

Effects of Sequential and Reflective Teaching Methods on Interest and Academic Achievement: A Study of Essay Writing in English Language among Senior Secondary School Students in Abuja Metropolis

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of sequential and reflective teaching methods on Senior Secondary School students' achievement and interest in essay writing within the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design was employed across selected co-educational Senior Secondary Schools in the Abuja metropolis. The sample size comprised 158 students: 35 in the sequential teaching method group, 70 in the reflective teaching method group, and 53 in the conventional lecture method control group. Data were collected using two validated instruments: the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT) and the Essay Writing Interest Scale (EWIS). Face and content validities of both instruments were established by experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and English Language Education. The reliability coefficient for the EWAT was determined using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), yielding an index of $r = 0.82$, while the internal consistency of the EWIS was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.85$. Test scores were collected prior to (pre-test) and following (post-test) the instructional intervention. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Analysis of Covariance) via IBM SPSS Version 26. Results demonstrated that students exposed to both the sequential and reflective teaching methods achieved significantly higher mean achievement and interest scores in essay writing compared to those taught using the lecture method ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the sequential teaching method had a significantly higher positive effect on both achievement and interest levels than the reflective teaching method ($p < 0.05$). The study concluded that while both alternative instructional strategies outperform the conventional lecture method, the sequential teaching method is the most effective approach for enhancing students' essay writing performance and interest. Consequently, it was recommended that teachers integrate sequential and reflective teaching methods into Senior Secondary School English language curricula in the Abuja metropolis and comparable educational contexts.

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Introduction

Improvement in students' use of English Language for essay writing cannot be over emphasized. The Chief Examiners' Report (2020) highlights that many candidates who believe they possess the necessary skills to pass essay-writing examinations end up failing due to common issues such as muddled sentences, improper punctuation, and other technical errors. Some candidates, despite having above-average spoken English skills, fail written tests—particularly in continuous writing, which the contemporary syllabus refers to as composition. Given the multifaceted purposes English serves, particularly in education, it is crucial for students to master the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Speaking and writing have proven the most challenging skills for students to acquire. Writing is inherently more complex due to its reliance on punctuation, a feature absent in spoken language (Nygård & Hundal, 2024). The complexity of writing is particularly challenging for students learning English as a second language (L2). Reports from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) between 2019 and 2024 consistently attribute poor student performance in English to weak essay-writing abilities. Adenipekun (2020), in the *Daily Independence* newspaper, also linked students' failure in English language examinations to their inability to write coherent and well-structured essays. Continuous writing includes various essay types such as narrative, argumentative, descriptive, expository, formal and informal letters, articles, speeches and short stories. Students' performance in these areas had declined over the years, as noted in WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2019–2024). Common weaknesses include insufficient material to develop chosen essay topics, poor grammar, inadequate vocabulary, incorrect tenses, and a lack of familiarity with effective writing technique. Writing, is the process of composing text to communicate ideas, an intricate activity that requires creativity, structure, and linguistic accuracy, involving skills such as research, planning, editing, and organization (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2019).

Academic achievement in English language is the measurable performance of student's skill acquisition and competencies related to English language which encompasses various aspects of learning and application often gauged through performance areas including comprehension, essay writing (continuous writing), grammar, and oral skills. Achieving a credit pass in English language is essential for admission into tertiary institution and serves as a benchmark for effective communication and academic readiness. The persistent poor achievement in essay writing by students has been attributed to traditional teaching methods (Balwin & Linde, 2023; Pincas, 2022; Ugboja & Omachonu, 2023; Ugboja, Eze & Offor, 2018; Ezeokoli & Igubor, 2016).

Innovative approaches like the Sequential and Reflective teaching methods have shown promise in improving writing skills. The Sequential method, based on Schaffer's *Writing Pedagogy* (2000), provides structured, step-by-step guidance for composing multi-paragraph essays. It emphasizes the use of specific formats for body paragraphs, including topic sentences, concrete details, commentary, and concluding sentences. Constructive feedback is integral to this process, enabling students to refine their skills incrementally (Oxbridge Essays, 2021). The Reflective method, derived from reflective teaching practices (Farrell, 2015), involves exposing students to essay stages incrementally. Feedback and corrections are provided after each stage, allowing students to learn from their errors before compiling the final essay. This approach emphasizes self-analysis and continuous improvement. Traditional teaching methods while widely used have been acknowledged as often failing to accommodate diverse learning needs and can alienate students who struggle or excel beyond the standard pace (Wang, 2022). This calls for teaching methods that accommodates varied learner preferences and abilities involving different aspects like content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy. Various studies have reported that effective approach to writing makes it easier for understanding and increases its impact along with improved students' performances (Galve & Israel, 2024; Obiakor & Malu, 2020).

Sequential teaching method is an instructional strategy that engages students to learn a particular topic in logical order of display or is a process of imparting knowledge to learners using different instructional strategies in logical order. It provides a concrete basis for promoting critical thinking skills and enhance students' achievement. A study on the adoption of sequential teaching strategy may enhance students' achievement and retention (Sule, Dajal & Haruna, 2025).

Reflective teaching method involves critically examining instructional practices to improve student learning, engagement, and professional growth. The concept of reflective thinking was first introduced by Dewey in his work “How Do We Think” in 1910. It involves thinking about an issue and evaluating it seriously especially the thing which cannot be directly seen, hear, smell, or taste. As a result of the experiences lived during the processes of reflection-on-action and reflection in-action, the individual’s future thoughts and behaviours are shaped and come into being. In this study, the reflective teaching method required that the teacher gives information about each paragraph a day before the writing of the paragraph.

The two methods (Sequential and Reflective) as employed by the researcher, involve writing of the essay paragraph by paragraph with the assistance of the teacher over a period of four lessons. The major difference lies in the fact that while instructions on writing each paragraph is given before the paragraph is written in the Sequential method, the instruction on each paragraph is given a day before the paragraph is written in the Reflective method.

Interest is known to be a powerful motivational process that energizes learning and guides academic and career trajectories (Adelia, 2019; Renninger & Hidi, 2016). Interest is known to cause complete identification of an object, enhances long-term information and data retention, results in purposeful and meaningful learning as well as motivates learners for continuous learning (Aprilia, 2018). Interest is a pivotal drive that directs the whole system of the learning and teaching as well as paves the way for learners to overcome challenges in the learning process and facilitate the learning path by managing early or delayed learning (Ismail, 2021 & Shah, 2020)

Oguntade and Akinwamide (2022) reported significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in their investigation of Reading-Writing (RW), Think-Pair-Share (TPS), and the combination of both strategies (RW & TPS) on students’ performance in essay writing among senior secondary schools in Ondo State. Ezeokoli and Igubor (2016) reported significant main effect of treated students’ achievement in each of argumentative and expository essays and in both combined from their study, carried out to determine the effects of two modes of Essay Structure-Based Instructional Strategies (ESBIS) on students’ achievement in argumentative and expository (cause/ effect) essays. Oluikpe (2023) found that video instruction with student-student interaction enhanced essay performance more effectively than video instruction without interaction. Male students outperformed females, suggesting a significant gender effect. The study emphasized integrating interactive video instruction in classrooms and teacher training, differing in location, variables, and sample size from other researches. Obateru, Ogunleye and Lawal (2023) reported significant improvement in performance and attitudes post-treatment using model teaching methods. Differences between experimental and control groups highlighted the method’s efficacy, but variations. Zaw, Habok and Jozsa (2023) reported significant effects of reflective teaching models for reading comprehension and writing performances.

The national trend of massive failure is mirrored in the Federal Capital Territory. To improve students’ planning and organizational skills in grammar and writing, teachers must adopt methods that effectively impart these skills during the teaching-learning process. This paper is therefore focused on assessing the effects of sequential and reflective methods of teaching essay writing methods on students’ interest and achievement in essay writing, particularly in writing short stories, through experimental approach among Senior Secondary Schools in the Federal Capital Territory.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the effects of sequential and reflective methods of teaching on Senior Secondary students' interest and academic achievement in English Language essay writing within the Abuja Metropolis. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Compare the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing with sequential teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
2. Compare the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing with reflective teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
3. Compare the mean interest scores of students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
4. Compare the mean interest scores of students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
5. Compare the mean scores of students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with sequential teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are mean achievements scores of students taught essay writing with sequential teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
2. What are mean achievements scores of students taught essay writing with reflective teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
3. What are the mean interest scores of students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
4. What are the mean interest scores of secondary school students taught with the reflective and those taught with lecture method in Abuja Metropolis?
5. What are the mean achievements scores of secondary school students taught with the reflective and those taught with sequential method in Abuja Metropolis?

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H01. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement score of students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method and those taught with the lecture method Abuja Metropolis.
- H02. There is no significant difference in the mean achievements scores of students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
- H03. There is no significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught essay writing with the Sequential teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
- H04. There is no significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with the lecture method in Abuja Metropolis.
- H05. There is no significant difference in the mean achievements scores of students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with sequential method in Abuja

Methodology

The study adopted Quasi-experimental Design. It utilized the Pretest-Post-test Non-equivalent Three intact classes were used from three different schools and each were assigned experimental(A), sequential, experimental (B) reflective and control group respectively. The control group was taught using the lecture method while the other intact classes were taught using the sequential and reflective methods respectively. The teachers of English in the schools supervised every

contact. Reward method was used to encourage the students' participation. For the sequential class had 35 students while Reflective class had 70 students. The control class had 53 students. Two instruments (EWAT and EWIS) were used for the test. The students wrote on a given topic in not less than 450 (four hundred and fifty) words. The maximum mark was fifty (50) and the lowest mark was zero (0). The Essay Writing Interest Scale consisted of (20) structured questions that concerns students' positive or negative interest in essay writing. Response to each item was on a five-point rating scale ranging from SA (Strongly Agree) to SD (Strongly Disagree). The reliability coefficient for the EWAT was determined using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), yielding an index of $r = 0.82$, while the internal consistency of the EWIS was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.85$. Data collected were analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), IBM version 26. Statistical procedure adopted included descriptive and inferential statistics (Analysis of covariance, ANCOVA procedure) for the tests of the hypotheses, carried out at the fixed alpha level of 0.05

Results

The pretest and post-test achievement mean scores in sequential and lecture methods are presented in Table 1 in relation to the first research question of the study.

Table 1: Pretest and Post-test Mean Achievement Scores of Students Taught Using the Sequential and Lecture Methods

Teaching Methods	N	Pretest	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Sequential	35	13.91	1.91	20.06	0.802	6.15
Lecture	53	12.92	2.65	12.94	2.33	0.02

The mean achievement of students exposed to the use of sequential teaching method was found to be higher at the post-test level than was obtained at the pre-test stage of the study. The mean gained was 6.15. Among students exposed to the use of the lecture method, the observation did not reveal such major difference. The mean gain in achievement was just 0.02. These observations pointed to the efficacy of the sequential teaching method in terms of improvement on the students' mean achievement after their exposure to the use of the teaching method. The result here provided the solution to the first research question of the study.

Table 2 present the mean score of the students in the two groups (reflective and Lecture methods) before and after the experiment. in relation to the second research question of the study.

Table 2: Pretest and Post-test Mean Achievement Scores of students taught with reflective method and Lecture method

Teaching Methods	N	Pretest	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Reflective	70	14.25	2.12	19.74	0.735	5.49
Lecture	53	12.92	2.65	12.94	2.33	0.02

For students who were exposed to the use of the reflective teaching method, mean difference in achievement in the essay writing was 5.49 after the exposure. The observed mean difference of students exposed to the use of the lecture method was very small (0.02) which showed that the use of reflective method had more positive impact on the students' achievement in the essay writing than was observed among those exposed to the use of the lecture method. The observation here implied that the reflective teaching method had a better and positive effects on the students' achievement than the use of the lecture method.

The interest level of the students generated by the two teaching methods before and after the experiment in their essay writing are summarized in Table 3 in means and standard deviations in relation to the third research question of the study.

Table 3: Pretest and post-test mean interest scores of students taught with the sequential method and those taught with the Lecture method

Teaching Methods	N	Pretest	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Sequential	35	2.37	0.218	5.39	0.401	3.02
Lecture	53	2.45	0.943	2.97	0.891	0.52

Table 3 revealed the gain in interest on essay writing by the students who were exposed to the use of sequential teaching method was higher than was obtained among students who were taught the essay writing with the lecture method. After the experiment (mean post-test) was 3.02 compared to 0.52 obtained by students who were exposed to the use of lecture method. These observations showed that the use of the sequential teaching method was more likely to generate the students' interest on essay writing than the use of the lecture method.

Table 4 showed a summary of the mean interest scores of students in the reflective group and those that were exposed to the use of the lecture method in relation to the fourth research question of the study.

Table 4: Pretest and Post-test mean interest scores of students taught with the reflective and those taught with lecture methods

Teaching Methods	N	Pretest	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Reflective	70	2.34	0.149	4.42	0.486	2.08
Lecture	53	2.45	0.943	2.97	0.891	0.52

The mean gain in interest by students exposed to the use of the reflective teaching method was far higher than those who were taught with the lecture method as indicated in the table. Before the exposure, students who were exposed to the use of lecture method had a relatively higher mean interest in the essay writing than was observed for those in the reflective group. The observation changed after the two groups were taught with the different methods. The mean interest of students taught with reflective method rose to 4.42 from 2.34 before the exposure while the mean interest of those exposed to lecture method rose to 2.97 from 2.45 before the exposure. The mean gains were 2.08 for reflective group and 0.52 for the lecture method respectively. The observation here further pointed to the efficacy in generating more students' interest in essay writing by the use of reflective teaching method,

The effects of the two (Sequential and Reflective) teaching methods on the students' achievement were compared here in relation to the fifth research question of the study. Table 5 showed a summary of the Pre-test and Post-test achievement mean scores of the students taught essay writing with the two teaching methods.

Table 5: Pretest and Post-test Mean Achievement Scores of Students Taught with the Sequential and Reflective Methods

Teaching Methods	N	Pretest	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Sequential	35	13.91	1.910	20.06	0.802	6.15
Reflective	70	14.25	2.120	19.74	0.735	5.49

The mean scores in Table 4.5 revealed that students who were exposed to the use of the sequential teaching method had higher mean achievement in the essay writing than their counterparts who were exposed to the use of reflective teaching method. Before the exposure, mean achievement of students in the sequential group was 13.91 with a standard deviation of 1.910. This mean rose to 20.06 with a standard deviation of 0.802 with a mean gain of 6.15 after the experiment. For those in the reflective group, the mean achievement was 14.25 with a standard deviation of 2.120 before the exposure. After the exposure, the mean rose to 19.74 with a standard deviation of 0.735 and a mean gain of 5.49. These observations gave an edge in mean achievement to students who were taught the essay writing with sequential teaching method.

Test of the Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated to validate the efficacy of the teaching methods were tested as follows:

Hypothesis I: There is no significant difference in the achievement mean score of secondary school students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method and those taught with lecture methods in Abuja Metropolis.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) procedure was used in comparing the mean scores of the two teaching methods with the pre-test score as a covariate factor. The result is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: ANCOVA on mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing with sequential and lecture Methods after the experiment.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Teaching methods	5.156	1	5.156	22.034	0.000
Pre-test score	0.402	1	0.402	1.717	0.419
Error	7.488	32	0.234		

Result of the test in Table 6 revealed that the mean score of the students from the classes taught with the different teaching methods differed significantly ($p < 0.05$). This is indicated with an observed F-value of 22.034 with a p-value of 0.000/ The inclusion of the pre-test score as the covariate factor did not show any influence of the student's prior-knowledge on the post-test achievement in the essay writing. The implication here is that the improved and significant mean difference could be attributed solely to the effect of the teaching methods. As indicated in Table 1, the students who were exposed to the use of the sequential teaching method had significantly higher mean achievement in the essay writing than was observed among those who were taught with the lecture method. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis II: There is no significant difference in the achievement mean score of secondary school students taught Essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with lecture methods Abuja Metropolis.

The result of the analysis of variance procedure used for the test is summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: ANCOVA on achievements mean scores of students taught with reflective and lecture methods after the experiment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Teaching methods	2.523	1	2.523	16.600	0.000
Pre-test score	0.466	1	0.466	3.062	0.084
Error	10.184	67	0.152		

The observed F-value (16.600) for comparing the mean score of the two teaching methods in Table 4.7 indicated significant difference. Students exposed to the use of reflective teaching method had a significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher mean score in their essay writing achievement than was obtained for those who were taught with the conventional lecture method as indicated in Table 2 where the mean scores were presented. In Table 7, the use of the pre-test score as a covariate factor did not have a significant influence on the achievement outcome in the essay writing among the students. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis III: There is no significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method and those taught with lecture method in Abuja Metropolis. Table 8 showed the analysis of covariance procedure used for comparing the mean interests of the two groups after the experiment.

Table 8: ANCOVA on means interest scores of students taught with sequential teaching method and those taught with lecture method after the experiment.

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Teaching methods	1.156	1	1.156	4.940	0.000
Pre-test score	0.402	1	0.402	1.718	0.319
Error	7.487	32	0.234		

Table 8 revealed that the observed mean interest gains in obtained for the two groups in Table 3 were significantly different ($p < 0.05$). The use of the pre-test score as the covariate factor did not significantly influence outcome of the students' interest in the essay writing. This is indicated with observed F-value of 1.718 and a p-value of 0.319 in the table. The observations here provided enough evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis IV: There is no significant difference in the interest mean score of secondary school students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method and those taught with lecture methods in Abuja Metropolis.

Table 9: ANCOVA on means interest scores of students taught with reflective teaching method and those taught with lecture method after the experiment.

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Teaching methods	2.487	1	2.487	11.621	0.000
Pre-test score	0.205	1	0.205	0.958	0.602
Error	14.338	67	0.214		

The interest mean score of students taught with the reflective and lecture teaching methods differed significantly as indicated in Table 9. The observed F-value for the test was 11.621 with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This is a clear indication that the variability in the mean interest gained in essay writing by the students taught with reflective method was significantly higher than the observed gains with the lecture method. These observations provided sufficient evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis V: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught Essay writing with the sequential teaching method and those taught with reflective method. The mean interests of the two experimental groups were compared here to determine the method that is more effective for interest generation in essay writing among the students. Table 10 showed a summary of the analysis of covariance model.

Table 10: ANCOVA on means interest scores of students taught with reflective teaching method and sequential teaching method after the experiment.

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Teaching methods	0.854	1	0.854	3.650	0.030
Pre-test score	0.402	1	0.402	1.717	0.197
Error	23.868	102	0.234		

The observed F-value for test was 3.650 with a p-value of 0.030 ($p < 0.05$). These observations were clear indications that the two methods differed significantly in the mean interest generation on essay writing among the students. In Table 5, it was observed that the sequential teaching method had higher mean interest score. The observed variability is proved to be significant in this test. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The implication is that the use of sequential teaching method generated more interest among students in essay writing than the use of reflective teaching method.

Discussions

This study revealed that use of sequential teaching method significantly improved on the mean achievement of Senior Secondary School students who were exposed to it in the teaching and learning of essay writing when compared to use of the lecture teaching method. This finding support previous finding by Regis-Onuoha (2021), who concluded that teaching methods can influence students' performance. The study revealed that the use of the sequential teaching method significantly improved the interest levels of students in essay writing when compared with the use of the traditional lecture method. The study established that use of reflective teaching method significantly improved mean achievement and interest levels of students in essay writing when they were exposed to its usage. The means scores obtained were significantly higher than those observed among students who were exposed to the use of the traditional teaching method after the experiment. The findings of this study revealed that the use of sequential teaching method had significantly higher efficacy in improving mean achievement of students and their interest level in essay writing then the use of the reflective method when effectiveness of the two methods were compared. This result is consistent with (Zaw, Habok, & Jozsa, 2023).

This study concluded that **sequential teaching method** and the **reflective teaching method** are more effective for improving mean achievement of students in essay writing than the use of the conventional lecture method. The use of sequential and reflective teaching methods had significantly higher impact in generating students' interest in essay writing among Senior Secondary School students in Abuja metropolis. Students taught essay writing with **sequential teaching method high higher achievement than those taught with reflective teaching method.** , the mean and standard deviation of achievement scores were the same for male and female students. There was no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught with this method.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Educational policymakers and curriculum developers should promote the use of sequential and reflective teaching methods alternatives to the use of the convention lecture methods of teaching essay writing among Senior Secondary School students.
2. There is need to for teachers' orientation on the use of sequential and reflective teaching methods as alternative to the tradition lecture method in teaching and learning of essay writing among Senior Secondary School students in the metropolis.

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