

# Teacher Creativity as Correlate to English Essay Writing Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities in Ibadan, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *Students with Learning disabilities are a unique minority in regular school setting in Nigeria, as such they often obstructed by partial or total delay in one aspect of learning development or the other. This paper discusses the impact of English language of teacher creativity on students with learning disabilities achievement in essay writing in Oyo State Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used to select seven government owned schools in seven towns within Ibadan, Nigeria. Eighteen (18) English Language subject teachers in Junior Secondary Schools II were enumerated while seven (7) intact classes of Juniors Secondary School II of students with learning disabilities totaling five hundred and eighty-five (585) were purposively selected for research purpose through nomination by the class teachers based on the academic records of each students in their classes across the seven schools. Two validated research instruments were used: Teacher Creativity Rating Scale ( $r=0.83$ ); Essay Writing Achievement Test ( $r=0.72$ ). Two research questions were raised and answered. The findings revealed that teacher creativity has a great influence on students' achievement in essay writing. The researcher then recommended that teacher of English language courses should make use of creative skills effectively during teaching/learning process, most especially in essay writing.*

**Keywords:** teacher creativity, achievement in essay writing, students with learning disabilities, English language subjects

## INTRODUCTION

Writing plays a pivotal role in academic attainment. It is an essential skill for composing essays, memorandum, research papers, examinations, assignments; to mention but a few. A well written paper not only attracts higher grades, but also reflects a student's depth of knowledge and critical thinking abilities. It could be concluded that writing skill is an indispensable tool which needed to be acquired in order to fit into the modern and global workforce.

Literacy is shown by one's ability to write (Anderson, 2010). The goal of teaching students to write essay in schools, according to West African Examination Council Syllabus, is to assist them to use correct English that is suitable for different audience and contexts. This implies that each sentence in a paragraph should be logical and there should be cohesive organisation of ideas.

Essay writing is a significant component in English language subject in secondary school, with the instruction taking place at all levels, that is, from Junior secondary 1 senior secondary school. A student who has attended essay writing classes is expected to possess the following skills: generating sufficient topic sentences and expanding them into a comprehensive composition using appropriate tense format, providing an explanation of the definition, types and purposes of letters, composing a well punctuated letter with correct layout, enumerating the distinctive features of a typical newspaper article and discerning the differences between an article, speech and other forms of writing , crafting a well-written article suitable for publication, and identifying and comprehending the attributes of literary materials (NCCE, 2020).

Despite the fact that learning disabled students have been exposed to various stages of essay writing, some of them seem to exhibit profound deficiencies in easy writing. Analysis of students answer scripts reveals that a significant number of learning disabled students encounter challenges when attempting to articulate their thoughts in written form. Some faults found in students' essays include, among others, incorrect usage of pronominal objects of preposition as pronominal subjects, use of empty or vague pronoun, inability to express parallel ideas in parallel manner and inconsistency in the use of tense. Adedigba (2015) suggested that the challenges of written English could be addressed when students realise the potential differences in word order. When students recognise the importance of word order in conveying meaning and its impact in their writing, their style is likely to significantly improve.

Students with learning disabilities have a hard time in School as academic failure is very common throughout their stay in School. They often accept failure, as such, discouraged from having motivation to try anything new. The task of essay writing would become much more difficult if teachers are not creative inclined to further enhance students performance. Researchers such as Muodumogu and Unwaha (2013) and Ogunyemi (2022) argued that the unsatisfactory performance of students in English language might be due to their lack of proficiency in essay writing aspect. This indicates that essay writing has a substantial impact on students' overall academic achievement. Igubor (2015) suggested the use of innovative instruction as a reliable

means of achieving excellent teaching in several areas of English language, including essay writing.

According to Fakeye and Ohia (2016) individuals with high level of apprehension tend to produce shorter essays that exhibit lower levels of writing talent compared to those with low levels of apprehension. Pupa et al. (2020) proposed that teachers should strive to teach essay writing via several pedagogical approaches in order to take care of individual differences among learners and enhance learners proper understanding of the concepts being taught.

From literature, it could be observed that researchers such as Ghuftron and Masnuatul (2015), Alabere (2018), Nnamani and Akabogu (2020), Pupa (2021), to mention but a few, examined many factors aimed at facilitating the successful teaching/to students of essay writing with little attention given to teacher creativity. According to Personal Creativity Theory which was developed by Runco in year 2003, creativity is subjective and unique to each individual because individual's imagination is often unique in reference to personal habits. This implies that what is innovative for one person may not be innovative for another. The proponent of this idea claimed that every individual has an innate capacity for creativity which is not limited to those with high intelligence. This concept is grounded on the belief that the ability to effectively use resources is a component of fundamental human inclination to create, understand and embrace knowledge as it is encountered.

Teachers are commonly seen as mentors, guides and facilitators. It is believed that when a teacher does not exhibit elements of creativity, students' ability to critically think outside the box and innovate is unlikely to develop. Likewise, teachers' imagination might run wild and inhibit students' natural inclinations to think beyond the box. A creative teacher could be seen as someone who has the capacity, the inclination, or the professional attribute to take bold actions in order to create unexpected learning scenarios for students, hence, fostering their independence and self-assurance (Cremin and Chappel, 2019; Olakunde, 2023).

Adeyemi (2019) revealed a comparable problem in Nigeria language classrooms and questioned whether language teachers fully understand the creative potentials of language teaching and how to use it in the classroom. Also, Ogunyemi (2022) found out that many teachers of English language subjects seem not to demonstrate creativity in the classrooms, particularly when it comes to essay writing.

In recent times, Zairil et al. (2015) investigated the use of creative thinking abilities in the context of academic essay writing in an Islamic higher institution. Group A served as the experimental group, receiving treatment via the Cognitive Research Trust Programme while group B functioned as the control group and received instruction through conventional teaching methods. The result indicated that a favourable correlation exists between teachers' creativity and students performance in essay writing as evidenced in the increase in organisation and idea creation in the experimental group, that is, group A, but no change was observed in group B. This implies that

teachers need to improve on the conventional teaching methods in order to satisfy the educational standards required in the current age of technological advancement. This could only be achieved when teachers always use innovative writing techniques to teach essay writing.

Ukoima et. al (2021) examined the impact of teacher creativity on the scholastic performance of senior secondary school students in Port-Harcourt, River State where teachers from government owned schools were sampled. The findings revealed that creative abilities of teachers in the classroom have a beneficial impact on the academic success of students. The implementation of workshop programmes for the teachers to enhance their knowledge of the significance and effect of creativity on academic achievement of students was proposed by the researchers. It means that teachers should, at intervals, undergo capacity building workshops, seminars and conferences to foster their creativity abilities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Essay writing is an important aspect of English language subject in secondary schools. It is taught to enhance its effective use in social communication as well as day- to- day living. However, reports have shown that students perform poorly in essay writing and this is particularly responsible for their poor performance in some other related subjects. Efforts to address this have led scholars to experiment with various strategies such as reciprocal peer tutoring technique, collaborative writing approach, brainstorming method, mini lesson strategy and other related techniques in relation to variables such as personal, family, textual factors, predictive power of cognitive types and gender; but little or no attention has been accorded teacher creativity. Therefore, this study focused on teacher creativity as a predictor of achievement in essay writing among learning disabled students in selected secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions were raised and answered:

1. What is the level of creativity exhibited by English Teachers in teaching of essay writing.
2. Is there any relationship between teacher creativity and learning disabled students achievement in essay writing?

### **METHODOLOGY**

Correlation research design was adopted for the study. Multistage sampling approach was also used in the study. Seven secondary schools were enumerated across Ibadan, Nigeria where eighteen Junior Secondary II English Language teachers across the seven secondary schools were enumerated while seven intact classes of Junior Secondary II students with learning disabilities, with a total of 585 were purposively selected. Based on students poor academic records provided by the English language teachers C.A.C Grammar School, Aperin Ibadan (95), Ibadan Grammar School, molete (89) Urban Day Grammar School (71) St Annes College, Challenge (79) Adelagun Grammar School, Odinjo (86) Methodist Grammar School (84) Loyala College (81). Two research instruments were used for the study: a self developed validated questionnaire titled

“Teacher Creativity Rating Scale (TCRS)” which comprised a set of 20 question items that were used and this was placed on a five-point scale: frequently – 5, occasionally – 4, sometimes – 3, seldom – 2 and never – 1. The Scott pie statistics was used to assess the inter-rater reliability, yielding a result of 0.83. The second instrument was “Essay Writing Achievement Test” which was also self-designed. . The instrument was scored using a marking guide versioned after the format of WASSCE/NECO as follows:

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Content             | = 10 |
| Organisation        | = 10 |
| Expression          | = 20 |
| Mechanical Accuracy | = 10 |
| Total               | = 50 |

Test retest was used to determine the inter-rater reliability of the instrument, and the value of 0.72 was reported.

## METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

**Research question 1:** What is the level of creativity exhibited by teachers of English language subjects in secondary schools.

**Table 1: Level of Creativity Exhibited by Teachers of English Language subject in essay writing.**

| S/N | Items   | FR          | OC          | SO         | SE         | N | Mean | ST.D |
|-----|---|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|---|------|------|
| 1   | I encourage students in solving problems in essay writing                             | 5<br>27.8%  | 9<br>50.0%  | 4<br>22.2% | -          | - | 4.06 | .76  |
| 2   | I allow students-initiated class presentations  | 4<br>22.2%  | 7<br>38.9%  | 6<br>33.3% | 1<br>5.6%  | - | 3.78 | .88  |
| 3   | I encourage brainstorming among students  | 6<br>35.3%  | 6<br>35.3%  | 5<br>29.4% | -          | - | 3.83 | 1.25 |
| 4   | I prepare students for the kind of expectations they would encounter in essay writing | 13<br>76.5% | 1<br>5.9%   | 3<br>17.6% | -          | - | 4.59 | .80  |
| 5   | I engage students in a critique of their own essay writing                            | 4<br>22.2%  | 11<br>61.1% | 3<br>16.7% | -          | - | 4.06 | .64  |
| 6   | I relate teaching to students' everyday life  | 15<br>83.3% | 2<br>11.1%  | 1<br>5.6%  | -          | - | 4.78 | .55  |
| 7   | I integrate technology into my teaching during Essay writing class                    | 3<br>16.7%  | 5<br>27.8%  | 5<br>27.8% | 5<br>27.8% | - | 3.33 | 1.09 |

|  |   |             |             |            |            |            |      |      |
|--|---|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------|------|
| 8                                      | I encourage the use of internet to access materials for submission of assignment on essay writing | 4<br>22.2%  | 6<br>33.3%  | 4<br>22.2% | 4<br>22.2% | -          | 3.56 | 1.10 |
| 9                                      | I use power point presentations for lectures  | -           | 4<br>22.2%  | 2<br>11.1% | 4<br>22.2% | 8<br>44.4% | 2.11 | 1.23 |
| 10                                     | I use voice projectors for effective communication  | -           | 5<br>27.8%  | 2<br>11.1% | 2<br>11.1% | 9<br>50.0% | 2.17 | 1.34 |
| 11                                     | I teach for transfer of learning  | 14<br>77.8% | 3<br>16.7%  | -          | 1<br>5.6%  | -          | 4.67 | .77  |
| 12                                     | I improvise a range of instructional materials for teaching essay writing                         | 2<br>11.1%  | 7<br>38.9%  | 6<br>33.3% | 3<br>16.7% | -          | 3.44 | .92  |
| 13                                     | I make students to work cooperatively in group  | 7<br>38.9%  | 4<br>22.2%  | 7<br>38.9% | -          | -          | 4.00 | .91  |
| 14                                     | I use heuristic approach in teaching essay writing  | 4<br>22.2%  | 7<br>38.9%  | 7<br>38.9% | -          | -          | 3.83 | .79  |
| 15                                     | I use higher order questions in teaching essay writing  | 3<br>17.6%  | 10<br>58.8% | 4<br>23.5% | -          | -          | 3.94 | .70  |
| 16                                     | I use didactic approach in teaching essay writing   | 5<br>29.4%  | 6<br>35.3%  | 2<br>11.8% | 4<br>23.5% | -          | 3.71 | 1.16 |
| 17                                     | I do not force students to strictly adhere to directions  | 3<br>18.8%  | 4<br>25.0%  | 7<br>43.8% | 1<br>6.3%  | 1<br>6.3%  | 3.44 | 1.10 |
| 18                                     | I give opportunities to students to express their ideas and thoughts in essay writing             | 9<br>50.0%  | 2<br>11.1%  | 7<br>38.9% | -          | -          | 4.11 | .96  |
| 19                                     | I encourage self and group assessment of students work  | 6<br>33.3%  | 7<br>38.9%  | 5<br>27.8% | -          | -          | 4.06 | .80  |
| 20                                     | I deploy only lower order questions in essay writing class  | 3<br>17.6%  | 3<br>17.6%  | 4<br>23.5% | 6<br>35.3% | 1<br>5.9%  | 3.06 | 1.30 |
| Weighted Mean = 3.73: Threshold = 3.00 |   |             |             |            |            |            |      |      |

**Keys: FR = Frequently; OC = Occasionally; SO = Sometimes; SE = Seldom; N = Never**

Table 1 revealed that the level of creativity exhibited by lecturers of General English courses. The result indicated that a weighted mean of 3.73 which is greater than the threshold set at 3.00. It shows that lecturers of General English demonstrated a high level of creativity.

**Research question 2:** Is there any relationship between teacher creativity and learning disabled students' achievement in essay writing?



**Table 2: Relationship between teacher creativity and students with learning disabilities in essay writing achievement.**

| Variables   | N   | Mean  | St.D  | r    | P-Value | Remark          |
|---|-----|-------|-------|------|---------|-----------------|
| Teacher Creativity                                      | 18  | 73.28 | 11.02 | .310 | .211    | Not Significant |
| Learning disabled students achievement in essay writing | 585 | 19.57 | 4.87  |      |         |                 |

Table 2 shows that lecturer creativity ( $r = -.301$ ;  $p = .211 > 0.05$ ) had no significant relationship with learning disabled students achievement in essay writing. It further indicated that teacher creativity correlated negatively with learning disabled students achievement in essay writing. Teacher creativity was inversely related to learning disabled achievement in essay writing because while teacher creativity was increasing, learning disabled students achievement in essay writing was decreasing, and vice versa.

## DISCUSSION

The data analysed for research question one shows that the teachers of English languages demonstrated a high level of creativity. Out of the 20 items used, 12 of them contributed to the high level of creativity with their mean values greater than the weighted mean. In their order of magnitude, the items are: 6 (mean=4.78>3.73); 11 (mean=4.67>3.73); 4 (mean=4.59>3.73); 18 (mean=4.11>3.73); 1 (mean=4.06>3.73); 5 (mean=4.06>3.73); 19 (mean=4.06>3.73); 13 (mean=4.00>3.73); 15 (mean=3.94>3.73); 3 (mean=3.83>3.73); 14 (mean=3.83>3.73) and 2 (3.78>3.73). Therefore, it could be established that majority of the selected teachers demonstrated a high level of creativity in English language essay writing aspect. With the exhibition of an exceptional level of creativity by English language teachers, one anticipates that disabled students achievement in essay writing would be encouraging. This research contradicts the conclusion reached by Adeyemi (2019) and Ogunyemi (2022). Adeyemi asserted that language teachers lack comprehension of the artistic aspects of language instruction and how to use them in classroom settings while Ogunyemi maintained that although, English teachers claimed to have positive attitude towards creativity in self-reports, their actual performance in areas such as independence, risk-taking, expressiveness, and creative thinking falls short.

The findings from research question two revealed that there is a negative correlation between teacher creativity and learning disabled students achievement in essay writing. While the creativity level of the teachers is increasing, it is expected that the achievement level of the learning disabled students should likewise be increasing, but alternative is the case from the result obtained. This may be attributed to teachers perplexity on the pedagogies required to stimulate students' enthusiasm for creative writing. The result contradicts the findings of Zairil et. al (2015) and Ukoima et. al (2021) who stated that creativity had a positive effect on students' academic performance.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher examined the relationship that exists between teacher creativity and learning disabled students' achievement in essay writing. It was established that teacher creativity has a great effect on learning disabled students' performance in essay writing. The study had a lots of implication for teachers of English Language to develop and implement effective intervention programmes and uphold the significance of creativity with the aim of eliminating students poor essay writing performance which is a vital aspect of English Language subject.

## Recommendation

Based on the finding, the following recommendations are made:

Teachers should intensify efforts to increase their creative knowledge by developing those skills needed to effectively function in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These can be easily acquired through attendance at workshops, seminars and conferences.

Essay writing is a crucial aspect of English Language subject; therefore, students should develop positive attitude towards it. In a situation where teacher creativity is increasing, but learning disabled students' performance in essay writing is decreasing, it implies that those students might have refused to give their academic activities any priority

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