

Is the cooperative approach better than the individualized approach in the teaching and learning of composition writing at a junior secondary school in Botswana?

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The use of English language in schools in Anglophone African countries is regarded as highly important if one is to be able to communicate effectively in the society. More importantly, English composition writing, as a component of English language, is of utmost benefit to the individual in Anglophone African countries as well as the ability to function effectively in a global society. However, composition writing for most students has become an arduous and torturous activity. Two strategies dominate the teaching and learning of composition writing in the classroom setting: the individualised and the cooperative. To further meet the challenges in composition writing, the researcher has attempted to find out which of the two strategies is relatively more effective than the other. Forty-one students (21 male and 20 female) in a Form One Junior Secondary School class in Gaborone, Botswana were asked to write a composition on the topic 'My First Day at Secondary School' using the two strategies. It was found that the cooperative strategy was better than the individualised strategy for writing and based on this finding, pertinent conclusions and recommendations are made.

Introduction

English is used as a medium of instruction in many African countries, most especially in the Commonwealth countries. Botswana, which became independent from Britain in 1966 and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, has adopted English as the official language as well as the language of instruction in educational institutions.

Data on students' ability to write, their quality of writing and research into students' 'writing generally is either scanty or inconclusive in the present setting (Mooko, 1996). Meanwhile, there is continued noticeable poor performance of students in the written English over the years. The evidence of this lapse is seen in the annual reports of the Junior Certificate (JC) English Examination in 2001, which recommended among other measures that:

- Teachers expose learners to varied reading materials and topics in order to enhance their creativity, develop vocabulary and generally enhance language acquisition and learning.
- Teachers equip the learners with all the sub-skills of writing by giving lots of practice (Ministry of Education 2001 Junior Certificate Examinations, English Report).

This explains the aim of this study namely, to utilise the individualised as well as the cooperative learning strategies in composition writing at the junior secondary school and to determine which of the two strategies is more effective in improving students' ability and performance in composition writing.

Background and Statement of the Problem

There are different strategies of teaching English composition writing in schools today. It has been noted, however, that the quality of students' performance in composition writing in the

Junior Secondary Final Examinations has not been encouraging. The traditional approach is writing the topic of the composition on the chalkboard, discussing the steps to be followed by the students in writing the composition and then allowing them to write the composition using either of two teaching strategies: the two strategies being the individualized and the group/cooperative/collaborative strategies. It is therefore worthwhile to examine a strategy that may be effective in improving the performance of students in English composition writing.

The individualized strategy involves the student working alone. He or she has little input as to the choice of topic to work on and the time frame to carry out the assignment. The topic is also selected by the teacher. Most often the topic is arbitrary. The student often works by himself or herself depending on his/her competency or inner resources for back-up while following the steps recommended by the teacher.

The same procedure goes for the cooperative strategy except that students work on the assigned topic in groups of about five students. Also, students collectively discuss the points and the stages to be followed in writing out the composition working in groups. Here also, students rely on their own initiatives to carry out the assignment without much help in terms of pre-discussions and other activities associated with the writing process e.g. drafting, re-writing, revising etc. Even though not much research has been carried out on students' writing ability, evidence both from parents and official reports issued on yearly Junior Certificate examination analysis shows a trend of students' weakness in English composition writing at the junior and even at senior secondary school levels.

Again, from the researcher's observation as a teacher of English at the secondary school level for over two decades, the feeling is that students find composition writing dull, laborious and uninteresting, and would rather avoid it if they could. It appears the feeling is also mutual as far as teachers are concerned. They are equally frustrated at the lack of progress generally in this aspect of language teaching.

The current Junior Certificate English Syllabus which came into effect in 1996 details the objectives and expected outcomes of the teaching and learning of English at the junior secondary school level. It also outlines skills in Speaking, Reading, Listening, Writing, Study Skills and Literature. The writing skill objectives include among others:

- To communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in speech and writing both in and outside school.
- To convey information, and logically order and present facts and ideas based on other subjects of the curriculum (Republic of Botswana, 1996, p. iii).

Furthermore, the syllabus states in part, 'The work involved enables pupils to gain further practice in the key areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing, consolidating these skills in interesting and communicative ways that enrich pupils' day to day language' (p. ii). It can be deduced that an interactive and communicative language course which offers learners the opportunity to use language as a vehicle for the expression of functional as well as interpersonal and social relations is implied.

Group and pair work, modelling and role playing, which are emphasised in the new course is expected to encourage group, pair and individual activities that would enable students to be involved in the learning process and the individual student to be ‘... encouraged to communicate, not only with the teacher, but also with other students in class’ (Ministry of Education, 1991, p.15). With such a paradigm shift in strategy to the teaching of English in general and particularly in the teaching of composition writing, the collaborative/group technique to teaching composition writing might be especially useful.

The individualized and cooperative strategies of composition writing will be examined with regards to their effectiveness in improving students’ performance in composition writing. The first is the individualized strategy of teaching composition writing. In this strategy an individual student is a loner in the endeavour. He or she works alone following the guidelines recommended by the teacher in writing the composition based on the topic at hand. Traditionally, this strategy deprives students of time as well as feedback on the content of what they write in their drafts. The individualised strategy, however, should not be assumed to be bad in itself, especially, if one of the goals or aims of the ten-year basic education programme in Botswana is to be considered, which states: ‘develop critical thinking, problem solving ability, individual initiative’”(Republic of Botswana, 1966, p. ii).

The second strategy which is group work/cooperative/collaborative technique involves working together by about five students to collectively discuss the points and the stages to be followed in writing the English composition together. This strategy is in line with the new approach to writing which is seen as:

A process whereby students do not write on a given topic in a restricted time and hand in the composition for the teacher to “correct”—which usually means to correct errors. Rather, they explore a topic through writing, showing the teacher and each other their drafts, and using what they write to read over, think about, and move on to new ideas. (Raimes, 1983, p.10)

For standardization, the process approach to writing will also be used in the individualized strategy. The question then arises as to which of these two approaches would be most effective to improve the achievement scores of students in English composition writing at the junior secondary level.

Related Literature Review

The importance of English as an official language as well as the medium of instruction in Botswana and the Commonwealth of which Botswana is a member cannot be over-emphasised. Furthermore, it is a major language of communication and economics, not only internally in Botswana, but regionally, within the continent of Africa and in the wider global context.

English has a significant importance in the field of education which permeates the entire curriculum and is closely linked to the achievement of all the fifteen aims of the Basic Education programme in Botswana. Furthermore, except for Setswana, the national language of Botswana, English is used across the curriculum to teach concepts in other subjects to bring a deeper understanding into the teaching and learning of content materials.

Against this background, the importance of the ability to write in English is imperative. This section, therefore, seeks to review descriptive and research literature on issues based on writing as a process and the most efficient way of helping students to take interest in and be able to develop composition writing skills effortlessly. The emphasis is on determining which of the cooperative and the individualized strategies could best be utilised to teach English composition writing to learners of English as a second language.

This study on English composition writing will be done in the context of English as a second language. Mooko (1996) makes a distinction between English as a first language (L1) or mother tongue and writing in English as a second language (L2). He adopts Ellis's (1994) definition which is:

In the case of second language acquisition, the language plays an institutional and social role in the community (i.e. it functions as a recognised means of communication among members who speak some other language as their mother tongue ... (Ellis 1994).

It was surmised that since the above definition has social and economic implications, it could be applied to the Botswana context. The argument being that English is institutionalised as it is the official language and also used as a medium of instruction in Botswana schools. It also has social implications, as it is the language of the elite or the educated which many people strive for. From the above, it is agreed that English in Botswana is a second language while Setswana is the first language or mother tongue for the majority, but not for all the learners. (Botswana is a multilingual society consisting of an estimated twenty different minority languages.)

We learned to speak our first language or mother tongue at home without systematic instruction, whereas writing is a literary activity which has to be taught usually in a formal setting such as schools. While speech is universal, not everyone learns to read and write (Raimes, 1983, p.4). Raimes (1983) argues further that although there is no one answer to the question of how to teach writing in an ESL classroom, nevertheless, students will not just "pick up" writing as they learn other skills in the classroom. Writing has to be taught and the ways of teaching writing are as many as there are teachers and teaching styles. This is so because a piece of writing involves different types of features, factors, considerations or processes depending on how one may want to categorise it.

Recently, the teaching of writing has started to move away from concentration on the written product to an emphasis on the process of writing. This, together with the communicative approach will be utilised a great deal in this study. However, the emphasis on the process of writing ensures that the elements are considered in their entirety rather than say emphasising grammar, mechanics or syntax at the expense of clear, fluent and effective communication. To sum up, a student cannot become a good writer simply by developing isolated skills alone but by constructing and using the skill in a more holistic way which is not totally explained by the discrete approaches. This realisation started a new trend or approach in the teaching of language and involves the art of the process approach to writing.

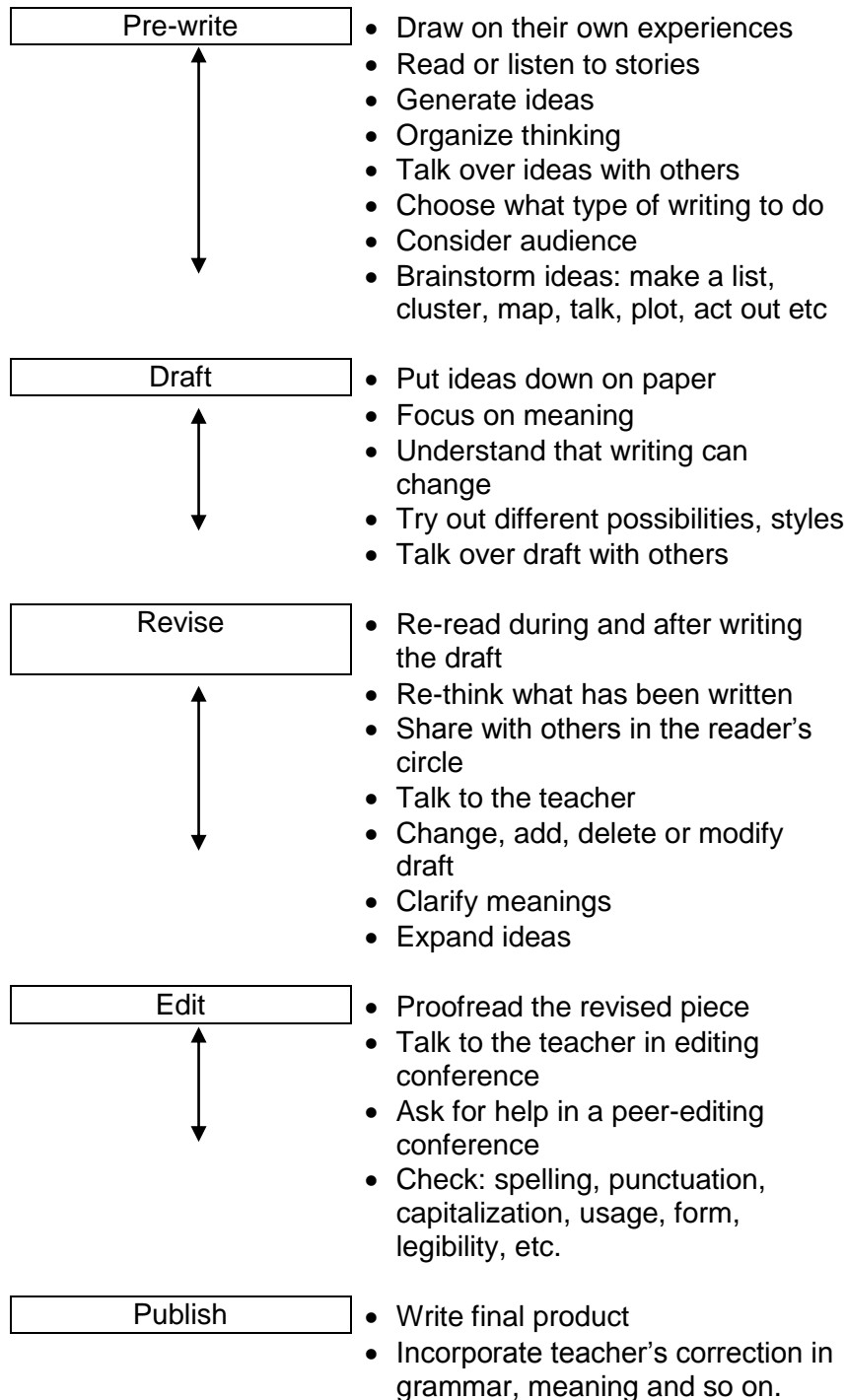
The notion of teaching writing as a process was developed during the 1970s and 1980s. It is based to a great extent on Donald Graves' (1983) influential book *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*. With this approach, the focus of writing instruction shifted from the product to the process. The process of writing refers to what children do, which Graves describes as

having five stages (See over for Figure 1). These are: 1. Prewrite; 2. Draft; 3. Revise; 4. Edit; and 5. Publish. Each of these stages involves children in a number of different activities (Cox, 2002: p. 321).

Terms like prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing are useful for talking about the parts of the writing process, which do not necessarily occur in a fixed order for individual writers in specific situations (Graves, 1994). Again in the process approach, the students do not write on a given topic in a restricted time and hand in the composition for the teacher to “correct”—which usually means to find errors. Rather, they explore a topic through writing, showing the teacher and each other their drafts, and using what they write to read over, think about and move them on to new ideas (Raimes, 1983). A student who is given the time for the process to work, along with the appropriate feedback from readers such as the teacher or other students will discover new ideas, new sentences, and new words as they plan, write a first draft and revise what they have written for a second draft.

Many teachers in ESL classes now give their students the opportunity to explore a topic fully such as pre-writing activities as discussion, reading, debate, brainstorming and list making. In this way the writing process becomes a process of discovery for the students: discovery of new ideas and new language forms to express those ideas. Even though Swales (1990) calls the process approach a “soft” process which protects students from the rigours of external assessment criteria, Johns (1993, p. 86) acknowledges the inestimable value of the process approach on L2 classroom work. However, he warns against the acceptance of the process movement without questioning its validity for our populations and educational contexts.

Figure 1: Stages in the Writing Process



(Adapted from Cox, 2002. Teaching Language Arts, p.322).

In spite of the above criticisms of the process approach, the writer strongly favours the use of this approach for beginners and intermediate learners of English as a second language. Various studies have been done to determine the efficacy of this approach at these levels with

encouraging results for learners of English as L2. (See for example, Hudelson 1987; Reyes 1991; and Reyes and Halcon 2000). Others have advocated a process approach for learners of English as a second language. It is strongly believed that the practice and the process involved would be engrained in students at these levels to enable them acquire the skill of fluency that goes with accuracy and which will eventually result in the competency needed for further academic accomplishment.

A much more valid criticism of the process approach for the purpose of this study is that of Martin (1985). Citing his work with Aboriginal and migrant students in Australia, he notes that because ESL students generally do not have a fully developed inter-language code system, they find it difficult to participate in discussions during the various stages involved in the process approach. As a result, they easily acquire the status of “outsiders” who cannot deal with the challenges and the demands of academic discourse or, simply put, classroom discussion.

The above is a valid concern. Therefore, in using the process approach, teachers must be careful not to end up, unknowingly “excluding” some students from the learning process because they are not able to take full advantages of the communicative opportunities encouraged by the approach (Chimbganda, 2001).

Objective of study

This study investigates the relative effectiveness of the individualized learning strategy and the cooperative learning strategy on the achievement scores of junior secondary school students in English composition writing.

Specifically, the study examines whether:

The overall achievement scores of junior secondary school students in English composition differ significantly according to whether they are taught by the cooperative learning strategy or the individualized learning strategy.

The objective of this study therefore triggers a research question:

Does the overall achievement of students in English composition writing differ significantly according to whether they are taught by the cooperative learning strategy or the individualised learning strategy?

The research Null hypothesis is:

There is no significant difference between the overall achievement scores of junior secondary school students in written English composition taught either by individualized learning strategy or the cooperative learning strategy.

The study is limited to one class as a case study in a junior secondary school in Gaborone, Botswana. It is limited to the form one class since the investigator is assigned to teach that class in the academic year 2004. The subjects can be regarded as representative of the population of form one students admitted for the year 2004. This is so because the class allocation system considers equal representations of students who scored grades A, B, C, D, and E in the Primary School Leavers Examinations (PSLE) while allocating them to various classes.

Research Design and Data Analysis

The research design in this study is the pre-test-post-test research design of Campbell and Stanley (1966) as diagrammatically represented below:

$$\begin{array}{c} O_1 \quad X_1 \quad O_2 \\ O_1 \quad X_2 \quad O_2 \end{array}$$

Where:

- O_1 is the pre-test, that is, scores resulting from composition writing using the individualised strategy;
- O_2 is the post-test, that is, scores resulting from composition writing using the cooperative strategy; while
- X_1 and X_2 are the teaching treatments i.e. the individualised and the cooperative instructions.

Study Population and the Sample

As earlier noted, the study population of this research was made up of Form One students at a Community Junior Secondary School (CJSS) in Gaborone, Botswana. It consisted of all intakes into form one from Standard Seven of primary schools who have been admitted and posted to this school for their junior secondary education for the year 2004. These students have completed seven years of primary education with about four years of exposure to English language as a medium of instruction. On entry to the school, they were arranged in performance order of their PSLE results of grades A, B, C, D, and E. They were then systematically divided into form one classes according to these grades which result in mixed ability students. At present, there are six classes of form one, so there is equitable distribution of high, medium and low achievers in all the classes. It can therefore be assumed that no one class in form one is significantly better in academic strength than the other because of the mode of distribution of students to each of the six classes.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used in this study were basically five. The first one was titled *Guidelines on Composition Writing* in line with the communicative approach favoured by the new English Language Syllabus of the Botswana Ministry of Education. Also past Junior Certificate examination questions on composition writing reflect this format. The guidelines were included to help students write much more effectively. Also the composition topic was a sequel to a previous content area reading on the topic, 'The New School Year' in which 'Sipho' described his first day at school. The choice of the topic for composition writing was in keeping with the integrated approach to language teaching and adapted from the students' class text titled *English In Action Book 1*.

Instrument 1: Guidelines on Writing Composition on the topic: My First Day at Secondary

School

Write about four paragraphs on your first day at secondary school using the following guidelines:

Compare your first day at secondary school with Sipho's.

- i. Did you feel the same way as he felt or
- ii. Did you feel differently when you first came to the school?

Write briefly about the people you met.

- i. Were they friendly or not?
- ii. Did they help or assist you in any way?
- iii. Would you say they were helpful or not?

What does Sipho say are the differences between primary and secondary schools?

- i. Do you agree with him?
- ii. Are there any other differences you can think of which Sipho did not mention?

Concluding paragraph/Conclusion

- i. What are your feelings about your new school now?
- ii. Say why you like or dislike your new school.

Instrument 2: Self-Editing Checklist

Name _____ Date: _____	
Title _____	
_____	1. Each sentence begins with a capital.
_____	2. Names of people and places are capitalised.
_____	3. Each sentence ends with a (.), (?), or (!).
_____	4. I have used (“) to show when someone is talking.
_____	5. A line is skipped to indicate each new paragraph.
_____	6. I have corrected all misspelled words.
_____	7. I have chosen the words that best describe what I want to say.
_____	8. I have re-read my writing and checked it.

(Adapted from Cox, 2002, p.344)

Note: To be successful at self-editing students need reminders of what they should look for as they revise and edit their work.

Instrument 3: Peer-Editing Form

Peer-Editing Report Form	
The piece I read was _____ by _____	
The best thing about this piece of writing is _____	

If the writer wants to change something, I will suggest _____	

Peer Editor	Date
(Adapted from Cox, 2002, p. 342)	

Note: In peer-editing groups, students work together to edit each other’s writing, revising without the teacher’s help. This peer-editing form guides students in formulating specific comments that will provide useful observations and suggestions (Cox, 2002, p. 342)

Instrument 4: Revising and Editing Poster

Revising and Editing Poster
Before I turn in a piece of writing for a score, I check to see if:

1. Paragraphs are indicated.
2. Margins/Layout are correct.
3. Punctuation is correct: full stops, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, question marks and exclamation marks.
4. Words are spelt correctly.
5. Capital letters are used correctly.
6. It has an introductory paragraph, detail paragraphs and conclusion
7. It is neat.

(Adapted from Cox, 2002, p.343)

The above is a general revising and editing poster which was posted permanently in class as a writing checklist. Students were able to self-edit relying on reminders in a poster like the 'Revising and Editing Poster' above. Revising and editing could also be done at writing workshops, teacher conferences, and peer-editing groups. The model of writing assessment used in scoring the final draft of students is as stated by the Botswana Ministry of Education rubric for extended writing (January, 1999), shown over.

The investigator used this marking rubric to grade the final composition written by students. It is a standardised score sheet utilised by teachers and authorised by the Botswana Ministry of Education, Secondary Department for assessing students' written composition. It is also the same score card used by the researcher and a second reviewer to score the students' compositions both for the individualised as well as the cooperative strategies. It is hoped that in this way, the incidence of bias or subjectivity would be prevented.

Instrument 5: J.C. Marking Scheme

	Max Marks	Symb ol	Very Good	Above Av	Av	Below Av	Poor
1. Communication Overall impression/ Relevance/ Own detail/Registrar/ Appropriate vocabulary/ Fluency.	14	C	14-12	11-9	8-7	6-5	4-0
2. Grammar Correct English idiom/Sentence patterns/Verb usage/Gender/Pronouns/Prepositions/Conjunctions/Links/Nouns/Articles/Etc.	14	G	14-12	11-9	8-7	6-5	4-0
3. Mechanics Spelling/Punctuation	6	M	6-5	4	3	2	1-0
4. Organisation Paragraphs / Sequence of ideas/ Top. S+ DSs + Term. S	6	O	6-5	4	3	2	1-0
Totals	40		40-34	30-26	22-20	16-14	10-0

Data Collection

For the Individualized Strategy

The 41 students were assigned to do the composition writing first using the individualized learning strategy. They were taken through the first instrument using the process approach by guided discussion of the topic under the guidelines through whole class discussion. The ideas students came up with were entirely their own and were listed on the chalkboard. This was to help students with the vocabulary and sentence forms they might need in their writing. Students then worked individually after the above activity. The teacher moved around to offer help where necessary on meaning, grammar or ideas. Students used the self-editing checklist in preparing their first drafts. Students then used the Revising and Editing poster to revise their final draft for assessment. (This process took approximately 3 composition writing periods or 120 minutes).

The final drafts of the composition were collected and assessed using the standardized marking scheme in Instrument 5. The treatment here stands for the individualised learning as initially represented by X_1 while the writing of the final drafts by students resulting into scores represents the pre-test, that is, O_1 .

For The Cooperative Group

The same 41 students were divided into groups of five and taken through the same pre-writing procedure of guided whole class discussion on the same topic as with the individualised strategy. Students first worked individually in their assigned groups utilising the self-editing checklist to revise their work. Then each student read out his or her piece of work to other students in the group who then used the peer-editing forms to assess group members' writing and offer suggestions for improvement. Students then wrote their final drafts for the teacher's assessment (as well as the review by the second assessor). This process took approximately four writing periods or 160 minutes as students took more time reading their drafts to members of the group. The final drafts of compositions were collected and graded using the same standardized marking scheme in Instrument 5. The treatment here stands for the cooperative learning strategy as initially represented by X_2 while the writing of the final drafts by students resulting into scores represents the post-test, that is, O_2 .

Discussion of Findings

The intent of this study was to determine the relative effectiveness of the individualized and the cooperative learning strategies on the achievement scores of students in English composition writing. Specifically, the study tested one Null hypothesis as to whether there was no significant difference in the overall achievement scores of students in English composition writing taught either by the cooperative learning strategy or the individualized learning strategy.

As earlier stated, the hypothesis was subjected to a Paired-T. Forty-one (41) Form One students made up of 21 male and 20 female students participated in composition writing on the topic 'My New Secondary School' using both the individualised and the cooperative teaching and learning strategies. The researcher and a second reviewer assessed the final drafts on the two write-ups of the compositions. The means of the two scores for each student were found and converted to percentages. Table 1 shows the raw scores in percentages of the male and

female students in both compositions based on the individualised and the cooperative learning strategies, and the individual difference in performance based on the two treatments.

Further observation by the investigator shows that in the cooperative treatment, most gains were exhibited in the areas of communication, grammar, spelling and punctuation. On the other hand, for those who made slight gains, their scores improved in the areas of surface error such as grammar, spelling and punctuation.

The above indicates that cooperative strategy works better to improve students' performance in communication, grammar and mechanics—spelling and punctuation. This leaves the teacher with the problem of organisational skills to concentrate on. This does not mean, however, that the other skills should be neglected. An important observation is that high ability students seem to do better on their own than when they are working in a group.

Those students whose scores remained static for the male students in both the cooperative and the individualised treatments can be said to be unchanged in their below-average performance. Could this represent the group of under-achievers or does this indicate a level of unpreparedness for secondary schooling on the part of the students concerned? Descriptively, 23 students gained with the use of the cooperative strategy in comparison with 16 students who dropped and also 2 students who remained static in performance. The above analysis is descriptive in nature and therefore the task that follows involves the use of inferential statistics in testing the significance of the two hypotheses as propounded shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 shows the results pertaining to whether there was no significant difference in the overall achievement scores of students in English composition writing taught either by the cooperative learning strategy or the individualized learning strategy.

Table 1: Paired T-Test Comparing Performance in Individualised and Cooperative Strategies in Composition Writing

Strategies	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	df	t	Significance	Correlation Coefficient
Cooperative	41	56.29	13.220	2.065	40			
Individualised	41	52.46	13.550	2.116	40	2.328	Significant	0.691

An examination of Table 1 shows that 41 students wrote both the drafts of the composition using the individualised and the cooperative learning strategies. The mean score of the cooperative strategy (56.29) is slightly higher than that of the individualised strategy (52.46). On the surface, this means that on average, students performed better in the cooperative strategy than in the individualised strategy. However, when tested with the use of a paired t-test, the difference is significant at a degree of freedom of 40 with a moderate correlation coefficient of 0.691. Therefore, this hypothesis which sought to find out whether there was no significant difference in the overall achievement scores of students in English composition writing taught either by the cooperative learning strategy or the individualized learning strategy is hereby rejected. The interpretation is that overall, students performed better on the cooperative learning strategy than the individualised strategy.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper entails a summary of the study and the findings. In addition, conclusions are drawn based on the findings related to the research questions, hypotheses and limitations of the study. In light of the conclusions, some recommendations are made.

The use of English language in schools is regarded as highly important if one is to be able to communicate effectively in the society. More importantly, English composition writing, as a component of English language, is held in high esteem if a citizen is to be able to function effectively in a global society. However, composition writing for most students has become an arduous and torturous activity. Two strategies dominate the teaching and learning of composition writing in the classroom setting. These are the individualised and the cooperative strategies. In an attempt at further meeting the challenges in composition writing, the researcher has attempted to find out which of the two strategies is relatively more effective than the other, using a Form One class as a case study, using the two strategies to write a composition on the topic 'My First Day at Secondary School.'

Forty-one students made up of 21 male and 20 female students in a junior secondary school participated in writing the composition on two different occasions using the two mentioned strategies. The average raw scores of the researcher and a second reviewer for each student were obtained through the use of a standardised marking guide and used in computing the results.

An hypothesis was formulated to find out if any difference existed in the overall achievement of students taught either by the individualised and the cooperative strategies. The hypothesis was tested with the paired t-test.

It was found that:

- The cooperative strategy is better than the individualised strategy going by the significance of the first hypothesis.
- The correlation between the scores on the pre-test (individualised strategy) and the post-test (cooperative strategy) is 0.691 (approximately 70%) and is moderate.
- The result of this study corroborates Crawford's and Haaland's (1972) assertion that group activities appear to lead students to work harder and to discover more than they do when tasks are performed on an individual competitive basis.
- Cooperative learning was advantageous and increases students' academic achievement and interaction. Students had animated discussion even for hitherto quiet students, about grammar, spelling and arrangement of ideas. This observation is in line with the observation of Slavin (1990) who stated that other benefits of cooperative learning include a positive student interaction and more positive student attitudes towards the class

It was concluded that the use of cooperative strategy in composition writing is more effective than the individualised strategy as found out in this case study. Even though the difference is moderate, students performed better with the use of the cooperative strategy than the individualised strategy as a whole. The result of this study corroborates Crawford's and Haaland's (1972) assertion that group activities appear to lead students to work harder and to discover more than they do when tasks are performed on an individual competitive basis.

Although significant, the correlation between the two sets of scores in the individualised and the cooperative groups is moderate. This means that on the average, students performed better with the use of the cooperative in this study, however, the relationship is only moderate and not as high as expected. It can be concluded from this study that the use of the process approach is very critical irrespective of whether a teacher uses the group or the individualised learning strategy.

On the basis of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made.

Pre-Service and In-Service Education

Although the pre-service and in-service education of JC teachers may not be directly obvious as far as this research is concerned, it may be worthwhile in the long run that teachers are effectively and efficiently prepared. For students at the junior secondary school to be effective in composition writing, their teachers should be well trained. Therefore, pre-service education of English language teachers who are to train students at this level should emphasise an in-depth knowledge of composition writing in addition to grammar, comprehension, spellings etc. If junior secondary school students are to be effectively taught to write highly rated composition, then their teachers must be well grounded in the art of composition writing. This is a challenge to English Departments and related Departments at the Colleges of Education and Universities to also conduct workshops and conferences to provide leadership where intellectual discourse on composition writing can take place for the benefit of junior secondary English teachers.

Textbook and Curriculum Development

One of the findings of this study denoted that the cooperative learning strategy is effective in the teaching and learning of composition writing. It then becomes necessary for authors of textbooks in English Language to provide series of activities on this strategy in textbooks. Further, textbooks written by local authors may go a long way in easing the difficulty associated with the writing of composition, as writing in the environment is better than writing out of the environment. The Department of Curriculum and Evaluation can also help by encouraging young authors to publish relevant books on composition writing to ease the dearth of books locally published.

Classroom Management

While classroom management is a broad term, the investigator is using it here in the context of assigning students into groups for the purpose of discussion or finding answers to problems in a classroom situation. In this case, students have to be grouped in such a way as to reflect mixed ability group of students as suggested by Foyle and Lyman (1991). Teachers also need to ensure that students work in such a way that emphasis is on group cooperation. Group members have to understand that success depends on the participation of every member of the group. For example, the completed assignments should be handed in as collective group work, not individually. Grades or rewards can be awarded for the group which did the most cooperative work, handed in their assignments first and so on (Raimes, 1983). Further,

instructions have to be clearly spelt out as not to confuse students on what they are expected to do.

Future Research

Future studies might examine or partially replicate aspects of this study with additional variables such as socio-economic background of students and performance in composition writing, exposure to the library and performance in English generally, frequency of travels to English speaking countries and performance in composition writing etc. Such studies might employ both interviews and observations on site, the use of questionnaires and ethnographic studies. Further, some questions raised in the study include:

- Do high ability students stand to benefit in composition writing using group work?
- Are female students better performers in composition writing with the use of the two approaches than their male counterparts? and
- Is there a correlation between the un-preparedness of students and under-achievement in composition writing?

These and other related questions when thoroughly researched into can produce new knowledge in the continuous effort by academics to improve the status of English composition writing in schools.

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