

Influence of using Collaborative Writing Strategy on Learners' Performance in Functional Writing Skills in English Language in Public Secondary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Function writing is an essential life skill for learners. As learners reach a sufficient level of proficiency, they make maximum use of the skill to get excellent results on national exams, making them ready to enroll in postsecondary institutions to pursue further education. Developing and utilizing the skill pave the avenue for learners to demonstrate effective communication skills in the work environment. This article investigated influence of use of collaborative writing strategy on learners' performance in function writing skills in English in secondary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The study was conducted in Githunguri Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. Four public secondary schools were purposively selected for application of the strategy. The sample size comprised of 192 learners, 8 teachers, and 4 heads of English Language Department. The study employed the use of simple random technique to sample learners and utilized purposive technique for instructors and heads of English Language Department. Solomon four group design, a type of quasi-experimental research design, was employed to enable the researcher to apply pre-test and post-test to determine learners' performance in the skills, and assess their entry behaviours. The study used tests and questionnaires to gather data from learners, while forms of interview schedules were applied for gathering of data from teachers and the heads of the English Language Department. SPSS version 21.0 computer software was used for data analysis. Findings of the study show that use of collaborative writing skills has a greater influence on learners' performance in functional writing skills in English as the strategy improves learners' critical thinking, communication, retention, understanding, collaboration, vocabulary, and grammar and writing skills through rigorous interactions during group discussions.

Key words: influence, collaborative writing strategy, English language and functional writing skills

INTRODUCTION

Teachers utilize a variety of techniques to raise their learners' proficiency in English grammar and functional writing. Collaborative writing is an excellent technique that positively affects learners' involvement and teamwork during class discussions (Anggraini, Rozimela,&Anwar, 2020). The researchers discovered that several studies had been done to assess how beneficial collaborative writing is for the writing process. It was determined that collaborative writing helps learners develop their writing products in terms of vocabulary, organization, and content, but not in terms of writing accuracy.

Additional research (Tiwari,2023) on how learners perceived the use of collaborative writing shows that the collaborative writing strategy was able to alter some of the learners’ unproductive writing habits while also increasing learners’ motivation, vocabulary, and comprehension of the subject.

Furthermore, Ghufron and Hawa (2015) discovered that teaching writing through collaborative writing strategies is more effective than teaching writing through direct instruction, and that teaching writing through creative expression effectively interacts with teaching techniques. The use of small groups or pairs makes theoretical sense in light of the social constructivist view of the able member (expert), who, by offering the novice the right amount of support, pushes them beyond their present level of development and toward their potential level. Writing instructors are advised to concentrate on teaching and learning methodologies rather than only the transfer of writing principles. They suggest that collaborative narrative writing is a suitable method to employ in order to enhance learners’ writing skills (Muslim& Rohmah, 2022).

Use of collaborative writing strategy is highly recommended when teaching functional writing skills as the strategy has great impacts on learners’ writing fluency in both individually and collaboratively authored papers. Writing teachers are, therefore, advised to utilize the strategy for group writing exercises in their classrooms (Pham, 2021).

Objective of the study

The specific objective of this study was to investigate influence of using collaborative writing skills on learners’ performance in functional writing skills in English in secondary schools in Githunguri Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

Theoretical framework

The study was grounded on Collaborative Learning Theory, which is based on Lev Vygotsky’s ideas of More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The theory states that learners learn effectively from others who have better understanding of the lessons or higher ability levels than their peers when they are paired or group to complete a writing task. “Others” as used here could be their classmates, teachers, adults, or their parents. Also, learners learn from each other to complete activities that they are unable to achieve on their own.

Conceptual framework

The study discusses independent, intervening, and dependent variables.

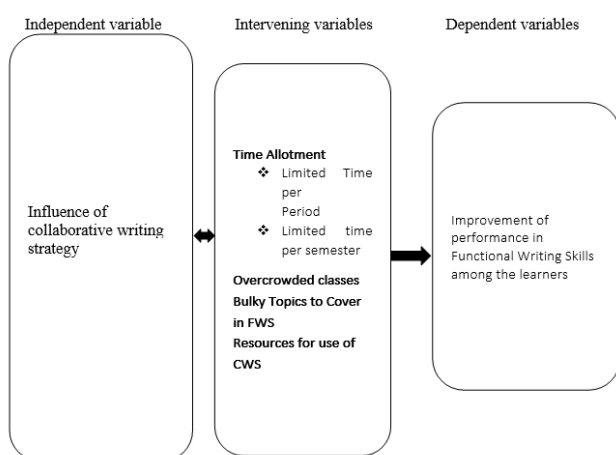


Figure 1.1: Diagrammatical representation of interaction among variables

Influence of use of collaborative writing strategy forms the independent variable of this study. The study found that learners imitate or model a lot of positive writing skills from classmates as they work in groups or pairs during class works or projects. Additionally, limited time, overcrowded class size, numerous topics to cover for emphasis on functional writing, and lack of sufficient standard resource on functional writing skills are the intervening variables. The intervening variables may impede learners' effective performance on functional writing skills if the variables are not addressed properly. Finally, the dependent variable of the study is improvement of learners' performance in FWS. This performance is influenced greatly by use of CWS (Chen, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study involved a review of related literature on the impact of using collaborative writing strategies on learners' performance when teaching functional writing skills. Writing collaboratively is a type of writing that involves multiple people. Surkiman (2016) discovered that the strategy has some benefits. In group discussions, it helps learners to become more socially adept; it also helps them to remember material and write better, concurrently developing their grammatical and structural skills. As they collaborate in groups and are given the opportunity to freely express their ideas when writing, learners become more motivated.

It has been discovered that collaborative prewriting assignments are an effective way to get learners to reflect on both their own and their peers' views. As the learners actively participate in a collaborative writing assignment, according to the study, collaborative prewriting conversations should be used to improve learners' language proficiency and writing abilities (Pospelov, 2021). Maharani (2019) did a study on the impact of employing collaborative writing on learners' process text writing skills. The study discovered that learners' procedural writing skills in the first semester of their twelfth grade at MA AL-Hikmah Bandar Lampung were significantly impacted by the use of collaborative writing techniques.

According to Pham's (2021) research, learners' writing fluency in both individually and collaboratively authored papers is significantly impacted by collaborative writing. Additionally, the study produced some frameworks that writing instructors might use to direct their learners in collaborative writing exercises. Learners' writing, cooperation, and communication skills all improve when they work in groups or pairs. According to study results, children write with a good mindset. To promote the collective participation of all learners and reduce noise, teachers should make sure they have active facilitation skills. Thus, language instructors can use this strategy to improve language instruction and learning (Veramuthu & Shah, 2020).

MATERIALS

To gather data from respondents, the researcher employed the use of tests (pre-test and post-test) and interview schedule. Pretest and posttest were used for learners, and interview schedule was applied to teachers and heads of English language departments. By pre-test and post-test, the research was able to assess learners' entry behavior on functional writing skills. Finally, use of interview schedule enabled the researcher to gather detailed information from teachers and HELDs on the influence of using CWS on learners' performance in functional writing skills.

METHOD

Research Design

A quasi-experimental research design was used for this study. According to Choueiry (2023), the design is similar to an experiment in which participants are assigned at random to one of four groups that differ in terms of whether they receive the therapy or not and whether each group's outcome of interest is measured once or twice. This study used the Solomon 4 group design's pre- and post-test procedures to evaluate

learners’ entry behaviour levels. Three learners from each of the four schools’ experimental and control groups were selected.

Targeted Population and Sample Size

A total of 10,894 respondents participated in the research data collection exercise, forming the sample size. The sample size was comprised of 38 public secondary schools, 38 Heads of English Language Departments, 76 teachers of English, and 10780 Form-3 learners.

The study utilized purposive random sampling and simple random sample to gather data from participants. 192 Form-3 learners were chosen at random using a simple sampling technique, and four schools, eight teachers, and four heads of English Language Department (HELD) were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The study’s sample size was 204:192 learners, 8 teachers, and 4 HELD. The number was justifiable within the alpha value table’s limit, resulting to the sample size of 1.7% (192 learners).

DISCUSSION

The findings of pre-test and post-test of this study as indicated in the given figures demonstrate how use of collaborative writing strategy increases learners’ performance in developing functional writing skills. The findings were, therefore, categorized: 1). Tests (pre-test and post-test) on topics taught for learners, and 2). Interview schedule for teachers and heads of English language department.

Test (Pre-Test and Post-Test) on Topics Taught for Learners:

i. Learners’ Performance in Functional Writing Skills

The table below discusses descriptive results on learners’ performance in FWS.

Table 1: Learners’ performance in functional writing skills

		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	pre test	88	4	16	10.14	2.25
	Post-test	88	6	17	12.14	2.024
Experimental group	pre-test	99	1	17	6.67	3.335
	Post-test	99	2	18	12.54	4.36

The control group’s mean scores were 10.14 for the pre-test and 12.14 for the post-test, according to Table 1. The results showed that the control group outperformed the experimental group in the post-test. The experimental group’s learners scored 6.67 on the pretest and 12.54 on the posttest, on average. As a result, the data show that in the post-test, the experimental group fared better than the control group. Accordingly, when compared to learners in the control group, who did not demonstrate any statistically significant improvement in the post-test, learners in the experimental group performed better on the exam because they were able to comprehend the topic better during group discussions.

Therefore, it can be said that the experimental group’s post-test results are consistent with those of Maharani (2019), who showed that using collaborative writing to improve vocabulary, content, organization, mechanics, and language has a positive impact on learners’ procedural text-writing abilities. Using CWS helps learners focus on certain subjects to develop in their writing projects and come up with writing ideas (Anggraini, Rozimela, & Anwar, 2020).

ii. Independent T-Test; Groups and learners’ performance (Pre-test)

Table 2 shows the independent t-tests results on differences in learners’ performance by groups

Table 2: Independent T-Test; Groups and learners’ performance (Pre-test)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F statistics	P value
Pre-test	Control Group	88	10.14	2.250	.240	3.241	0.000
	Experimental Group	99	6.67	3.335	.335		

Table 2 demonstrates how significantly the learner performance (pre-test) of the groups differs. The results are confirmed by F statistics of 3.241 and a 95% confidence interval p value of 0.0000.05. As a result, the control and experimental groups’ functional writing ability performance (pre-test) differed significantly on average. With a mean of 10.14, the control group outperformed the experimental group (mean of 6.67) by a significant margin. It can be inferred that learners in the control group outperformed learners in the experimental group in functional writing skills prior to the intervention.

This result demonstrates that the collaborative writing approach proved to be more successful than the conventional approach to teaching writing and reading, as found by Latifah and Ulfa (2020). According to study findings, using collaborative writing techniques allows learners to take an active role in writing assignments, share knowledge with one another, remember material, and use the skills to improve their own writing abilities.

iii. Independent T-Test; Groups and learners’ performance (Post-test)

Table 3 discusses the independent t-tests results on differences in learners’ performance by treatment groups.

Table 3: Independent T-Test; Groups and learners’ performance (Post-test)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F statistics	P value
Post-test	Control Group	88	12.14	2.024	.216	95.824	0.433
	Experimental Group	99	12.54	4.360	.438		

There was no discernible difference in the learners’ performance (post-test) between groups, according to Table 3’s findings. The results are displayed with a 95% confidence interval p value of 0.433 >0.05 and a F statistic of 95.824. This shows that the control and experimental groups’ functional writing skill performance (post-test) was not significantly different from one another. Nevertheless, the experimental group’s performance significantly increased after the intervention (learning through collaborative writing techniques). This result is in line with Pham’s research (2021), which emphasizes how CWS gives learners the opportunity to discuss and debate ideas regarding sentence structure, appropriate punctuation, vocabulary, paragraph writing, and idea organization. The study suggests that in order to identify typical writing faults, teachers should take on the role of facilitators in collaborative writing classes. Unlike the learners in the control group, who simply copied sentences from job application writing textbooks, the experimental group brainstormed and produced a stronger job application letter through group discussions.

Interview Schedule for Teachers and Heads of English Language Department.

Teachers and heads of English language departments who participated in the research exercise lauded how use of collaborative boosts learners’ performance in achieving functional writing skills.

a. Results from teachers' interview on how use of CWS influence learners' performance in functional writing skills

Teachers shared their opinions on how using a collaborative writing technique helps learners grasp the importance of developing functional writing abilities. Latifah and Ulfa (2020) found that instructors' utilization of collaborative writing strategies helps learners to gain confidence, understanding, and communication skills during discussions and presentations. The study also established that learners internalize writing formats more easily as they relate what the teacher is teaching to their own experiences, exchange of ideas, and assist one another on layouts of writing tasks.

b. Results from the interview of HELD on how use of CWS influence learners' performance in functional writing skills

The heads of the English language departments listed some effects that instructors' application of collaborative writing strategies has on learners' success in acquiring the necessary skills: Enhancing learners' listening, presenting, memory, comprehension, and communication abilities; ii). increasing learners' self-assurance; and iii) enhancing their grammar and vocabulary. According to research, collaborative writing improves learning effectiveness, integrates cognitive and motivational collaboration strategies, and raises learners' accomplishments and self-esteem (Prabowo, 2019).

ANALYSIS

Pre-tests and post-tests were utilized to gather data from learners, while teachers and the heads of the English Language Department were interviewed using an interview schedule. SPSS version 21.0 computer software was utilized to analyze data gathered.

FINDINGS

According to the study's findings, using a collaborative writing technique helps learners improve their grammar, vocabulary, writing, critical thinking, and communication abilities, which makes it easier for them to complete writing assignments in groups properly. The outcome supported the findings of Pham's (2021) study, which indicates that group writing exercises help learners talk about vocabulary, sentence construction, punctuation, paragraph writing, and concept organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's findings, the Ministry of Education should hold regular training sessions and workshops to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the collaborative writing strategy when teaching functional writing skills.

CONCLUSION

The major concern in this study was to investigate the influence of utilization of collaborative practices on learners' performance in functional writing skills in public secondary schools in Kiambu County's Githunguri Sub-County. The findings of the study show that use of CWS has a great influence on learners' performance as it increases learners' understanding, retention, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills as they interact freely during group works on writing tasks (Latifah & Ulfa, 2020). The strategy also enhances learners' abilities to translate information from their mother tongues to second language, English.

As evident in this study, the experimental group outperformed the control group when the strategy was

applied. In addition, both English teachers and heads of English language department viewed the strategy as one of the significant strategies that teachers need to utilize to increase learners' performance in learning functional writing skills. Finally, further research on the strategy could look in the direction of investigating management of learners' behavior when applying the method.

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