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ENHANCING WRITING AND ANALYZING SKILLS THROUGH

SELF-REFLECTION STRATEGIES, 2020-2021

Abstract

The paper discusses self-reflection strategies that help individuals sharpen general writing and analysis skills. Specifically, the study aims to identify and test the effectiveness of self-reflection strategies, such as 5-minute writing, think-pair-share, and reflective journaling, in enhancing writing habits and analytical skills among senior-grade students, particularly 12th-grade students at one of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools.

For data gathering, non-participant systematic observations, a survey, three students' papers, and online reflection sheets have been used. This research was conducted following the principles of action research: planning, action, analysis, and reflection. Self-reflection assignments were based on concept-based learning and assessed with a framework for evaluating reflection.

The study findings reveal that the majority of students improved their writing and analysis skills by practicing self-reflection to connect their knowledge to real life. The result shows that two participants improved to a higher level of self-reflection.

Introduction

Education at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) aims to develop academically competent, critical-thinking learners prepared for global challenges (NIS 2011–2020 Development Strategy). Developing strong writing and analytical skills is especially important in high school, where students are expected to show advanced reasoning, argumentation, and reflection (Educational Programme of NIS, 2020). Recent classroom assessments and the Grade

11 External Summative Assessment in English Language, aligned with the Cambridge AS Level standards report (2020), show that many students struggle with evaluating their writing, identifying areas to improve, and applying analytical strategies in the tasks. This study examines self-reflection as a way to improve writing and analytical skills among Grade 12 NIS students, meeting the needs for academic development and supporting the school's strategic goals. Self-reflection is a process in which students pause, consider what they have learned, and make sense of their progress (Davies, Herbst, & Busick, 2013). Through this process, writing becomes not only a product of learning but also a tool that deepens it. This is explained by the reason that Grade 12 is significant for increasing university demands and external assessments, and the need for such instructional enhancement is timely and essential as well.

Aims and Research Questions

The hypothesis of the study is that engaging in self-reflection through writing practices helps students strengthen their writing skills and develop deeper thinking. The research aims to examine how specific self-reflection strategies, such as 5-minute writing, think-pair-share, and reflective journals, improve writing habits and analytical abilities in senior students. Leading research questions are as follows:

1. Which self-reflection approach is most effective?
2. At what stage of the lesson does self-reflection support students' understanding of their own responses and learning processes?
3. How to determine the level of reflection?

This study is relevant for senior students preparing for graduation. Observations suggest that many individuals struggle to apply newly acquired knowledge to real-life contexts. By exploring these self-reflective strategies, the study seeks to provide insights that enhance academic development and encourage reflective learning habits.

Literature Review

Reflection means thinking back, observing ourselves in action, and learning from our experiences (Webb, 2019). Denton (2011) states that it connects students' experiences to their learning. To clarify the strategies of reflection, it is important to find out its definition. Moon (2003) notes that reflection is a part of learning and thinking where students reflect to learn or learn by reflecting. Therefore, discovering which strategy is more effective for reflecting arises. So, the following strategies have been taken into consideration, such as 5-minute writing, think-pair-share, and reflective journal.

5-minute writing is a type of freewriting. Elbow (1973) called it 'automatic writing,' 'babbling,' or 'jabbering.' He developed this strategy, which is like brainstorming but written in sentences and paragraphs without pausing. Setting time for 5 minutes during the lesson is a good way for students to practice.

Think-Pair-Share is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question related to an assigned task. The technique involves two steps: (1) thinking individually about a topic or question; and (2) sharing ideas with classmates. This method enhances classroom discussion by allowing students to reflect on their ideas before engaging in whole-class conversations (Sapsuha & Bugis, 2013).

Kerka (1996) states that journal writing helps learners connect new information to what they know and allows students record their thoughts, feelings, experiences, values, and beliefs. Dymont and O'Connell (2003) define journal writing as the recording of daily events, reflections, questions about the environment, and reactions to experiences.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research design to investigate how self-reflection strategies support the development of students' writing and analytical skills, specifically, 12th-grade students during the 2020–2021 academic year.

Data were collected from students' online self-reflection posts on Padlet and Jamboard, as well as offline written papers. Reflective writing samples from Term 1 and Term 3 were the main data sources for comparison and progress analysis. Ethical principles were taken into consideration to ensure a respectful and responsible approach to participants and data. All stages of the study were carried out with attention to confidentiality, voluntariness, and transparency, in accordance with ethical research standards.

In addition, a survey was conducted with 40 12th-grade students at NIS to evaluate the effectiveness of 5-minute writing, reflective journaling, and think-pair-share in English lessons. By combining reflective copybooks and survey responses, the study provided a broad understanding of how self-reflection influenced learning.

Three students from the focus group were purposefully selected in order to understand individual progress because they had previously shown difficulties in writing and analytical tasks. Two assessment tools were used to monitor their development. An analytical scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2007) evaluated their writing in terms of content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. A critical reflection rubric adapted from Kember et al. (2008) measured their reflective thinking and understanding of new knowledge. Students' reflective responses were collected online and in copybooks to ensure complete data. They practiced self-reflective writing during three academic terms.

The research began online in Term 1 and ended offline in Term 3. Each term, they completed reflection tasks after every unit. This approach allowed observation of students' reflective development in different learning environments. The study was structured into three cycles across academic terms. For each cycle, a self-reflection strategy was selected to observe its effect on students' writing and analytical skills. The cycles were: Cycle 1 (Term 1): implementing 5-minute writing at the beginning of every lesson to activate prior knowledge, warm up, and introduce the lesson topic. Cycle 2 (Term 2): adding think-pair-share at the end of

each lesson while continuing 5-minute writing in the beginning. Cycle 3 (Term 3): introducing a reflective journal for each unit of the term to encourage deeper and more structured reflection. These planned stages allowed the researcher to trace student progress as new reflective practices were gradually introduced.

Data Collection and Analysis

The implementation proceeded according to the planned design where in Cycle 1, students practiced daily 5-minute writing, producing short reflections that helped activate their thinking. In Cycle 2, lessons combined 5-minute writing with think-pair-share, where students discussed their ideas, shared interpretations, and clarified understanding. In Cycle 3, students wrote reflective journal entries for every unit, describing their learning, personal insights, and connections with real-life contexts.

Each strategy was applied systematically, and students produced continuous written reflections throughout all three cycles. The Brown (2007) analytical writing rubric was used to evaluate improvements consistently across the study. Throughout the implementation, the researcher conducted ongoing observations and collected students' written work. The monitoring focused on changes in students' writing (content, organization, grammar, mechanics, vocabulary), the quality of participation during think-pair-share, depth and clarity of reflective responses.

Observations showed that all three students (A, B, and C) demonstrated progress, where Student A improved in content, grammar, and mechanics. Student B improved in content, vocabulary, and organization, and Student C already demonstrated strong writing from Term 1 and continued to progress.

In the next stage of the research, the four-rubric table from Kember (2008) was applied to analyze students' reflection levels. In term 1, three participants practiced reflective writing, and according to Kember's indicators, two students in the focus group remained at the Non-reflection

level because they did not seriously reflect on the task. Their attitude could be seen in their unclear sentences in the paper, which made it difficult to perceive new knowledge from their own experience, whereas student C, on the contrary, took the topic for reflective writing properly and was assessed at the level of Understanding.

In term 3, the participants showed progress in self-reflection. Students A, B, and C improved their analysis skills by reaching a higher level. Student A moved from Non-reflection to Understanding, but does not relate to other experiences or personal reactions. As for student B, there was evidence that he understood the topic by connecting the experience with class content. Student C critically reviewed existing knowledge, questioned assumptions, and articulated new perspectives as a result of experience.

Survey data from 40 students further supported these findings. It was used to get information from students after classroom action research. The research used 9 questions to gather data on students' attitude to better understand their emotions, thoughts, and feelings. According to the survey, 65% like reflecting, and 91% of students consider the most suitable time for self-reflection is at the end of the lesson.

The majority of students prefer think-pair-share and 5-minute writing. 83% of respondents reported that self-reflection helped moderately, while 6% reported that it helped strongly. 60% of students rate their writing skills as moderately improved; however, 35% rate their improvement as excellent.

Reflection on the results of the first full cycle showed that the gradual implementation of different reflection strategies led to consistent improvement in students' writing and analytical abilities. Students became more confident in expressing ideas, organizing thoughts, and linking new knowledge with personal experience.

The findings also indicated that written reflections, especially reflective journals, were the most effective for deep learning. Combining 5-minute writing with think-pair-share helped

students clarify and brainstorm ideas, and make progress in reflection along with analytical writing improvements. These findings shaped the next steps of the research by emphasizing the need for reflective tasks and encouraging further integration of self-reflection into everyday learning activities.

Conclusion

Self-reflection is an alternative tool to assess the overall quality and strengthen writing skills, improving organization, vocabulary, and content based on students' analysis papers. The hypothesis met the expectation that self-reflection through writing practice is useful and effective for students to improve their writing skills and promote their thinking abilities.

According to the inferences, using 5-min writing and think-pair-share strategies proved effective in enhancing writing and analytical skills among senior-grade students. The most suitable time to reflect at the lessons was at the end of the unit and the lesson. Self-reflection frequency facilitated and encouraged self-awareness, enabling students to identify areas for improvement. Based on the results, the applied critical reflection rubric positively affected and revealed progress in students' thinking by providing feedback on their learning.

These methods were helpful for all learners, but in the next stage of my research, I would focus on assessing students' reflections through peer review and integrate with a school psychologist to consult with and help students with inner fears and build confidence.

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