

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

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of gender on the use of sequential and reflective teaching methods on Senior Secondary School students' achievement and interest in essay writing within the Abuja metropolis of the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design was used across selected co-educational Senior Secondary Schools in the Abuja metropolis. The sample size comprised 105 students: 35 students in the sequential teaching group (20 males, 15 females) and 70 students in the reflective teaching group (43 males, 27 females). Data were collected using two instruments: the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT) and the Essay Writing Interest Scale (EWIS). Face and content validities of the instruments were established by experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and English Language Education. The reliability index for the EWAT was established using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), yielding a coefficient of $r = 0.82$, while the internal consistency of the EWIS was determined using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.85$. Test scores were collected before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the exposure of the groups to the different teaching methods. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Analysis of Covariance) via IBM SPSS Version 26. Results of the analysis showed no significant variability in the mean achievement and interest scores of male and female students ($p > 0.05$). The findings revealed that gender had no significant effect on the use of sequential and reflective teaching methods in terms of student achievement and interest generation. The study concluded that both teaching methods have positive effects on students' performance and interest regardless of gender. Based on the findings, it was recommended that sequential and reflective teaching methods be integrated into the teaching of essay writing in Senior Secondary Schools within the metropolis and similar 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 (Nygard & 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 (Richard, 2019; Akram, 2020).

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; Ezeokoli & Igubor, 2016; Pincas, 2022; Ugboja et al., 2018; Ugboja & Omachonu, 2023).

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. Oluikpe et al (2023) found significant effects of students taught essay writing using video instruction and those without in their performances in their study. student-student interaction. The findings also showed that male students performed better than their female counterpart; and that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students in essay writing in favour of male students. The study recommended among others that Essay writing teachers should incorporate video instruction with student- student interaction in their teaching-learning process; and that in-service training should be regularly organized for teachers on how to use video instruction with student-student interaction in the teaching of essay writing. Obateru, Ogunleye and Lawal (2023) reported significant difference in performances and attitude between experimental and control group in their investigation with model of teaching method as determinant of Senior Secondary School students in Ekiti State. It also determined whether gender and school location could influence students’ performance in essay writing. Ugboja and Omachonu (2023) significant effect of blended learning on students’ academic achievement in Essay wring among Anyigba Senior Secondary Schools students. But there was no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students taught essay writing using blended learning approach. 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 gender 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 this study is to determine the gender effects of sequential and reflective methods of teaching essay writing on senior secondary students’ interest and academic achievement in essay writing in English Language in Abuja metropolis. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Compare the mean achievement scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with sequential teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.

2. Compare the mean achievement scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with reflective teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.
3. Compare the mean interest scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.
4. Compare the mean interest scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the mean achievement scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students who were taught essay writing with the sequential method in Abuja Metropolis?
2. What is the mean achievement scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing using the reflective method in Abuja Metropolis?
3. What are the interests of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the sequential method in Abuja Metropolis?
4. What are the interests of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the reflective 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 of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.
- H02. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.
- H03. There is no significant difference in the interest mean score of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching methods in Abuja Metropolis.
- H04. There is no significant difference in the interest mean score of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method in Abuja metropolis

Methodology

The study adopted Quasi-experimental Design. It utilized the Pretest-Post-test Non-equivalent Three intact classes were used from two different schools and each was assigned experimental(A), sequential, experimental (B) reflective group respectively. The teachers of English in the schools supervised every contact. Reward method was used to encourage the students' participation. Experimental A was made up of 35 students (sequential group) consisting of 20 males and 15 female. Experimental B (Reflective Method) consisted of 70students was made up of 43 males and 27 females. Two instrument were used for data collection. These were EWAT and EWIS. Test scores were collected before(Pre-test) and after(post-test) the exposure of the groups to the different teaching methods. Data collected were analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), IBM version 26. Statistical procedures used included descriptive and inferential statistics (Analysis of Covariance). For the sequential class had 35students while Reflective class had 70 students. Two instruments (Essay Writing Achievement Test and Essay Writing Interest Scale) 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 index for the EWAT was established using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), yielding a coefficient of $r = 0.82$, while the internal consistency of the EWIS

was determined using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability 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 Mean scores by the males and female at the pre-test and post-test stages after they were exposed to the use of the sequential teaching method for essay writing were summarized in Table 1 in relation to research question one of the study.

Table 1: Mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing before and after with sequential method

Gender	N	Pretest	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Male	20	14.15	1.95	20.05	0.825	5.90
Female	15	13.60	1.88	20.06	0.798	6.46

Table 1 showed pre-test and Post-test mean achievement scores of the male and female students taught essay writing with sequential method of teaching. The table revealed that both male and female equally improved on their mean achievement after their exposure to the use of the teaching method. For the males, the mean gain in achievement was 5.90 while the female had a mean gain of 6.46. The female had an edge over the male students but the margin was relatively small which could be an indication that gender had no major or significant effect on the use of the sequential teaching method for teaching and learning of essay writing among the Senior Secondary School students in the metropolis.

Table 2: showed that mean achievement of the male and female students taught essay writing with the use of reflective method. The mean achievement are summarized at the different stages (before and after) of the experiment in relation to research question two of the study.

Table 2: Mean achievement scores of male and female students taught essay writing before and after with reflective method

Gender	N	Pre-test	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Male	43	13.79	2.30	19.72	0.734	5.93
Female	27	15.00	1.56	19.77	0.751	4.77

The male students had a mean achievement of 13.79 before they were exposed to the use of the reflective method of teaching the essay writing while the female had a mean score of 15.0. After their exposure to the use of the reflective teaching method, the mean score of the male students rose to 19.72 with a mean gain of 5.93 while the female students improved on their mean score from 15.00 to 19.77 with a mean gain of 4.77. Though the male tended to have an edge in mean achievement after the exposure to the use of the method but the mean difference was relatively small. This was a clear indication that the students' gender had no effect on the use of the reflective method for teaching the essay writing in the selected Senior Secondary Schools.

The mean interest level generated among the male and female students taught the essay writing with the use sequential method before and after the exposure are summarized in Table 3 in line with the study' research question three.

Table 3: Mean interest level of male and female students taught essay writing before and after with sequential method

Gender	N	Pre-test	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Male	20	2.44	0.396	4.48	0.270	2.04

Female	15	2.33	0.413	4.03	0.130	1.70
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The mean interest level in essay writing by the male and female students were generally low before they were exposed to the use of the sequential teaching method of teaching the essay writing. After their exposure the mean interest level improved dramatically. For the male students the mean level rose from 2.44 to 4.48 with a mean difference of 2.04. For the female students, the mean interest level rose from 2.33 to 4.03 with a mean gain of 1.70. The observations implied that both male and female students benefited greatly from the use of the sequential method for teaching and learning of the essay writing. The difference in mean gain by the two groups was relatively small as indicated in Table 3. This observation implied that gender did not play a significant influence in the use of the method for teaching and learning of essay writing among the selected Senior Secondary School students in Abuja Metropolis.

The mean interest level generated with the use of the reflective teaching method for teaching the essay writing among the male and female students before and after the experiment are summarized in Table 4 in line with the fourth research question of the study.

Table 4: Mean interest level of male and female students taught essay writing before and after with reflective teaching method

Gender	N	Pre-test	Std. dev	Post-test	Std. dev	Mean gain
Male	43	2.43	0.396	4.42	0.270	1.99
Female	27	2.42	0.413	4.43	0.130	2.01

The mean interest level of the male students was 2.43 with a standard deviation of 0.396 while that of the females was 2.42 with a standard deviation of 0.413 before they were exposed to the use of the reflective method of teaching the essay writing. After the exposure to the use of the method, the male students improved on their mean interest level from 2.43 to 4.42 with a mean gain of 1.99 while the female students improved on their mean interest level from 2.42 to 4.43 with a mean gain of 2.01. The two groups generally improved on their interest in the essay writing after their exposure to the use of the method. The observed difference in mean gain by the male and female students was very low which was a clear indication that gender played no role in the use of the method.

Test of the Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated to validate the effects gender in the use of the two sequential and reflective) teaching methods used in the study were tested as follows:

Hypothesis I: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching method in Abuja Metropolis.

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) procedure with the pre-test score used as covariate factor for the test is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: ANCOVA on mean achievement scores of male and female students taught with sequential method after the experiment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value.
Gender	0.018	1	0.018	0.070	0.340
Pre-test	0.051	1	0.051	0.196	0.240
Error	8.288	32	0.259		

Table 5 revealed that the students did not differ significantly by gender in their achievement after they were exposed to the use of sequential method for the teaching and learning of essay writing. The observed F-value was 0.070 with a p-value of 0.340 ($p > 0.05$). The pre-test score did not significantly influence the outcome of the post test scores by the

two groups after the exposure. This observation confirmed that gender had no significant effect in the application of sequential method of teaching and learning of essay writing among the selected Senior Secondary School students involved in the study within the metropolis. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis II: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female secondary school students taught Essay writing with the reflective teaching method Abuja Metropolis.

The result of the analysis of variance procedure used for the test of the hypothesis is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: ANCOVA on achievements mean scores of male and female students taught with reflective method after the experiment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value.
Gender	0.218	1	0.218	0.842	0.440
Pre-test	0.151	1	0.151	0.583	0.533
Error	17.353	67	0.259		

Table 6 revealed that the observed variability in the mean achievement of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught essay writing with the reflective teaching method was not significant. The observed F-value for the test was 0.842 with a p-value of 0.440 ($p > 0.05$). The covariate factor did not significantly influence the achievement after the exposure as indicated with observed F-value of 0.583 with a p-value of 0.533 in the table. These observations provided enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The part of the implication here is that the students' gender did not significantly influence their achievement when taught with the reflective teaching method.

Hypothesis III: There is no significant difference in the mean interest scores of male and female senior secondary school students taught essay writing with the sequential teaching methods in Abuja Metropolis.

The mean interest levels obtained after the male and female students were exposed to the use of sequential teaching method were compared here with the analysis of covariance procedure. The result is summarized in Table 7..

Table 7: ANCOVA on interest mean scores of male and female students taught with sequential method after the experiment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value.
Gender	0.465	1	0.465	3.902	0.068
Pre-test	0.132	1	0.132	1.108	0.104
Error	3.808	32	0.119		

The male and female students were not significantly different in their mean interest scores in essay writing after the experiment as indicated in Table 7. The observed F-value was 3.902 with a p-value of 0.068 ($p > 0.05$). These observations provided sufficient evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis. The covariate factor which was the pre-test score was not found to be significant which implied that there was no significant influence of external factor in the outcome of the test. The observations implied that gender did not play a major influence in the interest generated by the use of the teaching method for teaching and learning of essay writing among the Senior Secondary School students involved in the study within the metropolis.

Hypothesis IV: There is no significant difference in the mean interest score of male and female Senior Secondary School students taught with the reflective teaching method in Abuja metropolis

The impact of gender on the interest generated among the male and female students after their exposure to the use of reflective teaching method for teaching and learning of essay writing were compared here with the analysis of variance procedure. The result is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: ANCOVA on interest mean scores of male and female students taught with reflective method after the experiment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value.
Gender	0.291	1	0.291	1.236	0.271
Pre-test	0.003	1	0.003	0.011	0.803
Error	15.745	67	0.235		

The result did not show a significant difference in the mean interest levels of the male and female generated with the use of the reflective teaching method among the Senior Secondary School students. The observed F-value was 1.236 with a p-value of 0.271 ($p > 0.05$). The covariate factor (pre-test scores) did not play a significant influence on the outcome of the interest generated after the experiment. These observations implied that use of the reflective teaching method was not affected by gender in the interest it generated among the Senior Secondary School students involved in the study within the metropolis. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Discussions

This paper investigated gender effects of sequential and reflective teaching methods on interest and academic achievement: A study of essay writing in English Language among Senior Secondary students in Abuja Metropolis. Findings of the study revealed that use of sequential and reflective teaching methods had a major positive improvement on the mean achievement of male and female students exposed to their usage in the teaching and learning of essay writing in Senior Secondary Schools of Abuja metropolis. The variability observed in the mean achievement for the males and female who were exposed to the independent use of the two teaching methods was not found to be statistically significant. The study revealed that use of the sequential and reflective teaching methods for teaching and learning of essay writing improved the interests of male and female students in essay writing. The variability observed in the interest levels of the two groups was not found to be significant as it relates to the different teaching methods. These observations implied that the use of the sequential and reflective teaching methods have positive effects on achievement and helps to generates students' interest in the teaching and learning of essay writing among Senior Secondary Schools in the metropolis. The study therefore recommended that educational policy makers and curriculum developers should be promoting use sequential and reflective teaching methods as effective alternatives to traditional lecture methods of essay writing in Senior Secondary Schools within the metropolis as ways of improving students' achievement and enhancing interest in the subject.

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