

NEEDS ANALYSIS OF SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS' WRITING IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN JOS EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study identifies the composition writing needs of Senior Secondary School Students (SSII) in Jos East Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprised of all (589) senior secondary two students in ten public schools in Jos East Local Government Area, Plateau State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two senior secondary two (SSII) composed of one hundred and twenty (120) students as sample for the study. Two (2) research questions were raised and answered in this study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha, and data collected were analysed using simple percentage. The finding revealed that students have the following as present writing needs: pre-writing activities (brainstorming, freewriting, questioning, outlining, mind mapping, journaling, listing), writing different types of essays (descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository, writing informal letter. The students also consider writing minutes of meeting, reports, memoranda, writing different types of applications for different purposes; Curriculum Vitae, notices, applications, congratulatory, invitation, memoranda, minutes of meetings, speeches, publishing composition and post writing activities as future writing needs. These identified needs have implication for learning as the students need to acquire the skills if they are to write effective, purposeful and meaningful communication. Based on the findings, some recommendations have been made to help the students gain the skills they need for effective composition writing.

Keywords: Needs, Analysis, Writing.

Introduction

Writing is an effective and crucial language skill whose importance cuts cross board. It is a productive skill that helps students to develop critical thinking, analyzing information, conveying ideas, thoughts, and opinions clearly and persuasively. Writing encourage students to express themselves creatively, exploring different styles, tones and perspectives (Gomwalk Marshal, and Enighe, 2023). In other words, composition writing helps students to process their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, promoting self – awareness and personal growth which is one of the 21st Century skills needed for globalization. Composition writing requires the development of ideas to make a comprehensive whole piece of writing in English Language.

In this paper, composition writing is a process of building longer units of writing from smaller elements (Gowon and Yashim, 2022). These smaller units of writing include different types of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and into paragraphs.

Composition writing is a complex activity that involve a number of skills to evoke the right information in the target audience. These skills include pre-writing activities (Brainstorming is generating list of ideas related to the topic to be written, freewriting according is the ability of the students to write freely without stopping or worrying about grammar, outlining is also creating a structure or framework for the writing, gather information and resources, writing down thoughts and reflection also making a list of key points or ideas and asking questions about the topic to clarify understanding (Gray, 2016).

Furthermore, writing different types of composition and letters according to Lauer and Pentak (2017); Descriptive composition which vividly describes a person place, object or experience or story. Expository composition; explains or describes a topic providing information. Argumentative or persuasive composition argues for or against a point or position aiming to convince the reader. Narrative composition refers to a story, account, or recounting of events, experiences, or actions that are connected and make sense. (Smith ,2020). In addition, writing different types of letters: (formal: refers to official, professional and business – related correspondence. Informal letters refer to casual and friendly letters to acquaintances or family, while business letter; points to correspondence for commercial purposes, applications, accompanied by a resume or curriculum vitae applying for a job or position, cover letter: introducing a resume or curriculum vitae, highlighting qualifications. Other types include apology, condolence, complain, request, invitation, resignation, reference, congratulatory, get-well and others.

It is expedient to make both teachers of English and students to be aware of other need of writing composition as it defines communication, written words, leave an account of a science when spoken; communication is possible. In this regard a need analysis should be made to identify the peculiar needs of the students in composition writing class to determine if an existing course adequately addresses the need of potential students, which the students are mostly in need of training in particular composition writing skills, to identify a change of direction that the students in a reference group feel is important, to identify a gap between what they are able to do, what they need to be able to do, and to gather information about a particular problem they are experiencing.

The concept of needs in composition writing, is understanding the audience and their requirements. These requirements include: The audience needs, that is what the students need, what is the purpose of the student writers, what is the context in which the audience will need what the writer has written, what is the appropriate tone for the audience and purpose, the content relevance and usefulness to the audience in composition writing?

The concept of needs is a crucial concept in understanding the audience's perspective and creating effective writing. According to various composition writing Scholars, “need” can be defined as: A lack or deficiency that the writer seeks to fulfill (Lunsford, 2020). Another writer

defines “need” as a requirement or expectation the audience has (Hacker, 2020). Also, (Sommers, 2016) defines “need” as a gap in knowledge, understanding, or perspective that the writer seeks to bridge.

That is to say that “need” is summarily describe as a gap or lack in the audience's knowledge, understanding, experience or perspective that the writer aims to fill or address through their writing.

Needs also includes students' rights, its school responsibility to take into account the cultural, political and personal characteristics of students in order to plan activities and objectives that are realistic and purposeful. Linse as cited in Milaham (2018) states that need includes perceived and present needs, potential and unrecognized needs. This means that needs analysis may take place prior to, during and after a composition language programme.

Bitrus (2016) buttresses that composition writing can be applied to determine that writers' abilities in other aspects of learning. This is because composition writing requires cognitive ability such that students who exhibit a good ability in it do better in English and other discipline areas.

Thus, the students' ability to write good composition in English is correlated with their abilities to excel in other aspects of learning (Ibibi, Bako and Dung, 2020). Despite the importance of composition writing across the curriculum and in all spheres of life, senior secondary school students exhibit lack of ability to write good composition. Most students find writing skill challenging as their composition writing are fraught with incompetence skill to cope with the varieties of writing task inherent in daily life, this also envisage the students to express or communicate their thoughts and ideas using prints to get across other people. For instance, students would need writing skills to take minutes, or write reports and most importantly write and pass examinations. Anyebe (2017) observes that an average Nigerian student is writing at less than mastery. The author further maintains that senior secondary students not only lack the competence of engaging in cognitive or mental process of writing such as planning, writing and editing of written product, but also grapple with even the basic writing skills such as spellings, sentence construction, capitalization, punctuation and handwriting, which results to failure in both internal, external and international examinations. Commenting on the students' composition writings, the WAEC Chief Examiners' Report (2021 and 2022) equally state that, students' composition writing lack adequate content, (inappropriate vocabulary, and are fraught with incorrect sentences, punctuations and are dotted with too many grammatical errors, which perhaps attributes to the failure rate in composition writing and English Language in general.

The causes of students' failure in Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) cannot be readily traced to a particular deficiency, however a study by Ezeokoli and Igubor (2016) revealed that most of the problems faced by the students are related to ineffective methodologies as many teachers teaching composition complained that the teaching of composition writing is due to many factors, out the major ones, it is the most difficult skill to inculcate in the students which consequently exerts detrimental effects on them. Such as fear, and lack of motivation. Similarly, Walter as cited in Ojo (2014) laments that teaching the students to write is probably the least understood and least reached in the traditional EFL curriculum. The author stresses that writing is the last and perhaps the most difficult skill students and teachers often confused about how to approach composition writing instruction.

Statistics have indicated that from 2019-2021, there has been a decline in students' performance in composition writing and in English language in general, particularly in plateau state, students' performance in senior school certificate examination (SSCE) conducted by WAEC, revealed the rate of students' failure in English. Report from Plateau State Ministry of Education shows the rate of students who could not have a credit pass in English; for 2019 as 64%, 2021 is 41.4% and in 2022 is 40 %. Commenting on students' failure in English composition

writing specifically 2019 avers that most students are not familiar with writing convention as their composition fail to show a clear understanding of topic, and their language is marred with wrong grammar and incorrect vocabulary and poorly constructed sentences. Other reasons include, no clear goals, some students prefer other forms of expression; like oral or visual communication, non-native language speakers may struggle with writing in a second language.

From the foregoing, composition writing deals with the cognitive nature of man. It involves the active participation of the writer who is involve in solving the mind problems through constructing, planning, organising, and searching memory to produce materials. It is in realisation of these that the researchers investigate the writing needs of senior secondary students in Jos East LGA with a view to proffer solution on the writing needs to write composition effectively while in school and after graduation from school. The fact that research effort aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning English language composition writing in SSII in Jos East LGA in particular and in Nigerian schools at large is important and timely. The justification of this study is the fact that students' performance in the English language and specifically is far from being satisfactory.

Purpose

The aim of the study was to investigate the needs analysis of senior secondary students two (SS11) in Jos East LGA. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify SS11 students' present composition writing needs.
2. Identify SS11 students' future composition writing needs

Researcher Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the SS11 students' present composition writing needs?
2. What are the SSII students' future composition writing needs?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design the design was used because it allows selection of a representative portion of the entire population of the study area.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was 578 students in all the ten (10) public senior secondary schools in Jos East LGA Plateau State, Nigeria. A random Sampling technique was utilized to select five (5) Public Senior Secondary schools which composed of 200 in Jos East Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

Research Instrument

The Instrument used in the study was a self-developed questionnaire for Collection of data tagged "Students Composition Writing Needs Questionnaire" (SCWNQ).

Validity and Reliability

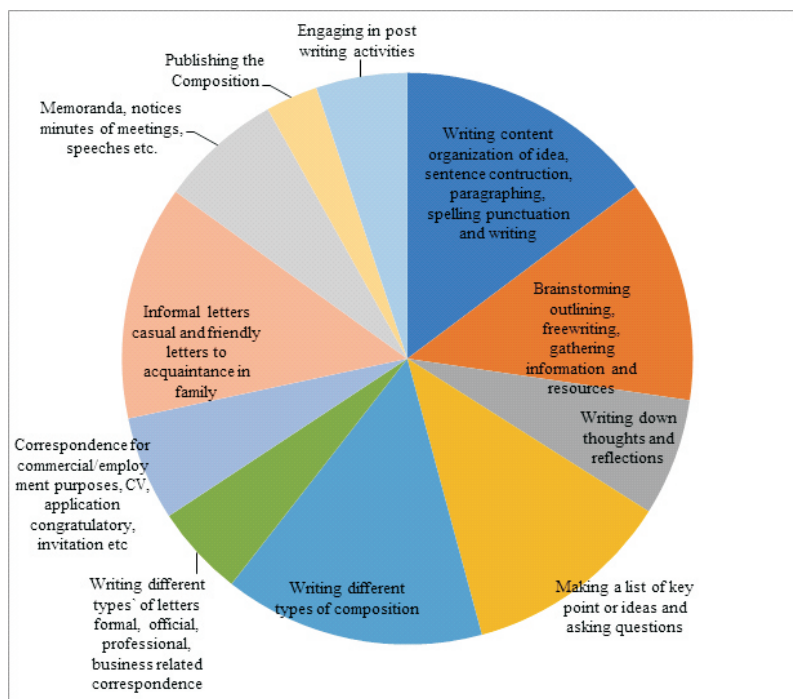
To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the Students' Composition Writing Needs Questionnaire (SCWNQ) was subjected to scrutiny by experts in English Education of the University of Jos. The experts were required to assess and judge the instructions and items in term of usefulness and appropriateness. Also , the expert were required to assess the suitability of the introductory statement, adequacy of introduction, the ease of wordings, and the relevance of the items (present and future writing needs).Content Validity ensured that the statements of the item

fairly represents the content it purposed to measure. While the face validity ensured that the instrument was attractive, appealing and well arranged. The experts made some suggestions/corrections which made the material fit and satisfactory for use.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a test retest and the result obtained were correlation using the Pearson product moment correction coefficient and the index obtained by this method was 0.69. This shows that the correction is high. This is because any correction that falls between 0.06 to 0.80 is regarded as high. Therefore, the validity and reliability of the instrument can be claimed as suggested by Kathari and Garg (2014); which implies that Students' Writing Needs Questionnaire was reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to analysed or compute findings on Senor Secondary School two (SS II) present and future writing Needs. All the responses to each of the questions were tailed according to Present and Future Writing Needs. The formula used is:



The pie chart above shows the highest percentage of the senior students' current writing needs; writing content, organization of idea, sentence construction, paragraphing, spelling, punctuation and writing (100%), writing different types of composition (90%), informal letters; casual and friendly letters to acquaintance or family (90%), brainstorming; outlining, freewriting, gathering information, and resources (85%), making a list of key points or ideas and asking questions about the topic (80%). While, the following current writing needs show the lowest percentage, writing down thoughts and reflection (45%), writing different types of letters official, professional and business relation correspondence (35%) writing different types of correspondence for employment purposes; curriculum vitae, applications, congratulatory, invitation (34%), memoranda, notices, minutes of meetings, speeches (20%), publishing the composition and students need to engage in post writing activities (15%).

Research question 2 – what are the SSII students' future composition writing needs?

Figure 2: Showing the Future Composition writing Needs of SSII Students.

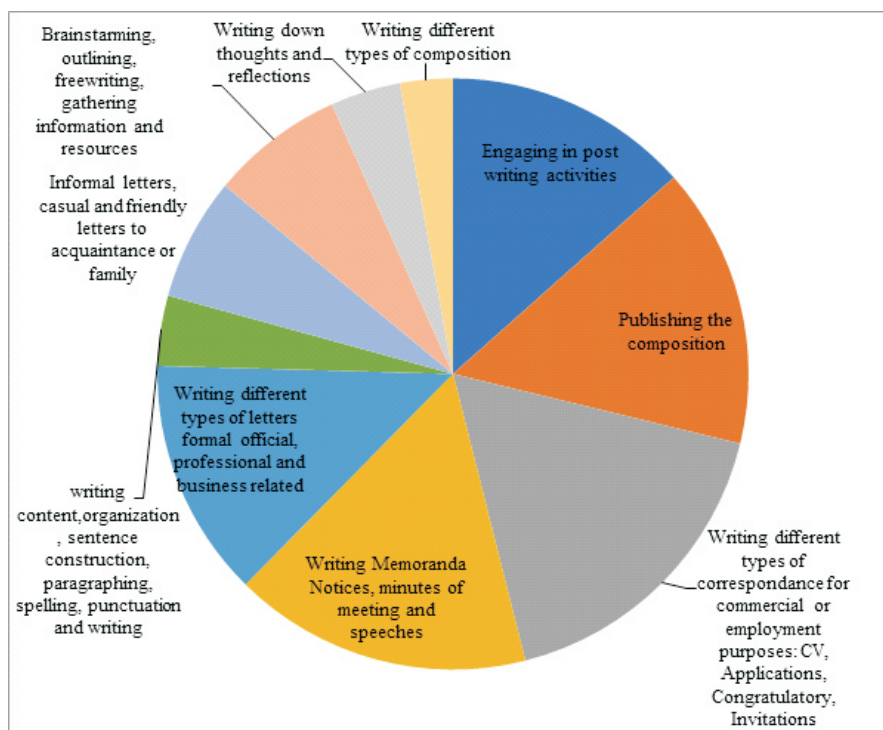


Figure two (2) above indicates that all the item are students' future composition writing needs of SSII students.

The pie chart above shows that all the items are students' future writing needs. The chart shows that students' response to these needs differ. For instance, students need to write different types of correspondence for commercial or employment purpose; CV, applications, congratulatory, invitations (90%) writing memoranda, notes, minutes of meetings, speeches (85%), publishing the composition written (80%), writing different types of letters; formal, official, professional business related correspondence (68%) have the highest percentage. while the following future composition writing needs; brainstorming, outlining, free writing, gathering information and resources, (38%), informal letters, casual and friendly letters to acquaintance or family (35%), writing content, idea organization, sentence construction, paragraphing, spelling, punctuation and writing (20%) writing down thoughts and reflections and writing different types of composition (15%). These responses by the students were the lowest.

Discussion

Data on table one (1) reveals the current composition writing needs of the students in SSII in Jos East LGA, Plateau State, these needs include; writing different types of composition, writing content, organisation of ideas, sentence construction, paragraphing, spelling and punctuation. This finding reveals that most of the skills require immediate attention that is students need these skills while in school which will enable them perform better in writing test, examination for assessment of knowledge, promotion, preparation for final examination, university admission, career guidance and standardization. As sommer John (2018) agrees with the finding of the study and stated the importance of regular writing practice which include; feedback, and guidance in developing writing skills. Also, it is plausible that this finding is connected with previous study similar to Howard (2019) who concurs that all writing needs are paramount, making the students effective composer through regular writing practice by carrying out class work and assignments.

On the other hand, the following current needs were scored low by the students; writing memoranda, notes, minutes of meeting, specific writing different types of correspondence for commercial, employment purposes, CV, applications, congratulatory invitations, writing different types of letters; formal official, professional, business related correspondence, engaging post writing activities and having the composition written published.

Table two (2) shows that the future composition writing needs of the students in SS II in Jos East. These skills include pointing different types of correspondence for commercial or employment purposes: CV, application, congratulatory invitations, writing memorandum, notices, minutes of meeting and speeches, publishing composition of letters, formal, professional and business related. This could be as a result of students' poor background experience in composition writing which does not motivate or encourage these writing composition skills, while students are in school. The finding was buttressed by Adler – Kassner (2018) and Inoue (2019) who share the same view, that students' learning needs are brought by necessities which the learner needs to know to function effectively.

However, on table two (2) that result also indicated that the following future composition writing needs of SS II students in Jos East LGA; brainstorming, outlining, free writing, gathering information and resources, writing content, idea organisation, sentence construction, paragraphing, spelling and punctuations, writing down thoughts and reflections and writing different types of composition were recorded low. The result of this study did not however agree with Nwogu and Nwoke as cited in Anyebe (2019) and John (2019) encourage that senior secondary students should be taught composition writing from known to unknown (transitional). This finding could be attributed to the fact that the teachers' traditional pedagogical approaches (Adler-Kassner, 2018) or lack of students centered approach (Weaver, 2018) who seem to focus on transmitting knowledge through lectures, rather than encouraging student-centered learning. This teaching is exhibited by dominating class time with teacher talk rather than encouraging students' participation and discussion.

The author also agreed that students are unprepared and uninterested to work because the teachers do not address the students diverse needs (present and future) which further confused the students in prioritising these needs, whether current, that is at school, or future, that is at work or business place.

Conclusion

Composition writing is a vital and critical component in teaching and learning English language whether in school or out of school (on the job). Students' intellect or learning are assessed or evaluated across disciplines, as it is an essential skill in many subjects. This study has shown that SS II students have current (school) and future (at work or business) writing needs which affects their composition writing both in school (present) or on the job (in future). There is the need for the teachers of English to tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs and abilities of SS II students to ensure that the audience needs, and purpose are met as stipulated in communication through composition writing.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made as a result of the findings of this study;

1. Teachers of English Language at the senior secondary school level should encourage students reflect on their writing processes and progress to develop their metacognitive skill by using or adopting a variety of teaching strategies to meet other needs and abilities necessary for composition writing.
2. Senior secondary school students should be involved in the teaching and learning process by engaging in various composition writing activities that what pave way for participatory learning. For instance, implementing writing workshops were student can share their work and receive feedback from peers, teachers or experts.
3. There should be adequate training and re-training of teachers of English in senior secondary schools in order to update their knowledge on various strategies used in teaching and learning composition writing.

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