



ENHANCING SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN COMPOSITION WRITING: WHAT CONSTITUTES THE EFFECT OF REFLECTIVE WRITING STRATEGY?

Johnson Ojeka Ebibi

Department of Arts Education

University of Jos.

ebibiojeka@gmail.com

Victor Linus Velnoe

Directorate of General Studies Education

College of Education, Gindiri, Plateau State

Anthony Jegede Sunday

5 Uphill Avenue

Sabon Gari, Bwari, Abuja

Nenfort Emmanuel Joseph

Department of English language

Federal University of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The study explored the effect of reflective writing strategy on senior secondary students' achievement in composition writing in Mangu Local Government Area Plateau State. It adopted the quasi-experimental specifically, the pretest, posttest control group design. The population was 926 senior secondary two (SS2) students in the 25 public secondary schools in Mangu LGA in the 2022/2023 session. The sample for the study was 62 SS2 students drawn from two intact classes. One school (A) was assigned the experimental group and was taught using reflective writing strategy, while the other (B) was labelled the control and was taught using discussion method. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Data were gathered by a descriptive writing achievement test (DEWRAT). The reliability of the instrument was done by two experts using the Cronbach alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while ANCOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that the reflective writing strategy enhanced the SS2 students' achievement in generation of ideas in composition writing. Also, reflective writing strategy improved the senior secondary students' achievement in organization of ideas in composition writing among others. It was recommended among other things that teachers of composition in the various secondary schools should endeavour to adopt the reflective writing strategy to help students in developing the skill of idea generation in writing compositions or essays.

Keywords: Reflective writing strategy, composition writing, idea generation, organization of ideas, achievement.

Introduction

Writing is a multifaceted process that encompasses the creation and expression of thoughts, ideas, and information through the medium of written language. It is an essential approach to communication that allows people to express their thoughts concisely and have interaction in meaningful discourse. Writing is a means of verbal exchange that requires putting down of facts or thoughts of various types with the intention of moving equal to the reader (Akinyeye, 2015). As a method of communication, writing includes shape and meaning. It is the means of expressing desires, aspirations ideas or information via written symbols, characters or words and similarly a fundamental activity in any formal schooling setting (Okono, 2020).

Writing entails the thoughtful arrangement and organization of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to bring about meaning efficiently. A proficient writer requires a good knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and syntax to assemble coherent and grammatically accurate sentences. Beyond the technical elements, writing additionally calls for creativity, critical thought, and the potential to articulate ideas effectively. Writing is crucial to students' academic progress and success in all literate professions. As such, there is an increasing need to develop students' writing skills to meet the demands of the 21st century. With the growing importance of digital communication and information literacy, it is essential to teach students how to write effectively for different purposes and audiences. Writing enables students to compose coherent essays and research papers as it also aids students to express their thoughts ideas and emotions clearly. In the same manner, writing helps students develop critical thinking and analytical skills as they organize and articulate their arguments or opinions. In addition, writing fosters creativity and self-expression in students, allowing them to explore their imagination and develop their unique voice among others (Bamgbose, 2015).

Secondary school writing requirements are multifaceted, encompassing various forms of written expression. Students are typically expected to master descriptive, narrative, argumentative, and expository writing. This study, however, focused on one specific genre:

descriptive writing which is a captivating form of expression that transports readers into a vivid and sensory experience. It paints a detailed and immersive picture, using words to evoke sensations and create a powerful visual and emotional impact (Haruuna, 2014). This choice is because it allows for a precise and skillful use of descriptive language in which writers bring scenes, characters, and objects to life, engaging the reader's imagination and fostering a deep connection with the written word.

In spite of the importance of writing to the academic progress of students, the teaching of writing has not been very effective. Many factors have been attributed to the ineffective teaching of writing at secondary school level. For example, Sati (2016) noted that in most secondary schools, writing is taught as a product (a one-time task) instead of as a process that involves many stages. In the same manner, most school timetables do not give ample time adequate time to the teaching writing to students. Besides, there is the problem of large class size especially in public secondary schools. Large class size limits the amount of individualized attention and feedback teachers can provide to each student. This makes it difficult for teachers to address the unique needs and challenges of each learner, thus, negatively impacting on the quality of instruction and feedback received by students. Another challenge is the integration of technology in writing instruction. While digital tools and platforms offer new opportunities for collaboration, research, and publication, teachers face the task of effectively integrating these resources into the writing curriculum (Ekhatior, 2021). They must navigate issues such as digital literacy, plagiarism, and the appropriate use of online sources, ensuring that students develop critical thinking skills and responsible digital citizenship. Idowu, 2021). Moreover, the huge workload of teachers is another factor that affects the teaching of writing in schools. In many schools, teachers are saddled with a lot of responsibilities ranging from curricular to extra-curricular activities (Ebibi, Bako & Dung, 2021). In the same vein, a teacher may be assigned to more than four classes to teach. At the end of the day, such a teacher is overloaded and may not be as effective as expected and this has an effect on the quality of teaching of writing. The aforementioned

challenges have continued to hinder the efforts of teachers in teaching writing effectively in secondary schools. The efforts of teachers in teaching writing have not yielded the needed result. Most times, writing is just given as an assignment without any proper drilling given to students. This may be the reason why students are doing poorly in writing. The poor performance of students in writing may be attributed to the poor teaching of writing in the various schools.

Several efforts including organizing writing workshops (where students engage in concentrated writing activities), writing across the curriculum, organizing capacity improvement programmes for teachers and integration of generation gear and virtual resources in writing among others have been made to enhance secondary students' writing achievement (Amuseghan & Tunde-Awe, 2016). It is however worrisome to note that these efforts have not yielded the required result as there has not been any appreciable improvement in the writing performance of secondary school students. Many students still perform poorly in writing tasks (WAEC Chief Examiner's reports for May/June 2022, 2023 and 2024). This calls for a search of an alternative intervention strategy to remedy the poor writing achievement of students. Some of the interventions include modeling, explicit instruction, writing workshops, scaffolded writing, peer feedback and collaboration, process writing and reflective writing strategy which is of interest to this study (Nwoke, 2012).

Reflective writing strategy is a method of teaching writing strategy that involves writing about a personal experience or event and reflecting on how the event has impacted the writer or what the writer has learned from it. The goal of reflective writing is to encourage critical thinking and self-awareness and to help students connect their experiences to broader themes and concepts. Advocates of the reflective writing strategy (See review) argue that the strategy can help improve students' descriptive essay writing ability in several ways which including: to developing self-awareness, encouraging critical thinking and building connections. While reflective writing has been widely investigated in various educational contexts, its specific impact on writing achievement remains an area that requires further exploration. Some of the writing

skills that are needed to enhance students' performance are generation of ideas, organization of ideas, use of appropriate vocabulary/ language use, sentence construction, paragraphing, and editing (Black, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

One crucial aspect of English studies is composition writing which plays a vital role in enhancing students' communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and overall academic performance. Writing is an essential academic activity in any school setting as students use the skill in examination, tests, minute of meetings, term paper, assignment and narration. However, many students have serious difficulties in expressing their thoughts coherently in writing. For instance, the WAEC Chief Examiner's reports for May/June 2022, 2023 and 2024 indicate that despite all effort made to simplify the candidates' tasks a good percentage of the candidates scored below average in writing.

Consequently, resulting in poor achievement or outright failure in English and other subjects. To address this issue, educators and researchers have explored various strategies to improve students' writing skills but the problem still persists. To reverse this trend, innovative teaching methods or strategies should be employed by teachers of writing and indeed English language. One of such strategies is reflective writing, which has the potential to make students to engage in self-reflection and self-assessment of their writing processes and outcomes. Therefore, the problem of this study is could be captured interrogatively as: What will be the effect of reflective writing strategy on senior secondary students' achievement in descriptive composition writing in Mangu LGA of Plateau state, Nigeria?

Reflective Writing and Students' Achievement in Composition

Reflective writing has emerged as a powerful pedagogical tool, with a growing body of research highlighting its positive impact on student achievement in composition writing. This practice encourages students to think critically about their learning process, helping them to move beyond simply recalling information to constructing meaning and developing a deeper understanding of their own writing skills. The

core principle is that by reflecting on past work, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and planning future improvements, students can become more effective and self-directed writers (Dewey, 1910).

Udu and Iorkighir (2025) examined the use of reflective writing strategy to increase SS 2 students' interest and achievement in composition writing in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State and they observed a significant difference between the mean performance scores of students taught composition writing with reflective writing strategy and those taught using conventional strategy. Similarly, Cheria (2017) investigated and discovered that reflective-writing skills are associated with academic success or to be a predictor of academic performance in some formats of assessment: written examination; oral assessment task and overall score for the Unit of Study (UoS). Furthermore, Hattie and Timperley (2007) underscore the importance of feedback in learning, and reflective writing acts as a form of internal feedback. They argue that effective feedback should answer three key questions for the learner: "Where am I going?", "How am I doing?", and "Where to next?". Reflective writing directly addresses these questions, prompting students to set goals, assess their progress, and create action plans. By engaging in this metacognitive process, students are not just receiving information about their performance; they are actively processing it and taking ownership of their own learning. This active engagement is crucial for fostering a growth mindset and improving writing proficiency over time.

Similarly, Moon (2004) emphasizes that reflective writing is not a single, isolated act but a structured process that can lead to significant improvements in academic writing. She outlines different levels of reflection, from descriptive reporting to critical analysis, and argues that guiding students through these levels can enhance their ability to articulate their thoughts and improve the structure and coherence of their essays. This is particularly relevant for composition writing, where clarity of thought is paramount. By reflecting on their rhetorical choices, students can better understand how to tailor their writing for specific audiences and

purposes. These studies collectively suggest that reflective writing is not a secondary activity to composition but an essential component that drives metacognitive awareness and, consequently, higher-quality writing.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the pre-test and post-test achievement scores of the SS2 students in generation of ideas in composition writing in the experimental and control groups?
2. What are the pre-test and post-test achievement scores of the SS2 students in organization of ideas in composition writing in the experimental and control groups?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the achievement means scores of senior secondary two (SS2) students in generation of ideas in writing between those exposed to reflective writing and those that were not.
2. There is no significant difference in the achievement means scores of senior secondary two (SS2) students in organization of ideas in writing between those exposed to reflective writing and those that were not.

Methodology

The study utilised quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design. The population was all SS2 students in the 25 public secondary schools in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State during the 2022/2023 academic session. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools for uniformity of standards. The sample for the study was sixty-two (62) SSII students drawn from the two selected schools in the study area. School A was tagged experimental group while School B was assigned the control. A researcher-made Descriptive Writing Achievement Test (DEWRAT) was used to collect data. The instrument's reliability test was carried out using the Cronbach alpha method and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.83. Pretest was administered to the respondents before the commencement of treatment. The

treatment consisted of classroom teaching of writing skills, such as idea generation, organisation and idea development to the experimental group using the reflective writing strategy while the control was taught the same contents using discussion method. Using the discussion **method** for the control group is necessary to show whether the reflective writing

strategy is genuinely superior. The duration for the treatment was six weeks. After the treatment, a posttest was administered to both groups. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One

What are the pre-test and post-test achievement of the SS2 students in generation of ideas in composition writing in the experimental and control groups?

Table 1: Achievement Mean Scores of Students in Generation of Ideas in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre-test			Post-test		Mean Gain	Mean Score diff.
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Experimental	39	6.59	1.53	12.87	2.73	6.28	4.81
Control	23	4.57	1.62	6.04	1.15	1.47	

Table 1 presents the pre-test and post-test achievement of SS2 students in generation of ideas in composition writing in the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group the post-test achievement mean score was 12.87 and standard deviation of 2.73, higher than the pre-test mean score of 6.59 and standard deviation of 1.53 with a mean gain of 6.28, indicating that there was improvement in the achievement of students after treatment using reflective writing strategy. For the control group, the pre-test mean score was 4.57 and a standard deviation of 1.62. The post-test mean score of students was 6.04 with a standard

deviation of 1.15 and a mean score gain of 1.47. The results show that students in the experimental group had a higher achievement mean score (12.87) after treatment than those in the control group (6.04) who were not given treatment with a mean difference of 4.81. This means that at the pre-test the students in both groups had a poor achievement, but after the intervention using reflective writing strategy, the experimental group achieved better than the control group. This implies that reflective writing strategy did improve the SS2 students' achievement in generation of ideas in composition writing.

Research Question Two

What are the pre-test and post-test achievement of the SS2 students in organization of ideas in composition writing in the experimental and control groups?

Table 2: Achievement Mean Scores of Students in Organization of Ideas in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre-test			Post-test		Mean Gain	Mean Score diff.
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Experimental	39	6.15	2.02	12.97	2.84	6.82	4.68
Control	23	5.43	1.04	7.57	1.56	2.14	

Table 2 presents the pre-test and post-test achievement of SS2 students in organization of ideas in composition writing in the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group the post-test achievement mean score was 12.97 and standard deviation of 2.84, higher than the pre-test mean score of 6.15 and standard deviation of 2.02 with a mean gain of 6.82, indicating that there was improvement in the achievement of students after treatment using reflective writing strategy. For the control group, the pre-test mean score was 5.43 and a standard deviation of 1.04. The post-test mean score of students was 7.57 with a standard

deviation of 1.56 and a mean score gain of 2.14. The results show that students in the experimental group had a higher achievement mean score (12.97) after treatment than those in the control group (7.57) who were not given treatment with a mean difference of 2.14. This implies that at the pre-test the students in both groups had a poor achievement, but after the intervention using reflective writing strategy, the experimental group achieved better than the control group. It means that reflective writing strategy did improve the SS2 students' achievement in organization of ideas in composition writing.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the achievement means scores of senior secondary two (SS2) students in generation of ideas in writing between those exposed to reflective writing and those that were not.

Table 6: ANCOVA Result on Post-test Achievement of Students in Generation of Ideas in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	725.304 ^a	362.652	82.110	.000	.736
Intercept	167.054	167.054	37.823	.000	.391
Covariate	50.732	50.732	11.487	.001	.163
Group	327.907	327.907	74.243	.000	.557
Error	260.583	4.417			
Total	7613.000				
Corrected Total	985.887				

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine if a significant difference exists in the posttest achievement mean score of students in generation of ideas in composition writing when exposed to reflective writing strategy and not exposed to it. Table 6 shows that $F(1,59) = 74.24$, $p < 0.05$, since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that there was a significant effect of reflective writing strategy on achievement of students in generation

of ideas in composition writing. The result further reveals an adjusted R squared value of .727 which means that 72.7 percent of the variation in the dependent variable which is achievement in generation of ideas is explained by variation in the treatment of reflective writing strategy, while the remaining is due to other factors not included in this study. Hence, one can conclude that reflective writing strategy can help improve students' achievement in generation of ideas in composition writing.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the achievement means scores of senior secondary two (SS2)

students in organization of ideas in writing between those exposed to reflective writing and those that were not.

Table 7: ANCOVA Result on Post-test Achievement of Students in Organization of Ideas in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	560.347 ^a	2	280.174	73.932	.000	.715
Intercept	131.621	1	131.621	34.732	.000	.371
Covariate	137.039	1	137.039	36.161	.000	.380
Group	317.219	1	317.219	83.707	.000	.587
Error	223.588	59	3.790			
Total	8242.000	62				
Corrected Total	783.935	61				

a. R Squared = .715 (Adjusted R Squared = .705)

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine if a significant difference exists in the posttest achievement mean score of students in organization of ideas in composition writing when exposed to reflective writing strategy and not exposed to it. Table 7 shows that $F(1,59) = 83.71$, $p < 0.05$, since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that there was a significant effect of reflective writing strategy on achievement of students in organization of ideas in composition writing. The result further reveals an adjusted R squared value of .705 which means that 70.5 percent of the variation in the dependent variable which is achievement in organization of ideas is explained by variation in the treatment of reflective writing strategy, while the remaining is due to other factors not included in this study. Thus, it can be concluded that reflective writing strategy can help improve students' achievement in organization of ideas in composition writing.

Discussion

The study investigated the effects of the reflective writing strategy on senior secondary school students' achievement in descriptive writing in Mangu Local Government Area Plateau State. The findings on students' achievement in

generation of ideas revealed that at the pre-test level, students in both groups had a poor achievement, but after the intervention using reflective writing strategy, the experimental group achieved better than the control group. It means that reflective writing strategy did improve the SS2 students' achievement in generation of ideas. This is because reflective writing improves composition because it fosters **metacognition as it was effectively deployed in this study by the teachers**. Students monitor their thought processes, identify writing weaknesses (a key constructivist principle), and consciously modify strategies for better **organisation** and clarity. This result is in consonance with Hayes and Flower (2017) who noted that reflective strategy helps learners to brainstorm better in order to generate ideas that will enable them build up their texts. Continuing, Hayes and Flower opined that when ideas are well generated, it becomes easier for students to write the description by developing each of the ideas generated. The finding is in agreement with Clifford and Onakpo-Fure (2019) who reported that repeated draft method enhanced senior secondary II students' ability to write expository essay.

The findings on students' achievement in organization of ideas in composition writing showed that at the pre-test the students in both

groups had a poor achievement, but after the intervention using the reflective writing strategy, the experimental group achieved better than the control group. It means that reflective writing strategy was very effective in improving the SS2 students' achievement in organization of ideas in composition writing. In the same vein, the testing of its hypothesis confirmed that there was a significant effect of reflective writing strategy on achievement of students in organization of ideas in composition writing. These findings corroborate that of Okonkwo (2015) who observed that reflective strategy helps in idea organization as students' writing reflect on their own experiences. By reflecting on their experiences students are well able to organize the generated ideas according to the sequence of events. This may be the reason why students in the experimental group exposed to reflective strategy were better in idea organization than their counter parts in the control group. This finding also affirms that of Maiyaki (2011) who investigated the effects of the use of guided composition on junior secondary school ability to write coherent essays and found that many of the students could write coherent essays and were able to paragraph their essays well.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that reflective writing strategy did improve the SS2 students' skills in composition writing. That is, reflective writing strategy enhanced students' ability to generate and organize their ideas in coherent and meaningful manner when writing composition writing. The study will help students develop strong writing skills through the use of the reflective writing strategy. The consequence of this enhanced writing skills will engender improvement in their academic achievement and communication skills.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings from the study, the following are recommended:

1. Teachers of composition in various secondary schools should adopt the reflective writing strategy to help students in developing their writing skills.
2. Text book writers in English Language should incorporate reflective writing strategy to guide teachers on effective teaching of

essay writing skills.

3. Government should provide schools with the necessary materials and enabling environment by organizing of workshop, tutorials and seminars on reflective writing so teachers of English language would be well-grounded on its application in teaching in the various schools.

References

- Akinyeye, S. A. (2015). The importance of writing. In the Routledge *handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp 266-279). Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Amuseghan, U. & Tunde-Awe, C. (2016). Fostering creativity and self-expression: Exploring the benefits of writing to secondary school students. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 25(3), 112-130.
- Bamgbose, A. (2015). Developing critical thinking and communication skills: the significance of writing in secondary education. *Journal of Nigerian Educational Research*, 12(1), 78-95.
- Bamgbose, A. & Adeniyi, S. A. (2019). The role of outlining in improving the writing prowess of secondary school students. *Journal of Education and Training*, 3, 134-145.
- Black, P. E. (2012). Exploring pharmacists' views about the contribution that reflective learning can make to the development of professional practice. *Int J Pharm Pract.* 15(2), 149-155. [Google Scholar]
- Cheria S. E. (2017). Using reflective writing as a predictor of academic success in different assessment formats. *International Journal of Education*, 4; 181-196.
- Clifford, H. Y. & Onakpo-Fure, T. V. (2019). Effect of repeated draft method on senior secondary ii students' ability to write expository essay in public secondary schools in Pankshin LGA of Plateau state. *FCE Pankshin Journal of Education*, 3(1), 123-132.

- Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co.
- Ebibi, J. O. & Bako, V. N. (2021). Utilizing Assessment for Learning Strategy to Enhance Critical Comprehension and Retention among Senior Secondary Students: Implications for Gender. *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria*, 20 (1), 92 - 98.
- Ekhatu, I. E. (2021). The use of multimedia tools in english teaching in a globalized world *Journal of the Association of Language Educators (JIALE)* 2(2), 14-30.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112.
- Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. (2017). *Identifying the organization of writing processes*. In writing: A cognitive process (pp. 3-30). New Jersey: Routledge.
- Idowu, O. B. (2021). Assessment of internet based brainstorming strategy for teaching writingskill in a globalized world. *Journal of the Association of Language Educators (JIALE)*, 2(2), 103-110.
- Maiyaki, R. (2011). Effects on the use of guided composition on junior secondary school ability to write coherent essays. Unpublished M.Ed dissertation, University of Jos.
- Moon, J. (2004). *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice*. New Jersey: Routledge.
- Okonkwo, G. (2015). The impact of reflective practice on teacher professional development in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 15(2), 45-62.
- Okono, S, B (2020). Enhancing learning through writing.: the importance of writing skills for secondary school students. *Nigerian Journal of Education*, 15(2), 45-62.
- Nwoke, A. O. (2012). Rudiments of writing in second language. Unpublished lecture notes. Faculty of Education, University of Jos.
- Sati, J. (2016). Writing challenges of secondary school students in Pankshin LGA Plateau State. Unpublished M.Ed Thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Jos.
- Taggart, G. L., & Wilson, A. P. (2005). *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers: 44 Action Strategies for Informal and Formal Learning*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Udu, T. T., & Iorkighir, J. D. (2025). Use of reflective writing strategy to increase SS2 students' interest and achievement in composition writing in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue state. *Nigerian Journal of Literacy and English Education*, 2(3), 32-42 <https://nijolee.net.ng/index.php/home/article/view/79/45>.