?
4. What kinds of mechanical errors have you located?
5. How has your editor helped you proofread?
6. How can I help you identify/correct mechanical errors?
7. What do you plan to do next?

After students have completed their compositions, Tompkins (1994) suggested asking these questions:

1. With what audience will you share your writing?
2. What did your audience say about your writing?
3. What do you like best about your writing?
4. If you were rewriting the essay, what changes would you make?
5. How did you use the writing process in this composition?

The researcher feels all these questions suggest that one writing task would be given and would be written and assessed over a long period, longer than the single or double periods of thirty minutes apiece allocated to the teaching of essay writing in Nigerian secondary schools. The use of the editor, moreover, suggests the use of writing editors in computers, this question would be difficult to answer positively in most secondary schools in Nigeria.

Students, moreover, need to be encouraged to reflect on what they have composed, learn to treat first drafts as attempts and not as final copies. Training students to respond to correction symbols as well as offering them a `revision checklist` to use when they are reading through what they have written are some ways students can be encouraged to revise. When doing these, the researcher believes that a participatory interaction between the student`s writing and the corrections comes into play and would greatly enhance the quality of the student`s essay. Another way of encouraging revision is to `have students involved in collaborative writing` where a pair or group of students respond to each other`s ideas (both in terms of language and content), making suggestions for changes, thus contributing to the success of the finished product (Harmer, op. cit).

This study finds asking questions- before, during, and after the composition task- that focus on the what, why, and how of the revision extremely relevant and has incorporated this in the course of administering its treatment to the subjects.

2.4.3 Self- assessment

This is another participatory approach to the teaching of essay writing. According to the Saskatchewan Department of Education (1997):

> Students assess their own writing and decide which pieces will be shared or evaluated. As students work through the writing process, they may address the quality of the writing and the effectiveness of the message. They may also judge if they have met the requirements for the given assignment.

For Self-assessment by students, the Saskatchewan Department of Education (1997) designed a handout with questions such as:

1. Does my composition make sense?
2. Does it say what I want it to say?
3. Does it say it clearly?
4. Can the reader follow my thinking (organization)?
5. Are there any details that need to be deleted or addressed?
6. Am I happy with this composition? What makes this piece of writing strong or weak?

Students` reflections and insights are an important element of evaluation in this, as in most strategies. The researcher believes that a checklist, similar to the Sasked

handout, of students` expected errors and their solutions would help in guiding learners when they are self-assessing their essays.

This review of Self-assessment as a participatory approach has led this study to include self-correction as well as peer- correction in the essay tasks to be given in the experimental class` essay writing instructions.

2.5 Teaching Narrative Essay using Participatory Approaches

A narrative essay generally tells a story (McCrimmon, 2000; Merriwether, 1997; Nunan, 1999). It is `the least formulaic expository pattern of writing and uses fiction techniques like setting, plot, characters and dialogue and, unlike fiction, is purely written to make a point rather than to entertain readers` (Abbot, 2007, Crystal,2000). To write a narrative, the students need to tell a story usually about something that happened to them, in such a way that the audience learns a lesson or gains insight (Caudrey, 2000; Cohen, 2010; Merriwether, 1997). Narratives are easier for many novice writers to handle (Crowhurst, 2000; Freedman, 2000).

Generally, the purpose for writing a narrative essay influences the choice of events and related details to be included (Willingham, 2012). In the participatory teaching of narrative essay, it is important for the teacher to review its` general elements. The literature on the teaching of narrative essay is unanimous on the presence of certain key elements (Chandler, 2002; Cobley, 2001; Hazel, 2007).

Narrative essays are told from a detailed point of view, usually in the author`s, so there is feeling as well as specific and often sensory details provided to get the reader involved in the elements and sequences of the narration. The `verbs are vivid and precise` (Reynolds, n.a; Warwick, 2002).

The narrative essay makes a point that is often defined in the opening sentence but can also be found as the last sentence in the opening paragraph. Since a narrative essay relies on personal experiences, all the conventions of story-telling: plot, character/s, setting, climax, and ending should be included (Reynolds, n,a). This researcher is of the opinion that carefully selected details that explain, support or embellish the story should be included so that all the details should relate to the main point the student is attempting to make and this is where conferencing plays a key role.

Reynolds (n.a); Willingham (2005); Young (2000) offered three principles for learners to keep in mind when writing narrative essays: the involvement of the reader in the story being told, finding a generalization which the story supports and giving carefully selected details to support, explain, and enhance the story, all of these, the researcher believes, require brainstorming, which is a key component of conferencing, with the teacher playing a facilitating role.

2.5.1 Language of Narration

Generally, narrative essays are written in first person singular. However, the third person singular (he or she or it) can be used also (Hazel,2007). Vivid and precise verbs are used. The researcher considers that this calls for instruction on the skill of expression, especially on pronouns and subject-verb concord for which a section is written herein.

For the characteristics of narratives, Goddard (2002) wrote that they (narratives) rely on concrete, sensory details to convey their points. These details should create a unified, forceful effect, a dominant impression, and they should include the story conventions of plot, including setting and characters, a climax and an ending. For teaching setting, Reynolds (op.cit) suggests setting the narrative in `a specific time and place` at the story`s beginning. For characterization, Amztis (1995), Langan (2001), and Reynolds (op.cit), suggest using three-dimensional characters for the protagonist(s) and/or antagonist(s), with the introduction containing the setting, characters, and opening situation. All of these conventions, in relation to this study, can best be taught through interaction and exchange of ideas offered by the conferencing strategy as students would deliberate until a consensus is achieved. This is what the study borrowed from the review of narrative essay teaching.

2.6 Teaching Argumentative Essay using Participatory Approaches

An argumentative essay `takes a position on an issue using logic and evidence to convince readers` (Jamieson,2004). To teach this type of essay writing using a participatory approach, a look at what the literature says about the elements of argumentative essay would help the teacher decide on the appropriate strategy to adopt. Abela (2006) recommends that students should think about their own opinion and ask `whether they have a strong opinion, ask what other people have said on the subject and whether they are right or wrong`.

The elements of argumentative essay are similar in almost all the literature reviewed. The introduction is the first element and it incorporates stating the r debate topic in one`s own words, writing whether one agrees or disagrees with the argument (Abela, 2006; Gibson, 2008; Wheeler, 2005). The body of the argument essay develops the arguments in support of the writer`s thesis usually paragraph by paragraph; each paragraph containing the reasoned arguments offered in support of the writer`s thesis statement. Here, the arguments are specified one at a time and counter-arguments are also addressed (Thompson & Waring,2009). The conclusion summarizes the thesis and analysis developed in the introduction and body of the essay. It also makes a final effort to convince the reader that the thesis has been established as a reliable conclusion with effective supporting arguments (Holt and Holt Handbook on Essay Writing, n.a).

The classical pattern of the outline of the argumentative essay is given by Markus(2011) and is condensed below:

1. Introduction:
   a. Background information- basic information about the issue and the position being argued
   b. Thesis statement which states the position to be argued in the essay.

2 Reasons that support the thesis statement:

   a. Reason/ argument 1 (main point #1):
      i) Supporting paragraph 1 (ii) supporting paragraph 2
      b) Reason/ argument 2 (main point #2):
      i) Supporting paragraph 1(ii) supporting paragraph 2
   b. c) same as a &b above

3 Counter- arguments:

   a) mention the arguments from the other side of the issue:
      i) Supporting paragraph 1 ii) supporting paragraph 2

4 Rebuttal: briefly refute the other side`s arguments.

5 Conclusion:

   a) Summarize the main points of your essay. State what further issues need to be researched or addressed.

The literature is stating here that the argumentative essay has three parts: a thesis statement, which is a clear and explicit statement of the position that will be defended throughout the course of the paper, a description of the position that the essay seeks to address, and the arguments or sets of reasons presented in an effort to convince the reader(s).

In view of the overview of argumentative essay presented here, the next issue is how to teach it using a participatory approach. No single approach is

perfect just as no two learners learn in exactly the same way. To teach argumentative essay, the researcher subscribes to Smith`s (1999) proposition that sample essays of marked argumentative essays should serve as a model to be used as instructional aid in the classroom, this would ensure collective revision- a participatory strategy- in the classroom, one that can be done in groups or using the whole class altogether. In addition, pre-writing tasks of brainstorming would naturally introduce any participatory teaching.

2.6.1 Language of Argumentation

Some of the common mistakes to avoid in writing argumentative essays include avoidance of the first person or, especially, the second person singular as this may imply that the reader has become either `the target or accomplice of the writer` (Vernon, 2007). Jones (2008) suggests that signposts gain importance in argumentative essays as they enable the reader to follow `our arguments easily`. When opposing a point, he suggests using signposts like: `opponents of this idea…`, `those who disagree/ are against this idea may say/assert…`

When reaching a turning point, he recommends the use of `however`, `but`, `on the other hand`. When refuting opposing ideas, one may use the following strategies: `To a certain extent, they are right,` `Completely disagree`.

2.7 Teaching Descriptive Essay using Participatory Approaches

To write a descriptive essay, one will need to describe a person, object or event `so vividly that the reader feels like he or she could reach out and touch it`(Cook,2007). Like all other types of essays, the descriptive essay also has features that distinguish it from the rest. Warwick (2002) labels it the `most liberating and pleasurable essay to write. You are just writing something as you see it`. Descriptive essay uses imagery and metaphorical language, the essay usually contains opinions so one can describe anything desired.

This type of essay calls for actual description of the person, place, or object and therefore calls for the use of concrete and abstract ideas. Some of the suggestions offered in writing good descriptive essays include not getting `overboard` with the use of adjectives and adverbs, with similes and metaphors and, in line with the participatory strategy of teaching descriptive essay, giving out the essay to someone else, in the class or outside it, to see if the essay actually describes what it is supposed to- a form of revision strategy (Wheeler, 2005).

One of the main features of descriptive essay is that it requires lots of imagination; the description does not need to be factual, only believable. How well it is described will determine how easily a reader believes it. Description helps readers understand an essay in the same way that they understand the world through sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. It is a fact that descriptions painted using sense impressions present a clearer picture to readers, this is why the researcher would suggest teaching spatial order and sense impressions hen teaching students descriptive essay. Jamieson (2004) suggests giving pre-writing task that requires students to fill in gaps with correct sense impression and spatial order words that best complete each blank space afterwards an in-class correction would help the students to self-assess their performance in this vital descriptive test. As the students develop the correct habit of describing tasks or persons, in spatial and sensory terms, then descriptive writing of paragraphs would commence, this could be called a kind of bottom-up approach.

2.7.1 Language of Description

Description is more than just a mixture of unrelated details; every detail in a descriptive essay should `join in conveying a single dominant impression and should be included in the topic sentence. Spatial order words (such as bottom to top, left to right, background to foreground, outside to inside, ahead, next, south, above, beyond) and sense impression words should be self-assessed by students,

using their or each other`s essays to do so in class. In a nutshell, the language of descriptive essay involves five elements (Ozagac, 2004; Rich, (op. cit). These are: the use of figurative language that would provide enough vivid detail to help the reader create a mental picture of what is being written about; giving enough sensory details; precise language; creating a dominant impression, and finally, careful organization of both content and language.

2.8 Teaching Expression using Participatory Approach

Learning to write in a second language involves linguistic knowledge and the diction, grammatical patterns as well as the cohesive devices that make up the `building block of texts` (Harmer, 2004). Essentially, writing is seen as something constructed as a result of the writer`s command of grammar and lexis of the language (Reid, 2000; Crystal, 2000). It (writing) is learnt, not taught (Harmer, op. cit) and research suggests that second language writing skills `cannot be acquired successfully by practice in writing alone but also need to be supported by extensive reading…` ( Harmer, op. cit). `Teaching expression is a four stage process (Harmer, op.cit, pp. 3-4; Rich, 2010; Yang et al, 2006). Familiarization is the first stage where learners are taught certain` grammar and vocabulary, usually through a

text`, followed by the second stage of `controlled writing`, a stage where learners work with fixed patterns, mostly from substitution tables; guided writing is the third stage where students imitate model texts; it should be at this stage , this researcher believes, that intensive drilling of the target language`s phonological, syntactic, and morphological features be the focus so as to minimize the high rate of interference- caused errors in English compositions. Free writing is the last stage where learners employ the structural patterns they have developed to write an essay, letter, and the rest.

Ecenberger (2008) holds that any participatory teaching of expression should incorporate the teaching of the parts of speech, transitions, complete sentences, word choice, complex sentences, all these are necessary because the rules of English grammar are not predictable and systematic. In view of all these points, the researcher feels that very often students and teachers approach writing as a one-off task to be completed in a single thirty minutes or so English period; complex or complete writing cannot be `accomplished in a single sitting, in a single draft` (Coppell, 2009; Ecenberger, 2008; Emerson, 2003). The researcher believes that we, as teachers, need to help the learners realize that successful writing is reflective and takes time; furthermore, as grammar and mechanics are in the context of use, substitution tables and guided composition should be the main participatory tasks that permeate the participatory teaching of essay writing, bearing in mind that our

students are non-native learners of English who need as much guidance and participation in the mastery of the rules of English grammar. English grammar is a broad topic with so many rules and exceptions and can be a tedious topic, for non-native students with a full-blown mastery of their native language grammar, to master.

Many scholars recommend the use of the students` Mother Tongue in the teaching of difficult concepts (Ellis, 2000, Harmer, op.cit; Ecenberger, op.cit; Nunan, op.cit). Resorting to the Mother Tongue, the researcher concurs, is a useful participatory strategy to get students involved in the lesson as difficult words or concepts would be translated thus helping the smooth flow of the lesson. As a result, this study borrows the use of the Mother Tongue for use in the treatments described in Chapter Three.

In teaching the expression skill using any participatory approach, Ecenberger suggests that the focus should be on teaching only one type of grammatical structure at a time as more than one can be overwhelming and this, the study believes, suggests that a change of attitude- on most teachers` part- that an essay can be taught in one or just two lessons, is necessary. It is here that the study acknowledges borrowing a leaf and taught the three essay types for a fortnight for each essay type. As for the choice of the grammatical approach the teacher ultimately decides to adopt, most scholars advocate keeping an open mind- on the

teacher`s part- as most grammar lessons are eclectic (Harmer, op.cit; Hyland, 2003; McAvoy, 2008).

2.9 Teaching Essay Content using Participatory Approach

Content is what students are required to talk about. This involves a set of themes or topics of interest that establish a coherence and purpose for the course (Harmer, op.cit). Generally, learners must have some personal knowledge of these topics or themes and can write meaningfully about them. Participatory approaches reviewed in this study should activate and strengthen background knowledge through conferencing, Self-assessment and revision, in an attempt to tap into what students know already so as to produce better essays.

Promoting oral interaction and extending academic talks in the classroom helps in acquiring new literacy skills, accessing new information because classroom instruction involves discussion – a key feature of any participatory approach. Such discussions should include oral paraphrasing, provision of target structures for discussion as well as teaching new terms or phrases for discussion in the writing classroom. All these are in accordance with the pre-writing and brainstorming tasks involved in participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in SS II classes.

Short and Echevarria (2005) advocate the review of vocabulary and content concepts; stressing that `most content is in a new language – unfamiliar language- a mentally exhausting task`. In view of this, the researcher feels that as participatory approaches are student-centered, teachers should schedule time for review at the end of the lesson, concentrating on the key concepts, associated vocabulary and making connections to the lesson`s objective and set standards. Furthermore, giving feedback in language use in the classroom is a strong basis of participatory approach, and in content teaching it often goes a long way in helping learners to internalize grammatical and vocabulary rules governing the mastery of the content skill. Most of the scholars consulted refer to `schema`- knowledge of the topic and vocabulary students will need to create an effective text (Burt, 1998; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982; Harmer, op.cit; Short and Echevarria, 2005). These may be exercises that include reading for ideas in parallel texts, reacting to photographs, and many more (Short and Echevarria, 2005).

Content can be taught at two levels (Harmer, op.cit): at the` lower level- where much of the content are supplied by the teacher in order to reduce students` difficulties in generating and organizing material, and at the more advanced levels where students are often to collaborate in collecting and sharing information as a starting point for writing an essay. The second level suggests a participatory strategy that involves group work, conferencing, and revision as learners would be

focusing on gathering information, and structuring the way they will organize their texts, providing a practical purpose for genuine communication. Content teaching can focus on language structures and functions as students are typically presented with language structure and vocabulary items directly relevant to a topic (Grabe, 2001). There may follow an introduction and explanation of the rhetorical patterns that help develop learners` awareness of functions such as explanation and cause and effect (Harmer, op.cit). The researcher believes that practicing the language structures in a series of exercises is a useful participatory task to be included in classroom instruction.

Content teaching methods tend to `rely heavily on reading and exploit the close relationship between writing and reading in L2 literacy development (Harmer, op.cit; Krashen, 1993; Burt, 1998). Reading and content, this study believes, go hand in hand at the level of this study – SS II. Reading provides input for both content and the appropriate means for its expression – a positive link that reflects the wider role of reading in developing composition skills (Carson and Leki, 1993; Harmer, op.cit; Rimin Tsiwa, 2000). Harmer (op. cit) wrote that:

> L2 writing skills cannot be acquired successfully by practice in writing alone but also need to be supported with extensive reading…. Whether assigned or voluntary, reading has been shown to be a positive influence on composing skills at various

stages of proficiency (p.17).

Both reading and writing involve the individual in constructing meaning through the application of `complex cognitive and linguistic abilities that draw on problem-solving skills and the activation of existing knowledge of both structure and content` (Grabe, op. cit). Though not within the scope of this study, this researcher believes that reading- especially extensive reading- can provide a great deal of knowledge of conventional features of written texts, including grammar, vocabulary, grammar, and organizational patterns; what students read, therefore, is important in making them good essay writers.

In the teaching of content, the participatory approaches of conferencing, editing, and self-assessment all play a vital role in ensuring that students` content reflects the real topic and not just making reference to the words in the topic. Reading questions carefully and brainstorming in the classroom are key participatory strategies that ensure the content reflects the writing task assigned.

The introduction should provide the background for the essay and should contain a topic sentence which expresses key ideas of the essay, the writer`s ideas of the topic and should give the reader a hint about the way a topic is going to be developed (Burt, 2003). Supporting the topic sentence with ideas, proving ideas with examples, concluding with generalizations that restate the thesis, are ingredients that make the content of essays clear and cohesive and these can be

successfully achieved by the eclectic or combined use of the participatory approaches discussed in this chapter.

2.10 Teaching Organization using Participatory Approaches

Organization refers to the way different parts of an essay are arranged. The organizational structure of an essay can take many forms. The introduction, body, and conclusion parts of the essay are the defining portions that should be taught in essay teaching. What is common amongst them is the paragraph. Students need to know how to organize a paragraph of introduction, exposition (body of the essay), and conclusion. Students can be taught to learn writing by formula (Warwick, op.cit) until they learn the process of writing an entire essay. While the students in this study are at a level where the researcher can assume that they have passed this level, it is still believed that as the learners are entirely non-native speakers of English this assertion holds true for them. The Schaffer paragraph is considered by the researcher to be a model that can go a long way in making our non-native students good essay writers. This is because of its simplicity in design, ease of pedagogy and can help students formulate ideas better. It is a five- sentence paragraph designed by Jane Schaffer (Schaffer, 2001). It consists of topic sentence

that is followed by another sentence containing `concrete detail` (CD) followed by a sentence(s) containing a `commentary` (CM) and then a concluding sentence (CS). It follows a 1:2 ratio, that is, for every topic sentence there should be a sentence giving concrete detail followed by two or more sentences containing relevant commentaries. The requirements of the Schaffer paragraph are that it must not be written in the first person, every paragraph must be a minimum of five sentences long, each section (the topic sentence, the concrete details section, the commentary and the concluding sentence sections) is only one section in length, each section should avoid past tense and be written in the present tense (Winkler, 2007). These requirements, the researcher believes, can enhance the teaching of the expression skill, especially the teaching of tenses and concord as a specific tense can be selected for practice in essay writing in the classroom. This review borrowed from and included- in the lessons to be taught the experimental group- the key elements of the Schaffer paragraph so as to test its efficacy in helping the subjects to improve their essay writing skills. It was already stated in this chapter that most participatory approaches to teaching will not fit each classroom therefore the teacher will need to determine the best way to get students to learn. Improvisation is the key to successful mastery of the written tasks selected for teaching.

To introduce essay organization, Gibson (op.cit) suggests providing students with a scrambled essay and asking them to put the paragraphs back in order. A well-structured essay , with a clear thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph with at least two supporting paragraphs with helpful transition words, should be used as a model for this exercise. This, the researcher believes, could elicit the type of conferencing, revision, and self-assessment responses needed in a participatory approach to the teaching of essay writing, as learners would be busy rearranging the scrambled essays either in groups or on their own and then submitting the edited draft for scrutiny in class, ultimately leading to self-assessment and self-correction.

Warwick (2002) mentions several ways of organizing writing, stressing that not every pattern will work for every writer or writing. Some of the ways include: organizing the essay chronologically, in the order in which events occur; cause and effect order as well as spatial order. In the teaching of organization, this researcher believes that it is important to organize the writing in an order that is interesting and, above all, logical enough to make sense to the reader.

2.11 Teaching the Writing of Essay Introduction

Gibson(1996) relegates the teaching of introduction to the stage at which learners have mastered writing the body part of their essay because the body paragraphs are

the most important type of organization skills and the first type that students should learn. Introductions, however, have been found to `prepare the reader to understand the thesis which is usually in the last sentence in the introduction` (White & Arndt, 1991).

Ideas in an introduction are arranged from broad to narrow, the narrowest being the thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph; it is usually short. In teaching introduction, most of the literature reviewed suggest that the introduction should not be taught until they have mastered body paragraph writing. In a non-native learning context as ours, this researcher feels that students do not have to know how to write the introduction for their first essay lesson using participatory approaches, they should have a fairly good grasp of how writing the body of the essay goes. Jamieson (op. cit) suggests reducing paragraph writing to a fill-in-the-blanks simplicity until `students get the hang of the thing` and that only the essentials about introductory paragraph writing are- such as teaching learners to write only the basic information about the task. Students should not write the introduction too soon, they should learn how to write it after they have developed a working thesis, a writing skeleton, and a comprehensive plan as most opening paragraphs can do the job quickly by hints rather than by direct statements` (Nasri, 2010). Everything about the introduction and the essay focuses on the thesis statement.

2.12 Teaching Writing of the Essay Body

This is the most important content in an essay and should be the first component the students should learn to write (Swan, 2002)). The body contains the evidence to support the thesis; in the body is where one finds the `thesis + support pattern` which usually begins with topic sentence or, if the topic sentence cannot be the opening sentence, then it can appear in the middle or end of the body paragraph. Within the paragraphs in the body of the essay (the exposition) transitional words and phrases function like `road signs to show readers how one idea is like or unlike the previous one` (Cook, 2007). Linking sentences, here, help to glue the expository paragraph together (Ur, 2007).

2.13 Teaching Writing of the Conclusion

Conclusion paragraphs let the reader know that the writer has finished. Some students will figure out how to conclude essays without the teacher`s help, most students, however, need to see the basic pattern before they can follow it; a reason why this study borrowed the use of model essay in the class. Before writing the conclusion, suggestions abound in the literature reviewed as to the importance of re-reading the introduction because an effective conclusion often combines the beginning and end of the essay (Ur, 2007). Revision and conferencing strategies also come into play when revising rough drafts, the researcher suggests here that

students should confer and analyze the method(s) they used for concluding their essays and determine whether another means of arriving at the conclusion might be more successful. Having learners write two diverse methods can also be a useful tool in making students learn about different ways of concluding an essay.

2.14 Traditional Approaches to Teaching Essay Writing

Most of the traditional methods of teaching essay writing believe that the best way to teach essay writing is by taking on the role of `the dictator in the classroom` (Harmer, op.cit; Russell, 2007). As `dictators`, they treat the students as `sponges`, and merely feed the students information and expect it to soak in and be comprehended. These kinds of teachers believe that once the information is presented, it is the students` own responsibility to comprehend the material (Vernon, 2007). The researcher believes that `learning`- in the eyes of the traditional approaches- means reading, memorizing, and being able to repeat any information. Freire calls this the `banking concept` which states that education `becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor`. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues` communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat` (Freire, 1985). Through memorizing and repeating, information goes in through one ear and out through the other. Until this information sinks in, it will not be understood. The banking concept of education does not encourage students

to engage in critical thinking, instead it requires the students to be passive, accept facts as they are given without having the options of questioning or debating.. If teachers want their students to grasp the material, they have to realize that the banking concept is not an effective method.

Students, however, will grasp the course material better when they are focused, engaged, and interested in the material. It is at this time when students are at their peak point of digesting the material that the eagerness to learn sets in(Ur, 2007). Traditional methods that just by sitting in the class, the students learn by listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments and spitting out answers (Langan, 2001). In contrast, participatory approaches stress that students should talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives.

Many scholars have described the traditional or product approach`s view of teaching essay writing as `an exercise in habit formation` (Flower, 1989; Silva, 1990) or as one that results in `mindless copies of a particular organizational plan or style` (Escholz, 1980; Zamel, 1983). Basically, the traditional approach is one in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage. Jordan (1997) identified four main stages are the basis of the traditional approach`. The first stage is the reading of the model texts, followed by highlighting of the features of the genre or text. For example, in

teaching formal letter writing, students` attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests; if studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting and students focus on how the techniques are employed by the writer.

The second stage consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, mostly in isolation. If students are studying a formal letter, they may be required to mimic the language of making formal requests, practicing the `I would be grateful if you would…` pattern.

The third stage is where ideas are organized; it is a very important stage in the traditional approach as its proponents believe in the primacy of organizing ideas over the ideas themselves and is as significant as the mastery of the language itself.

The fourth stage represents the end result of the learning process; it is a stage where students choose from a range of comparable essay tasks (Silva & Matsuda, 2001). To produce the essay, students –individually- use the skills, structures, and vocabulary they have been taught in an attempt at displaying what they can do as competent users of the language.

Applied activities in the traditional approach include: sentence-level writing, paragraph organization and writing formal letters (Abbot, 2007; Griffiths, 2007; Harmer, op.cit; Jordan, 1997). These activities, this study believes, may have the

advantages of being easy to use with large classes and, when form is the main focus, easier to grade because the emphasis is on form.

Some weaknesses have been identified in the traditional approach. Jordan (op.cit) claims it has no practical applications; Escholz (1980) opines that it has `resulted in mindless copies of a particular organizational plan or style` while Prodromou (1995) believes it `devalues the learner`s potential, both linguistic and personal`. This study is convinced by the conclusions of the literature reviewed so far herein that the traditional approach does not teach learners how to write independently as it does not teach or encourage how to think and it does not make writing essays a manageable and interesting activity thus limiting the students` creativity in contrast with participatory approaches.

Summary

The Chapter reviewed the concept of, issues in participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in addition to three participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools. The chapter also reviewed literature on the teaching of descriptive, argumentative and narrative essays using participatory approaches in addition to how to teach expression, organization and content using participatory approaches. The major pedagogic features of the traditional approaches were also reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in conducting the study. It describes the research design, method, and instruments for data collection, description of the population, sample and sampling procedure.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed the Pre-test, Post-test Experimental Research Design in its attempt to discover the effects of participatory approaches on the teaching of English essay writing to SS II students. Using this design involved assigning the subjects to control and experimental groups- which were given pre-test and post-test exercises in essay writing (Table 3.1); the test (pre-tested on the experimental group as it was, without altering the questions) being the 2012 question paper in the Kano State Ministry of Education-administered SS II qualifying examination in English language, with the post-test – a modified version of the pre-test – given after the experimental group had received the treatment. This examination conforms with the West African Examination Council`s questions and marking scheme and it also contained the variables stated in the objectives of this study. The experiment was conducted as illustrated by Trochim (2006). This type of

experimental research design was selected because of its merits in providing satisfactory empirical feedback.

Table 3.1: Pre-test Post-test Experimental Design:

Groups	Pre-Test	Treatment	Post-Test
Experimental Group	✓	✓	✓
Control Group	✓	✓	✓

3.3 Population

The population for this study consists of all SS II students within the Nassarawa Zone of Kano State Ministry of Education and this zonal education office is responsible for the administration of all secondary schools in Fagge Local Government. It has a total of 2,068 SS II students (2010-2011session) in a total of sixteen secondary schools which include girls` secondary schools, boys` secondary schools and mixed- sex secondary schools that are owned by government, missionary organizations as well as private individuals.

The selection of SS II classes as the population for the study was informed by the fact that the learners have undergone four years of instructions and practice in English essay writing and are believed to be conversant with writing tasks.

Moreover, the subjects were preparing for their promotion examination to the final year in secondary school, and the English paper in this examination makes essay writing compulsory. This implies that the students had been receiving instructions in writing essays during the course of their four years of instructions from JSS I to SS II. Furthermore, Fagge Local Government was selected because it offers many fruitful possibilities of obtaining the required sample size due to its cultural heterogeneity in addition to the fact that the senior secondary schools` English language curriculum used in Fagge is the same nationwide.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

There are sixteen (16) senior secondary schools in Fagge Local Government (Nassarawa Zonal Education Office, 2011). This experimental research involves making generalizations on a large population, therefore, it randomly sampled two senior secondary schools out of the sixteen senior secondary schools in the Nassarwa zone, this represents 12.5 % of the total number of senior secondary schools in Fagge Local Government and this figure is regarded as acceptable sample in an experimental study (Nworgu, 1991). The schools selected shared a number of features which include same location, mixed ability of SS II students, same English language syllabus and certified English language teachers. It was assumed that these factors would lessen bias and inaccurate interpretation of results to be obtained. One of the schools, GSS Kwakwachi, formed the `control` group

while the other randomly selected school- MVA Senior Secondary School- was labeled the `experimental` group. A total of a hundred (100) students, representing a class of fifty (50) students from each school, were sampled.

3.4.1 Characteristics of the Sample

Both the control and experimental schools are for boys only and the classes were made up of solely of the SS II forms; all the subjects were of the same age.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

To assess the effects of participatory approaches (conferencing, revision, and self-assessment) on the teaching of argumentative, descriptive, and narrative essays, especially their effects on expression, content, mechanical accuracy and organization in students` compositions, essay questions from the 2012 SS II `qualifying examination` question paper were selected for the pre-test and post-test. This was informed by the fact that the examination questions were set and administered by the body responsible for public examinations in Kano State, the Kano Educational Resource Department (KERD) thus the questions were therefore deemed to have reliability and validity, due to their replication of the West African Examination Council`s and the National Examination Council`s standard of questions` setting. The four essay questions in section A of the 2012 English language paper were administered to students at the pre-test stage; during the post-

test the wordings of the questions were altered so as to ensure more validity and reliability. Students were to attempt answering one question only.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

To collect the data, the researcher motivated the students by encouraging individual and group essay writing competition among the students. The feedback given to them also stimulated their interest in the lessons. Moreover, knowing that, for the SS II students, the SSQE was just around the corner served as an extrinsic motivation for them.

The treatment was in the form of essay writing. The questions were selected from the 2012 English language `qualifying examination` question paper, as they cover the narrative, descriptive, and argumentative types of essays. This selection was informed by the fact that the subjects will write a similar examination before proceeding to their final year in senior secondary school; in addition, the selection was also based on the cognitive level of the subjects. The questions on the 2012 `qualifying examination` paper are included in the appendices. All the SSQE questions were subjected to an external assessment for validity and reliability (KERD, 2012) all the questions were accepted as possessing face, content and construct validity and the WAEC marking guide was used as the norm for assessing the SSQE.

3.6.1 Treatment I

Aim: Learning basic essay structure, through the participatory approach of conferencing, for students to use in writing essays in English.

Activity: Overview of basic essay structure presentation, with students working together to develop an essay outline. The lesson followed these nine pedagogic steps (Adapted from: Dorner, et.al, 2007: 224-225):

i. Provision of the topic by the teacher.

ii. Explanation of the aim of the lesson and the audience for whom the essay was to be composed.

iii. Collection of ideas about the topic (The patient dog eats the fattest bone) from the class.

iv. Re-organization of the ideas according to sequence and importance.

v. Discussion and exchange of views by the class.

vi. Division of students into groups for developing the essay. The teacher then moved round the class, leaning over shoulders to skim drafts, offering suggestions, praising good work. The teacher allowed talk among group members to support the

writing and simultaneously getting involved with students throughout the essay task, focusing on their development of the composition.

vii. Correction of each group`s work by pointing out errors and allowing them to rectify errors before submitting their drafts.

viii. Evaluation of one group`s work by the class- under the teacher`s guidance.

ix. Collection of the final drafts for marking.

Outline: Both parties actively participated in the lessons conducted via a participatory approach rubric that emphasized brainstorming on the topic in order to get as many ideas from the students as possible. This involved getting the subjects to contribute as much as they knew about the topic.

After the brainstorming stage, the class was divided into manageable groups. As many as ten items-which the students already knew and mentioned about the topic - were written on the board, in addition to unfamiliar words and a list of some of the commonly held opinions and answers relating to the topic.

The students were given a short outline to writing an essay, made to read through the outline and were then required to ask any question they might have. Next, the groups were told to begin writing the first draft, after informing them once more that they should feel free to ask the teacher, or any group, anything they might find difficult.

After writing the first draft, each group then read aloud its own sample which was then exchanged by the groups for peer perusal and editing. Next, the essays were collected and one of the essays was selected for general correction which focused on the areas of content, expression, organization, and mechanical accuracy. The researcher-corrected students` essay was then pasted on the class` display board.

3.6.2 Treatment II

Aim: understanding proper style for, and writing of, informal letters through the participatory approach of revision.

Activity: understanding the difference between formal and informal letters, vocabulary practice, writing practice.

Outline: The class was asked which situations call for a formal letter and which situations require an informal letter. Time for brainstorming, on the

differences between formal and informal letters written in the students` native language(s), was allowed.

Presentation:

1. Introducing the topic of differences in English letter writing by providing formal and informal letters and asking the students to compare the two samples of letter writing and to decide on the differences between formal and informal phrases, punctuations, as well as the layout used in the two letters.

2. Correcting the exercise as a class, discussing questions that occurred during the correction.

3. Asking the learners to do the second exercise which focused on appropriate formulas for writing informal letters.

4. Discussing the differences in layout and language between formal and informal letters (indentation, use of contracted forms, use of phrasal verbs, and idiomatic language).

5. Informing the students to write an informal letter on a topic of their choice.

6. Assessment for corrections.

3.6.3 Treatment III

Objective: Students were to write a descriptive essay using the participatory approach of self-assessment.

Outline: Discussion of the writing topic, emphasizing the importance of logical sequence, descriptive writing, attention to detail and the inclusion of key elements of description. Students were reminded of the need to be inventive and original.

Presentation:

1. Distribute copies of a corrected essay to the class and then students review the writing and editing tips contained in the assessed copies given to them. Identification of difficult vocabulary used in the sample or related to the topic. Ask the class to write on a topic similar to the model or a topic of their choice.

2. Allow time for writing the first drafts.

3. Begin revision of the finished work. Divide the class into groups of three and then have the groups exchange their essays. Based on the feedback they receive, the learners are to revise their essays for clarity, purpose, and tone.

4. Proofread selected essays focusing on correcting errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

5. Collection of the compositions for marking.

In summary, the treatments followed these steps illustrated by Dorner, et al(2007):

1. Identifying the essay topic.
2. Asking the subjects to brainstorm what they know about the topic.
3. Division of subjects into groups.
4. Brainstorming for the subjects` knowledge about the essay topic.
5. Writing as much as five salient points about the topic.
6. Writing word bubbles consisting of new words.
7. Grouping the students.
8. Inter and intra-group discussions followed by the essay writing task.

9. Marking of sample essays by the researcher.

10. Pasting a marked essay or two on the class` wall or board as an essay guide for the subjects.

The treatment for revision and self-assessment followed these steps:

Both the researcher and the subjects were actively involved in the essay writing task for a period of six weeks- as it is the overall length of actual instructions out of the twelve weeks allocated to each school term in Kano State (Nassarawa Zonal Education Office, 2011) and this represents sixty essay writing lessons. The schools have double periods of English five days a week and each period lasts for thirty five minutes. A copy of the question paper used was presented for validation by the researcher`s supervisor.

The pre-test for the control and experimental groups in the two schools selected for the pilot study was administered on the same day. Thirty five minutes- the duration of a period of instruction in secondary schools in Kano- was the duration of the pre-test. The treatment for the experimental group lasted for six weeks after which the post-test was administered and it lasted for thirty minutes of the English period.

The responses were marked with the variables stated in this study (content, mechanics, expression, and mechanics) as the guide or marking scheme as they are

in examinations by reputable examination institutions such as WAEC and NECO. The treatments described herein were not administered to the control group.

3.7 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study in two different secondary schools (GSS Na`ibawa and GSS Tarauni) outside the area covered by the study. This was done in order to avoid threats to the internal and external validity of the study. A total number of two senior secondary schools were selected randomly and 12 SS II students from a class each in the two pilot study schools were used.

A two week period was the duration of the pilot study for both groups altogether. The pre-test (using the 2012 SS II English language question papers) was administered on the same day and lasted for the thirty five minutes allocated to each period on the school timetable. The study proper lasted for six weeks.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

The T-test statistical technique was employed for data analyses and hypothesis testing as it is a technique commonly used to examine whether two samples are different and also to discover whether the variances of two normal distributions are unknown and when an experiment uses a small sample size

(Preacher, 2011). Each hypothesis was analyzed using the T-test and percentages were assigned to describe and explain the results of each hypothesis. In other words, the hypotheses were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

The checklist for revision and self-assessment for the students and as a guide for teachers of essay writing is presented below:

Expression skill checklist:

1. Are the verbs used in the correct tense?
2. Are the forms of the verb correct?
3. Have you checked for subject-verb agreement?
4. Have you used prepositions correctly?
5. Have you omitted article(s)?
6. Are all pronouns used correctly?
7. Is the choice of adjectives and adverbs appropriate?
8. Is the composition written in complete sentences?

Organization skill checklist:

1. Is there a clear introduction, body and conclusion?
2. Does the introduction provide sufficient background for the reader?
3. Are all the wh-questions (who, where, when, what, why and how) addressed?
4. Is there a thesis sentence?
5. Is the purpose of the essay clear?
6. Does the essay move from general to specific?
7. Does every paragraph address the subject matter of the essay in some way?

Content and style checklist:

1. Does the essay show that the writer has the audience in mind?
2. Is the length of the essay appropriate?
3. Were sufficient examples and details used in the essay to make the points clear?
4. Is the tone appropriate?

5. Was the language vivid and creative?

Summary

The pre-test, post-test experimental research design was selected for this study; the population covered all the SS II students in the sixteen secondary schools of Fagge Local Government, (administratively designated as Nassarawa Zonal Education Office), in the 2010/2011 session. Two secondary schools were selected randomly and divided similarly into control and experimental groups. A total of 120 students were sampled, this represents 60 students apiece from each school. A previous SS II English language question paper on essay writing was used as the instrument for data collection while pre-test and post-test served as the treatment. A checklist for revision and self-assessment of essays was included.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains data analysis and interpretation of students` sample essays as well as discussion of the findings. Tables, with relevant headings, are used to present the study`s results.

4.2 Presentation and interpretation of data using various tables.

Table 4.1 displays the pre-test results of the control and experimental groups` overall performance in written English.

Table 4.1 Pre-test results of the control and experimental groups` essays

Group	n	Mean	SD	SE	DF	Tvalue	P
Control	**50**	**8.430**	**4.63**	**6.556**	**98**	**0.75**	**0.4584**
Experimental	**50**	**7.770**	**4.09**	**5.784**			

The study`s first hypothesis states that `there is no significant difference between the mean of essay writing scores of SS II students at the pre-test stage`, the table above shows a pre-test mean score of 8.430 for the control group and a mean of 7.770 for the experimental group. Similarly, the t-test reveals no significant

differences in the control and experimental groups' mean scores obtained in the pre-test and there appeared to be no significant differences in the standard deviations of the two groups when performances in the pre-test essay tests were compared. This forms the basis for comparison of the two groups as the results suggest no significant difference between both groups` performances prior to the administration of any participatory approach treatment on either group and this led to the retention of hypothesis 1.

The control and experimental groups' post-test performances in the three types of essays (narrative, descriptive, and argumentative) were computed and compared for mean performances in the areas of content, organization, mechanics, and expression. The results are presented in tables followed by an interpretation and analysis of the experimental and control groups` results. Essays of three students- tagged A,B, and C – are selected for the analyses of narrative, descriptive, and argumentative performance in the areas of content, organization, mechanical accuracy, and expression in the pre-test and post-test essays of the control and experimental groups.

Table 4.2a displays the content area post-test results for the narrative essays of the control and experimental groups.

TABLE 4.2a: Content Area Post-test Results for the two groups` Narrative Essays

Group	n	Mean	SD	SE	DF	T value	P
Control	**50**	**4.650**	**2.357**	**3.33**	**98**	**-3.35**	**0.0013**
Experimental	**50**	**6.290**	**2.53**	**3.58**			

In the area of content, the data in table 4.2a shows a mean of 4.650 for the control group and a mean score of 6.290 for the experimental group. The t-test also revealed a t-value of -3.35 higher than the 0.0013 probability level thus suggesting a significant difference between the mean performance of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approaches and those who were not. The study`s null hypothesis is rejected.

To substantiate the statistics in Table 4.2a with qualitative evidence, the researcher selected two essays from sample A for analyses .The two essays represent the pre-test and post-test written performance of student A from the experimental group. The pre-test essay question asked: `` Now that you are about to write your qualifying examination, write a letter to your father who is on a business trip abroad giving at least three steps you intend to follow, so as to pass your qualifying and SSCE examinations with credit in English.`` Student A`s pre-

test letter is reproduced and analyzed below:

1a MVA Secondry school

Pm.b 11277

Kano sitet

Fagge local govment

Dear may mother.

I am think my mother you are find and my father are find momyI am writing to you this latter Becouse you are gointto this country

May qoulifyeing examination is in three month and I have no moni to registration and my food is finished may moni is finish. Haruna have no moni pleas send me some moni for registiration

I want stop here.

Tank you.

It could be noticed that sample A contains digressions from the content; references to`money`, `registration` `qualifying examination` as well as other sentences unrelated to the topic abound in the sample. Furthermore, no mention was made of the steps the subject planned to take in order to pass the qualifying examination. The format of letter writing was inaccurately followed as the letter contains an address incorrectly written and no date. For content and all other skills this sample is an indication of the pathetic failure in the mastery of English by the student at the pre-test level. In all, a total of thirty two unpardonable errors were recorded.

Expression errors include: `I am think…`, `Dear may mother`, `…you are find…`, `…this latter Becouse`, `… no moni to registration…`, `Haruna have no moni…`, `I want stop here`.

For spelling errors, they fill the sample. Examples: `may` for `my`, `momy` for `mummy`, `latter` for `letter`, `moni` for `money`, `pleas` instead of `please`, and `tank` was used for the correct form `thank`. This sample contains what WAEC(2011) terms`… distortion of ideas, for example, writing a letter to the editor instead of an article` and `irrelevant discussions not related to the topic`.

In the post-test, same student wrote on the topic: ``Write a letter to the Commissioner of Education in your state, highlighting the need for the introduction of computer education in your school``. The essay is reproduced below:

1b

MohdViceAdamuSenior
Sec. Sch. Kuka
PMB 1177
Kano.
7/3/2013.

The Honorable Commissioner
Ministry of Education
Kano.
Dear Sir:

I am a student of Mohammed Vice Adamu Senior Secondary School, SS II a. I want to request that computer lesson be teach in our school because computer is teach in primary schools abroad and even in many schools in Nigeria.

Computer is like a book. We can use the computer to read books and write notes when teacher gave note. We use computer and internet to birowz Bbc, CNN and play game.

Our school we need it to be good students of English, math and biology, chemistry etc.

Honorabil sir commissioner of education, please give my application considertion.
Thank you.
Yours faithfully,

It is noticeable, in this post-test sample, that a marked improvement can be noticed in the writing of the features of an official letter just as a noticeable improvement can be seen in the relevance of the letter to the theme in question. Much remains to be done, however, in the adequacy of the coverage of the content or subject matter, in the judicious use of punctuation and rules of spelling and grammar. Overall, the sample avoided distortions of and digressions from the subject matter as points pertinent to the question were raised in this post-test sample, such as comparing a computer to a book, using the computer for browsing and note-taking. Noticeable improvements here include absence of many spelling errors as found in the pre-test sample, addresses in the letter were written correctly, noticeable improvement in the use of punctuation marks, more paragraphs were developed and a noticeable

improvement in the expression skill as most of the serious grammatical errors committed in the pre-test seemed to diminish in the post-test sample where the most prominent errors that appeared to persist were the be + past form of main verbs (`…be teach…`, `…is teach…` instead of `…be taught…` and `…is taught…`) another persistent error can be seen in the area of spelling: `birowz` for `browse`, `Bbc` for BBC and the non-capitalization of `Maths`, `Biology` and `Chemistry`. In the content area, the post-test score for this essay sample is 5 out of the ten (10) maximum marks. Therefore, the statistical value for content presented in Table 4.2a is accurate and this means that hypotheses 2 – which states that there is no significant difference between the mean performances in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics and expression, in the narrative essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not- is rejected.

Table 4.2b contains the post-test results of the organization aspect for the essays of the control and experimental groups.

Table 4.2b: Post-test Results of the Organization Aspect for the Control and Experimental Groups

Group	n	Mean	SD	SE	DF	T-Value	P
Control Group	**50**	**1.380**	**9.179**	**1.298**	**98**	**-5.10**	**0.0000**
Experimental Group	**50**	**6.000**	**5.714**	**8.081**	**98**	**-5.10**	**0.0000**

The table above shows 1.380 as the post-test mean performance of the control group in the essay organization aspect and a higher mean score of 6.000 for the experimental group. With a t-value of -5.10 and a probability level of 0.000, the study concluded a significant difference exists between the mean performances of subjects taught essay writing using Participatory Approaches and those students who were not.

To illustrate the meaning of these statistics further, the pre-test and post-test essays of another subject (labeled Sample B) from the experimental group are analyzed below:

Topic (Pre-test): ``Write a story to illustrate the saying: `A patient dog eats the fattest bone`. ``

2a `Once upon a time in the Agubega village, the man his name malamTanko, He has two wive, Amina and Salama, all of them live at the same House, but malamTanko he love Amina and her son ,more than that he love Salama.

And Salama she patient about his behavior, malamTankocontiniou with his travalism between his wive. One day, suddenly, in the night maleriaa effect malamTanko and he call Amina three time but Amina she not answer his calling and he leave calling and try to call Salama one time Salama answer his calling. And she came to him in order to help him very soon malamTanko get a health.

After he get a health, he divorce Amina and he lived with Salama together.

As the WAEC(2012) Marking Scheme recommends the award of marks for `correct use of formal features such as good paragraphing, appropriate use of emphasis… suitable spacing, adequate development of paragraphs, links between paragraphs, unity, balance, coherence…`, the essay was awarded a total of three marks out of the maximum ten marks. The student wrote three paragraphs within which he told his story about the `patient dog` eating `the fattest bone`. Each paragraph developed an idea- even though in a grammatically flawed manner. However, the essay lacked coherence, unity and balance as a result of few and improper punctuation like: `…he love Amina and her son, more than…`, `…the man his name…`. Moreover, the sample exhibits no awareness of tense or time. Examples of instances of the student`s penchant for the present tense he seemed to know very well include: `…try to call…` (instead of: `…tried to call…`, `…continiou with his…`, ( instead of:`…continued with his…`), `…he love…` (instead of: `…he loved); moreover, instances of double marking abound: `…the man his name…`, `but Amina she…`.

For spelling errors, such glaring misspellings can be noticed: `continiou` obviously for `continued`; `travalism` (tribalism); `maleriaa` (malaria); `effect` for `affected`. For the content, only the general storyline suggests the student`s creativity and says something good about the learner`s ability to capture in his content what the question asked.

In the post-test, the same student wrote on the topic: `Now that you are about to write your qualifying examination, write a letter to your uncle who lives abroad, informing him of the steps you intend to follow so as to pass your qualifying and SSCE examinations with credits in English.

2b

MVA Senior Secondary School
Kuka
P.M.B 1177
Kano.
7/03/13.

Dear uncle,

How is London? How is Musa? Hope they are all fine. I am write my qualifying in two months coming. I want get credit in English so I will come to London and be with you.

I plan study my English book well well. I will not play football, I will read my book so that I get credit in all subjects.

Then I practice classwok in test book with my friend. Everyday I listen to radio and hear English so I learn it and I not speak vanacular in class only English. This way I know I will get credit in English. Some of my frends always speak hausa everywhere and go to watch champions league, I not follow them.

Also, Binta, she teach me more at home, she want that I get credit in all subjects in qualifying exams and SSCE.

I want drop my biro here, I hope you pray for me.

Greet aunty for me, tell her to pray for me also.

Thank you.

Yours,

In this post-test sample, the student was able to punctuate the address and the salutation with the correctly and was able to display some improvement in the use of punctuation marks as well as begin sentences with a capital letter. The sequence of arranging his plans for succeeding in the examinations were also stated chronologically and logically as opposed to the pre-test performance which was marred by poor punctuation, translations from the Mother Tongue, double marking and absence of cohesive markers. Four marks out of the ten maximum marks were awarded for organization in this post-test essay.

Twenty errors were recorded in the post-test sample altogether; the predominant errors being the `to-infinitive` and the auxiliary + not + main verb patterns as can be observed in constructions like: `I want get credit…`; `I plan study…`; `I want drop my biro…` (omission of the `to` before the infinitive). `I not follow them`; `I not speak…`, are instances of omission of the primary auxiliary verb `do`. An interesting instance of wrong reduplication- the use of which perhaps seems popular in some varieties of Nigerian English- is `well well`. Other expression errors in this pre-test sample may seem to be attributable to first language transfer to the English language as these examples from the sample may

indicate: `…Binta, she teach me…`; `…she want that…`, these constructions juxtapose proper nouns with their pronoun referents- a construction that ignored the `s` or `es` inflections for the third person singular pronouns or a singular noun when they occur with lexical verbs. `I am write my…` is another expression error in sample B and it indicates an unfamiliarity with the present form of the verb `to be` (am, are, is) being followed by a verb in the `-ing` form.

For spelling errors, noticeable ones include: `classwok`, `test book`, `vanacular` and `frends` for: class work, textbook, vernacular and friends. Despite these post-test errors this post-test sample can be said to be more comprehensible, statistically, in content, expression and organization than the incomprehensible pre-test sample with its 28 glaring errors.

Based on these analyses of student B`s pre-test and post-test performances, it can be safely concluded that a significant difference exists between those students taught essay writing in English using participatory approaches and those who were not thus allowing this research to reject hypothesis 3 which states that `there is no significant difference between the mean performances, in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics and expression, in the descriptive essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not.

Table 4.2c indicates post-test results of the expression skill for the control and experimental groups` argumentative essays.

TABLE 4.2c: Expression skill Post-test Results of Essay Tasks for the Control and Experimental Groups.

Group	n	Mean	SD	SE	DF	T- value	P
Control Group	**50**	**3.010**	**1.649**	**2.33**	**98**	**-5.54**	**0.0000**
Experimental Group	**50**	**5.480**	**2.690**	**3.80**			

With mean scores of 3.010 and 5.480 and corresponding Standard Deviations of 1.649 and 2.690 respectively for the control and experimental groups, it becomes clear that a significant difference exists in the performances of the two groups in the area of expression; with the experimental group`s performance higher than the control group`s. The study`s null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained.

Two essays of a student labeled student `C`- an essay apiece for the pre-test and post-test- are analyzed for expression below:

3a Excerpt from Student C`s Pre-test essay on the topic: You are the chief speaker in a debate on the topic: ``Computer has done more harm than good.`` Write your argument for or against the topic.

1) Computer it help the people to any brausing or chatingin the facbook.
2) Computer it help the people it any learneeducation Qur`an and hadith
3) Then computer help the people of any knowledge in the world either political education> Biology> history> Economic and so on.

Without a doubt, the sample above is very ungrammatical. It contains plenty of double marking :` Computer it help`(possibly a translation from the student`s L1) is repeated thrice , repeating the subject twice; omission of the –s ending for third person singular in: `…it help`; the construction: `… to any brausing` contains an omission of the verb `do` in sentences 1 and 2, as well as several misspellings.

A post-test excerpt by the same student shows this performance on the topic: `Computer has done more good than harm.`

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Judges.
Co- devators,
Distinguished Ladies and Genlemen.

Good morning. I am here to support the motion which says ` computer has done more good than harm`. It is a good thing, computer. We make frends through computer, we make money and busines by usin computer , in facebook I make friends in America USA

In university research is made by use of computer and internet helps people to chat and send email. With thise points I hope you all agree that computer has don more good than harm

When the two excerpts are compared, the post-test performance shows a marked improvement in the expression skill of student C as the errors of double marking and most of the omissions of the –s in the verb endings for third person singular pronouns were not repeated in the post-test although spelling errors such as: `…usin …` contains omission of the letter `g`, `debators` was spelt as `devators`, `these` was wrongly spelt as `thise` and the last `e` in `done` was carelessly omitted. `…make friends in America USA` is a repetition of the same noun. Further misspellings of `friends, business` also reduce the expressive appeal of the sample just as the absence of a period to end the essay. The post-test sample evidently reveals more mechanical rather than content, organization or expression errors and is an indication of improvement in the three latter skills. However, the few noticeable errors of spelling and punctuation still exist in the post-test- albeit not as glaring as in the pre-test sample where one can notice proper nouns like Facebook, Hadith, and History all written with small letters. This comparison, together with the analysis of the two samples suggest a significant difference between the two group`s mean performance in both the pre-test and post-test expression tasks and this translates into the rejection of the study`s hypothesis 4 which postulated that `there is no significant difference between the mean performances, in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization,

mechanics and expression, in the argumentative essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not`.

The mechanical accuracy skill aspect revealed no basis for statistical comparison as the pre-test performances of both groups as well as the control group`s post-test performance was a recurring zero thus offering no statistical value to be compared, even though the experimental group did not all score zero as can be observed in Appendices II and III which contain the complete texts of the subjects` sampled essays.

Table 4.3 displays the overall average of the post- test results in the areas of content, organization, mechanics, and expression for the control and experimental groups` narrative, descriptive and argumentative essays.

Table 4.3 Post-test overall average of control and experimental groups` essay results

Group	n	Mean	SD	SE	DF	T-value	P
Control	**50**	**8.30**	**4.386**	**6.202**	**98**	**-4.67**	**0.0000**
Experimental	**50**	**13.24**	**6.069**	**8.582**			

Table 4.3 displays a t-value of -4.67 which is greater than the P level of 0.0000 and an overall mean score of 8.30 for the control group which is lower than the 13.24 scored by the experimental group, these figures suggest a significant difference in

the post-test performances of the two groups; this leads to the rejection of the study`s fifth null hypothesis that no significant difference exists between the mean performances in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanical accuracy, and expression at the post-test stage. The null hypothesis 5- which stated that `there is no significant difference in the overall mean performances of students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not`, is rejected as the pre-test and post-test performances were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed and the scores obtained by, and the performances of, the experimental group were higher and better – qualitatively and quantitatively- than the control group`s performances.

4.3 Overall Findings

The study made these five findings:

a. The study`s control and experimental groups exhibited similarities in their pre-test performances (Table 4.1).
b. There is a significant difference in the mean performances of the control group and the experimental group in the areas of content, organization, and expression in the narrative essays of the two groups (Table 4.2 a)

c. There is a significant difference between the mean performances of the study`s control and experimental groups` descriptive essays in the areas of content, organization and expression skills (Table 4.2b).
d. There is a significant difference in the mean performances of the control and experimental group`s argumentative essays in the skill areas of content, organization, mechanics, and expression (Table 4.2c).
e. There is a significant difference in the overall mean performance of the two groups` essays at the post-test level (Table 4.3).

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

Participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing at the SS II level is the main focus of this study. Control and experimental groups were selected and administered with the treatment - the Kano State 2011 SSQ examination question paper. The findings of this study are based on the procedures and activities discussed in the research design (Chapter three) of this study. The study`s findings correspond with the objectives, research questions, and hypotheses of the study.

Table 4.1 revealed that the control and experimental groups displayed similar levels of performance at the pre-test level thereby answering the question

about their level of performance before administration of the treatment discussed in this study. Had any significant difference been observed before the treatment then there would have been no basis for any comparison as the two groups would have possessed different abilities.

Moreover, Table 4.2a revealed a significant difference in the mean performance of the control and the experimental groups in the post-test narrative essays. The statistics showed that the experimental group did better than the control group thus answering the study`s second research question. This finding corroborates the views of Cook (2007), Markus (op. cit), Nasri (2008), and Vernon (2007) that pre-writing activities- planning, reading, brainstorming and conferencing- in addition to the provision of essay models, facilitate the writing of good content as well as better organization of ideas in students` essays.

The study also discovered a significant difference between the post- test mean performances of the control and experimental groups` descriptive essays (Table 4.2b). The finding concurs with the suggestions of Gibson (op.cit); Winkler, 2007; and Cunningham and Anderson, 2009; that the organization skill can be mastered easily by introducing learners to the Schaffer paragraph; this can be achieved through provision of model essays, scrambled essays or asking students to put paragraphs back into order. The study practically discovered that these

suggestions actually enhanced the organization skill when applied to the experimental group during instruction in descriptive essay writing.

In Table 4.2c, the study revealed a significant difference between the mean scores in the students` performances in the presentation of the skill of expression by the control and the experimental groups in the two groups` argumentative essays. In the skill area of expression, the experimental group performed better than the control group; the finding also supports the views of Coppell (op.cit); Ecenbarger (op.cit), and Harmer (op.cit) that teaching expression should proceed from the familiarization stage through controlled writing, guided writing and then free writing in addition to `intensive drilling of the target language`s`…syntactic and morphological features`(Rich, 2010). The finding showed that those learners who were taught expression through drills in the target language`s grammatical structure often wrote with less expression errors than those who were not. In the area of mechanical accuracy, however, no significant difference was observed at both the pre-test and post-test levels amongst both the control and experimental groups.

Finally, Table 4.3 displayed a significant difference between the post-test overall mean performances of the two groups` entire essays. The statistics in this table suggest that not only at the SS II level but students at other levels of secondary school can perform better in writing essays when taught essay writing

through the use of participatory approaches. This finding showed an overall mean of 8.30 for the control group and 13.24 for the experimental group- revealing a substantial gap between the two groups` actual performances.

These findings have led to the rejection of four out of the study`s five null hypotheses. These hypotheses are:

1. Null hypothesis two which states: `there is no significant difference between the mean performance in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics and expression in the narrative essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approaches and those who were not.

2. Null hypothesis three that states: `there is no significant difference between the mean performance in the area of the presentation of the skills of content, organization, mechanics, and expression in the descriptive essays of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approaches and those who were not.

3. Null hypothesis four which states: ` there is no significant difference between the mean performance in the area of the presentation of content, organization, mechanics, and expression skills in the argumentative essays

of SS II students taught essay writing using participatory approaches and those were not.

4. Null hypothesis five that says: `there is no significant difference in the overall mean performance of students taught essay writing using participatory approaches and those who were not.

Hypothesis 1 is the only null hypothesis retained.

The study`s findings concur with the views of scholars like Harmer (op.cit), Hyland (op.cit) and Ecenbarger (op. cit) that a positive relationship exists between reading and writing as well as between participatory approaches and essay writing. The study is unique because it chose a novel approach to the teaching of essay writing in senior secondary schools and has been able to prove that participatory approaches can improve students` essays as well as enhance the learners` mastery of the four writing skills of content, organization, mechanical accuracy, and expression.

The study was able to come up with a model for participatory teaching of essay writing in secondary schools:

Participatory model for the teaching of essay writing at the SSS level

Step I: Pre-writing activities: brainstorming, planning

Step II: Teacher writes word bubble, explains unfamiliar words, discusses grammatical structures and format to be used in the particular essay.

Step III: First draft of the essay to be written by students, individually or in groups. Revision of the writing- individually or in groups- would follow the writing of the first draft, with the teacher suggesting areas to be revised.

Step IV: Guide the students to use important issues/ points and grammatical structures discussed in the class to write another essay, individually.

Description

The introduction involves the pre-writing activities of brainstorming on the essay topic. The teacher writes the essay topic on the board and asks the students to mention all they know about the topic; key and unfamiliar words or word bubble would be written on the board for explanation to students during the course of the lesson.

The next step is where the teacher discusses the essay format and the grammatical structure(s) demanded by the essay type. The teacher, here, offers examples of the relevant structure to be practiced by the students during the lesson.

Writing the first draft follows, either individually or in groups; after this, the teacher then directs the students` attention to areas in the essay that may need to be concentrated upon in the revision.

Lastly, the participatory model involves guiding the students to use the important issues or points discussed about the topic in the classroom and then use the relevant grammatical structures to write another essay, individually.

A study of this nature is not without problems to be encountered. One of the problems was absenteeism on the part of the students. This study sampled only fifty students per class in each of the two secondary schools sampled and for the six weeks of classes about ten students were not attending classes regularly.

Another problem is that most of the students found it difficult to define or identify basic concepts like punctuation marks and parts of speech. Remedial teaching of most of these had to be done by the researcher.

As the classes contain a hundred or more students in each class, group work could be untidy because the classes were originally not built for more than thirty or forty students. Most of the lessons conducted by the researcher were rowdy but

were fruitful and enjoyable as the students could not wait for the English period , and the researcher, to come.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented statistical analyses of the data collected, the sample scripts of the subjects` pre-test and post-test essays. Different tables were used in data presentation, in accordance with the study`s five hypotheses. The five findings of the study- all related to the research questions- were discussed with references made to the comments of scholars in the field of essay writing pedagogy. The major findings highlighted the positive instructional effects of participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing; in addition, a participatory model for teaching essay writing at the secondary school level was presented for essay writing lessons by teachers interested in participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing.

MARKING SCHEME

To assess the pre-test and post-test essays, the following areas were awarded marks akin to most external examinations; here the WAEC marking scheme is adopted for its reliability.

CONTENT: refers to `relevance of ideas to the topic and its specific audience and purpose, appropriateness of the language used, relevance to the central theme and its development` (WAEC, 2011). Total marks: 10.

ORGANIZATION: Maximum marks: 10.

Organization `refers to correct use of formal features such as good paragraphing, appropriate use of emphasis and arrangement of ideas; suitable opening…, balance, unity, coherence and a suitable conclusion.` (WAEC, 2011).

EXPRESSION: The maximum marks for this aspect is 20. It refers to the `vocabulary chosen, which should reflect the general audience, atmosphere or format f composition, for example, vocabulary for an informal letter. Vocabulary must also be controlled and the sentences structured`.(WAEC, op. cit).

MECHANICAL ACCURACY:

`This refers to grammar, punctuation and spelling… rules to be complied with`. Maximum marks: 10. (WAEC, op.cit).

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Implications, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of the study, implications of the study`s findings, conclusion and recommendations.

5.1 Summary

The study asked these five research questions:

1. What is the difference between the mean performances of the two groups of SS II students before pedagogy using participatory approaches?
2. What is the effect of participatory approach on the performances of students in narrative essay writing?
3. What is the effect of participatory approach on the performances of students in argumentative essay writing?
4. What is the effect of participatory approach on the performances of students in descriptive essay writing?

5. Is there any difference in the overall mean performances of students taught essay writing using participatory approach and those who were not?

To find answers to these research questions, five null hypotheses were formulated and the t-test formula was employed to test these hypotheses. The pre-test, post-test control group research design was selected for data analysis and the 2011 Kano Educational Resource Department`s Senior Secondary School Qualifying Examination (SSQE) English Language question paper was the pre-test treatment; the questions were amended for use as the post-test treatment for the experimental group. There were four essay writing questions on the question paper. Two purposively sampled schools (Mohd Vice Adamu Senior Secondary School and GSS Kwakwachi) in the Nassarawa Zonal Education Office were pre-tested and, after administration of the treatment on the experimental group, the post-test was conducted for the control and experimental groups.

At the end of the study, five findings-corresponding to the study`s five research questions- were made. These findings are that:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores in the performances of the control and experimental groups before any participatory approach treatment were administered.

2. There is a significant difference in the performances of the two groups in the narrative essay tests for content, organization and expression. The experimental group`s mean score of 6.290 is higher than the 4.650 for the control group.

3. There is a significant difference in the performances of the experimental group (Mean= 5.480; SD= 5.480) and the control group (Mean= 3.010; SD=1.649) in the descriptive essay tests for the two groups.

4. There is a significant difference in the performances of the two groups in argumentative essay tests. The control group`s mean of 1.380 is lower than the experimental group`s score of 6.000.

5. There is a significant difference between the overall performance of students taught essay writing using participatory approach (Mean=13.24; SD=6.069) and those who were not (Mean=8.30; SD=4.386).

5. 2 Implications of the Study

The study`s findings contain a number of implications for various areas of education. These implications affect teachers, especially those teaching at the SS level of education, as well as curriculum planners.

For teachers of essay writing at the SS II level, the study`s findings imply that they improvise whenever they teach. This means that the findings suggest no single approach to the teaching of essay writing works with each group of learners but introducing students` participation through conferencing in the essay task could go a long way in instilling the skills needed to write better compositions.

As essay tutors are instrumental in whatever writing their students produce, the findings imply that teachers should teach- separately- features of the various types of essays to be learnt, in addition to integrating in their lessons the mastery of grammar points that are relevant to specific writing tasks through employing substitution tables and pattern drills.

Pre-writing activities (like planning and brainstorming) are like a good roadmap to good composition; teachers at the SS II level should encourage these tasks before requiring learners to just write. These pre-writing activities do assist in producing essays that are better in content and organization. To illustrate this point, the learners were asked to write on `the patient dog, eats the fattest bone`; the steps followed are presented here:

1. Oral discussion of narrative strategies. Different types of reasons used in narration were discussed and related to the influence of the audience on the reasons selected. Students were reminded of the need to see things from someone else`s perspective so as to generate strong, cohesive relations.

2. Group work: students worked in pairs and did some role play.

3. Joint text construction: students wrote a narrative essay about the topic on the board. This was followed by group correction of the essay.

4. Individual text construction.

In making revisions, teachers should offer students revision checklists for use when reading through what the learners have composed, with a view to encouraging more revisions. The checklist presented in 3.8 of this study serves as an illustration of this point.

Collaborative writing should be encouraged by essay tutors. Students working together in groups can respond to and benefit from each other's language and content ideas. This way, contributions or suggestions for changes in the essay can help in making a success of the writing. An illustration of this is Treatment I contained in 3.6.1.

Another implication is that teachers need to rethink the way they respond to students` essays. Instead of correcting a finished text, they should respond to what the learners are writing- the work in progress. This could be done by talking to them , individually, about their draft or reading through a work and then offering written suggestions about how to improve problematic areas.

The findings also imply that provision of a model essay can also be beneficial to the learners as they get a chance to make fruitful comparisons of their work and the correct sample. It is better, in this instance, to provide excerpts from recommended textbooks to avoid samples which may contain errors that most students could not recognize. An illustration of this point has been presented in chapter three (3.6.3).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that SS II students need a wide range of vocabulary for writing better compositions; this implies that whilst teaching the necessary skills for essay writing, teachers should encourage learners to read widely so as to build their vocabulary and develop their ideas on many themes. The learners should be taught how to use the dictionary; in the absence of one, the teacher should feel free to resort to translating new and difficult words as encouraged by the Grammar-Translation method.

Another implication for teachers is the teaching of essay writing should pay attention to the faultless instruction in sentence and paragraph structures, cohesive devices and overall essay structure using contextualized examples as a basis. Students with poor expression skills often write sentences that `lack syntactic maturity`(Shandy, 2003, 217-218). A step by step illustration of this point is adapted from Harmer (2007, p.70) and is presented below:

i. Familiarization: Teaching the target grammatical structures and vocabulary through a selected text, keeping in mind the cohesive devices the essay type demands.

ii. Controlled writing: Learners are trained to manipulate fixed grammatical patterns, through the use of substitution tables. This structural orientation serves to emphasize writing as combinations of lexical and grammatical forms.

iii. Guided writing: At this step, learners are allowed to imitate model written texts.

iv. Free writing: The fourth step is where the grammatical patterns, vocabulary and essay format developed in the previous steps are used by the students to compose essays.

For curriculum planners, the finding that students performed poorly in all essay tests in the area of mechanical accuracy suggests that relevant exercises to simplify the mastery of this important skill should be included in the writing syllabus as well as in essay writing textbooks.

5.3 Conclusion

The study showed that participatory approaches to the teaching of essay writing can enhance the compositions of SS II students. It is possible to conclude that the activities of planning, brainstorming, self-assessment and conferencing in essay writing tasks have escaped most essay teachers. Writing can be improved significantly if educators incorporate these activities in their lessons. The learners` performances in the area of mechanics revealed no significant difference between the control and experimental groups, this suggests that it should be given more attention by educationists.

The study found that in the areas of content, organization and expression, students taught essay writing using participatory approaches performed better at the post-test level than those who were not. To facilitate the teaching of the written word a participatory model was offered. Implications of the study to teachers and curriculum planners were also presented.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. Essay topics should have cultural relevance. That is to say, the topics should be about things, places, or persons familiar to the students as this familiarity often make the content and expression richer and better.

2. Teachers of essay writing should make the writing lesson a two-way one. Participation in writing, correcting a model composition, encouraging group work and first drafts by students could encourage learner participation in writing a good essay.

3. Reading has a positive effect on the development of the writing skill. The study recommends that teachers should encourage the reading of different model essays at the pre-writing stage so as to enable learners get a picture of how to organize, punctuate, and generally get acquainted with the expression and mechanical demands of the writing task.

4. The education ministries should consider providing cash incentives for English language teachers just like their science counterparts enjoy.

5. The computer assists in self-editing; it is recommended, therefore, that both teachers and students be trained in the use of computers and Information Technology. Learners should also be trained to be knowledgeable in the use of the dictionary.

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APPENDIX VI

Conferencing: Dorner, et al (2007:225) summarized the steps involved in conferencing as:

i- Generating: Students do some in-class generating activities such as brainstorming, clustering, freewriting.

ii- Revising: have the learners work with each other over drafts in class using peer groups with the teacher moving round the class, asking questions praising, offering, suggestions.

iii- Polishing: hold final editing and proofreading workshops in class, again using pains or small groups.