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Developing Argumentation Skills through Writing Strategies in the 9th Grades.

Annotation

This Action Research builds on our previous research on improving argumentation skills through reading and speaking, which prompted us to further explore teaching strategies that promote the development of argumentation skills in writing in 9th-grade students. The aims of the study were to implement effective teaching strategies that would help formulate and develop students' argumentative writing skills through precise planning, and to prepare students to pass external final examinations demonstrating persuasive arguments in various types of written work. The research questions were which learning strategies can assist in developing students' argumentation skills and which motivational approaches can be used to engage students in writing tasks designed to improve these skills.

The study involved several stages, including horizontal lesson planning, conducting lessons using the OREO and PEEL writing strategies, lesson observations, post-lesson discussions, and student interviews. To evaluate the effectiveness of these argumentation strategies, the study employed a qualitative approach comprising lesson observations and student interviews. As a result, the findings indicated that both writing strategies were effective in organizing ideas into coherent paragraphs when used separately, employing sentence starters and prompts. However, some limitations were observed, as students became confused when using both strategies simultaneously.

Keywords: Argumentative writing, Foreign language education, Writing strategies, OREO strategy, PEEL strategy, Student engagement, Critical thinking, Action research, EFL learners

Relevance and justification of the problem

Writing is key in developing foreign language students, but is often seen as more complex than the other three language skills. Argumentative writing is challenging because students must understand sentence structure as well as the format and content of argumentation. It requires structuring claims, adding evidence, and using persuasive language (Pratiwi, 2016). The importance of integrating reading, speaking and reasoning is emphasized by previous research (Rivard & Straw, 2000; Ryu & Sandoval, 2012; Chen, Hand, & Park, 2016; VanDerHeide, 2018). Discussion- and inquiry-based teaching approaches are believed to improve critical thinking and help students create coherent, evidence-based arguments.

Based on these findings, this Action Research aims to improve argumentation skills, particularly in writing, among ninth-grade students. We chose to teach students argumentation skills in writing to prepare them for upcoming external exams. Besides, reasoning and critical thinking skills will be necessary for students for real-life decision-making outside the school.

Purpose and research questions

The study aimed to introduce learning strategies that support students in developing argumentative writing skills through structured planning. The focus was also to prepare students for final exams where they must write convincing arguments in various situations, the research objectives were as follows:

1. To identify learning strategies that effectively develop students' argumentative writing skills.
2. To explore motivational approaches that enhance students' engagement in writing tasks aimed at strengthening argumentation.

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are the most effective strategies for developing argumentation skills in writing?
2. Which motivational strategies can be employed to increase learners' engagement in writing activities focused on argumentation?

Theoretical basis

The study tested whether structured argumentative writing strategies, combined with motivational techniques, improve students' ability to organize and present coherent arguments. Students' written work is expected to improve, and they will be more motivated to complete written tasks by planning and structuring arguments effectively.

This Action Research included a number of structured steps, including horizontal lesson planning, lesson implementation using the OREO and PEEL writing strategies, lesson observations, post-lesson discussions, and student interviews. A qualitative approach based on observations, lessons, and interviews was applied to assess the effectiveness of the applied strategies. Lesson observations demonstrated that the OREO and PEEL strategies are useful when applied separately, as students were able to organize ideas into coherent paragraphs using sentence starters and prompts. However, student interviews and further observations revealed certain limitations: some students tried to use both strategies simultaneously and became confused. Hence, it is important to carefully plan writing lessons applying these strategies to maximize their benefits.

Methodology

Procedure. The study had several stages: horizontal lesson planning, use of writing strategies in lessons, lesson observations, student interviews, and post-lesson discussion. We used a qualitative approach, including lesson observations and interviews, to assess the effectiveness of argumentative writing strategies. Participants and context. The study was conducted across 4 9th-grade classes over one academic year. The study involved 18 girls and 42 boys aged 14 to 15 years. Each class had 4 hours of English per week. The level of English proficiency among students varied from pre-intermediate to intermediate. The program that was used for the English lessons was based on the school's curriculum.

Research instruments and data analysis. Lesson observation was organized for this research. The same writing lessons were observed 4 times. All teachers who participated in this study took part in lesson observation and post-discussion. With the help of observation notes, student participation, and argumentative structures, the team discussed frequent writing errors and recommended improvements for the same activities in the next observed lessons.

Student interview. Three students from each group were selected for semi-structured interviews after each lesson. They were chosen from different language levels to see how the writing techniques helped them. Interview results were analyzed, and implications were discussed during the post-discussion. Search **results**

In the pre-writing phase, students did speaking, reading, and case study exercises to brainstorm before their first draft. The main problem is that students often present many arguments without giving examples or evidence.

Interview results. Students from different proficiency levels shared feedback. Most said writing preparation exercises helped them generate ideas and feel more confident before writing. Advanced students believed that discussions and comparisons of evidence improved their persuasion skills and expanded their perspectives. For students at the intermediate proficiency level, organized writing methods such as OREO and PEEL helped them express their thoughts coherently and provide clear examples. Moreover, students at lower proficiency levels noted that conversational and

brainstorming activities reduced their anxiety and increased their understanding of writing-related topics. However, they still struggle with vocabulary and sentence structure.

Overall, interview feedback shows that written assignments and structured letter outlines help students organize their ideas when writing argumentative texts.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the results of this action research, several practical and realistic recommendations can be suggested to enhance teaching practice.

It is recommended to focus on a single argumentative writing strategy, such as OREO or PEEL, when teaching 9th-grade students. Introducing both strategies at the same time could make it challenging for learners, particularly for those with low level of English. Teachers should demonstrate the given strategy in a structured way and support by providing with sentence starters and examples and clear writing frameworks. In addition, regular pre-writing activities such as discussions, brainstorming, and working with evidence should be taken at writing lessons, as they help students feel more confident and prepared. To engage quieter students and provide additional support where needed teachers should consider differentiation.

Sharing effective writing practices through joint workshops, lesson observations, and professional learning communities can contribute to schools as a whole. Teachers can be provided with ready-to-use materials, which will help them become more confident in using argumentative strategies. Further research can be carried out on the effectiveness of the long-term use of a single writing strategy and the impact of it on students' external examination results.

Conclusion

According to the results of the research it can be clearly seen that well-structured and supportive approach is crucial for improving students' argumentation skills. When students are given clear writing frameworks, time for preparation and opportunity to discuss ideas before writing, they become more confident and readier to express their opinions in a written form. The main aim of the research is achieved as students better understood how to build, organize and support their arguments using the applied strategies.

The significance of this study is closely connected to everyday teaching. The strategies applied in the lessons are practical, easy to use, and flexible for different levels of learners, which helps ensure that the positive effects are long-lasting.

In addition, teachers also benefited from the process of conducting the research, observing lessons and analyzing the findings in terms of professional development. Hence it encouraged teachers to critically reconsider their pedagogical approaches.

The research results can be relevant for other educators, though it was carried out in a specific school context. Findings demonstrate that consistent use of strategies and constant reflection will help improve teaching and learning argumentation skills. Overall, this research results can help teachers improve their teaching methods, as well as students become more confident, independent, and effective writers.

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