

STAGES OF TEACHING WRITING SKILL IN NIGERIAN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL.

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Abstract

This paper examined the stages of teaching writing skill in Nigerian junior secondary schools. What writing entails, stages of writing, strategies such as imitating a model, spelling, etc were discussed. The paper recommended that students should try and get recommended textbooks as this will improve their writing skill; the Ministry of Education should recruit enough qualified teachers of English. It is also recommended that teachers should be allowed to attend seminars, conferences and workshops so as to brainstorm issues on writing.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, English language is one of the core subjects taught in schools. Also, a credit pass in English is one of the prerequisites for admission of students into any higher institution of learning. The ability of the individual students to listen, speak and read well will improve such student's writing skill.

Language as a means of communication has four skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are regarded as receptive skills, while speaking and writing are called productive skills. Writing is the process of representing one's thought, ideas and feelings graphically and conventionally. It is considered as the most difficult of all the language skills because the writing process demands for the author's presence of mind in simultaneous thinking, organising and reading.

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For students in junior secondary schools to effectively communicate, they need imagination in conceiving an idea, transforming the idea to a composition and finally, producing a written text that will be interesting and exciting. The students therefore need to give the appropriate intellectual and emotional investment to their writing. The skill of writing even though a strenuous task can be adequately developed through practice.

Writing

Writing is the highest and the most complex of all the language skills. Babatunde (1998) affirmed the complexity of writing by saying that it is the most difficult, tasking and demanding on the part of the writer because writing calls for the writer's presence of mind in simultaneous thinking, organizing and writing. This implies that as a writer writes, he as well reads.

Writing as a skill emerges from the ability of the writer to identify the letters of the English alphabets, use them to form words and sentences. This explains why Saleman (2008) asserted that a good writer must possess good imagination, sense of creativity and must be an individual with high level of organization.

Saleman (2008) quoted Ogunsiji (2004) that writing involves putting the graphic symbols that represent a language one understands, so that others can read the graphic symbols if they know the language and the graphic representations.

Writing is a continuous process. Fashiku (2011) supported this view by explaining that it is called a continuous writing because it allows the writer to relate a personal experience of another person, to discuss an idea or contribute to on-going contemporary issues. The issue of writing demands are numerous and endless and that whatever the demand is, students in junior secondary schools are bound to use words joined together in the form of phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs; these sentences must conform with the grammar and context of the demand of the topic. Tenses are vital in writing; hence, the students must use the appropriate tenses of verbs.

In short, writing entails deep thinking, appropriate use of language, clear and logical organisation of thoughts. In writing, the students have to carefully choose words to be used and organize them logically, while creating the context. Any form of writing is identified by its features such as content, organization, expression, mechanics and the use of language. The types of writing include essay types, such as narrative, descriptive, argumentative and expository, articles, speech writing and letter writing.

Stages of Writing

Writing as a process is considered as a major task involving various stages. These stages are pre-writing, writing and re-writing. The three stages shall be discussed one after the other.

Pre-Writing Stage

The pre-writing stage is a stage that deals with all the activities of the writer before the commencement of the actual writing. Olanrewaju (2010) opined that the pre-writing stage entails decision on what to write, knowing your audience, choosing appropriate topic and organising the ideas on the chosen topic. She added that the aim of writing should be linked with topic of discussion and that the audience should be considered too. Thinking about the audience assists the writer to select what to say and how to logically present the ideas.

Writing Stage

The next stage is the writing stage which lends itself to the actual writing by structuring the text. Abdulsalam and Adeoti (2007) posited that this stage involves connecting words together in a particular way to bring about meaningful sentences so that repetition and redundancy can be prevented. It is at this stage that content, organisation, expression and mechanical accuracy are marked.

Re-Writing Stage

The last stage is the re-writing or editing stage. Oluwole (2009) revealed that the re-writing stage is a stage whereby a writer edits his or her write-up so as to make the write up meaningful and error free. One fact is certain that it is natural for students to make mistakes of punctuation, spelling, omission, tense, etc during the course of writing under stress. If students submit their write ups without editing or proof reading, such write ups will be marked down and in order to forestall this, students must make it a point of duty to always proof read and make necessary corrections on their papers before submission.

In a nut shell, students should always use the stages discussed as guide to effective writing.

Strategies for Teaching Writing at Junior Secondary School Level

The major reason for writing is to express ourselves to others either to affect their points of view by presenting ours, make them change their positions on certain issues or things, make others understand the processes of a research experiment or even convince them to take action on certain matters. When we write, we do so to achieve certain positive results. The aim of any writing depends on the strategies employed.

This paper presents some of the strategies that teachers of English can employ for effective writing.

What good pronunciation is to speech is what good spelling is to writing. Spelling in English is a complex thing because English is a language of many sources. Such sources have their diverse rules. Words change form (spelling) when the grammatical context changes as we have in the past tense and plural markers. Students are supposed to be taught that some of these changes in spelling are done by suffixation or the adding of a letter or more to the actual word at the final position. A suffix is employed to change a word by replacing, by dropping or by adding. E.g. to 'ies' in the following inflections "lady" "ladies", "baby" "babies" and when some

