

## **INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME TO ENHANCE LEARNERS WRITING PERFORMANCE**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper titled integrating reading and writing instruction in English Language teaching programme to enhance learner's English writing performance examined the effect of applying skills integration strategy on the performance of trainees in written English in the areas of content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy. The study adopted the quasi-experiment with pre-test-post-test design to study the effect on two groups of students, the experimental and the control groups. Each groups consisted of eighty eight (88) subjects. The experimental group was exposed to integration of reading and writing strategy for six weeks while the control group was not given the treatment. The two groups were tested and the result revealed that the experimental group performed better than the control group because of the treatment given. The paper recommended among others that teachers should adopt integration of skills as a teaching strategy to enhance learner's performance in English writing exercises.*

**KEYWORDS:** Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE), Integration, Reading and Writing Instruction, English Language Teaching, Learner's Writing Performance.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of integration in language teaching can be tackled from two points of views: practice or theory? Arguably, certain principles of language teaching are derived from successful practice over a period of time; in this case, practice comes first before theory. On the other hand, instances where techniques of language teaching emanates directly from the theories about the nature of language, theory comes first.

From whatever point of view one looks at the above argument, the vital point here is that the practice of teaching should be associated with the theory that explains it. In essence, teachers should be aware of the link between a particular classroom technique and its corresponding theory of language learning; that is, the technique guiding a particular substitution must be associated with a particular theory and practice.

Integration is a central concept in any comprehensive approach to language teaching methodology. Thus, the concept, as used in this paper, is not restricted to linkage between practice and theory, but also to encourage practising teachers and teachers in training to embrace other dimensions of language teaching such as: past and present practice, the traditional and the innovative, skills and aspects of language to be related, the spoken with the written, the receptive with the productive; literature teaching in relation to language teaching, testing as an aspect of teaching; evaluating and developing materials; two sides of a coin to mention just a few. This paper is focused on inter-linking reading and writing skills in English

language instruction as a process or means of enhancing the performance of learners in English language instruction.

Looking back at language teaching methods over the years, certain changes are discernable, i.e. changing from one position to another, which in the language-teaching circle, has been referred to as “the swing of the pendulum” (David, 1990). It is obvious that no one method of language teaching holds the answer for all purposes and situations. Presently, there are many new methods being tried out presently, like “client centred instruction”, “Total physical Response” and “silent way” (Charles, Ashers and Caleb Gattegno in Olaofe (2013). In essence, what is pertinent here is that we should preserve both new and old practices. Thus, language teaching methodology offers the teacher variety, i.e. to focus on a particular aspect of language as well as provide unique practice opportunity in other aspect(s). This time around, the emphasis is on using reading instruction to reinforce writing skill and vice versa.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading instruction has been accorded pre-eminence by policy makers, educators, researchers and the public. Consequently, there has been a large investment by many stakeholders in reading research and instruction (Troia, 2005). When reading is interpreted into writing in a balanced way during instruction, the students are likely to benefit more. The present study looks at the integration of or interlinking reading and writing of students’ written English instruction to enhance their performance among teacher trainees in our nation’s colleges of education.

By interlinking reading and writing instruction, the study means explicit instruction involving balancing actual practices of reading and writing in an instructional situation or unit. It is using different reading strategies to achieve success in writing.

Researchers have shown that students in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are inefficient readers (Ikonta, 2004; Popoola et al, 2010). This affects their performance negatively. They cautioned on and highlighted the prevalence of reluctant reading and learning syndrome and higher illiteracy syndrome in Nigeria, a situation where students who can read do not love to read while many educated Nigerians do not read for pleasure. Students limit their reading and writing to prescribed texts for specific examinations, but hardly indulge in recreational reading which research has shown to be necessary for expanding intellectual horizons, sharing experiences, improve writing performance and developing more mature personalities. They fail to realise that reading is a major tool for obtaining information and for learning in general while writing is an expression of what is read.

Sunday Times (7<sup>th</sup> November, 2004) commented on the way South Africa is lagging behind, compared to Taiwan in the area of science and how science related courses were encouraged by offers of bursaries by the government and concerned sectors of the economy. A UNESCO report in The Star (2003) stated that with the country’s highest number of tertiary students in Sub-Saharan Africa (633,918), had a graduation rate of only 15% students compared to the ideal graduation rate of 33%. This low pass rate has been attributed, in part to poor language

skills, particularly reading and writing skills. Scarcella (2002:217) argued that students who failed to read in the early grades could not achieve advanced literacy skills without intensive instruction to bridge the proficiency gap between their actual level of competence and performance for academic studies.

Reading and writing are very important to the teaching and learning process and students need support from their teachers in order to gain motivation and desire to put effort in achieving competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These two terms, though related, have become difficult for some teachers to integrate and make use of them in teaching and learning (Sule, 2007). Some scholars attributed the decline of literacy to the detachment of reading instruction from content in the primary and secondary schools which leads to the disengagement of students from books and necessary literacy practices (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000). Some teachers attributed their inability to teach literacy to disparity in students' background and abilities, pressure to cover curriculum content, uncertainty regarding how to integrate the basic skills (Troia & Maddox, 2004). Research has shown that reading and writing instruction are more interdependent than they are portrayed. Reading instruction is most effective when integrated with writing instruction and vice versa (Walid, 2011). Effective reading gives room to variety of responses and helps make language arts instruction enjoyable and effective (National Writing Project, 2012). Reading instruction could be geared towards preparing learners for writing task while in school and after graduation. This is applicable in the secondary as well as in the tertiary levels of education. The quality of teaching could determine the performance of NCE students in their chosen fields (NCCE, 1990).

Studies have shown that better readers tend to produce more grammatically correct sentences while inability to read and write is a great deprivation (Ikonta, 2004) which can affect the quality of what is written (Commeyras, 2001). Academic language is predominantly in books and students who read extensively both inside and outside the school, have greater opportunities to more knowledge than those whose reading is limited. Sustained growth in reading and writing is strongly related to students' level of literacy engagement (Guthrie, 2004). Writing is the most neglected of the four skills (National Commission in Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). Writing is an important skill that should not be ignored or approached with laxity.

Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) students, irrespective of their course of study, are undergoing training to become teachers in the primary and secondary schools, or their equivalents, elsewhere (NCCE, 1990). Their ability to read and write effectively is needful, not only to themselves, but in order to impact knowledge to their students. The need for the study title "Integration of Reading and Writing Instruction to enhance Students' Performance in our Colleges of Education, came as a result of complaints from lecturers on many students' inability to construct correct sentences, copy notes correctly – which is glaring in their notes, assignment, examination scripts – and students' inability to write effectively generally.

A novelist, Saul Bellow in Nadell et al; (2005:1), describes writers as "readers moved to emulation". That means a student who has read books may understand the nitty-gritty of writing with or without being taught by the teacher. Reading, according to Aliyu (2006:47) "is a way of building up from what has been put down in the written form". Reading challenges our

beliefs (Nadell et al; 2005:3) and opens new horizon (Ikonta, 2004) which is both satisfying and productive (Block & Pressley, 2001). Instruction means teaching a particular subject or skill or the facts or skills taught by the instructor (Scholastic, 2002). Reading instruction can be described as a process of teaching students the strategies of reading and giving them, opportunities to read, write and discuss text to get meaning from written symbols (Nell & Pearson, 2002:2). Writing is a complex intellectual exercise (Franklin, 2008) that is organised and takes a gradual process (Oguntope & Agbana, 2000; Egbe, 2002) in order to produce a meaningful text clearly and effectively (Latilo & Beckely, 2008).

Empirical work from several domains has demonstrated that many students, especially less competent writers tend to overestimate their ability (Stone & May, 2002). Common areas where students write include report, essay, letter writing, project writing, assignments, note taking etc. Studies have indicated less than optimal writing instruction in the classrooms (Graham & Harris, 2002; Troia, 2005; Wray et al., 2000). This is evident in the teacher self-report data from the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that nearly seven out of ten teachers indicate they employ process-oriented instruction to teach composition, yet not more than a third of those teachers spend ninety minutes per week, which is supposed to be the minimum per week or more than ninety minutes per week teaching writing (National Centre for Education Statistics, 1998). The need to instruct and motivate the students on the importance of writing task is necessary, so that they can perceive that the writing task is related to their needs in school and after graduation.

Some NCE graduates seem to lack the basic knowledge of reading and writing when they write, the notes are filled with wrongly spelt words like flend, rite, brid instead of friend, write and breed respectively; wrongly constructed sentences like this classes of food are protein and vitamins and this types of food is expected to be eating by a person; concord problem, some features of informal letters in formal letters like I am very happy to write you this letter, etc. This shows gross deficiency in reading and writing. There are also complaints from some lecturers and previous experiences during teaching practice supervision of students' inability to express themselves comprehensively, when asked to write. Dynamic (2010) asserts that the art of letter writing should not be neglected; these are the building blocks of our civilisation (p.1). The advent of emails have made it less common (Learner Development Unit, 2007) but it is very important at some point in time and becomes unavoidable, especially business letters where emails may not replace. Letters, especially handwritten, have a charm of their own. One can keep them to read over and over (Reading Rockets, 2007).

Teaching reading and writing are areas that some lecturers dread due to the demand that come with it and the large number of students involved. Since students hardly read anything outside what they are taught, they miss out on things that the teacher fails to teach. The ability to read and write is needful in a society because it is, according to Kellner (2002:157), a necessary condition in equipping people to participate in the local, national and global economy, culture and polity. The study exposed students to some forms of writing. It also explored the students' ability to discuss and write meaningfully as the occasion may demand.

As far as this paper is concerned, several studies on reading-writing relationship have been conducted but there have been few researches on the integration of reading and writing

instruction to enhance students' performance in written English. The absence of such, especially in the colleges of education, motivated this study.

- a) What is the effect of integrating reading and writing instruction for the enhancement of teacher trainees' performance in English language in the areas of content, organisation, grammar and mechanical accuracy?
- b) What is the difference in the English performance of students exposed to integration and those not exposed to such instruction?

## METHODOLOGY

To achieve the set objectives, the study adopted the quasi-experiment with pre-test and post-test design because randomization of the subjects was not possible and grouping already existed. The grouping was based on subject combination of the students (subjects). It consisted of 88 students from English/Social Studies combination and another 88 students from English/PES combination. That gives a total of one hundred and seventy six students. The English/PES combination (88 students) served as the control group and the English/Social Studies combination (88) served as the experimental group that received treatment for six weeks. The control group was included to help ascertain if difference in performance is attributed to the difference in instructional method (integration of reading and writing or skill by skill instruction) usually adopted. The students in both groups were asked to write letters and essays for publication. Below is a structural design for the pre-test – post-test.

The structure of the pre-test – post-test design

N <sub>1</sub>	01	X	02
N <sub>2</sub>	01		02

The first line above is for the treatment or experimental group, where '01' stands for pre-test, 'X' is for treatment and '02' for post-test without any treatment given.

## RESULTS/FINDINGS AND DATA PRESENTATION

This section is divided into 3 subsections:

### Summary of results

The results of statistical analysis from the study on the effect of integration of reading and writing instruction as a strategy to enhance teacher trainees writing performance in English written instruction are presented thus – The data was analysed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS version 17).

The presentation of the result revolved round the research questions stated. Two groups of students were involved in the study. One group was exposed to treatment on integration of reading and writing instructional strategies (experimental) while the other group (control) was not exposed to the strategies. A total of one hundred and seventy six (176) students i.e. 88 for

each group were selected based on stratified random sampling technique. Data on their performance were collected before and after the experiment from the two groups.

### Data Presentation

Findings from the test are presented with discussion in the tables below:

**Table 1: Performance of Experimental and Control groups before and after treatment**

Experimental Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Controlled Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
Performance level	F	%	F	%		F	%	F	%
Low	83	94.31	25	28.40		81	92.04	75	85.22
Average	05	5.68	56	63.63		07	7.95	13	14.77
High	00	00	07	7.95		00	00	00	00

Table 1 revealed that there was no significant difference between the experimental and the control group at pre-test but a wide gap existed at post-test. The experimental group moved from 94.31% at pre-test from low category to 28.40%.

The control group moved from 92.04% to 85.22% which is not much an improvement to the experimental subjects. The first specific objective is aimed at finding out the effect of integration of reading and writing instruction on trainees' English performance in the area of content, organisation, mechanical accuracy and expression after receiving treatment. It should be noted that only students in the experimental group were selected for this question.

Performance with regard to the solution provided for the question, was categorised in low, average and high. This enables the classification of the effect of integration of these skills instruction administered to the students before and after the experiment. Each of the sub-variables content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy was assessed independently to determine the effect. The sub-variables are tabulated in frequencies and percentages in table 2.



**Table 2: Two sample T-Test on writing performance of students before and after exposition to integration of reading and writing instruction**

Variable	Status	N	Mean	Std Variation	Std Error	DF	t-value	P	Decision
Content	Before	88	6.69	3.706	0.395	174	2.405	.017	R
	After		8.08	3.937	0.420				
Organisation	Before	88	5.47	2.435	0.260	174	7.691	.000	R
	After		8.77	3.215	0.343				
Expression	Before	88	7.99	3.378	0.360	174	10.090	.000	R
	After		15.30	5.894	0.628				
Mechanical accuracy	Before	88	4.65	2.259	0.241	174	5.040	.000	R
	After		6.69	3.064	0.327				
Written performance	Before	88	24.80	9.875	1.053	174	7.452	.000	R
	After		38.84	14.667	1.564				

(Critical Value = 1.96)

The result revealed that the writing of students after exposure to integration of reading and writing instruction was significantly higher than the scores before exposure.

This observation was found to be correct for content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy where tests revealed that the observed significant levels were all lower than the fixed level of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). In the overall aggregate test for the writing performance of the trainees, the mean scores rose from 24.20 before exposure to 38.84 after exposure.

The observed t-value for the aggregate test is 7.452 at 174 degree of freedom (DF). The critical value at the equivalent degree of freedom is 1.96. This means that the observed or calculated value (7.452) is higher than the critical value of 1.96 at the probability level of 0.05. The observed significant level is 0.000 ( $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the trainees' written performance before and after exposition is thus rejected.

**Hypothesis II:** There is no significant difference between the written English performance of students exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction strategy and those not exposed to the instruction.

This hypothesis was tested with the writing performance of students in the experimental group and those in the control group after the experiment. The paired t-test procedure was used for the test because of the equal observation of the two independent groups (experimental and control) involved in the test. The summary of the result is present in table 3.

**Table 3: Two sample t-test on writing performance of students in experimental and control group after exposition to integration of reading and writing instruction**

Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error	DF	t-value	P	Decision
Experimental	88	38.84	14.667	1.564	87	6.347	000	Rejected
Control	88	25.55	11.902	1.269				

The students who were exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction had higher mean score of 38.84 when compared with the 25.55 by students in the control group. From the observed t-value of 6.347 and the level of significance of 0.000, it could be concluded that the students who were exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction performed significantly higher in writing than their counterpart who were not given the instruction. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the written English performance of students exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction and those not exposed to the treatment is therefore, rejected. The result revealed that the instruction improved the writing performance of students.

### Research Findings

From the analysis of the data in this study, the use of integration of reading and writing instruction was found to have better advantages over the conventional method of teaching on the writing performance of the subjects. The overall findings emanating from this experimental study are stated below.

1. There was a significant difference between the written performance of students in content, organisation, grammar and mechanical accuracy after receiving treatment on integration of reading and writing instruction. (See tables 1 and 2). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.
2. There was a significant difference between the written English performance of students exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction than those not exposed to the strategy. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study sought to find out the effect of integration of reading and writing instruction on students' written English performance among the teacher trainees. The first hypothesis which predicted that there is no significant difference between students' written English performance in the areas of content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy was rejected. This is because the instruction improved students' written English performance by the use of strategies such as predicting, brainstorming while reading, drafting, sentence construction/combination, editing and writing.

The second hypothesis predicted that there is no significant difference between the written English performance of students exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction and those not exposed to the instruction was rejected. The result revealed that the writing



performance of the students exposed to the integrated instruction was significantly higher than those not exposed to the treatment. This finding is a further revelation of the efficacy of the strategies used in the experiment. It is also in agreement with Brummit (2008) who pointed out that a learner's literacy development is dependent on the interconnection between reading and writing and that in any language one is learning, reading and writing should be treated together because they help in mastery of the language. This study is different from previous studies (Bereiter & Scadamalia, 1987) which differentiated a skilled and unskilled writer. Findings from this research showed that strategies used in this study can assist unskilled writers to produce coherent articles. The treatment activities used in this study include outlining, peer interaction, teacher modelling and scaffolding. This means that the study offers many reading activities which brought about improvement in the students' writing.

### **IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICES**

The outcome of the study has far-reaching implications to teachers, students, classrooms and curriculum planners.

The teacher, the students, the curriculum planners and the classroom

- a) The use of integration of reading and writing as instructional strategy by teachers should be encouraged in place of conventional method of teaching for improvement in writing among students in the college. Students should be encouraged to use strategy like predicting, collaborative learning, locating ideas, brainstorming, peer-editing, drafting and sentence construction.
- b) As interest of students could be sustained with the use of integration of reading and writing instructional strategies by the teachers in the classroom, stakeholders should be encouraged to adopt collaborative learning, modelling and teacher scaffolding as part of improving reading and writing performance among students.
- c) A system of evaluating what is taught and learnt by students as it relates to reading and writing performance should be encouraged. Students could be encouraged to write essays either weekly or monthly and teachers should have time to read their work and organise mini-lessons on any area of difficulty.
- d) Curriculum planners should plan in such a way that reading and writing can be integrated along with recommend texts.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The study set out to investigate effect of integrating reading and writing instruction on students' written English performance among some selected teacher trainees of English language arises from the need to enhance their performance in written English. The effect of the instruction in the areas of content, organisation, mechanical accuracy, expression, instructional strategy and grammar; find out if the written English of students exposed to the treatment, is better than those not exposed. The hypotheses formulated were as follows: there is no significant

difference between the written English of students in the areas of content, organisation, mechanical accuracy and expression; there is no significant difference between the written English of students exposed to the treatment and those not exposed.

To determine the effect of this instructional strategy on students' written English performance, 176 students were selected from English combination within the college. Pre-test-post test experimental design was used in the study. The experimental group comprised 88 students who were exposed to integration of reading and writing instructional strategies for six weeks, while the control group, which had 88 students, were taught in the traditional way of teaching in the college. The research instruments were written letters and articles from the students which were collected by the researcher. The data collected were analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS). Extent of effectiveness of the instructional strategies were analysed in proportions, while other variables were examined with mean scores, standard deviation and standard error. The hypotheses were tested with the t-test procedure because of the two independent groups involved and decision of rejection or acceptance of any hypothesis was fixed at the 0.05 level of significance.

The major findings from the analysed hypotheses are summarised below:

1. There was significant difference between students' written English performance in the areas of content, organisation, mechanical accuracy and grammar before and after they were exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction.
2. The written English performance of students exposed to integration of reading and writing instruction was significantly different from those not exposed to the treatment.

From the observations and findings from the tests of the hypotheses involved in this study, into the effect of integration of reading and writing instruction on students' written English programme to enhance learners written performance, the paper wishes to conclude as follows:

1. The use of integration of reading and writing instructional strategies significantly improved the students' written English performance.
2. Students who were exposed to the integration of the two skills (reading and writing) instruction performed significantly better than students not exposed to the strategy.

By implementation, this paper has shown that integration of reading and writing instruction would enhance the English writing performance of trainees.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

By the logical and objective steps taken to arrive at the result of this research, a high internal validity for efficiency has been enshrined in the language teaching circle. However, like any other innovations, it is assumed that a healthy implementation environment would be provided for full realisation of the potentials of the strategy. The researcher recommends application of

integration strategy to other language skills i.e, listening/speaking and listening/reading, to determine their effects on learners' performance.

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