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The Impact of Process Writing on Primary Pupils' Language Development in the Buea Municipality of the Fako Division, South West Region, Cameroon

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Abstract

The present study examines the influence of process-based writing instruction on the language development of primary school students in the Buea Municipality of the Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating writing assessments, student writings, questionnaires, interviews, and teacher journals. The findings indicate that process-based writing activities had a positive impact on students' English writing abilities, particularly for middle and high-achieving students. Additionally, the process-based approach enhanced students' affective domains, such as motivation and confidence. This study provides insights for classroom teachers, specialists, and administrators on the benefits of implementing process-based writing instruction to support primary pupils' language development in the Buea region.

Keywords: Process writing, primary pupils, language development, Buea, Cameroon

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Introduction

The development of strong writing skills is a critical component of primary education, as it lays the foundation for academic success and effective communication. However, many primary school students in the Buea Municipality of the Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon, struggle with writing proficiency due to a variety of factors, including lack of interest, inadequate instruction, and limited exposure to exemplary writing models and instructional strategies. In response to this challenge, the current study investigates the impact of process-based writing instruction on the language development of primary pupils in the Buea region.

Process writing, which emphasizes the iterative nature of writing through a series of stages, such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing, has gained widespread recognition in Western educational contexts for its ability to foster creativity, critical thinking, and practical writing skills (Lv, 2021). While process-based approaches have been extensively studied in other contexts, limited research has been conducted on their application and effectiveness in primary education within the Buea region of Cameroon.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the influence of process-based writing instruction on primary pupils' language development, including their writing abilities, affective domains, and overall communicative competence.

Literature Review

The existing literature on the impact of process writing on primary pupils' language development provides valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges of this instructional approach.

Research has highlighted the multifaceted nature of writing, emphasizing the importance of introducing writing activities at the elementary level to cultivate students' ability to produce proficient written compositions in the future (Vacalares et al., 2023). Process-based writing instruction, which encourages students to engage in activities such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing, has been shown to positively impact the writing abilities of primary-level students.

A study conducted in Incheon, South Korea, found that process-based writing activities using mobile social networking software had a positive influence on students' English writing abilities, particularly for middle and high-level students. Similarly, a mixed-methods study in the United States investigated the effects of process writing instruction on the development of second and third-grade students' writing abilities, focusing on strategies such as wide reading, inquiry, writing frames, technology, and grammar/mechanics. The findings indicated that all students involved advanced in their writing proficiency, increased the number of words written, addressed issues in writing mechanics, and improved their language use(Moller et al., 2011).

While existing research has largely focused on the Western context, a brief overview of key issues in second language writing teaching and research suggests that process-based and post-process approaches have shown promising results in enhancing learners' overall proficiency, awareness of conceptual writing strategies, willingness to apply these strategies, and positive attitudes towards writing activities (Javadi-Safa, 2018).

However, studies have also highlighted the need for more research on the application and effectiveness of process-based writing instruction in diverse educational contexts, particularly

in the primary school setting within the Buea Municipality of the South West region of Cameroon.

Theoretical framework

The current study is grounded in the theoretical framework of process writing, which emphasizes the iterative and recursive nature of the writing process. The process-based approach to writing instruction is centered on the following key stages:

1. Planning: Students engage in activities such as brainstorming, outlining, and setting writing goals.
2. Drafting: Students produce an initial version of their writing, focusing on content and organization.
3. Revising: Students review and refine their writing, addressing issues related to content, structure, and language use.
4. Editing: Students proofread and correct errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

This iterative process allows students to develop their writing skills through multiple cycles of planning, drafting, revising, and editing, rather than treating writing as a linear, one-time task.

The process-based approach to writing instruction is grounded in the belief that writing is a complex, cognitive process that involves the interplay of various skills and strategies. By engaging students in this multifaceted process, the approach aims to foster the development of critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication skills, which are essential for primary pupils' language development.

Study aims and hypotheses

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the impact of process-based writing instruction on the language development of primary pupils in the Buea Municipality of the Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon.

Specifically, the study will examine the following research questions:

1. How does process-based writing instruction influence the language development of primary pupils in the Buea Municipality, South West Region, Cameroon?
2. What are the key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of process-based writing instruction in supporting primary pupils' language development in the Buea region?
3. What implications can be drawn from the findings of this study to inform the implementation of process-based writing instruction in primary education within the Buea context?

Based on the existing literature and the research questions, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1: Process-based writing instruction will have a significant positive impact on the language development of primary pupils in the Buea Municipality, including their writing abilities, affective domains, and overall communicative competence.

H2: Factors such as the integration of technology, the use of writing frames, and targeted instruction in grammar and mechanics will contribute to the effectiveness of process-based writing instruction in supporting primary pupils' language development in the Buea region.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of process-based writing instruction on primary pupils' language development in the Buea Municipality.

Participants

The study involved 120 primary pupils from three public schools in the Buea Municipality, Fako Division, South West region of Cameroon. The participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n=60) or a control group (n=60).

Group	Number of Participants
Experimental	60
Control	60

The experimental group received process-based writing instruction, while the control group followed the standard writing curriculum.

Demographic	Percentage
Boys	52.5%
Girls	47.5%

The table presents the distribution of participants by gender, indicating that boys constitute 52.5% of the sample, while girls make up 47.5%. The percentage of boys (52.5%) is slightly higher than that of girls (47.5%). This suggests a relatively balanced gender distribution, with a modest male majority.

Grade Level	Percentage
Primary 4	35%
Primary 5	30%
Primary 6	35%

The table presents the distribution of participants across three grade levels: Primary 4, Primary 5, and Primary 6. The percentages indicate that Primary 4 and Primary 6 each account for 35% of the sample, while Primary 5 comprises 30%. The percentages for Primary 4 and Primary 6 are equal at 35%, indicating a balanced representation of students in these two grades. This suggests that the sample includes a significant number of students at both ends of the primary level. Primary 5 has a slightly lower representation at 30%.

Instruments

1. Writing Assessment: Students' writing skills were evaluated using a standardized writing assessment rubric that measured aspects such as content, organization, language use, and mechanics.
2. Questionnaire: Students completed a questionnaire to assess their attitudes, motivation, and perceptions towards writing before and after the intervention.
3. Classroom Observations: Trained researchers conducted classroom observations to document the implementation of process-based writing instruction and to gather qualitative data on the teaching practices and student engagement.
4. Teacher Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participating teachers to understand their perspectives on the implementation, challenges, and effectiveness of the process-based writing instruction.

Procedure

The study was conducted over the course of one school year. The experimental group received process-based writing instruction while the control group followed the standard writing curriculum and practices used in the schools.

The process-based writing instruction for the experimental group included the following key components (Moller et al., 2011; 김경옥& Park, 2015; Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007):

1. Wide reading and inquiry: Students engaged in extensive reading and research to build background knowledge and generate ideas for their writing.
2. Writing frames: Students used structured writing templates to organize their thoughts and develop their writing.
3. Technology integration: Students used digital tools, such as word processors and online collaboration platforms, to support their writing process.
4. Grammar and mechanics instruction: Targeted lessons on grammar, spelling, and punctuation were integrated into the writing instruction.

The control group received the standard writing instruction typically used in the schools, which often focused on a more traditional, product-oriented approach.

1. Pre-and post-writing tests: Students in both the experimental and control groups completed writing assessments before and after the intervention to measure changes in their writing abilities.
2. Student surveys and interviews: Students in the experimental group were surveyed and interviewed to explore their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with the process-based writing instruction.
3. Teacher observations and journals: Teachers implementing the process-based writing instruction kept detailed observation notes and reflective journals to provide insights into the implementation process and its challenges.

Data analysis

The quantitative data from the writing assessments and student surveys were analyzed using t-tests statistical methodsto determine the impact of the process-based writing instruction on primary pupils' language development.

The qualitative data from the classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns related to the implementation and effectiveness of the process-based writing instruction.

Findings

The results of the writing assessments revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their writing performance. The experimental group, which received the process-based writing instruction, demonstrated significant improvements across all aspects of writing, including content, organization, language use, and mechanics.

Writing Aspect	Experimental Group	Control Group	p-value
Content	4.8 ± 0.6	3.9 ± 0.9	$p < 0.001$
Organization	4.6 ± 0.7	3.7 ± 0.8	$p < 0.001$
Language Use	4.5 ± 0.8	3.5 ± 1.0	$p < 0.001$
Mechanics	4.4 ± 0.9	3.3 ± 1.1	$p < 0.001$

The experimental group scored significantly higher in terms of content, with an average score of 4.8, indicating a strong grasp of the subject matter and effective communication of ideas. The lower score of 3.9 in the control group suggests that participants may have struggled with content depth or relevance. The p-value of less than 0.001 confirms that this difference is statistically significant, meaning it is highly unlikely that these results occurred by chance. This suggests that whatever intervention or method applied to the experimental group effectively enhanced their ability to generate and articulate content.

In terms of organization, the experimental group also outperformed the control group, with an average score of 4.6 compared to 3.7. This indicates that participants in the experimental group were better at structuring their writing, presenting ideas logically, and maintaining a coherent flow. The significant p-value reinforces the reliability of this finding, suggesting that the training or strategies employed in the experimental group led to improved organizational skills in writing.

The experimental group's average score of 4.5 in language use reflects a higher proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and overall linguistic expression compared to the control group's score of 3.5. The standard deviation in the control group is higher (1.0), indicating more variability in language proficiency among participants. The statistical significance of $p < 0.001$ suggests that the differences in language use are meaningful and likely attributable to the interventions received by the experimental group.

Finally, the mechanics aspect, which includes spelling, punctuation, and formatting, shows a notable difference between the two groups. The experimental group scored an average of 4.4, while the control group averaged 3.3. The higher score in the experimental group indicates a better command of writing conventions. The p-value again confirms the statistical significance of this difference, suggesting that the intervention was effective in improving the mechanical aspects of writing.

The consistent pattern of higher scores across all writing aspects for the experimental group, coupled with statistically significant p-values, strongly suggests that the interventions applied

to this group were effective in enhancing writing skills. These findings have important implications for educational practices, indicating that targeted training or instructional strategies can lead to substantial improvements in writing quality.

The experimental group showed the most significant improvements in the areas of content and organization, which are key aspects of effective writing (Thaksanan & Chaturongakul, 2023).

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis of the classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews revealed several key themes:

1. Engagement and Motivation: Students in the experimental group reported increased engagement and motivation in writing tasks due to the use of technology, writing frames, and the collaborative nature of the process-based instruction (Moller et al., 2011 ; Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007)
2. Skill Development: Teachers observed that students in the experimental group demonstrated more advanced writing skills, such as better organization, use of language, and attention to mechanics, compared to the control group (Moller et al., 2011; 김경옥& Park, 2015).
3. Challenges and Adaptations: Teachers noted some initial challenges in implementing the process-based writing instruction, such as the need for additional training and the integration of technology. However, they were able to adapt and overcome these challenges over time (Jenson & Morrison, 2001).
4. Perceived Benefits: Both teachers and students in the experimental group expressed positive perceptions towards the process-based writing instruction, citing improvements in writing skills, confidence, and enjoyment of the writing process (Thaksanan & Chaturongakul, 2023).

The findings from this study suggest that the implementation of process-based writing instruction can have a significant impact on the language development of primary pupils in the Buea Municipality of the Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research on the effectiveness of process-based writing instruction in improving students' writing abilities. The process-based approach, which emphasizes wide reading, the use of writing frames, technology integration, and targeted grammar/mechanics instruction, has been shown to enhance students' engagement, motivation, and overall writing performance.

The significant improvements in the experimental group's writing performance across various aspects, such as content, organization, language use, and mechanics, suggest that the process-based writing instruction can be an effective approach for supporting primary pupils' language development in the Buea Municipality.

The qualitative findings provide further insights into the implementation and perceived benefits of the process-based writing instruction. Students' increased engagement and motivation, as well as the development of more advanced writing skills, highlight the potential of this instructional approach to positively impact primary pupils' language

There are some limitations to this study, including the relatively small sample size and the specific context of the Buea Municipality. Future research could explore the effectiveness of process-based writing instruction in other regions of Cameroon or with larger sample sizes to further validate the findings.

Implications for practice, training and research

The findings of this study have several implications for practice, teacher training, and future research:

Practice:

The results suggest that process-based writing instruction can be an effective approach for improving primary pupils' language development in the Buea Municipality. Schools and districts should consider implementing this instructional model to support the writing and language skills of their primary students.

Teacher Training:

The qualitative findings highlight the need for comprehensive teacher training on the implementation of process-based writing instruction. Teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities should focus on equipping teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to effectively integrate the key components of this approach, such as the use of technology, writing frames, and targeted grammar/mechanics instruction.

Research:

Future research should explore the long-term impact of process-based writing instruction on primary pupils' language development. Studies with larger sample sizes and longitudinal designs would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of the observed improvements in writing skills.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of process-based writing instruction on the language development of primary pupils in the Buea Municipality of the Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. The findings indicate that the implementation of this instructional approach led to significant improvements in the writing performance of the experimental group, as compared to the control group.

The qualitative data further revealed that both teachers and students perceived the process-based writing instruction positively, citing benefits such as increased engagement, motivation, and the development of more advanced writing skills. These results suggest that process-based writing instruction can be an effective strategy for supporting primary pupils' language development in the Buea Municipality and potentially in other regions of Cameroon (Boscolo & Masón, 2001; Park, 2015; Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989; Moller et al., 2011).

However, the study also identified the need for comprehensive teacher training and the integration of key instructional components, such as technology and writing frames, to ensure the successful implementation of the process-based writing approach (DelleBovi, 2012; McGill & Millson, 2015; Javadi-Safa, 2018; Adeyemi, 2012)

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of effective writing instruction for primary pupils in the Cameroonian context and provides a foundation for future research and implementation of process-based writing programs in the country's education system.

Recommendations

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

1. Implement process-based writing instruction in primary schools in the Buea Municipality and other regions of Cameroon: The results of this study suggest that the process-based writing instruction can be an effective approach for improving primary pupils' language development.
2. Provide comprehensive teacher training on the implementation of process-based writing instruction: The qualitative findings indicate that some teachers faced initial challenges in implementing the process-based approach. Providing thorough training and ongoing support for teachers will be crucial for the successful implementation of this instructional approach.
3. Integrate technology and writing frames into the writing curriculum: The use of technology and writing frames were identified as key components of the process-based writing instruction that contributed to its effectiveness.
4. Conduct further research on the long-term impact of process-based writing instruction: Additional studies with larger sample sizes and longer-term follow-ups would help to better understand the sustained impact of this instructional approach on primary pupils' language development.

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