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Effect of Tumblr Online Strategy on Written English Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in North–West Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

The poor writing skills of senior secondary school students in the North–West Zone of Nigeria have been a major concern for this study. Based on this, the study investigated the effect of Tumblr Online Strategy on the written performance of senior secondary school students in the North–West Zone of Nigeria. The study set and answered a research question. A null hypothesis was formulated and tested. The study employed a quasi-experimental design. A total population of three hundred and forty four thousand, one hundred and three (344,103) of SS2 students and two hundred and twenty-five (225) computers in one thousand, seven hundred and one (1,701) public secondary schools in the entire zone considered for the study. However, a sampling population of one hundred and eighty (180) students were purposely selected from six secondary schools with ICT facilities from Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto States, divided into experimental and control groups for the study. Essay questions were used as the instrument for data collection. For reliability and validity, the instruments were presented to the experts for validation. Similarly, the instruments were pilot tested. The investigation involved a pre-test and a post-test. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The study's findings showed that exposure to Tumblr Online Strategy led to significant improvements in the written English performance of students in the experimental group, compared to the control group. The study recommends that Tumblr Online Strategy can be integrated into the teaching of English in our secondary schools for better performance of SSS students in their written English performance. Similarly, it appeals to the Government to fund digitalization of secondary education by providing computers, internet facilities and provision of stable electricity. It concludes that teachers in secondary schools can be sponsored for training on digital technology.

1. Introduction

Writing is an extraordinarily complex activity that incorporates thought, processes, feelings and social interactions. It is also an act of creatively and imaginatively expressing ideas, emotions, and opinions using correct words. In other words, writing is an important communicative skill. It is observed that writing is both complex and crucial in the academic sphere, particularly in language teaching and learning.

English is generally regarded as the world's most important language. It is reported that over 1.75 billion people worldwide use English in their daily communication. English writing is crucial in academia as well as in politics, business, and economic life. In Nigeria, the English language is both a core subject and the language of instruction in the Nigerian Secondary School system and at all education levels in general. It occupies the centre stage. It has been assigned the status of a prestige language by default because it is the language of mass media, law, education, administration and the official language in the country. The importance of the English Language in our education system is further underlined by the fact that a minimum credit pass in English in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) is required for a candidate to gain admission to tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Therefore, teaching and learning the English language should receive considerable attention to support the continuous development of the language in our education system, particularly at the Senior Secondary level, which is a preparatory stage for students before gaining admission into universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Many research studies in the field of second language teaching and learning have emphasized the importance of writing in the academic circle. Olaofe (2013) asserts that writing is an important skill that a language learner must master proficiently. It is incontrovertible that an essay is a vehicle for expressing a person's inner thoughts and deeply felt emotions, and all educated people are expected to be able to do this. Human beings have used essays for generations to express their views on a subject or to present their perspective on a topic. Anyone who wants to do likewise is expected to write a concise essay without losing facts, detailed without being boring, and appealing without being unserious.

From the above, writing skill is one of the most effective tools of communication. It helps develop imaginative and critical thinking abilities, and it is often a sign of a well-educated person. It involves the ability to write effectively and creatively. ORELT, (2012) observes that writing is more permanent than speaking and requires more careful organization. It is also less spontaneous because it involves a process, from organizing ideas in the mind to setting the final document on paper (ORELT, 2012).

Studies have shown that developing writing skills among ESL learners has been a major concern for teachers and linguists. In all the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), writing poses some challenges to many English as Second language users, such as students, academics, government officials and managers of organizations. They often encounter constraints in their bid to write texts that are free from spelling and grammatical mistakes.

To identify the factors responsible for students' inability to write effectively and the major problems associated with the poor performance of ESL learners in English writing, several studies have been conducted to investigate the reasons behind these issues. The research

findings in the field have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the major problems associated with mastering English in Nigeria can be attributed mainly to pedagogical rather than innate incompetencies.

Due to advancements in technology, numerous research studies have demonstrated that incorporating new technology into the classroom is crucial for providing students with opportunities to learn how to operate in the information or digital age. The current writers are inspired by the proposition that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) provides second language learners with the opportunity to enhance their learning experience in the four language skills, including speaking, reading, listening, and writing. We are in a global and digital age, where the use of computers, mobile phones and social media is widely spread. Integrating CALL into English writing may have a positive effect on the performance of ESL learners in this most complex skill among the four. The use of technology has the possibility to enrich L2 teaching/learning by keeping the quality of instruction with a minimum amount of teacher-student contact and not negatively affecting the learning objectives.

Based on the above assertion, the current study was particularly designed to investigate the effect of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the written English performance of Senior Secondary School Students, using "Tumblr" online strategy. The current researcher, relying on research evidence from numerous studies in the field previously mentioned, believes that there are several reasons for students' weakness in writing skills. The weakness, according to the studies, is largely traced to the technique of teaching or pedagogical rather than innate incompetence. Many research findings, such as those (Jones 2006, Shih 2011, Olaofe 2013, Stanley 2013, Kwasau 2015 (a), Mohammed & Hamisu 2015, Alhawiti 2015 and Hamisu 2017) in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), have supported alternative teaching strategies and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is one of such strategies.

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Finally, this study was motivated by the Kano State Government's decision to establish Computer Based Training (CBT) Centres in secondary schools in 44 Local Government Areas of the State. The Commissioner of Science, Technology and Innovation, Mohammed Tajo Uthman, says, "examinations were now going to be computer – based, so it's our duty to make sure that our students in Secondary Schools are familiar with computers because currently a lot of them don't even know what keyboard is" ((Daily Trust, 23 January, 2024).

2. Statement of the Problem
Admission into undergraduate programs in universities and other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria is based on a minimum credit pass in English and Mathematics in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Perennial poor performance in written English of Senior Secondary School Students constitutes a great concern for stakeholders in the education sector. To identify the factors responsible for students' inability to write effectively and the major problems associated with the poor performance of ESL learners in English writing, several studies have been conducted to investigate the reasons behind the issue. The research findings in the field have proven, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the major problems associated with mastering English in Nigeria can be largely attributed to pedagogical rather than innate incompetencies.

Several studies on language education have consistently shown that the performance of students in this aspect of language teaching and learning is abysmally low (Olaofe, 1997, 2013; Muodumugu & Unwaha, 2014; Kwasau, 2015(a); & Mohammed & Hamisu, 2015). Similarly, the reports of the Chief Examiners of the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and other examination bodies have raised concern on the poor achievement of secondary school students' essay writing (see WAEC Chief Examiner's Report, 2018; 2015; 2014; &2013). Similarly, numerous research studies, such as Jafarian, Soori, & Kafipour (2012) and Adejuma & Abioye (2016), have found that out of all four English language skills, writing has become a significant issue faced by many EFL learners. Adejuma and Abioye (2016) observe that there is evidence that Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been effective in promoting three skills: listening, speaking, and reading, while substantial gains have not been made in writing skills. In the same vein, Jafarian *et al.* (2012) posit that "as much the earlier studies have focused on the effectiveness of CALL, studies on the effect of CALL on the students' writing achievement seem inadequate". Hence, this study will go a long way to fill the gap. Some studies suggest that technologies like the Internet can provide access to large quantities of authentic input material and simultaneously offer practice opportunities.

This study was purposely designed to investigate the effect of Tumblr Online Strategy on the written English performance of senior secondary students in the North-West Zone, Nigeria.

Tumblr is a microblogging platform and social networking website founded by David Karp. The service allows users to post multimedia and other content to a short-form blog (Kurniati, 2015). In other words, Yunus and Salehi (2012) Tumblr, which was founded in 2007, is a microblogging website that is becoming increasingly popular in the Web 2.0 world. This platform allows users to post text, images, videos, links, quotes and audio to their "tumblelog", a short-form blog. Tumblr offers users the easiest and fastest way to blog, whether they want to publish text, audio, or video content (Matteson, 2011).

3. Research Question
This study was designed to address the following question:
1) What are the effects of Tumblr Online Strategy on the written English performance of SSS Students in the North–West Zone?

4. Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was postulated to guide the conduct of this study:
1)   There is no significant difference between the written English performances of the students in the North–West Zone who were exposed to Tumblr Online Strategy.

5. Materials and Methods
The study employed a quasi–experimental design involving a pre-test and post–test. According to Rahmanita and Cahyono (2018), a quasi-experimental design is the most suitable research design for investigating the cause-and-effect relationship among research variables. The population of this study encompasses all SS2 students of public senior secondary schools in the North–West Zone, Nigeria. The Zone comprises seven states: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. The total number of Three Hundred and Forty Four Thousand, One Hundred and Three (344,103) of SS2 students from One Thousand, Seven Hundred and One (1,701) public secondary schools in the entire Zone

constitute the total population of the study. Three states from the zone were randomly selected for the study. Two secondary schools from each state and 30 students were purposely and randomly selected from each secondary school from the three selected states to serve as experimental and control groups, respectively. The total number of 180 students was purposely and randomly selected as the sample size of the study. Table 1 shows the distribution of the study population.

Table 1. Distribution of the Population of the Study

S/N	States	No of Public Secondary Schools	SSSII		TOTAL
			Male	Female	
1	Jigawa	153	15,360	10,451	**25,811**
2	Kaduna	370	29,057	33,057	**62,114**
3	Kano	712	56,509	47,096	**103,605**
4	Katsina	246	41,196	28,736	**69,932**
5	Kebbi	168	20,889	8,992	**29,881**
6	Sokoto	132	18,920	11,096	**30,016**
7	Zamfara	153	15,996	6,748	**22,744**
	Total	1,934	197,927	146,176	**344,103**

* Source: Annual School Census Report, 2019/2020. (November 2020)

The instruments for data collection included essay questions, Online Resources, and a Tumblr Online Strategy. Tumblr is an online interactive platform specifically selected by the researchers for the purpose of improving the participants' essay writing skills. The study used two groups, experimental and control. The Experimental Group (EG) was exposed to Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) through the "Tumblr Online Strategy," and the Control Group (CG) was exposed to a traditional or conventional method.

The construct, criterion, and content validity of the instruments were determined by specialists in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. At the same time, the software and other online materials used for the CALL treatment were validated by an expert from the Institute of Computing, Information and Communication Technology, ABU, Zaria. The expert validated the software and other online contents or materials deployed in the study. For the reliability of the instrument, it was pilot-tested and administered at Sarduana Memorial College, Kaduna, to a sizable number (n = 10) of SS2 students. A reliability of 0.85 was obtained. Therefore, the pilot

study established and confirmed the suitability, effectiveness and reliability of the instrument.

The treatment consisted of a series of class presentations on writing. The control and experimental groups were subjected to the test, i.e. essay writing. The test consists of a pretest and a posttest. After the pre-test, the Experimental Group went through the treatment, while the control groups were allowed to go through the conventional classroom instruction, i.e. they received their own instruction through the traditional method of teaching, whereby chalk, chalkboard, pen and paper were mostly employed. The experimental control group received their treatment through the computer and digital applications. The treatment involved brainstorming, pre-writing, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, online collaborative writing, editing and online publishing. The Experimental groups were subjected to computer-assisted instruction in writing skills via Tumblr Online Strategy.

Tumblr was employed during the pre-writing task or writing process. Under this programme, students were given assignments, such as a topic on essay writing. They were asked to draft the essay either individually or in a group, depending on the type of assignment given to them. Afterwards, the written pieces would be posted on their group's Tumblr account. The posted or drafted piece received comments from other groups, while the other groups posted their written works and received comments from other group members. Similarly, the control group was involved in collaborative writing. Collaborative learning is a learner-driven approach that fosters a social and interactive classroom ecosystem aimed at enhancing communication, negotiation, feedback, and problem–solving skills among students. Through collaborative writing, the students came to realize that writing was a process; therefore, they collaborated and worked together to achieve a common goal, which also increases their sense of mastery of what is often a complex and challenging task. Therefore, this interactive communication enabled them to be actively engaged in the writing process and improve their writing skill.

The control and experimental groups were subjected to the test immediately after the treatment, which lasted for 12 weeks. The administration of the treatment and data collection was carried out from February 2024 to May 2024 during the second term through the third term of the 2023/2024 Academic Session.

6. Data Analysis
Appropriate statistical tests were used to test the data collected. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested at alpha 0.05 level of significance.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Research Question
What are the effects of Tumblr Online Strategy on the written English performance of SSS Students in the North–West Zone?

Table 2.0 below will answer this research question.

Table 2.0: Summary of Test Results for Different Variables in Overall Essay Post-Test by Group

Variable	Control		Experimental	
	Mean	Std.dev	Mean	Std.dev
Content	6.38	1.09	6.73	0.95
Expression	10.97	2.00	12.22	4.07
Organization	5.26	0.77	6.81	0.90
Mechanical Accuracy	5.17	0.81	6.42	1.17
Total	27.77	3.39	32.19	5.38

Source: Field Survey, 2024

After the intervention, the post-test results (Table 2.0) reveal an improvement in the experimental group's performance across all variables. In Content, the experimental group had a mean of 6.73 (SD = 0.95), a notable increase from the pre-test mean of 6.19, while the control group's mean rose to 6.38 (SD = 1.09) from 5.91. Expression showed a larger gap between the groups in the post-test, with the experimental group improving further to 12.22 (SD = 4.07), compared to the control group's mean of 10.97 (SD = 2.00). Similarly, in Organization, the experimental group's mean increased to 6.81 (SD = 0.90) from 5.91, whereas the control group's mean increased to 5.26 (SD = 0.77) from 5.06. The Mechanical Accuracy of the experimental group also showed improvement, with a post-test mean of 6.42 (SD = 1.17), compared to 5.17 (SD = 0.81) for the control group. The experimental group's total score increased to 32.19 (SD = 5.38), a more substantial increase compared to the control group's total of 27.77 (SD = 3.39), suggesting a greater benefit from the Tumblr Online Strategy intervention.

7.2 Null Hypothesis Testing
The following null hypothesis was postulated and tested using inferential statistics of an independent samples t-test at the level of significance.

Table 3: Summary of Independent Samples t-test on Written English Performance of the SSS Students in the North–West Zone.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	df	p
Control	90	7.06	.987	.104			
Experimental	90	6.73	.946	.100	2.236	178	.027
Total	180						

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 presents the analysis of the independent samples t-test on the written English performance of the students in the North–West Zone. The result revealed that the null hypothesis, which stated no significant difference, was rejected. That is, there was a significant difference in the written English performance of students in the North–West Zone who were exposed to the Tumblr Online Strategy and those who were not. Therefore, the Tumblr Online Strategy is more effective than the conventional teaching method; the results show a statistically significant difference.

8. Discussion

This study investigated the effect of Tumblr Online Strategy on the performance of SSS students in the North–West Zone of Nigeria. The findings of the study demonstrated clearly that the integration of digital applications in the teaching of English writing has improved significantly the performance of SSS students in the zone. The study clearly provides evidence of the effectiveness of Tumblr's Online Strategy in comparison to traditional methods of teaching writing skills. The experimental group performed better than the control group; the effects of the Tumblr online strategy influenced their performance.

The results from the statistical tests reveal a clear and significant difference between the experimental and control groups. These findings strongly suggest that Tumblr Online Strategy is more effective than traditional teaching methods in improving written English skills among SSS students in the North-West Zone.

Regarding the hypothesis, the data provides strong evidence that there are significant differences between the application of Tumblr Online Strategy and traditional methods in teaching writing skills to SSS students in the North-West Zone. A possible reason for the findings might be the use of the Tumblr Online Strategy, which significantly influenced the learners' academic writing skills by changing the ways they drafted, planned, edited, and revised their writing. Through the Tumblr Online Strategy, the EFL learners were exposed to new ways of editing their peers' assignments. The activity undoubtedly exposed them to the review of their writing, looking critically at their structures, grammatical correctness of their draft, expression, as well as mechanical accuracy of their writing.

9. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of Tumblr Online Strategy on the written English performance of SSS students in the North–West Zone of Nigeria. The study's findings demonstrate significant differences in the written English performance of SSS students who were exposed to the Tumblr Online Strategy compared to those who were not.

10. Recommendations

a. The study recommends that Tumblr Online Strategy be integrated into the teaching and learning of English writing in our secondary schools;

b. Teachers in secondary schools should be sponsored for training on digital technology;

c. Government at all three tier levels to endeavour to fund digitalization of our education, through the provision of computers, internet facilities, computer laboratories, as well as the provision of stable light in our secondary schools.

d. Nigerian teacher training institutions should establish Digital Multimedia Laboratories as a human development centre to prepare teachers for the use of emerging digital media as instructional tools to be used in classroom instruction.

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