Direct and Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategies and Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Composition in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study determined the effects of direct and indirect comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategies on students' achievement in composition. The study adopted the pretest, posttest, control group, quasi experimental research design. The participants consisted of 87 secondary school students drawn from three different schools. The main instruments used were: Achievement Test in Composition (r=0.72), and Verbal Ability Test (r=0.87). Data were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance and Scheffe post hoc. The results revealed that treatment had a significant main effect on students' achievement in composition (F(2,100)=11.268; p 0.05,partial=0.087). There was no significant main effect of verbal ability and gender on students' achievement in composition (F (2, 70)=.221; p 0.05, partial=0.006), (F (1, 70) =.120, p 0.05, partial = 0.002). It is recommended that teachers should always adopt these feedback strategies for effective teaching so as to reduce students' errors to a minimal level in English composition.

Keywords: Indirect comprehensive feedback, direct comprehensive metacognitive feedback, verbal ability, English composition.

Introduction

English language is one of the most broadly spoken languages in the world. In fact Knowledge of English language is a basic requirement in almost all academic disciplines and professions in Nigeria. Knowledge of the language determines to a great extent the level of academic and professional success achievable in Nigeria. However, when people want to learn English language, they face various problems in their communication, either in the written or spoken form of the language. Though there are four basic language skills, writing is considered one of the most significant language skills in the second language teaching and learning contexts. This is because learners' academic performances are mostly assessed through it. Any learner who cannot effectively put down his thoughts and ideas through writing may not do well academically. Although there are other means of measuring learners' abilities, written examinations still remain the most popular way of measuring learners' academic achievement in Nigeria.

Ezeokoli and Igubor, (2016) point out that English language is the only subject through which students' writing skills are truly tested in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations. English language is a compulsory subject which candidates are required to pass at credit level for them to be able to gain admission into any tertiary institution in Nigeria. In order to do this, candidates must possess good writing abilities. However, researchers (Asikhia, 2009; Ezeokoli & Ezenandu, 2013; Ogunyemi, 2014; Oladunjoye, 2005) have observed that as important as the ability to write well is to students' academic life generally and success in the English Language examination specifically, students are generally poor in written English. These scholars agree that the level of educational achievement in terms of competence in written English in Nigerian schools has been quite low.

The various Chief Examiners' Reports of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) have consistently shown that students' performance in writing has been poor. For example, the 2009 report reveals that candidates' weaknesses include, among others, students' unfamiliarity with the written words. It has been observed that students' essays are dominated by errors of grammar/poor expression, spelling and punctuation and wrong amalgamation (WAEC, 2007-2012).

There have been several attempts by scholars to help students overcome their writing problems. For instance, Naidu (2007) suggests that teachers should focus more on learners' errors and the giving of appropriate feedback. According to him, teachers need to study what learners do in their writing so as to be able to determine what learners still need to be taught. The teacher is expected to give appropriate and timely feedback that will help the learners see their mistakes and weaknesses and encourage/motivate them to overcome the problems in order to produce a more proficient text next time. This process is believed to be more effective in improving the learners' writing proficiency (Meisuo, 2000). Naidu (2007) points out that the most popular way of feedback has been written comments on the students' essays, pointing out problems and making suggestions for improvement of future papers. It could be seen from the above that feedback is considered an integral part and an important element in instructional design and it has a strong foundation in major learning theories.

Though there have been several research findings on the effectiveness of corrective feedback on students' writing (Ashwell, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Truscott, 2007; Bitchener, 2008), agreement on research findings to date is still inconclusive, hence the need for this present study. While some of the previous studies found that feedback is helpful and effective in improving students' writing skills, others reveal that there are conflicting findings in different areas of feedback such as feedback focus and strategy. Scholars such as Bitchener (2008), Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima, (2008), and

Guenette (2007) identify some factors that might be responsible for the differences in research findings on corrective feedback. These factors include the absence of a control group in some of the previous studies, focusing on too many error types, and failure to compare corrected texts with a new piece of writing. As a result of this, Ellis (2008) suggests that one way by which researchers can address the inconclusiveness in feedback researches might be for researchers and teachers to identify the various options available for correcting students' writing. This study will therefore consider the effects of direct and indirect metacognitive feedback strategies on students' achievement in English composition.

The role of the teacher in error correction has attracted a lot of research interests in recent times. For instance, Goldstein (2004) opines that the use of comprehensive or detailed feedback will likely cause the students to produce better written texts which will in turn increase their self-confidence in writing. It also increases self-regulated learning which occurs when students receive feedback on a draft from the teacher and are required to revise and make the relevant corrections based on the written feedback provided (Nicol & MacFarlance-Dick, 2006). The written feedback provided by the teacher exposes them to their shortcomings, gives them new ideas and makes them understand what the teacher wants. When teachers take their time to provide feedback on all noticeable errors on students' written works, students are able to comprehend the feedback and subsequently produce an improved version of their essays. To this end, this study examines the effect of indirect comprehensive metacognitive teacher written corrective feedback and direct comprehensive metacognitive teacher written corrective feedback. Ellis (2009) describes Metacognitive Corrective Feedback as a situation whereby the teacher provides learners with some form of explicit comments about the nature of the errors contained in their written works. Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback (ICMF) as conceived in this study refers to a strategy whereby the teacher allows the students to write a full composition during each class period. Before the next class period, the teacher will provide the necessary corrective feedback by indicating that some errors have been made but will not provide the correct forms of such errors, thereby leaving the students to diagnose and correct the errors. The teacher will mandate the students to submit the corrected version of their writing for further vetting. On the other hand, Direct Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback (DCMF) in this study is a strategy whereby the teacher allows the students to write a full composition during each class period. Before the next class period, the teacher will provide the necessary corrective feedback by identifying the errors in the students' writing and will provide the correct forms. The teacher will mandate the students to rework their essays based on the feedback given by the teacher and submit the corrected version of their writing for further vetting.

Apart from feedback, another factor that might have significant influence on students' writing skills is verbal ability. Verbal ability is an aspect of language learning that requires learners of a second or foreign language to demonstrate a great deal of reasoning skills while learning the said language. Myles cited in Adegbile and Alabi (2007) argue that second language learners have varying commands of the target language (competence) and measures of the extent to which they can use higher and lower language as well as information processing mechanism (verbal ability). Michael, Casey, and Peter (2005) are of the opinion that verbal ability is usually demonstrated as the ability to write and speak well. To them, verbal ability refers to a person's facility at putting ideas into words, both oral and written. According to them, this facility involves not only a strong working vocabulary but also the ability to choose the right words to convey nuances of meaning to a chosen audience. Verbal ability questions are usually multiple choice questions containing options that are very similar and thus confusing for students. To the best knowledge of the researchers there have been little research efforts on the effect of verbal ability on students' writing ability particularly when different feedback styles are adopted. Hence the present study will look at the moderating effect of verbal ability on students' achievement in composition when both direct and indirect comprehensive feedbacks are used.

Gender is another factor whose moderating effects on students' achievement in composition will be considered. According to Newman (2018), gender is more difficult to define, but it can refer to the roles and responsibilities of a male or female in the society, known as gender role, or gender identity. Zeynali (2012) observes that the actual role of gender in language learning is still a subject of debate because there are numerous ways by which gender can affect language use and development. Gender is a variable that can affect language use and acquisition as a result of biological, psychological effects, or socio-cultural differences between the two. Masoud, Seyyed and Ali (2013) found in their research that girls achieved higher marks than boys in EFL. In a similar vein, Zoghi, Kazemi and Kalani (2013) also found in their study that girls achieved higher marks than boys in EFL learning. On the other hand, Wharton (2000) in his own study found that male students performed significantly better than their female counterparts in language learning. In view of the fact that studies on the effects of gender on language learning have produced mixed results and the observations of Reynolds, Scheiber, Hajovsky and Kaufman (2015) that the issue of gender differences in writing skills has always been overlooked because it is less frequently measured in educational assessments, this study will also look at the moderating effect of gender on students' achievement in composition when comprehensive feedback strategies are used.

Statement of the Problem

Research findings over the years have shown that in comparison to the other language skills, writing is the most neglected language skill by both students and teachers. It has been observed that a large number of teachers are not familiar with appropriate techniques to be used in order to help their students improve their writing ability. As a result of this, majority of students failed to use accurate grammar needed for acceptable writing. This situation has led to mass failure in English language examinations. To overcome this, researchers have suggested that adequate attention should be given to corrective feedback in EFL classrooms. However, researchers have observed in the past that some teachers do not give necessary and adequate feedback to learners' written errors thereby creating a false sense of capability in the learners. When students receive timely and comprehensive feedback, they are able to comprehend the feedback and attain their writing goal which is to become better writers. In order to address the problem identified above, this study will examine two strategies that will make it possible for teachers to give feedback to learners' errors appropriately, thereby providing learners with the opportunity of knowing what is wrong with their compositions and how to correct such errors. Such strategies are indirect comprehensive metacognitive teacher written corrective feedback and direct comprehensive metacognitive teacher written corrective feedback. The former is the indication that an error exists on the students' scripts through circling but the correct forms will not be provided by the teacher, while the latter is the indication that an error exists on the students' scripts and the correct form is provided by the teacher. The moderating effects of verbal ability and gender will also be examined.

Hypotheses

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the following research hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

$H_0$1: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in composition.

$H_0$2: There is no significant main effect of verbal ability on students' achievement in composition.

$H_0$3: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability on students' achievement in composition.

Methodology

This study adopted the pretest-posttest control group quasi experimental research design. There were two experimental groups which were exposed to indirect comprehensive metacognitive corrective feedback and direct comprehensive metacognitive corrective feedback with explicit corrective comment strategies; while the control group was exposed to the conventional strategy of teaching and marking composition. Eighty seven (87) senior secondary school two (S.S.S. 2) students in three intact classes from three secondary schools in Akoko South West Local Government Area were selected as samples for the study. The multistage sampling technique was employed in sample selection. The first stage involved the use of the simple random sampling technique to select a Senatorial District out of the three senatorial districts in Ondo State. The second stage involved the use of the simple random sampling technique to select a Local Government Area out of the six local government areas in the Senatorial District selected under the first stage. The third stage involved the use of the purposive sampling technique to select three secondary schools out of the existing public secondary schools in the selected Local Government. The schools were selected based on the following criteria:

i. The schools selected had similar class size:
ii. The schools selected had three arms: Science, Arts, and Commercial.

The fourth stage involved the use of the simple random sampling technique which was used to select one arm, and the arm selected in the first school was also selected in the other schools to prevent the moderating effects of students' area of specialization on the research outcome. Intact classes were used to guard against disrupting the schools' programmes. The three schools selected were randomly assigned to experimental group one, experimental group two and control group. The instruments to be used for data collection are: Achievement Test in Composition (r=0.72), Verbal Ability Test (r=0.87) and instructional guides. Data collection was done using the following procedural steps:

The first step was the visitation of schools and teacher's awareness.

The second step was the pretest administration.

The third step was treatment implementation.

The fourth step was the posttest administration.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Also, the inferential statistics of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine the significant main effects and interaction effects using the pretest scores as covariates to test the research hypotheses. In addition, Estimated Marginal Means (EMM) was used to find the direction of the difference among the groups with significant main effects. Scheffe Post-hoc Analysis was also used. All the hypotheses were tested at P=0.05.

Results

Hypothesis One

$H_0$1: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in composition.

Table 1 represents the summary of ANCOVA results on students' achievement in composition.

Table 1: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Achievement by Treatment, Verbal Ability and Gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	476.591[a]	16	29.787	3.390	.000	.437
Intercept	14.561	1	14.561	1.657	.202	.023
Pre-achievement	201.340	1	201.340	22.914	.000	.247
Treatment	58.901	2	29.450	3.352	.041	.087
Verbal Ability	3.886	2	1.943	.221	.802	.006
Treatment * Verbal Ability	7.777	3	2.592	.295	.829	.012
Error	615.087	70				
Total	3440.000	87				
Corrected Total	1091.678	86				

R Squared=.437 (Adjusted R Squared=.308) * denotes significance at p

Treatment	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Direct group	4.477[a]	1.008	2.467	6.487
Indirect group	6.656[a]	.723	5.214	8.099
Control group	3.631[a,b]	.847	1.941	5.321

Table 2 revealed that Composition students in the Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (ICMFS) Treatment Group 2 had the highest adjusted Post-achievement mean score (= 6.656), and was followed by Direct Comprehensive Metacognitive Strategy (DCMFS) Treatment Group 1 (mean=4.477), while the Conventional Strategy (CS) Control Group had the least adjusted Post-Achievement mean score (=3.631). This order is represented as ICMFS <DCMFS<CS. Furthermore, the source of the significant difference obtained in table 2 was traced using Scheffe post-hoc test.

Table 3: Scheffe Post-hoc Analysis of Achievement by Treatment and Control Group

(I) Treatment	(J) Treatment	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[d000]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[d]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Direct Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (DCMFS)	Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (ICMFS)	-2.179	1.239	.083	-4.651	.292
	Control Group (CS)	.846[a]	1.315	.522	-1.776	3.468
Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (ICMFS)	Direct Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (DCMFS)	2.179	1.239	.083	-.292	4.651
	Control Group (CS)	3.025[a,*]	1.113	.008	.806	5.244
Conventional Strategy (CS)	Direct Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (DCMFS)	-.846[c]	1.315	.522	-3.468	1.776
	Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (ICMFS)	-3.025[*,c]	1.113	.008	-5.244	-.806

Table 3 revealed that achievement in composition for students exposed to Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (ICMFS) was significantly different from those taught using conventional strategy while achievement of students exposed to direct Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (DCMFS) was not significantly different from those taught using the conventional approach. Hence, Indirect Comprehensive Metacognitive Feedback Strategy (ICMFS) was the main source of the significant difference observed in the treatment.

$H_0$2: There is no significant main effect of verbal ability on students' achievement in composition.

Table 1 showed that there was no significant main effect of verbal ability on students' achievement in composition (F (2, 70) =.221; p>0.05, partial = 0.006). Thus, hypothesis 2 was not rejected. This implies that verbal ability had no effect on students' achievement in composition.

$H_0$3: There is no interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability on students' achievement in composition.

Table 1 showed that there was no significant two-way interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability on students' achievement in composition (F (3, 70) =.295, p>0.05, partial =0.12). Thus, null hypothesis 4 was not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Effect of Treatment on Students Achievement in Composition

The main focus of this study is to determine the effect of direct comprehensive metacognitive feedback and indirect comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategies on students' achievement in composition in Ondo North Senatorial District of Ondo State. The research hypothesis one sought to find out if there is a significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in English composition. The result of this study showed that treatment had a significant main effect on students' achievement in composition. The result showed that indirect comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy was more effective, followed by the direct comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy while the conventional strategy was the least effective in the achievement scores of students in composition. The main advantage of indirect comprehensive feedback strategy is that it allows learners to search for the correct forms thereby exposing students to more cognitive processes. The students in this group were able to correct the errors themselves, having been provided with underlining and circling as general clues regarding the location of errors on their scripts. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Lee (2008), O'Sullivan and Chambers (2006) who found in their studies that exposing students to indirect strategy is an effective means of helping them to improve their writing skills. Also, this finding is in line with the findings of Salameh and Khaled (2015) who reported that self-correction addresses a valuable need in the language classroom. They further stressed that indirect comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy raises awareness of the language, as well as urges students to take a more active and responsible role. Chandler (2003), Ferris (2006) also agree that indirect feedback with underlining on students' error is a preferred alternative to direct feedback correction in a multiple-draft setting as indirect feedback engages students in the correction process and engages them more cognitively during the process.

On the contrary, the findings of Fatemeh and Hossein (2017), Elham and Amir (2016) negated the findings of this study. Elam and Amir (2017) who investigated the effectiveness of different types of teacher' feedback (direct feedback, indirect feedback and a control group) on Iranian students' writing performance in an EFL context reported that both types of teachers' feedback enhanced the learners' performance in writing and there was not a statistical significant difference between direct and indirect groups.

The low performance of the control group in the post-achievement score as compared with the other treatment groups may not be unconnected with the reasons provided by Evans et al (2010) and Ogunyemi (2014). Evans et al (2010) outlined three contextual variables which may negatively affect the academic performance of the learners. The three contextual variables are: learner variables, situational variables, and methodological variables. In his own case, Ogunyemi (2014) who exposed senior secondary school students to three feedback strategies reported that students in the control group performed below the two experimental groups of explicit and implicit treatments.

Effect of Verbal Ability on Students' Achievement in Composition

Verbal Ability was found to have no significant main effect on students' achievement in English composition. This result is clearly different from the observation of Fakeye (2001) that students with higher verbal ability levels are able to write better than students with lower verbal ability levels. This finding also contradicts the findings of Adegbile and Alabi (2007) that verbal ability has a significant effect on students' achievement in essay writing. It also negates the submission of Ogunyemi and Adebowale (2018) that verbal ability is positively correlated to second language writing ability. Myles (2004) also avers that second language learners have varying commands of the target language (competence) and measures of the extent to which they can use higher and lower language as well as information processing mechanism (verbal ability) which affects their ability to produce acceptable composition. The results suggest that it is essential, while teaching, to ensure that students understand the words used.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of direct comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy (DCMFS) and indirect comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy (ICMFS) on senior secondary school students' achievement in English composition in Ondo North Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria. In accordance with the results, it can be concluded that both indirect comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy and direct comprehensive metacognitive feedback strategy contributed positively to students' achievement in English composition over what is attained with conventional strategy. This implies that students' poor performance in composition could be dealt with when direct and indirect feedback strategies are applied.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. In order to improve students' performance in English composition, metacognitive feedback strategies are recommended to secondary school EFL teachers while teaching composition.
2. The school authorities should ensure that all hands are on deck to monitor the teachers as they implement these metacognitive feedback strategies.
3. Government and professional bodies and other education certificate awarding institutions in Nigeria should always expose EFL would-teachers to the appropriate use of metacognitive feedback strategies through seminars and workshops and in teacher training institutions to enhance better performance of senior secondary school English Language students.
4. EFL teachers should encourage students to be engage in writing tasks on their own frequently and such write-up should be submitted to their teachers for evaluation and feedback as this will help improve their writing skills.
5. Authors of English Language textbooks should ensure that metacognitive feedback strategies are replete in their textbooks.

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