FAMILY PORTRAITS: A FLICKER IN NARRATIVE WRITING IN GRADE SEVEN STUDENTS OF KAPAYAPAAN INTEGRATED SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study reports an action research on the use of photo-based writing strategy to develop narrative essay writing among selected grade seven students in Kapayapaan Integrated School in school year 2019 - 2020.

The participants of the four-week study were students from two sections of seventh grade, comprised of 39 students each class. It also involved two grade seven teachers of the English subject. The control group was instructed with process-based approach to writing while the experimental group was taught with photo-based writing along with process-based approach. The class in the experimental group used photographs as writing prompts to generate thoughtful pieces of written work as part of process-based approach to determine whether this strategy led to better written output in the form of narrative writing. After four-weeks of instruction, a post-test was administered to both groups to measure the effect of the intervention process. The obtained results through descriptive statistics (Mean) indicated significant difference between the group that was taught with photo-based writing and process-based approach over the one that only received process-based approach.

The researcher concludes that the intervention with Photo-based Writing, particularly of family portraits improved the overall growth of creative writing skills among the grade seven students.

INTRODUCTION

This paper also aims to share the researchers' experience and the results of an action research in the field of writing, especially with teachers who are interested in developing innovative strategies to teach writing at any level of teaching. It reports on the use of Photo-based writing activities to improve the narrative essay writing skill in 39 participants from the seventh grade at Kapayapaan Integrated School in Canlubang, Calamba City in the school year 2019-2020.

According to Monis and Rodrigues (2012), writing is a skill and an art. They stated that writing must be learned before one can hope to write well, just like any other skills. They emphasized that teachers should talk about writing with the learners, how to write well, why is there need to write and for who, and what makes it difficult."

Based on the above, process approach was selected as the most appropriate approach to teach writing. It was also embedded in the lessons in the curriculum. Through process approach, respondents gradually learn how to create texts by familiarizing with cognitive writing strategies like pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing their own written work. Additionally, implementing Process approach matches a series of communicative competences (linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic) respondents need in order to write particular text types.

Directly associated with creativity, creative writing means one's putting his or her ideas and feelings about a particular topic on paper by using his or her imagination freely (Oral, 2012). We need to find ways to integrate writing with other skills and activities, giving it more relevance and importance - and also making it more interesting. We need to use meaningful, realistic and relevant writing tasks, based on our learners' needs and interests. All of the writings of respondents are important and any kind of writing is a creative act (McVey, 2008).

Many respondents claim that it is hard to write. It is most likely that the learners need more time in acquiring writing skill successfully. In addition, writing opportunities in teaching - learning process in the classroom are limited. In order to motivate respondents to engage in any writing exercises, they must be presented with resources that will tap to their creativity and writing potentials.

This context has led to the development of this research paper specifically on the use of family portraits as a flicker in creative writing of a narrative essay. Pictures and photographs implicitly convey a narrative—and that makes them ideal writing prompts for generating new ideas. This paper is an attempt to show the benefit of including photo-based writing activities in classroom already utilizing Process approach. The literature reviewed by the researcher regarding picture in language teaching, writing included, maintain that incorporating picture to language teaching and learning has positive effects on the improvement of learners' communicative skills. Such resources aid teachers to contextualize language by connecting the classroom with the world outside its

walls. They also encourage respondents to use the target language by providing support or a reference point to write or talk about. In this regard, Wright affirms that pictures "contribute to: 1) interest and motivation; 2) a sense of the context of the language; and 3) a specific reference point or stimulus". Pictures pack features that may be used to design tasks focused on developing narrative writing.

Writing is the most difficult area of academics for Filipino respondents, which is evident in the results of teacher-made assessments and their classroom performances. Nunan also affirms that when facing writing the "challenges for second language learners are enormous". In addition, the researcher emphasizes that, based on his own experience, that in classroom settings, the challenges for respondents to develop writing skills are even the most demanding but with the lowest levels of achievement.

In the educational setting where this study has been carried out, most of the respondents face serious problems to write in English. As a result, writing has the lowest percentage of achievement of all the communicative skills. Beside the academic records, findings from the pre-test scores revealed that most participants had difficulties in writing texts related to specific writing standards. These results evidenced a mismatch between the participants' writing competence for the seventh grade according to the K to 12 English 7 competencies and the scores obtained from the standardized tests applied in the classroom.

The situation described above encouraged the researcher to explore alternative strategies to approach the abovementioned problem. A review of the literature led to the decision of adapting and implementing Photo-based Writing Strategy to support the processes of teaching narrative writing. Thus, the researcher expected the learners improve their writing skill and develop a higher degree of involvement in their learning process.

RESEARCH PROBLEM
As previously stated, writing is the most difficult area of academics for grade seven respondents, which is evident in the results of teacher-made assessments and their classroom performances. Due to this weakness in writing among the respondents in selected classes, this research seeks to find strategy that will increase student response in writing tasks particularly in narrative essay writing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
This study targeted to determine the level of writing skills and the significance of photo-based writing strategy in improving writing skills, particularly in narrative essay writing among grade seven respondents.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:
1. What is the pretest mean scores of the experimental and control group?
2. What is the posttest mean scores of the experimental and control group?
3. Is there a significant difference between pretest and post-test mean scores within the group?
4. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the experimental and control group?

METHODOLOGY
This quantitative research employed a pretest posttest experimental design where measurements were taken before and after the intervention.

The study included two classes of grade seven respondents in Kapayapaan Integrated School. Each class consisted of thirty-nine (39) respondents. The total number of respondents in both classes was seventy-eight (78). Class A was the control group while class B was the experimental group. Class A received the process-based approach, an embedded lesson to writing narrative essays while class B received the processed-based approach with photo-based writing strategy. The research topic coincided with the lessons on classifying text types and composition writing at the time the research was conducted. The conduct of pre-test and post-test had been approved by the department head as well as the principal.

Data collection consisted of narrative essay writing for both classes. During pretest, respondents were given instruction to write a narrative essay about one's own happy moment with his/ her family. The instructions stated *"Write a three-paragraph essay to tell about one happy moment or one happy experience with your family."* The instruction was made clear and easy to understand. This essay topic was validated by the head teacher of the English department and the English subject teachers as grade seven respondents were more familiar with the idea of a happy family. Pre-test was initially conducted to describe the level of writing skills of the respondents.

Following the pre-test, class A (the control group) continued with the lesson on classifying text types and composition writing through process-based approach. An embedded strategy to teach the lesson as indicated in the curriculum and textbook used by the respondents. On the other hand, class B (the experimental group) proceeded with the same lesson through process-based approach included with photo-based writing strategy in every learning session. The intervention for the experimental group lasted for four weeks.

With photo-based writing strategy, the class was presented with a family photo. Each family photo varied in every learning session. The researcher consistently selected photos of families to allow respondents to build up ideas and inputs for their writings throughout the intervention period. As respondents viewed the photo, they were given specific prompts to lead them to think of a story for that photo. Writing prompts, Location prompts, Scene prompts, and Character prompts were each focused every week. For week one, respondents were given the writing prompts. Example of the prompt included *"The child has just received a gift from his parents. Write that story."* For week two, they were given location prompts such as *"Where is this location? What time of year is*

it? Is something usual or unusual happening? What are your thoughts on the location?" For week three, they were given scene prompts such as *"Write a scene among the characters in the photo before, during, or after that event takes place."* For week four, they were given character prompts such as *"What is the emotional state of the person in the photograph? Why?"* These writing prompts helped in leading respondents to generate idea toward writing their narrative essays.

Checking of narrative essay outputs including the posttest outputs were done by one senior high school teacher in the same school teaching Creative Writing. The rubric used to evaluate respondents' written output was based on HiSet Writing Practice Test of the ITP Iowa Testing Programs authored by Houghton, Mifflin and Harcourt. It included the scoring guide for scoring essay responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
At the pre-intervention, the researcher obtained the results of the pre-test which shows that class A (control group) and class B (experimental group) both have low writing skills.

Table 1. Pretest Mean Scores of Control and Experimental Group

Group	Mean Score	Remarks
Control	2.31	Low
Experimental	2.28	Low
Legend:		
4.50 - 6 High		
2.70 - 4.49 Average		
0 - 2.69 Low		

At the end of the intervention, the researcher obtained the results of the posttest which shows that class A (control group) and class B (experimental group) both have average writing skills.

Table 2. Posttest Mean Scores of Control and Experimental Group

Group	Mean Score	Remarks
Control	3.05	Average
Experimental	4.1	Average
Legend:		
4.50 - 6 High		
2.70 - 4.49 Average		
0 - 2.69 Low		

Interestingly, the results between pretest and posttest mean scores showed significant difference within the group. The teaching-learning process on the given lesson had rendered significance to the respondents.

Table 3. Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of Control and Experimental Group

Group	Test	Mean Score	Mean Difference	t - computed	tabular value	Remarks
Control	Pretest	2.31	-0.74	-3.82	1.99	**Significant**
	Post Test	3.05				
Experimental	Pretest	2.28	-1.82	-9.96	1.99	**Significant**
	Post Test	4.1				
Level of Significance = 0.05						

Also, the intervention yielded significant improvement in writing skills, particularly in narrative essay writing conducted to the experimental group compared to the control group.

Table 4. Significant Difference between the Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control group

Test	Group	Mean Score	Mean Difference	t - computed	tabular value	Remarks
Pretest	Control	2.31	0.03	0.14	1.99	Not Significant
	Experimental	2.28				
Post Test	Control	3.05	-1.05	-5.43	1.99	**Significant**
	Experimental	4.1				
Level of Significance = 0.05						

In general, students from the experimental group reported slightly better results after the intervention than the control group. Students stated that they found the photo-based strategy and writing prompts to be advantageous because it helped them set a foundation upon which to start writing in English.

Finally, most of the students agreed that the pictures made them open their minds and think quickly, while others mentioned that it was possible for them to use prior knowledge in terms of vocabulary and use it to write faster. It was also interesting because it helped them to understand the situation given, and it was easier to establish a context for writing.

RECOMMENDATION

The English teachers particularly in grade seven must utilize visuals and strategies like photographs of certain subjects or topics, as they are good stimulus that trigger students' creative writing skills. Learners can then easily relate those stimuli to their prior knowledge or schema to produce better-written outputs. Furthermore, students get highly motivated and encouraged to participate in writing activities when they are able to perceive ideas that they will need in producing quality written work. More importantly, the intervention tested in this research can lessen the anxiety of both the teacher in teaching writing and the students in learning writing.

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