

BLENDING LEARNING APPROACH AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ESSAY WRITING IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANYIGBA, KOGI STATE

¹UGBOJA, Anthony & ²OMACHONU, Clement Gowon

^{1&2}Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education,
Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State.

Email: Ugboja.a@ksu.edu.ng or tonyugboja@gmail.com & Omachonu.cg@ksu.edu.ng

Abstract

This study is aimed at investigating Blended Learning Approach on Student's Academic Achievement in the teaching and learning of English Language in Senior Secondary Schools in Anyigba, Kogi State. The researcher raised two research questions and formulated two hypotheses to guide the study. The research design used in the study is quasi-experimental design. All the SSII students in Anyigba Metropolis form the population for the study. The total population for this study is six thousand, eight hundred and sixty-two SSII students. The study used purposeful sampling techniques to select two schools and 70 students which serve as the sample for the study. Pre-test was administered to both control and experimental groups before treatment commenced. Four weeks was used for treatment, the same instrument was administered as post-test. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while hypotheses were tested using analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 levels of significance. The result indicated that Blended learning had significant effect on students' academic achievement in Essay writing in Anyigba senior secondary schools; there was no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students taught essay writing using blended learning approach. From the findings of the study, it was concluded among others that blended learning approach has positive effect on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in Essay writing in Anyigba. There is no significant difference in the male and female mean achievement in essay writing when taught using blended learning approach. Based on the above, it was recommended that blended learning approach be adopted in teaching essay writing in senior secondary schools in Nigeria.

Introduction

A study from relevant authorities' reveal that many students graduate from secondary schools without good background knowledge of the English language. The English language in Nigeria being the language of instruction, media, commerce, trade and international relations, there is need to prepare students adequately to be able to communicate effectively since the purpose of language is for communication. There is need, therefore, to give maximum

Blended Learning Approach And Students' Academic Achievement

attention to developing basic skills in teaching and learning of the English language at the secondary level to prepare them for further career. Looking at the status of English Language and its role in the secondary school curriculum, it is crystal clear that students lack the basic language skills that can prepare them for their further academic career.

The electronic evolution i.e., Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought about a rapid expansion in the 21st century's classroom. English language teaching has witnessed a huge revolution in the educational applications of the computer. ICT's use in education is beginning to take various forms starting from education to the use of the internet and finally the innovative techniques which is a new trend has emerged as blended learning approach. This new trend depends on technology to provide learners with quality educational content. Notable scholars recognize the importance of adjusting the curriculum to keep up with the age of ICT but there is no agreement on the type and amount of the required modification needed.

Stakeholders in education believe that the preparation of young learners and arming them with the basic ICT in education and use is the most appropriate way of rehabilitating learners in order to cope with the changing world. The change in our world left view point on our modern societies with no choice but to adapt the information age because this innovation has become necessary for continued survival and progress (Bani, 2011). It is on this background that this present research wants to investigate the effect of blended learning approach on the academic achievement of SS2 students in essay writing in Anyigba metropolis.

Blended learning approach can also be seen as hybrid learning approach. It is a teaching technique that integrates technology and digital media with traditional instructor-led classroom method, giving learners more flexibility to customize their learning experience. The learning approach is one of the most modern approaches of teaching and learning which helps in solving the classroom challenges; that is, the growing demand for teaching and learning of English language in the modern classroom. Blended learning approach is new trend in education that create new opportunity in the modern classroom, this approach was introduced into the teaching of distance learning students, which by implication creates opportunities to rehabilitate workers who need some remedial programme without leaving their jobs and teaching housewives without relinquishing their position which to a large extent increased the literacy rate and eliminating illiteracy. Blended learning approach increases learning effectiveness to a large extent, decreases the time required for training and allowed learners to study at their favorite time and preferred places of learning. It provides learners with adequate information needed to practically engage in teaching and learning exercises. (AlShunnaq, Bani, & Domi, 2010).

Blended learning approach is an innovative trend in education that is used in the modern classroom for teaching and learning; it can be described as an educational approach/technique in which more than one channel is used in impacting knowledge, wisdom, and experience to learners in the classroom. (Freihat, 2004). This approach according to the author, combines the advantages of e-learning and the benefit of conventional teaching method in the 21st century classroom. The integration of the two approaches, i.e., e-learning and face-to-face learning

have enormous benefits in the modern classroom. In the opinion of Thorne (2003), blended learning is the integration between e-learning and face-to-face instruction.

Some of the barriers faced by schools in planning blended learning experience is to allocate appropriate time needed by the learners to complete the online portion of the course which includes reading assigned materials, collaborative discussion, interacting with digital learning materials, completing online quizzes and tests. In the actual sense, it is very challenging trying to speculate the amount of time that learners spend in reading textbooks and completing written assignments at home. (Veledinskaya & Dorofeeva, 2014).

With the innovation in communication and network technologies, the teaching approach/technique has changed as new trend has emerged to equipped learners with meaningful learning experiences the modern classroom. Blended learning classrooms which are both virtual and traditional method is used to deliver meaningful learning experiences as contained in the programme of learning. Blended learning approach as an innovative teaching style is growing rapidly because of the role it plays in enhancing learning outcomes and increasing student's satisfaction and participation in the teaching and learning process (Lim & Morris, 2009). It is based on the above background that the present study investigated blended learning approach on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in essay writing in Anyigba Metropolis.

The present study investigates essay writing of senior secondary students in Anyigba Metropolis. Essay writing is a style of writing, often written from the author's point of view. Essay consists of several elements which include imaginative, criticism, and observations of daily life experience, recollection and reflections of the author. Essays can be classified as thus: Narrative, Descriptive, Expository, or Imaginative, and Argumentative etc.

According to Amuseghan (2007) conventional approach in teaching writing skills employed by almost all the teachers of English in Anyigba Metropolis is the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach in which the bulk of the writing tasks lie heavily on the teacher. This approach is straight forward; the teacher presents the target language and students are asked to practice it; first in a well-controlled activities and free activities. It is only later that students are allowed to produce. The PPP approach starts with input and ends with output.

The first stage of PPP is presentation of an aspect of language in a context that students are familiar with. The second stage is practice, where students will be given an activity that gives them enough opportunity to practice the new aspect of language and be familiar with it. At this stage, the teacher monitors this process and gives little support (teacher's center). The final stage is production, here, the students will be asked to use the language in context, in an activity set up by the teacher who will be giving minimal assistance (Jing, 2007). To emphasis further, Ksenia, (2011) states that PPP focuses on form might benefit learners in relation to grammar instruction, especially in the early stages of learning yet, this approach has been criticized as merely providing focus on form of second language learning (SL), it does not seem to promote adequacy in learning essay writing. Jing (2007) listed the shortcomings of PPP as thus:

Blended Learning Approach And Students' Academic Achievement

- a.) It is a teacher centered activities when teacher is lengthy to talk.
- b.) Learners in most cases get bored and unwilling to participate in the learning process.
- c.) Students are not given the chance to be creative in the classroom activities.

This approach is dominant in the traditional classroom especially in Anyigba Metropolis. This method is observed to have been predominantly employed in teaching essay writing in Senior Secondary Schools in Anyigba. This study is centered on the belief that application of blended learning approach to the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools would help transform students learning experience and develop their essay writing skills with positive impacts on the use of English and overall achievement in both internal and external examinations.

Gender is socially ascribed status of either male or female. In agreement Okeke (2000) states that gender is seen as socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviour and expectations associated with males and females. The author stresses further that, males and females are biologically different even with different cultural interpretation. It is also worthy to note that biologically inherent differences in social expectations about what behaviour and activities are appropriate and expected of each gender and what rights, resources and even power they possess. In the study of Beard and Burrell (2010) on assumption of third grade students' skills in narrative writing fluency and text quality, the study found out that female are more fluent in writing skills as measured by the total number of written words with a time limit, and produced better text in comparison to their male counterpart.

Female learners in the primary grades performed consistently better than their male counterpart in the areas of reading comprehension and writing skills. In science, boys' and girls' performance is on the same level at age nine; but beginning in the middle school, the performance of girls will begin to decline. It is also discovered that White boys perform better than White girls in science, but by age 17, both White and Hispanic males perform better than their female counterparts. Some proponents of single-sex education view this achievement gap as evidence that co-education hurts female students, but the exact cause have not been ascertained (Hurst & Johansen, 2006). Regardless of the many thoughts and opinion that have been presented, this study will investigate blended learning approach on the essay writing achievement of senior secondary schools in Anyigba Metropolis.

The present study has adopted computer mediated communication theory (CMC) as the theoretical framework that will form the basis for the study. This unique theory is designed to look at CMC from a communication perspective which was propounded by Walther (1992) because of the author's robust background in communication. The author expresses further that human impressions of those we interact with and the interpersonal interaction with others is not static since we are living in a society that is dynamic. Walther later expanded his ideas of CMC to include a new concept he referred to as hyper personal interactions. Hyper personal interactions are those interactions that are beyond traditional classroom face-to-face (FTF) to include online self-help group discussion, Face-book post, or email, media conferencing, among others.

This present study is centered on the version proposed by Herb, (2000). The computer mediated communication (CMC) is based on human communication or interactions that make use of two electronic devices. (CMC) referred to every aspect of human communication that occurs through the use two or more electronic channels. Some of these channels are e-mail, online forums, instant messaging, text-based interaction, video conferencing, phone call, facebook, WhatsApp etc. The above channels have been introduced into teaching and learning to meet up the 21st century's innovative classroom.

Computer Based Training (CBT) was the first online learning that was introduced into teaching and learning. There is no doubt that this is the reason the CBT is also referred to as Computer Based Learning (CBL). When CBL was introduced into teaching and learning, the focus was on interaction between learners in the classroom. The innovative approach has changed to what is generally known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), the mode of interactions eventually changed, the CMC now plays a multidimensional role in the classroom as a mediator between students and instructors for effective teaching and learning.

It is pertinent to note that CBT and CBL is seen as individualized learning while CMC move further to incorporate teacher/tutor and students which allowed the arrangement of flexible and active learning activities in the classroom. It is unequivocally clear that introduction of CMC work as a catalyst in a full time distance learning.

Introduction of ICT has changed a lot in our classroom by giving the world more control over information to make learning easy. It can expose teachers and learners to focus on more complex tasks, using the computer as a major instructional material. Despite all the numerous role of this innovative approach, many people still see it as a threat in the classroom especially people who by implication have spent all their lives in the traditional way of teaching and learning (FTF) have the same view towards computer as people of old, they see it as magic in the teaching and learning. This is the reason why this theory is relevant to form background for the present study since the theory believes in using double channel in the interaction between the instructors and the learners, this double interaction is very significant in the blended learning approach since it combine online and face-face learning

English language is a compulsory school subject which requires much more explanations and applications because the competency of the language is about using it to communicate since it serves as language of instruction and official language. It has been observed over the years that English language competency is lacking in senior secondary schools in Anyigba, therefore, the need to find out if blended learning approach would help to fill this gap in teaching and learning becomes eminent. But how can blended learning approach improve students' achievement in English? It's obvious from literature that the teaching and learning of English as a compulsory subject in senior secondary schools is characterized by the use of traditional method which does not give room for active participation to be at the center of learning with effective collaboration by students, therefore, the need to employ modern and technological-based instructional approach (blended learning approach) in the teaching of English in senior secondary schools in Anyigba Metropolis, Kogi State

Blended Learning Approach And Students' Academic Achievement

The general objective of this research is to investigate the effects of blended learning approach on student's academic achievement in English language. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the following.

1. The effects of blended learning approach on students' achievement in essay writing in Anyigba metropolis.
2. The influence of gender on the achievement of students taught essay writing using blended learning approach and those taught using traditional learning approach in Ayigba Metropolis.

The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study.

1. What are the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using blended learning approach and those taught using the tradition learning approach?
2. What are the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using blended learning approach and those taught using traditional learning approach?

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach and those taught using traditional learning approach.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using blended learning approach

This study utilized a pre-test, post-test non-equivalent quasi-experimental design. In a quasi-experimental study, there is no random assignment of subjects rather intact classes were used for the study. There was treatment group where students were taught essay writing using the Blended learning Approach and a control group that was taught using traditional learning approach (PPP). The population of the study consists of the entire 14 senior secondary schools with a total of 6,862 students in Anyigba Metropolis, Kogi State. The schools used for this study are government secondary schools.

The sample of this study was an intact class of senior secondary two students that was selected using purposeful sampling technique. This technique was used to select only SS2 students who are preparing for WASSCE since SS3 is a terminal class they cannot be use for this study. The intact class was selected from two public senior secondary schools. The intact classes from the two schools were divided into control group of 34 students and experimental group of 36 students making a total of 70 students. The instrument for data collection was an English Achievement Test (EAT) for both pre-test and post-test.

The face and content validity of the English Achievement Test (EAT) was presented to three experts: two from the Department of Arts Education and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, both in the Faculty of Education, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba. This was done to make sure the content was in line with purpose of the study.

The English Achievement Test (EAT) was subjected to test of reliability using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21 (K-R₂₁). Since the instrument was dichotomously scored. The score obtained from the administered instruments was recorded and subjected to (K-R₂₁) formula and the reliability index of 0.82 was obtained.

The researcher developed a good rapport with research assistants giving and explaining the content of the instructional activities and how the lessons should be delivered. Teachers in the treatment and control groups were subjected to separate training in line with the demands of the packages for the study. The researcher further monitored the experiment to ensure that there was no deviation from the specified procedures. The instrument (EAT) was delivered directly by the researcher with the help of the research assistants to both control and experimental groups. The researcher and the assistant supervised the tests after which the copies of completed tests were collected from the students on the spot for assessment. The scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean achievement scores of students in experimental and control groups taught essay writing using blended approach and traditional approach.

Variable Instructional Mode	N	Pretest		Posttest		Mean Gain
		\bar{x}	sd	\bar{x}	sd	
Treatment group (Blended Approach)	36	32.13	4.74	63.30	5.52	31.17
Control group (Traditional Approach)	34	34.43	5.63	43.30	4.71	8.87

Results in Table 1 show that the experimental group had a pretest mean of 32.13 with a standard deviation of 4.74 and a posttest mean of 63.30 with a standard deviation of 5.52. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean for the experimental group was 31.8. The control group had a pretest mean of 34.43 with a standard deviation of 5.63 and a posttest mean of 43.30 with a standard deviation of 4.71. The mean gain for both pre-test and post-test as shown in the table is: 31.17 & 8.87. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean for control group was 8.87. However, for each of the groups, the posttest means were greater than the pretest means with the experimental group having the higher mean gain. This is an indication that blended learning approach has some effects on essay writing of senior secondary schools in Anyigba Metropolis.

Table 2: Mean achievement of male and female students taught essay writing using blended learning Approach.

Variable	N	Pre-test Interest		Post-test Interest		Mean gain
		\bar{x}	sd	\bar{x}	sd	
Gender Male	34	35.53	5.72	61.45	6.1	25.92

Blended Learning Approach And Students' Academic Achievement

Female	36	36.33	5.8	72.00	5.26	35.67
--------	----	-------	-----	-------	------	-------

Results in table 2 above show that male students had a pretest mean of 35.53 with a standard deviation of 5.72 and a posttest mean of 61.45 with a standard deviation of 61.0. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean for the male students was 25.92. The female students had a pretest mean of 36.33 with a standard deviation of 5.8 and a posttest mean of 72.00 with a standard deviation of 5.26. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean for the female was 35.67. However, for each of the groups, the posttest means were greater than the pretest means with the female students having higher mean gain. This is an indication that blended learning approach has significant effect on both female and male students' achievement in essay writing in Anyigba Metropolis.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement of students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach and those taught using the traditional learning approach.

Table 3: ANCOVA for students' overall achievement by Methods and interactions

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Dec.
Corrected Model	20656.584 ^a	0	10226.352	313.361	0.00	0.83	
Intercept	6836.099	1	6836.099	211.438	0.00	0.62	
Pre-test	579.090	1	579.090	15.728	0.00	0.12	
Group	20831.935	2	20831.935	442.735	0.00	0.83	S
Error	3101.206	63	32.301				
Total	362677.000	68		736736736			
Corrected Total	22668.751	70					

Note: S = Significant NS = Not Significant, $\alpha = 0.05$

For hypothesis 1, the alpha level (0.05) is greater than the probability value (.000). This indicates significant result. Based on the decision rule the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach and those taught using the traditional learning approach

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach.

Table 4: Analysis of Co-Variance of Mean Achievement Scores of male and female students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach (Treatment groups only)

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	Sig of f
Covariates (Pretest)	7922.570	1	7922.570	358.988	.000

Main Effects (Gender)	8.262	0	8.262	.374	.541
Explained	7930.832	1	3965.416	179.681	.000
Residual	4899.363	68	22.069	S	
Total	12830.196	70	57.278		

Summary of data analysis shown in Table 4 reveals that the alpha level (0.05) is less than the significance of f-value (.541). Based on the decision rule the researcher upholds the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach and those taught using traditional learning approach.

Results presented here reveal the following as the major findings of the study.

1. Blended learning approach has significant effect on students' academic achievement scores in essay writing. The group taught using the blended learning approach, performed significantly higher than the group taught using the traditional learning approach.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using the blended learning approach meanwhile there is a significant effect on achievement of both male and female students when taught using blended learning approach, this is shown in the pre-test and post-test above.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that students in the treatment group taught essay writing using the blended learning approach obtained a higher mean achievement score than those in the control group who were taught using the traditional learning approach. This finding agrees with the finding of Thompson, (2011) whose review indicates that, using a blended classroom led to remarkable academic performance and positive attitude that could increase interaction between teachers and learners. It was noted also that the application of blended learning could increase students' engagement and improve their performance. The present study agrees with the above findings which also encouraged blended classroom approach which improves students' performance in essay writing.

Table 2 reveals that there is significance difference in the achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing using blended learning approach. This finding agrees with the findings of Beard and Burrell (2010) which revealed that female are more fluent in writing, as measured by the total number of written words with a time limit, and produced better text in comparison to their male counterpart. However, the result of this finding disagrees with the findings of Torty (2010), that gender has no significant influence on students' achievement. The researchers did not establish any significant difference in the achievement of male and female students taught the English language using different methods and techniques. This recent findings by this study indicates that with the effective application of the blended learning approach, good results can be achieved by both male and female students as seen in the pre-test and post-test of both groups.

Conclusion

English language is a medium that helps people to think, communicate and express ideas in today's world. The expression of ideas through writing is very key to teaching and learning since academic progress or achievement is assessed through writing, writing in English language should, therefore, be given full attention, especially essay writing from secondary school to prepare them for tertiary institutions. Writing as a skill is developed through effective teaching using appropriate approach and methodology with a lot of activities in the classroom. It is expected that teachers are to assist students by teaching the rudiments of essay writing. Teaching with relevant innovative approach will help students to analyze written work in terms of correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, and meaningful punctuation, spelling, connecting ideas to develop information and organizing it appropriately using relevant innovative approach/strategy.

However, the finding from this study proved that blended learning could improve students' achievement in essay writing significantly. The study, therefore, concludes that blended learning be adopted in the teaching of essay writing in the senior secondary schools in Nigeria. To achieve this, training is expected to be conducted for language teachers because it is said that "you cannot give what you do not have".

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Blended learning approach be adopted in the teaching and learning of essay writing in senior secondary schools in Nigeria.
2. This study also recommends that both male and female students be taught essay writing using blended learning approach in senior secondary schools in Nigeria since it shows significant improvement in the teaching and learning of essay writing.

References

- Amuseghan, S. (2007). ESL Curriculum in Secondary Schools: Issues and Challenges towards Communicative Competence. *Nebula Journal*.4(2), 319-333.
- Alshunnaq. A., Bani C.& Domi S. (2010). Effects of a Blended Learning Strategy in Teaching Vocabulary on Premedical Students' Achievement. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*. 7(2), 64-72.
- Al-Rimawi, F.T. (2016). The Effect of using the Blended Learning in Teaching English Language. *Unpublished Master's Thesis*.
- Beard, R.& Burrell, A. (2010). Writing Attainment in 9- to 11-year-olds: Some Differences between Girls and Boys in Two Genres. *Language and Education*. 24(6), 495–515.
- Bani, H. (2011). Effective of Blended Learning in Improving Students' Achievement in Third Grade's Science in Bani Kenana. <https://files.eric.edu.gov>.

- Freihat, Y. (2004). Effective Blended Learning among Undergraduate Students. <http://psychologyandeducation.net/analysis>.
http://www1.aucegypt.edu/faculty/thompson/herbtea/articles/iadat_15.pdf
- Hiltz, D. (1988). Teaching Philosophy. www.Jaist.ac.jp/johnb/pdfs/tpsv3.pdf. on 12 November, 2015.
- Halilu, I.U.& Siliki, M.S. (2017). *Integration of Blended Learning in Universal Basic Education School in Nigeria: The Way Forward*. Paper Presented at the 30th Annual National Conference of Curriculum Organization of Nigeria.
- Jing, R.L.(2007). *Theme and Thematic Progress in English Writing Teaching*. College of International Studies, Southwest University.
- Walther, J.B. (1992). Theory of Computer Mediated Communication and Interpersonal Relation. <http://wiki.comres.org>
- Ksenia, B. (2011). *Implementing Task-Based Learning of English as L2 at Private Courses for Adult False-Beginners in Russia*. Master's Thesis, University Stavanger, Stavanger.
- Lim, D.H.& Moris, M.L. (2009). Learners and Instructional Factors Influencing Learning Outcomes within a Blended Learning Environment. <http://www.researchgate.net>
- Okeke, D. (2000). Influence of Electronic Media on Reading ability of School Children. www.digitalcommon.unl.edu/lib...
- Robinson, T. (2009). The Impact of Open Textbooks on Secondary Science Learning Outcomes. *Educational Researcher*. 43(7), 341-351.
- Torty, O.U. (2010). Effect of Collaborative Learning Method. <https://www.scirp.org>
- Thorne, K. (2003). *Blended Learning: How to Integrate Online and Traditional Learning Approach*. Sterling VA: Kogan Page Limited.
- Thomson, I. (2011). Thomson Job Impact Study: The Next Generation of Corporate Learning. <http://www.net.com/jobimpact>
- Veledinskaya, S.B. & Dorofeeva, M. (2014). Blended Learning: Secrets of Efficiency. *Higher Education Today*. 8, 8-13.