

Expository Guided Writing for Learners at Elementary Levels

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ABSTRACT: *Writing skill is a complex skill that poses challenges to its teaching and mastery by teachers and pupils. This study is an expository one that focuses elementary learners who are regarded as emergent writers and struggling writers who have passed emergent stages of writing but are still experiencing writing difficulties. English teachers are expected to have explicit knowledge in language skills particularly writing and adequate instructional strategies to provide timely instructional assistance that can position writing as not a difficult and complex skill. This study provides an academic window that both teachers and learners can access for better cognitive development in writing. The study exemplifies guided writing as a strategy to serve as an intervention to prompt teachers in assisting learners to grasp writing skills with ease. It is the conclusion of the study that guided writing assists both teachers and learners in ameliorating writing problems.*

KEY WORDS: guided writing, substitution table, fill the gap, expository, elementary levels

INTRODUCTION

Education in Nigeria is governed by both exclusive and residual lists, which complicates its functioning and makes it challenging to reach a consensus on how to advance the nation. The many states under the federal structure of Nigeria formulate distinct policies based on their respective values, resources, and the current government's priorities. According to UNICEF (2023), education in Nigeria has experienced a decline in literacy rates, especially in the Northern States. Yobe has the lowest literacy rate at 7.23%, followed by Zamfara at 19.16%, Katsina at 10.36%, and Sokoto at 15.01%. In contrast, the Southern States have higher literacy rates, with Imo, Lagos, and Ekiti states ranking first, second, and third, respectively.

UNICEF further indicates that around one-third of children of primary school age do not progress to Junior Secondary School, with the majority being female students from the Northern States. The

reasons cited for this early withdrawal include: poverty, insecurity, abduction, child marriage, and religious fanaticism. Although education is included in both the exclusive and residual lists of the government, it is widely agreed upon that all states must implement an approved educational system following the 6.3.3.4 framework. This implies that students are required to complete a six-year programme in elementary schools, followed by three years in Junior Secondary Schools, three years in Senior Secondary Schools, and a minimum of four years in universities. Some postsecondary schools, such as Colleges of Education, have a duration of fewer than four years. For example, the duration is three years for Ordinary National Diploma programmes and two years for others.

Literacy is assessed based on learners' cognitive abilities to comprehend and overcome difficulties in reading, writing, and basic mathematical operations. In order for individuals to make substantial contributions to the nation, they must possess a solid understanding of both reading and numeracy. To attain proficiency in reading and mathematics, it is essential to begin the learning process from the early stages of education, namely in elementary schools. The foundation must be established by proficient educators who possess a deep understanding of the subject matter and are skilled in the art of instructional delivery. This necessitates the presence of educators who possess advanced knowledge and expertise in the fields of English language and Mathematics. Regrettably, the Nigerian educational system employs instructors based on a recruiting criteria that only requires a basic teaching certification of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), without considering their specific fields. There are several individuals without expertise in English language and Mathematics who are teaching these fundamental subjects in classrooms despite having limited or no knowledge in these areas. This is a systematic blunder with severe repercussions that are severely impacting the fundamental principles of educational ideals in Nigeria.

The English language holds a prestigious standing in comparison to other Nigerian ethnic languages. The English language holds a prominent position as the official language of the government at all levels, promoting national unity. It is also the medium of instruction in schools, not only for English language classes but also for other subjects. Consequently, the use of indigenous languages is diminishing as many public and private schools prohibit the use of mother tongues, categorising them as vernaculars in Nigerian schools today.

The concept of writing

Writing is a fundamental component of language proficiency. It possesses formality, manipulative qualities, cognitive abilities, and productivity. Being literate is shown by one's ability to write, which is evaluated by a proficient reader based on their command of verb tenses, grammatical structure, precision, logical flow, cohesion, and proper paragraph organisation. The writer's mistakes are readily observed, and his negligent use of punctuation marks, which have the potential to impact meanings, are regarded as indications of illiteracy on the part of the writer. While a

speaker may be able to hide flaws in grammar and punctuation, writing reveals them all. The fundamental aspect of writing is in the ability to comprehend and grasp the logical arrangement of information, starting from the basic building blocks of alphabets and progressing to words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and ultimately, whole works. Writing is deemed intricate for this reason. In addition to this, it is crucial to have a proficient command of verb tenses, and selecting the right phrases is equally vital in effectively expressing the thoughts of authors to readers. Punctuation marks, correct spellings, and proper capitalization in phrases are all fundamental aspects of proficient writing. The process of generating ideas and articulating them in a coherent manner adds value to the act of writing.

From the earliest stages of education, students are instructed on the manipulative nature of alphabets in conveying concepts. At their young age, instructors should provide assistance to ensure that students write in a clear and readable manner, since illegible handwriting may create discomfort for readers and hinder the comprehension of ideas. At the beginning, learners require the instructional guidance of their teachers. Writing is considered to be one of the productive talents (Jabali, 2018; Toba et al., 2019). Writing is of utmost importance for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, especially for tertiary-level students. In the Nigerian environment, the English language is considered a secondary language, alongside the indigenous languages that are also spoken. This contribution clearly highlights the fact that writing poses difficulties for learners at all stages of education, from elementary school to higher institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to provide instructional intervention in the form of guided writing at the elementary level in order to help students overcome their fear of failure in writing.

Jebreil et al (2015) view writing as a productive talent that involves cognitive processes such as articulating aims, generating ideas, solving problems, and engaging in critical thinking. According to Linse (2005), writing is viewed as a process of collecting and refining ideas in order to create a polished and easily understandable final result for readers. It is crucial to emphasise that authors must possess sufficient knowledge and understanding in order to fulfil the requirements of writing. According to Al Mubarak (2017), the complexity of academic writing is a significant obstacle for students, leading to difficulties in developing this talent and ultimately resulting in failure to get a passing mark. In Nigeria, admittance into any tertiary institution necessitates a credit pass in English language. The imposition of this obligatory standard has compelled several Nigerian students to resort to cheating in exams in order to gain admission into higher education institutions, however they have subsequently struggled to meet the academic requirements of tertiary education.

He asserts that English second language students have significant challenges in writing, including articles, punctuation marks, prepositions, irregular verbs, weak phrases, and incorrect use of tenses. These aforementioned challenges serve as compelling justifications for the necessity of effectively instructing learners in writing, in order to cultivate an engaging learning experience.

Intervention of Teachers.

Teaching is of utmost importance for developing writing proficiency. Regrettably, not all teachers possess the necessary skills to effectively teach writing. Only those who have a strong command of the subject matter and proper teaching techniques can do so successfully. Teachers that possess the ability to inspire students and offer prompt, critical comments without undermining their self-esteem, regardless of their initial proficiency in writing. Teachers who prioritise guiding and instructing students to achieve writing proficiency must demonstrate unwavering dedication.

Adegun (2010) asserts that instructors are the most significant individual aspect that influences the process of teaching and learning. Adegun (2013) characterises teachers as technologists inside the confines of the classrooms. This fact is also confirmed by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) in its updated National Policy on Education, which states that the quality of education cannot exceed the quality of its instructors. These positions highlight the significance of teachers in delivering excellent lessons and as catalysts for both individual and national progress.

Guided Writing

According to Tyner (2004), guided writing is an educational setting that primarily focuses on teaching the process of writing via the use of modelling, assistance, and practice. Holdich and Chung (2003) suggest that guided writing provides young writers with enhanced prospects to establish meaningful connections between texts, sentences, and word-level choices. It also assists youngsters in shaping and revising works while considering certain criteria. According to Brown (1994), guided writing reduces the teacher's authority while yet providing a set of inquiries.

According to Huebener (1965), directed writing is the subsequent stage of writing, following imitative writing and dictation. These contributions clearly indicate that teachers must possess a substantial cognitive advantage over learners in order to effectively support or give any writing intervention to learners. According to Silva (1990), instructors have significant roles in assisting students in developing effective techniques for initiating, composing, revising, and editing. Learners should be highly motivated, particularly during the early phases of writing, in order to provide assistance for guided writing. According to Jeffrey (2009), motivation refers to the internal factors such as needs, wants, interests, and aspirations that drive individuals towards a certain goal or path. According to Lim (2004), motivation is a crucial factor for learners, whether they are beginners or struggling writers.

Guided Writing for Who?

This study focuses on the use of guided writing strategies to support emergent and struggling writers in primary and junior secondary schools. The phrase 'emergent' refers to an individual who is beginning to demonstrate aptitude in a certain area, such as writing. This person has the capacity

to achieve mastery in writing provided they get suitable guidance from teachers, educated parents, and siblings. At this facility, young children will get guidance starting from the basic stages of drawing, scribbling, and writing letters and names. They will advance through each stage as they improve. Once a budding writer achieves proficiency in letter formation, they excitedly progress to composing words. While writing, many spelling patterns may arise, requiring teachers to take appropriate correction actions. This is important to prevent humiliation for emerging learners and to prevent discouragement, as writing is regarded a challenging endeavour. Bear, Inverenizzi, Templeton, and Johnston (1996) provide a concise overview of the five stages of spelling development observed in emerging authors. These stages are: preliterate, letter sounds, inside words, syllable junction, and derivational consistency.

Struggling writers refer to individual writers who have progressed beyond the initial stages of writing but have not yet achieved the expected level of writing proficiency. This lack of proficiency can be attributed to various factors such as writing difficulties, environmental influences, teachers' competence in terms of instructional methods and subject matter mastery, grammatical structures, spelling errors, and other obstacles. The group of pupils can benefit from and be effectively repositioned via the implementation of guided writing.

Types of Writing Instructions.

For learners to develop good writing skills, they can be helped with any or combined types of the under listed writing instructions: modeled, shared, interactive, guided and independent.

	Modeled	Shared writing	Interactive	Guided	Independent
What is looks like	Teachers do the writing in the front of pupils and create the text.	Teachers and pupils create texts together	Techers and pupils create a text and share the actual writing	Teachers presents a structured lesson and writing procedure and supervises as pupils write	Pupils use the writing process to write a text. The teacher monitors the progress and provide the feedback
Who does the working	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher & pupils	Pupils	Pupils
Who does the thinking	Teachers	Mostly teachers &pupils help	Teachers and pupils together	Mostly pupils and teachers help	Pupils
Levels of supports received by pupils		Teachers & pupils plan think together. The teacher writes	Both do the thinking planning and writing together	Teachers provides the structure but pupils do the thinking planning and writing	Pupils the thinking planning and writing.

Culled from Introduction to Teaching Reading in Primary 1-3, Student Teacher Resource Book, 2018 Edition, page 87.

Using Substitution Table as Guided Writing

Substitution table is one of the ways through which emergent or struggling writers can be assisted. Substitution table assists writers to identify right subject- verb agreement, right choice of words, accuracy in writing sentences and paragraphs.

The below composition contains in the box can be used to write three short paragraphs.

Table 1

I	likes your son			has	finished
Ngozi	like your brother	Akpan	I	have just	started
Emmanuel	likes your friend			have	been admitted

at the	secondary school	I	is	very intelligent
to	university	but he	am	a great football
	primary school	She	am	very gentle

Her	coach		him	to teach the class
My	mother	allows	me	cook for my siblings
His	teacher		her	coach his teammates
All	her	siblings	loves	him
	his	classmates	love	her
	my	teammates	loved	me
				very much

His	coach	is		me
Her	teacher	are	equally proud of	her
My	mother			him

The following sentences and paragraphs can be realized.

The first paragraph

I like your brother, Akpan. I have just finished at the secondary school but I am very intelligent. My mother allows me to cook for my siblings. All my siblings love me very much. My mother is equally proud of me.

The second paragraph

Ngozi likes your brother, Akpan. She has just finished at the University but she is very gentle. Her teacher allows her to teach the class. All her classmates love her very much. Her teacher is equally proud of her.

The third paragraph

Emmanuel likes you brother, Akpan. He has just been admitted to a primary school but he is a great footballer. His coach allows him to coach his teammates. His teammates love him very much. His coach is equally proud of him.

From the above, appropriateness of personal pronouns functioning as the subjects with the appropriate verbs are indirectly taught.

Ayo Banji, Adekunle Adeniran, Ayo Akano, and Uzoma Onaga (2020) New Oxford Secondary English Course 1 for Junior Secondary Schools. New Edition.

From the below substitution table, two different introductory paragraphs can be written on the topic titled 'The day I shall never forget'

Table 2

I	woke up suddenly	on	Tuesday	morning of	4 th December, 2019
	got up early		Friday		25 th May, 2020

I felt	very happy weak and sad	I	quickly sluggishly	did my morning duties
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My mother was	impressed disturbed	at	seeing me
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She	asked commented	‘Bisi, is anything wrong’ ‘Bisi, I share your joy, Good luck, love’.
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I answered,	‘I am alright, mum, Just tired’ “ Thank you, mum, love you	I ate my breakfast and
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dashed out of the house lingered in the house	eager reluctant	to get to school
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Ayo Banji, Adekunle Adeniran, Ayo Akano, and Uzoma Onaga (2020) New Oxford Secondary English Course 1 for Junior Secondary Schools. New Edition.

The following introductory paragraphs can be realized.

I got up eagerly on Tuesday morning of 4th December, 2019. I felt very happy. I quickly did my morning duties. My mother was impressed at seeing me. She asked ' Bisi , I share your joy , Good luck, love'. I answered, ' Thank you, mum, love you'. I ate my breakfast and dashed out of the house, eager to get to school.

Paragraph 2

I woke up suddenly on Friday morning of 25th May, 2020. I felt weak and sad. I sluggishly did my morning duties. My mother was disturbed at seeing me. She asked, ' Bisi, is anything wrong?'. I answered, ' I am alright, mum, just tired'. I ate my breakfast and lingered in the house, reluctant to get to school.

From the above two paragraphs, basic concepts are taught that include,,: first person singular used in a simple past tense, right punctuation marks, direct speech and logical progression of thoughts. From these introductory paragraphs, emergent writers or struggling writers can be encouraged to proceed to the second paragraph.

Abilities of writers to flow with thought progression is considered a good mastery of writing. Right punctuations of sentences also play crucial roles in writing. Akere (2002) sees punctuation in English language as an essential aspect of meaning of a sentence. Punctuation marks serve multifarious purposes in expressing thoughts in language. (Mawodoku 2020). Therefore, teachers are enjoined to ensure that punctuations are well marked in writing.

Another way of rendering instructional assistance through guided writing is fill the gap with the most appropriate word. This affords learners to select among words listed for filling the gap. It tests the lexis and structure of learners.

Snail Hunting

Last year, -_1, the rainy season began, my father, mother, two brothers and I __-2 snail hunting. You must look for snails _-_3it is dark __4. Dad chose a night __5__there was no moon and the forest was very dark indeed. Mum reminded me, 'Ekaete, remember to bring lantern and a box of matches'. 'I have them, mum', I answered.

My younger brother, Akpan was very excited. He ran to dad and said, ' Hold me, I want to near you'. We moved slowly to the bushes and trees bending down to look under the rocks and tree trunks. It was easy to lose sight of us __7__she discovered a place filled with a lot of big snails and wandered off to gather as many as possible. We had moved on some distance ___8, we noticed

her absence. Peter, my elder brother, took the lantern and went to look for her ___9___ they arrived. Dad was no longer disturbed but happy ___10__. She had picked a lot of snails.

Table 3

	1		2	
	[as soon as where because]		[go went were going]	
3	4	5	6	
[Because Often When]	[therefore although when]	[when though before]	[before as through]	
7	8	9		
[until before as]	[before when where]	[when Therefore Although]		
	10			
	[after because how]			

From the above, the following composition can be realised.

Last year, as soon as the rainy season began, my father, mother two brothers and I went snail hunting. You must look for snails when it is dark. Therefore, dad chose a night when no moon and forest was very dark indeed. Mum reminded me, "Ekaete, remember to bring the lantern and a box of matches". 'I have them mum'. I answered.

My younger brother, Akpan was very excited. He ran to dad and said, 'Dad, hold me, I want to near you'. We moved slowly through the bushes and trees bending down to look under the rocks and tree trunks. It was easy to lose sight of us, until she discovered a place filled with a lot of big snails and wandered off to gather as many as possible. We had moved on some distance before we

noticed her absence. Peter, my elder brother took the lantern and went to look for her when they arrived. Dad was no longer disturbed but happy because she had picked a lot of snails.

As productive and helpful this strategy is, one important factor must be taken into consideration which is feedback to learners. Altaeib, (2018) and Fadhel (2017) state that providing students with negative feedback makes them fear writing and expressing their thoughts and stick only to the words and expressions they always use in order to avoid making mistakes

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that teachers owe their learners, most especially emergent writers and particularly struggling writers the responsibilities of using guided writing as a strategy to serve as interventions of bailing students out of writing challenges. No doubt, second language learners have difficulties in the mastery of English language most especially writing, the most difficult skill, guided writing will soften the hardship if teachers can painstakingly lead learners through guided writing as one of the strategies of resolving writing problems.

Recommendations

The study recommends the followings:

1. Teachers should be dynamic and strategic to use guided writing to assist learners on writing.
2. Teachers are encouraged to search for additional new knowledge on approaches to teaching writing as a skill.
3. Government should endeavour to facilitate workshop and seminars on current teaching approaches.
4. Government should provide relevant texts for pupils and students in Junior Secondary Schools to assist them in writing.

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