

PDF - THE EFFECT OF CLASS SIZE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING/ LEARNING OF SUMMARY WRITING IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGER STATE - researchcub.info **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to empirically investigate the effect of large class size on the teaching/learning of summary writing in senior secondary schools especially in Niger State. The large class size places a major barrier to the effective teaching and learning of summary writing in English language as a core subject in these senior secondary schools. The study was also done to determine the effect of school location and gender on the student's performance in summary writing. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the studies. The instrument used for data collection was test items drawn on comprehension and summary passages and face validation of the instrument was done by three experts in Language Education and Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A split-half method for single administration of instruments was used and the result of the test was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to measure the consistency and reliability of the test. The sample for the test consisted of 400 senior secondary school students drawn from the selected schools in Suleja Education Zone which was the focus area for the study. Two hundred students were drawn from urban school location and two hundred students from rural school locations. The major findings of this study were that, the students taught summary writing in small class setting performed better than those taught in large class setting. Location was also a significant factor, the findings revealed that students taught summary writing in urban school locations had a better performance than the ones taught in rural school locations. Gender as well played a major role, in that, the female students scored higher in summary writing than their male counterparts. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations were made to senior secondary school teachers in the state to engage students in frequent writing exercise, not only in English Language subject but in other subjects as well so as to help develop in them adequate writing skill. The text book writers and the curriculum planners are expected to make writing exercise feature often in the syllabus developed for senior secondary schools. The government should pay attention to solve the problems militating against the effectiveness of school programmes in general. The limitations of the study were outlined and suggestions for further research were proposed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The influx of the missionary to Nigeria in 1842, followed by the British colonization later bequeathed to the nation English as a second language. Tomori (Azikiwe 1995: 24) and Kangas (2000:4) state that, one higher reason for the spread of English is legacy of colonialism and the history of European expansion that went along with it, while the highest reason is the sustained economic power. English is a language with great reach and

influence, the language is the most internationalized in the distribution of any language in the world. Graddo (1997:3) affirms, "the only people who think that one can conduct all of one's affairs in this world through the medium of a single language are speakers of English. The necessities of the language are surrounded with being the machinery for cultivating the minds and training of staff for effective communications with the colonial masters, thus, the English language was officially institutionalized in 1861 in Lagos Nigeria by the British government (Azikiwe 1995:24). With time, English language became a course of study at all levels of learning, consequently, the number of Nigerians who enroll for learning of the language can be said to be on the increase on daily basis, either at the state or federal institutions of learning. Specifically, English language has taken the place of a second language in Nigeria; it is the nation's lingua franca which has now solved the problem of communication barriers throughout the country. Obanya (1982:3) states that "English language fills a huge communication gap, it helps to facilitate contact between Nigerians of diverse language backgrounds; it is also the language of the country, the language of document and official communication. Bamgbose (1995:13) emphasizes that "English language is socio-linguistically the language of social and official transactions, the media, science and technology, it is the language of legislature and judiciary respectively. Educationally, English language plays a top role as a tool for transmitting knowledge". The National Policy on Education (2004:16) states

The medium of instruction in the Primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three (3) years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject; but from the fourth year, the language shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and shall be taught as a subject.

Evidently, the language has been accepted in education for teaching and learning, and for subsequent services in Nigeria. Mgbodile (1996:106) postulates that "English language is the key to the world's pool of knowledge, universal culture to average Nigerian." The foregoing confirms that English occupies a prominent and enviable position in Nigeria; it could be seen as the life wire of the survival growth and unity of the nation.

However, the four language skills which comprise of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are to be properly taught, but this is not so in Nigerian schools. The introduction of free schooling programme for all in 1976, which was called Universal Primary Education (UPE) led to population explosion which extended to secondary schools in Nigeria. As the enrolment into schools increases daily and beyond the capacity of the available resources, merging of classrooms also began, which resulted into large class size. The problems that beset the effective teaching and learning of English are many such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of teaching materials, teachers' incessant strike but large class places a higher constraint. Hayes (1997:4) posits, "there can be no quantitative definition of what constitute a large class, as perception of this will vary from context to

context". Edoabasi(2007:19) describes, "large classes as over populated class-rooms or as sometimes presented, streams of a segmented class, running from (a) to (m) for one secondary school teacher". The researcher further describes "large class as, one that depicts national underdevelopment, inadequate educational infrastructure and teachers for the teeming population in all of Nigerian school life". Tinto (1987:5) posits that large classes leads to a decline in intrinsic motivation for studying and increases in attrition. The National policy on Education (2004:14) suggests, "for effective teaching and learning, the teacher versus learners ratio shall be 1:35". In the same vein, All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS 2007:14) recommends a maximum of forty (40) students per class for effective management and control. Allen(1992:3) affirms that American class-size placement ratio is a ratio of 1.25(i.e. one teacher to twenty-five students),". The outlined policy of the National Policy on Education (NPE) on class size is violated by the Nigerian government itself, as classes are designated with students' population ranging between sixty (60) and one hundred and twenty (120). Effective teaching/learning is only possible where the climate is conducive and not otherwise.

In Niger state, enrolment exceeds the available resources provided for secondary school education and the result is that students perform poorly in summary writing especially in external examination. The WAEC chief examiner's report 2006, 2007 express a general dismay over the poor performance of students in summary writing, he emphasizes that the poor performance of students in summary writing has been a problem, and it is unimaginable how a student who has spent six years in secondary school will not be able to summarize a given text. The society places much value on writing as a social tool and if not developed and used, can form a permanent mental disorder because writing is believed to be a bridge for transferring ideas. Azikiwe (1998:5) opines that a developing nation like Nigeria needs a literate and enlightened populace rather than functional illiterates; that is people who are only able to read with ordinary comprehension, materials designed for unselected lay people. The process that helps learners develop skill for summary writing can be connected to the knowledge of essay writing and exercise in comprehension passages. Writing involves the active participation of the teachers/students in composition/essay writing as they work through the interactive and recursive stages of pre-writing, writing and re-writing. Christine (1982:249) postulates, "You teach students to write more effectively by encouraging them to make full use of the many activities that comprise the act of writing not by focusing only on the final written products and its strength and weaknesses". An excerpt from Literacy Education Online (LEO) www.wikipedia.org/wiki/summary subscribes that writing an effective summary requires the following

- Reading with the writer's purpose in mind
- Underlining with summarizing in mind
- Write revise and edit to ensure the accuracy and correctness of your summary"

Michael (1992:89) affirms that “Summarizing is a more comprehensive form of taking notes which is the process of rewriting a passage to make it shorter while still retaining its essential message”

Furthermore summary is the presentation of the substance of a body of material in a condensed form or by reducing it to its main point, an abstract or a short account of something that gives only the most important information and not all the details. Summary writing is a peculiar writing skill that requires being learnt and taught meticulously so as to provide skillful workers for the labour world. Susan (2003:1) stresses that, “the only way a busy administrator can deal with the flood of information is to rely on effective summaries that can efficiently present the most important information.” It is obvious that the Nigerian government is playing a leading role in the decline observed in secondary education. The underfunding of the educational sector in the country in general and the neglect of the maintenance of the physical facilities, instructional and living conditions of teachers have plagued effectiveness in teaching learning system. Classrooms, libraries and laboratories are nothing to talk about, all leading to decline in academic standards. The experience in Nigeria secondary schools is that of classroom congestion and low classroom utilization rates, all these put the effective teaching and learning of summary writing at a very low pace.

One of the considerable factors that underlines the poor performance of students in summary writing is the school location. Teaching and learning is influenced by school location. Andrew (2008:38) emphasizes, “we cannot rule out the possibility that location profiles may actually constitute a better criterion of school effectiveness than many measures that already have entered the field of educational administration. Ekpunobi (1985) holds that there is a remarkable difference in the performance of students from urban and the rural school locations. Urban location is characterized with obvious modern development; teaching and learning outcome in urban areas cannot be compared with teaching and learning outcome in schools in rural locations. Rural locations are of rural setting with less modern facilities, thus the discrepancies between rural and urban areas can be widely measured. One other notable factor that influences the learning of English language, whether written or oral is gender. Some researchers have dealt extensively on the factor of gender as one that is capable of influencing students’ learning. Nash (1979:279) states, “female tend to do better in tests of verbal ability including such components as fluency, reading comprehension analogies and creative writing” but on the contrary, Ekpunobi (1985:35) in his own findings posits that assessment on written composition of Group Assessment Learning Technique (GALT) shows that the female students in the experimental schools did not achieve significantly higher than the male students in the senior secondary schools. The difference between the female and male students has no definite proof, thus, it is regarded as a mere description out of proportion. Gass and Varonis (1986:46) Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler (1989:46) carry out an investigation into gender-based differences in the

structure of social interaction and shed light on gender-related differences in areas such as learning strategies for second language comprehension, their modification of inter-language and negotiated interaction. The discoveries from the investigation raise the possibility that language learning opportunities and experiences might not be quite the same for male and female students.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of poor performance of senior secondary school students in summary writing in English Language is concerned with poor infrastructures (conducive sizeable classroom) which constitutes the problem of large classes. Salle (2000:1) emphasizes that "it does not take a rocket scientist or poet laureate to know that teaching a large class is a very different set of challenges that we typically face in our classes".

The government of Nigeria be it federal or state as stakeholders in education contribute to the problems of schools and make the schools what they are today. The poor funding of the education sector has reduced the teaching/learning programme into a mere struggle for survival between the teachers and their students. The insufficient dilapidated school buildings are used to compress large number of students for learning activities. The meager salary paid to teachers and incessant strike actions have always disrupted adequate concentration of teaching/learning programme.

The frequent visit of the officials from the Ministry of Education into various schools in the nation to verify certificate and ghost workers does not include investigation of the teaching/learning progress, which are most relevant. The loss of relevant issues is spelt in the unrealized stated objectives of the learning outcome. Edoabasi (2007:19) emphasizes, "the teaching of basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, cannot be developed in crowded class rooms". His stated opinion supports that effective teaching/learning is only possible in a conducive environment where students/teachers are at ease. The dismay expressed over the poor performance of students in senior secondary schools in Nigeria over the years by the chief WAEC examiner are evident in the release of senior secondary school examination (SSCE) results. The chief WAEC examiner counsel the teachers to diversify methods and give more attention to the teaching of English language to students so as to reduce the level of poor performance for good ones, by engaging the students in writing activities in other subjects.

The poor performance of students in summary writing is a big concern to not only the teachers but the principals of schools and even the parents of these students, because poor performance in summary writing eventually leads to poor performance in English Language and at the end hinders students' ambition for higher studies and placements in good jobs in the society. What effect would therefore class size play on student's achievement in summary writing? The problem of this study put in question form is "what is the effect of class size on the effective teaching and learning of summary writing in

senior secondary school particularly in Niger State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out, how large class can hinder the effective teaching/learning of summary writing in English language in senior secondary schools.

Specifically, the study seeks to

- 1.) Determine the effect of large class size on the effective teaching and learning of summary writing in English language in senior secondary schools especially in Niger State.
- 2.) Ascertain the effect of class size on the achievement of male and female students in summary writing.
- 3.) Find out the effect of class size on the achievement of rural and urban schools in summary writing

The Significance of the Study

The importance of summary form of writing is of paramount significance, the finding from this study is of great benefit to the following people: the teachers, the students, the curriculum planners and Education officials as well as individuals who are concerned with writing in summary form.

This study provided information to the teachers in secondary schools since teachers recognize, through this study that teaching small class size in summary writing is more effective; the teacher can then adopt the shift method and group her large class into small sizes, though this may increase her contact time.

Students can benefit more in summary writing through small class sizes when the teacher adopts the shift method in teaching class, because this shift method will improve personal contact between the teacher and her students.

The curriculum planners can suggest average class size to government on the teaching of some aspects of English for effective teaching and clear understanding on how to write summary.

The study finding provided information to the Ministry of Education Officials about the effect of large size in teaching/ understanding of English in schools. The government can make use of this information to make policy adjustments on class size in schools for effective teaching/learning.

The report writers, journalist, secretary of organizations and other private officials who are concerned with summarizing in writing will also benefit from the finding because the discoveries will help them further to use economy of words without sacrificing the meaning. Because the finding has shown that summary writing will hence improve skills development in individual learners.

Scope of the Study

The study was restricted to determine the effect of class size on the teaching/learning of

summary writing in senior/secondary schools in Niger State.

The study was also restricted to the study of location, gender and summary writing of SS 2 students in Niger State Educational Zones.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide this study

1. What is the mean difference between the achievement of student taught summary writing in the large class setting and those taught summary writing in the small class setting?
2. To what extent does class size affect the mean achievement scores of male and female students in summary writing?
3. To what extent does class size affect the mean achievement scores of rural and urban schools in summary writing?

Hypotheses

The following Hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught summary writing in the large class setting and those taught summary writing in the small class setting in Niger State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students in summary writing.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students in summary writing.

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