**IMPROVING FORM TWO GENERAL ARTS STUDENTS DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY WRITING SKILLS IN NANA BRENTU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL USING MIND MAPPING**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to improve upon the descriptive essay writing skills of Form Two General Arts students of Nana Brentu Senior High School through mind mapping. The specific objectives were to identify the challenges that Form Two General Arts students face in writing descriptive essays, explore the extent the use of mind map improves the descriptive writing skills of the students and to examine the impact of the use of mind map on students’ descriptive essay writing. The study used the practical classroom action research design. Regarding the challenges the students face in writing descriptive essays, the study identified generating detailed and captivating descriptions, maintaining a clear and logical organization of ideas in the essay, incorporating figurative language, such as metaphors or similes to enhance the descriptive quality of an essay and editing their work to maintain concise and focused descriptions. Again, the findings revealed that the use of mind maps greatly enhance students' descriptive writing skills by assisting with organization, generating ideas, visualizing connections and promoting creativity. Finally, the findings indicate that the impact of using mind maps on students' descriptive essay writing is a more organized, creative and engaging piece of writing. The study concludes that the implementation of mind mapping technique positively influenced the descriptive essay writing skills of the students.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. **Overview**

This is the chapter one of the study. It centers on the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations and organization of the study.

**1.1 Background of the Study**

Essay writing as an aspect of the English language has become a problem for many students at all levels of education in Ghana. Because of this problem, many students from basic education to higher education repeatedly fail the English exam. An essay is a short piece of writing that expresses information as well as the writer's opinion or gives the author's own judgment. Writing is the act of bringing individual words and thoughts into a unified and readable text. A growing challenge for teachers of English at Nana Brentu Senior High School and around the world is to develop the skills and knowledge needed for students to write an effective English essay. Agbesi (2013) observes that one problem with students’ essay is that information is not well organized to achieve coherence. The purpose of essay writing includes improving communication, organizing lessons, improving language comprehension, and promoting self-expression. The importance of essay writing for students is supported by Chikwature (2016) who mentioned that students will need English writing skills that range from simple paragraph and summary skills to the ability to write essay and professional articles.

Essay writing can be grouped into four categories. These are: argumentative writing, narrative writing, descriptive writing, and expository writing. This study focuses on the descriptive genre. In descriptive writing, we use words to paint ideas about people, animals, objects, feelings, sound, or smell to enable our readers or listeners have an idea about what we have seen or experienced. Atippoe (2010), emphasize that for a description to come to life, it is important to use words that give the reader a vivid picture of what is being described. He adds that it is like using words to paint a picture. In a descriptive essay, apart from using words to convey mental pictures for the reader, you should also ensure that the words you use are appropriate to the topic of the essay. For instance, a reporter who is to describe events at the warfront should use words that are usually associated with war.

The West African Examination Council Report (2019) indicated that students manifest a range of problems. In most cases, students present essays with loose content. They lack originality basing on the given topic. Their essays also lack proper sequence and organized flow of ideas. Furthermore, paragraphs are badly formulated, with ideas haphazardly arranged. It is common to find different ideas placed in one paragraph, devoid of developers at all. Essays lack properly defined structure, devoid of introductions body and conclusions. Hesse (2010) also stated that essays lack variety in their expressing of ideas. Sentences are long and meaningless. Sentences include wrongly used conjunctions. The complex sentences which are correct lack variety. Students show lack of understanding of the difference between fragments and short sentences. They confuse the two thereby messing essay with meaningful fragments.

The WAEC Report of 2018 again highlights composition writing as the most difficult component of English Language curriculum for students followed by written grammar which is also an important proponent of not only English Language but other content subjects. Adas and Bakir (2013) state that writing is an intricate and complex task, it is most difficult of all languages to acquire. They also highlight that many students understand the English Language but most of the students face the problem of communicating their ideas effectively. The problem is lack of adequate stock of vocabulary, creativity in writing and several other factors (Adas and Bakir, 2013).

Descriptive writing is therefore a complex combination of processes and techniques that require excellent preparation to facilitate its use. Scholars therefore suggest that the best way to teach descriptive writing is to break down the process. This writing process involves a series of steps to create the finished work. According to Gorski (2010), everyone learns to write well by focusing on the writing process and breaking the writing - step by step, removing riddles and reducing writer's block. Students discover the value of receiving constructive feedback on their writing and become better and better and even enjoy writing. This approach will clearly and greatly help improve the descriptive writing skill of most growing students in Ghana with similar problems particularly, among SHS 2 General Arts students of Nana Brentu Senor High School. A majority of these students could not express their ideas and thoughts adequately in descriptive essay writing. This situation motivated the researcher to take up the challenge to find out how this situation can be solved by using mind mapping to improve upon the students’ descriptive essay writing.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The ability to write appropriately and effectively is considered a major part of written communicative competence among students at all levels of the education system. Regrettably, learning to master descriptive essay writing skill is a problem for most Form Two General Arts students in Nana Brentu SHS. The students present essays with loose content. Their essays lack originality basing on the given topic. Their essays also lack proper sequence and organized flow of ideas. Furthermore, paragraphs are badly formulated, with ideas haphazardly arranged. It is common to find different ideas placed in one paragraph, devoid of developers at all. Essays lack properly defined structure, devoid of introductions, body and conclusions. In Nana Brentu SHS, performance in English language has remained below average over the years. Therefore, this study wants to use mind maps to improve students’ descriptive essay writing skills.

**1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to improve upon the descriptive essay writing skills among Form Two General Arts students of Nana Brentu senior high school through mind mapping.

**1.4 Research Objectives**

The study will however, be guided by the following specific objectives:

1. to identify the challenges that Form Two General Arts students face in writing descriptive essays.
2. to explore the extent the use of mind map improves the descriptive writing skills of Form Two General Arts students in Nana Brentu senior high school.
3. to examine the impact of the use of mind map on students’ descriptive essay writing.

**1.5 Research Questions**

1. What are the challenges that Form Two General Arts students face in writing descriptive essays?
2. To what extent does the use of mind map improve the descriptive writing skills of Form Two General Arts students in Nana Brentu senior high school.
3. What is the impact of the use of mind map on students’ descriptive essay writing?

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

Firstly, enhancing descriptive essay writing skills is essential for the students as it would help them develop effective communication skills. Being able to articulate their thoughts and ideas clearly in writing not only facilitates academic success but also prepares them for future career endeavors where effective written communication is crucial. Secondly, by using mind mapping as a tool for improving descriptive essay writing skills, this study introduces an innovative and practical approach to teaching writing. Mind mapping is a visual technique that encourages students to brainstorm ideas and organize them in a structured manner. This method would enhance students' critical thinking, improve their ability to generate ideas, and promote creativity. Furthermore, this study is significant for Nana Brentu senior high school as it addresses a specific need within the students. As descriptive essay writing is a fundamental skill required in various subjects, including English language and literature, history and social studies, improving students' proficiency in this area would enhance their overall academic performance. Additionally, the findings of this study would contribute to the existing body of knowledge on teaching writing skills. By investigating the effectiveness of mind mapping specifically for descriptive essay writing, this research would provide valuable insights and recommendations that can be applied in other educational settings. Finally, this study would have practical implications for educators and policymakers. The utilization of mind mapping as a teaching tool would inform instructional practices in writing pedagogy, leading to the development of more effective teaching methods and strategies.

**1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

The study was limited to senior high school students of Nana Brentu SHS. Although, the researcher could have conducted the research to cover the whole school population, she limited herself to SHS 2 General Arts students of Nana Brentu senior high school. Moreover, the study was restricted only to composition writing and no other aspects of English language such as reading, grammar and comprehension.

**1.8 Organization of the Study**

The study comprises of five chapters; chapter one is made up of the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations. Chapter two reviews related literature which are relevant to the topic on under study. Chapter three is the methodology and it contains the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection procedures and the intervention procedures. Chapter four presents the findings and results discussion. Finally, chapter five contains the summary, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**2.0 Introduction**

Chapter two is the review of related literature on the problem under study according the following themes: descriptive essay writing, challenges faced by students in writing descriptive essays, mind mapping as a method of teaching, the concept of writing, importance of writing as a skill and the approaches to teaching writing.

**2.1 Meaning of Writing**

Obeng (2022) says that writing is an activity of creating piece of written work, such as stories, poems, or articles. Byrne (2019) states that writing is the use of graphic symbols which are arranged according a certain convention to form words and sentences. In addition to the definitions above, Bryne states that writing is not merely the act of arranging graphic symbols; he states that in writing people produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in a certain way. From the statement, it can be said that writing work follows a gradual stages from a simple use of graphic symbols to a complex arrangement of sentences based on certain rules and conventions. This is supported by Scrivener (2015) who states that writing work in the classroom falls on a continuum from copying which focuses on accuracy to free writing which concentrates on fluency.

Writing can also be defined as the communicative act that allows individuals to share ideas, thoughts, and information with others through the use of written symbols. Owu-Ewie (2014) also sees writing as the act of putting individual words and thoughts into a coherent and readable text. Hendrawaty & Ambarwati (2017) also add that, writing is a process of transforming thoughts, ideas and feelings into written form.

From the information it can be concluded that writing is the act of expressing ideas or thoughts in communication using graphic symbols which are arranged based on certain rules and conventions.

**2.1.1 Writing Skills**

Heaton (2015) states that the writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. The varied skills are grouped into five general components or main areas. They are:

1. language use: the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences;
2. mechanical skills: the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language - e.g. punctuation, spelling;
3. treatment of content: the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information;
4. stylistic skills: the ability to manipulate sentences and paragraphs, and use language effectively;
5. judgment skills: the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information (Heaton, 2015).

Agbesi (2013) states that writing skills have several specific skills which are grouped under five headings; they are graphical or visual skills, grammatical skills, expressive or stylistic skills, rhetoric skills, and organizational skills. Details of each heading are as follows:

1. Graphical or Visual Skills. Under this first heading, graphical or visual skills, there are sub headings, i.e. writing graphemes, spelling, punctuation and capitalization, and format.
2. Writing graphemes is the use of letters of the alphabet, in upper or lower case as appropriate, joined in the standard way. This skill is especially difficult for students whose first language is written in a different alphabet.
3. Spelling. As a result of the first language interferes, students may apply the phonetic conventions of their native language to spelling English words.
4. Punctuation and capitalization. Here students’ attention needs to be drawn to the fact that conventions differ from language to language, i.e. in English in a numeral with at least four digits, a comma is inserted after every three digits, counting from the right.
5. Format, such as the layout of a letter, or memo. Again these differ from one language to another.
6. Grammatical skills refer to the students’ ability to use a variety of sentence patterns and constructions.
7. Expressive or stylistic skills refer to the students’ ability to express precise meanings in a variety of styles or registers. In order to do this, they will not only have to be able to select appropriate vocabulary, but also appropriate sentence patterns and structures for the written medium.
8. Rhetorical skills is the students’ ability to use linguistic cohesion devices such as connectives, reference words, ellipsis, and so on, in order to link parts of a text into logically related sequences.
9. Organizational skills are similar to those involved in rhetorical skills above, but here they concern with the organization of a piece of information into paragraphs and texts. This involves the sequencing of ideas as well as the students’ ability to reject irrelevant information and summarize relevant points.

Another classification is suggested by Brown (2011) which identifies and enumerates micro skills of writing as follows: producing graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, producing writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose, producing an acceptable core of words and using appropriate word order patterns, using acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralisation) patterns and rules, expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms, using cohesive devices in written discourse, using the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse, appropriately accomplishing the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose, conveying links and connections between events and communicate such relations as (main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification), distinguish between literal and implied meaning when writing, correctly conveying culturally specific references in the context of the written text develop and use a battery of writing strategies such as accurately assessing the audience’s interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing (Brown, 2011).

So, it can be concluded that writing is the act of expressing ideas or thoughts in communication using graphic symbols which are arranged based on certain rules and conventions. The rules and conventions are concerning with the aspects of content, organization, word choice, language use and mechanics. Aspect of content is talking about the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information. Organization is the logical order of sentences presented so that the arrangement of the sentences makes sense; it involves unity and coherence. Vocabulary is the ability to choose and use wide range of proper words, and idioms. Language use is the ability to apply sentence structure and other grammatical features. Mechanical aspect is related with the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language, counting punctuation, capitalization, and spelling (Owu-Ewie, 2014).

**2.1.2 Teaching Writing**

Integrating the four language skills in the teaching of English is strongly demanded (Suyanto, 2010). Byrne (2019) proposes an example that it is impossible to learn to speak a foreign language without learning how to write in it. It is also stated that in the early stages of a course oriented towards oral proficiency, writing serves a variety of pedagogical purposes. The consideration strongly suggests that teacher should teach writing skills as part of an integrated skill approach of language learning. Although at early stages writing will be largely a reinforcement of language learned orally, as the learner progress to the next stages of language learning, teacher can provide for written work on a more extensive scale. In the classroom, guided writing is a very important tool for helping students to become better writers. Help can be given in thinking through ideas, ordering the ideas, considering the vocabulary and grammar, co-operatively preparing notes and draft copies, and in other ways of making preparation to write. Students can learn to become a better writer by being actively encouraged to follow through series of preparatory steps before the final text is produced, and becoming aware of that preparation process, so that it can be done more independently and fluently in the future (Byrne, 2019).

In line with the ideas above, Scrivener (2015) states that writing work in the classroom falls on a continuum from copying to free writing. At one end the students are practicing forming letter shapes in a handwriting book, noting down substitutions tables form the board, copying example from a textbook, etc. At the other end the students choose subject matter and the form of a written work to do. As shown in the figure below, accuracy is more of concern towards the beginning level; the learning focus shifts slowly towards fluency as the level increases (Scrivener, 2015).

In addition, Brown (2011) states that there are at least five types of classroom writing performance. The first is imitative or writing down. At the beginning level of learning to write, students will simply write down English letters, words, and possibly sentences in order to learn the conventions of orthographic code. The second is intensive or controlled. A common form of controlled writing is to present a paragraph to students in which they have to alter a given structure throughout. For example, the students may be asked to change all present tense verbs to past tense; in such a case, students may need to alter other time references in the paragraph. The next type is self-writing. The most salient instance of this category in classrooms is note-taking, where students take notes during a lecture for the purpose of later recall. Diary or journal writing also falls into this category. Display writing is considered as the fourth type of classroom writing performance. For all language students, short answer exercises, essay examinations, and even research reports will involve an element of display.

For academically bound ESL students, one of the academic skills that they need to master is a whole array of display writing techniques. The last type is real writing. The two categories of real and display writing are actually two ends of a continuum, and in between the two extremes lay some combination of display and real writing. Three subcategories illustrate how reality can be injected: academic, vocational/technical or personal (Brown (2011).

**2.2 Descriptive Essay Writing**

Descriptive essay writing is a form of writing that is used to describe an object, person or place. It is an essay that is aimed at painting a vivid picture in the reader's mind. This genre of writing has been explored extensively by various authors and scholars, and the literature on the subject is rich and diverse. Below is a review of literature on descriptive essay writing.

According to Fiddler (2017), writing descriptive essays requires the use of sensory details to help the reader understand the object or subject being described. She further suggests that writers should use descriptive language to create an emotional connection between the reader and the subject. The purpose of descriptive writing, according to Fiddler, is to generate an emotional response from the reader. Hwang et al. (2013) also discuss the role of sensory details in descriptive essay writing. They suggest that sensory details are crucial in helping the reader form a mental image of the subject or object under discussion. According to Hwang et al., sensory details should not be limited to just visuals, but should also include other senses such as touch, taste, smell, and sound.

In their study, Koechling and Amrein (2016) examine the use of figurative language in descriptive essay writing. They suggest that figures of speech such as metaphors and similes can be useful in creating vivid descriptions that engage the reader's imagination. In their study, Koechling and Amrein explore the use of figurative language in two descriptive essays and conclude that it can be an effective tool if used appropriately.

Graham, Higgins, and Marcotte (2011) explore the role of specific and precise language in descriptive essay writing. They suggest that a writer should use specific words rather than vague ones to make their writing more effective. Specific language, according to these scholars, helps to create clarity and precision, making the writer's message more compelling.

It can be deduced that sensory details, figurative language, and specific language are crucial in creating compelling descriptive essays. By using these tools effectively, writers can help readers form a vivid mental picture of the subject, place, or object being described.

**2.2.1 Challenges Faced by Students in their Descriptive Essay Writing**

Writing a descriptive essay is often a challenging task for many students. There are several challenges that students face when writing a descriptive essay. Firstly, students often struggle with finding the right words to describe their topic. This can be particularly challenging when the topic is abstract or difficult to visualize (Owu-Ewie, 2014). Hendrawaty & Ambarwati (2017) observe that students may struggle to organize their thoughts and ideas properly. Descriptive essays require a logical structure that makes sense to readers. If students fail to do this, their essays may seem disjointed or confusing. Similarly, Nyang’au (2014) argues that students may struggle with generating ideas and identifying relevant details. Descriptive essays require a student to provide sensory details that enhance the reader's experience. If students fail to provide these details, their essays may appear dull and unengaging.

According to Hafiz (2014), students may struggle to balance their use of descriptive language with their need to remain concise. Students often find themselves stuck in the trap of over-describing their topic, which wastes precious space in their essay and can bore the reader. Students may also struggle with revising and editing their essays. Descriptive essays require students to pay close attention to their language choices and sentence structures, and they need to revise their work until it is polished and mistake-free. Fiddler (2017) argues that each student may face different challenges in learning writing. All the students are special and unique in their own ways. These challenges will somehow pull back the students from moving forward to produce a good piece of writing.

Gorski, (2010) said that, lack of vocabulary has caused the students to face challenges in acquiring descriptive writing skills. They are supported by Fiddler (2017) who stated that, vocabulary is the fundamental element in constructing sentences which is the core of effective writing skills. What they mean is that, students almost use spoken and written words every single day to communicate their ideas, beliefs and feelings with people around them. Good vocabulary repertoire can help students to speak or write to deliver their thoughts. Usage of electronic dictionary and more reading activities can help students with limited vocabulary. According to Fareed et al. (2016), students make mistakes in subject-verb agreement, pronouns, tenses, articles, prepositions and basic sentence structures. He wants to say that, students are also having trouble with grammar. Grammar plays an important role in writing. Grammar provides information that helps the readers to understand its meaning. It is a structure that conveys the detailed meaning of the writer to the reader. Grammar also explains the forms and structure of words, called morphology and how they are arranged in sentences, called syntax. By having very limited knowledge in grammar, students will face anxiety to write sentences with correct grammar. Grammar ability can be improved through reading activity and grammar related activities.

Poor spelling is another cause of anxiety for students in learning writing skill and this is supported by Nyang’au (2014) who argues that having good ability in spelling will lead to positive learning of writing skill. If the students are struggling with spellings, it will hold them back to move forward. The students have the habit to spell according to their pronunciation and this will lead to wrong spelling as mentioned by Afrin (2016). The students will either add or leave letters of the words. For an example “ballon” instead of “balloon.” According to Nyang’au (2014), memorization of the spelling will help the students to have good spelling.

Students’ readiness is another challenge in learning writing. According to Winarso (2016), in order to complete a task successfully, readiness is very important. The readiness can either be physical readiness and mental preparedness. If this is not occurring, students will be having challenges in writing. Students will not be mentally prepared to learn in the classroom if they are not ready. It is very important for the students to be ready before they enter the classroom. Foster (2015), emphasizes that motivating and attracting the students’ attention can help students’ readiness in learning writing.

Lack of exposure to books and reading materials are other challenges for elementary school students in learning writing and this is supported by Fareed et al. (2016) who indicate that many students find it very challenging to get enough and significant source of information. Lack of extensive reading will not help the students to write good sentences or paragraphs. This is because reading and writing are interrelated. If the students are not reading books or other reading materials, they are going to have lack of ideas and vocabulary to write. Their brain neurons will be connected to each other to come out with a good writing if they read more and connecting the ideas with their prior knowledge. Foster (2015) explained that exposure to different reading materials can help the students to be aware with language awareness explained. Additionally, lack of motivation is another challenge faced by the students. If the students are not motivated, they might not be interested to proceed with their learning process. Motivation is important in improving students’ learning results (Owu-Ewie, 2014). Teachers could motivate the students by rewarding them with simple motivational phrases by saying “Good job!”, “Good try!”, “Keep it up” etc. Positive reward will make the students go further in their learning process.

It is seen that writing a descriptive essay can be an overwhelming task for many students. However, with practice, students can overcome these challenges and learn to write effective and engaging essays that are rich in detail and sensory language.

**2.3 The Use of Mind Maps**

Suyanto (2010) states that making a mind map is a strategy for note-making before writing; in other words, scribbling down ideas about a topic and developing those ideas as the mind makes associations. So, it can be said that mind mapping can give students a way to begin writing assignments (Owu-Ewie, 2014). Hayes (2020) states that through mind mapping students turns random thoughts into patterns that can be written down and developed. Students become increasingly motivated to complete a writing task as their ideas emerge in organized forms. Lunsford (2010) also says that mind mapping is a prewriting technique used by writers to produce ideas using visual scheme or chart. It means that mind mapping is a creative activity because when creating the mapping, people tried to find things related to the topic using visual scheme or chart. It is also stated by Awalia, Gatot & Susilawati (2016), mind mapping is a technique used to see a visual map of our ideas and able to make us think more creatively in making a new association.

It can be also said that in mind mapping, ideas are presented in a radial, graphical, non-linear manner, so mind maps encourage a brainstorming approach to planning and organizational tasks freely. Though the branches of a mind map represent hierarchical tree structures, their radial arrangement disrupts the prioritizing of concepts typically associated with hierarchies presented with more linear visual cues. This orientation towards brainstorming encourages users to enumerate and connect concepts without a tendency to begin within a particular conceptual framework (Akbar and Yulitriama, 2022).

It has been stated before that mind map can give assistance for students to start writing assignments. In fact, many students find writing difficult, and most of them find getting started the most difficult part of writing. Hayes (2013) states that mind mapping can reduce difficulty in starting writing assignments by giving students an organizing strategy to get them started. He explains that ideas are freely associated and written out without pressure, thereby reducing tension and resistance often associated with writing. The product of the prewriting activity is an organized cluster of thoughts, which helps students stay on task when they write.

According to Obeng (2022), sufficient preparation must be made before teacher asks the students to apply the mind mapping. Owu-Ewie (2014) states that teacher must do specific preparation including try to map the material. This step is used to uncover any potential problems. The teacher’s diagram can also serve as a model against which to assess group work. Complete procedure of the employment of mind mapping in the classroom by Owu-Ewie (2014) is as follow: 1) Describe or demonstrate the process to the students; 2) Divide the students into groups which consist of four students; 3) Present the central concept/material that the students must graph; 4) Ask the groups to brainstorm, writing a list of terms and phrases that express core concepts and supporting details; 5) Ask the students to start sketching out the diagram; 6) Deliver any necessary suggestions to the groups while they are working; 7) Ask them to developed the main concept by adding some new ideas and relationships as they construct the map

The following is procedure of employing mind mapping in the classroom as described by (Suyanto, 2010):

* Students are given a main topic at the center of the board.
* Students jot down all the things associated with the main topic that come into their minds.
* Students share with each other about what they have jotted down – teacher gives any necessary explanations and suggestions.
* Ideas are elicited from the students as they suggest things, and a mind map is made collectively on the board as the ideas suggested so that students can see how to draw out aspects of the topic and subgroup items. This step based on the reasoning behind mind map that is not to think in an ordered or linear way, but explore a topic by moving between its various aspects.
* Branches are then drawn and added as the students suggest new ideas or add ideas to already established aspects. The end result is a map with a number of subtopics or aspects radiating from the central topic (main topic) and with further points added to these.
* When the map is reasonably full, teacher leads a class discussion on the best order in which points could be presented in a composition.
* Alternative writing tasks are then can be proposed: ask students to prepare a piece of writing using the mind map on the board, elaborate it in their own ways or ask students to choose other topics and draw up their personal mind maps for their own topics.

Buzan (2017) claims that the mind map is a vastly superior note taking method because it does not lead to a "semi hypnotic trance" state induced by other note forms. Buzan also argues that the mind map utilizes the full range of left and right human cortical skills, balances the brain, taps into the alleged 99% of your unused mental potential, as well as intuition (which he calls "super logic"). However, scholarly research suggests that such claims may actually be marketing hype based on misconceptions about the brain and the cerebral hemispheres. Critics argue that hemispheric specialization theory has been identified as pseudoscientific when applied to mind mapping (Suyanto, 2010).

Scholarly research found that the mind map technique had a limited but significant impact on memory recall in undergraduate students (a 10% increase over baseline for a 600-word text only) as compared to preferred study methods (a −6% increase over baseline). This improvement was only robust after a week for those in the mind map group, and there was a significant decrease in motivation compared to the subjects' preferred methods of note taking. It is suggested that learners preferred to use other methods because using a mind map was an unfamiliar technique, and its status as a "memory enhancing" technique engendered reluctance to apply it. Other research found that learners tended to learn far better by focusing on the content of learning material rather than worrying over any one particular form of note taking (Gorski, 2010).

According to Judy (2017), mind maps (or graphic organizers) are maps or webs of words. The purpose of creating a map is to visually display the meaning-based connections between a word or phrase and a set of related words or concepts. Mind maps help students, especially struggling students and those with disabilities, to identify, understand, and recall the meaning of words they read in the text. Owu-Ewie (2014) said mind maps clearly portray the schematic relations that compose a concept. It assumes that there are multiple relations between a concept and the knowledge that is associated with that concept. It can be used to teach most things in language and at any level (Owu-Ewie, 2014).

Mind mapping is also known as a useful technique to help and guide students in generating their ideas in writing a paragraph. Mind mapping is a good technique that can be applied in enhancing descriptive writing skills of students. The use of mind mapping in enhancing students’ descriptive essay writing skills gives some advantages: firstly, this technique is helpful for students to develop and generate their ideas systematically (Hafiz, 2014). This technique also encourages them to think in English because it can stimulate them to deliver their ideas in written form (Hafiz, 2014). Secondly, mind mapping is a good way to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic for a short essay (Awalia, Gatot & Susilawati, 2016). In mind mapping, students are to write words and phrases based on the topic given. Moreover, the students are easy to construct their ideas on the sentences into paragraph through ideas in mind maps (Gorski, 2010). Using mind maps make the students easier to write the paragraph, because they already have the ideas to write.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.0 Introduction**

This study focuses on improving upon the descriptive essay writing skills among Form Two General Arts students of Nana Brentu Senior High School through mind mapping. Particularly, the chapter deals with the methodology which entails; research design, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis and limitations of the study.

**3.1 Research Design**

According to Creswell (2008), research designs are the plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. He adds that the selection of a research design is informed by a number of key considerations including: the researcher’s own assumptions and worldviews, the nature of the research problem, strategies of research, methods of data collection and analysis, audience of the study, and more. Similarly, Vaus (2010) maintains that the research design is as an overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring an effective address to the research problem following the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.

For the purpose of this study, the practical action research design was adopted. Teachers embark on research in their classroom to improve their students' learning and their own professional performance. Teachers try to enhance the practice of education through a systematic study of a local problem. This is referred to as practical action research. Its purpose is to research a specific school/classroom situation with the view to improve practice. Meyer (2000) maintains that action research’s strength lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems and its ability to empower practitioners, by getting them to engage with research and the subsequent development or implementation activities. Meyer states that practitioners can choose to research their own practice or an outside researcher can be engaged to help to identify any problems, seek and implement practical solutions, and systematically monitor and reflect on the process and outcomes of change.

**3.2 Population**

A population is the entire group that you want to draw conclusions about. The study's population was all the Form Two General Arts students of Nana Brentu senior high school. The targeted population consisted of 61 students from the General Arts classes of the school.

**3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

A sample is the specific group that you will collect data from. The size of the sample is always less than the size of the population. Out of the 61 targeted students, 35 were selected as the respondents of the study through purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling method is a sampling in which elements are chosen based on purpose of the study. In purposive sampling, the sample is selected because they possess the information the researcher needs.

**3.4 Research Instruments**

For the purpose of this study, a pretest-posttest design and classroom observation were the instruments that were used for the study. A pretest-posttest design is an experiment in which measurements are taken on individuals both before and after they are involved in some treatment. All the sampled students took a pre-test. The researcher then used some techniques for one week and administered a post-test of similar difficulty. The researcher then analysed the differences between the pre-test and post-test scores to see if the teaching technique had a significant effect on scores. On the other hand, classroom observation of the implementation of the mind map technique was also conducted to collect data on the interaction of students during the discussion, the level of engagement and participation. Observation was very important in the study because it helped the researcher to collect data on non-verbal behaviours. It was also essential because it enabled the researcher to study in detail the behaviour that occurred in the classroom setting.

* 1. **Data Collection Procedures**

**3.5.1 Pre-Intervention**

Before implementing the intervention activities, a pre-test was administered to the sampled students to assess their baseline performance in writing descriptive essay and marks were recorded. It was also used to gather data which helped to identify the challenges the students face in writing descriptive essays. Again, through the marking of students' tests, the researcher identified the areas of the students’ essays that need improvement. The pre-test also enabled the researcher to discover some effective intervention activities to help the students understand and improve their descriptive writing skills.

* + 1. **Intervention**

An intervention is a strategy used to teach a new skill, build fluency in a skill or encourage a child to apply an existing skill to new situations or settings (Stringer, 2004). This means that an intervention is all about learning what treatments or strategies work best to improve outcomes and making a difference in what matters most to students. The researcher took the students through a number of activities to help them understand and improve their descriptive essay writing skills.

The following is the explanation on how mind mapping strategy was applied as the treatment for the problems in descriptive essay writing:

* The teacher invites the students to discuss about a familiar topic for them, such as about a human with the subject “My father.” In order to get information from the students, the teacher gives some questions related to family members until finally one student mentions about one of the family members, they love the most, for example “My father.”
* Next, the teacher writes the words “My father” on the whiteboard; then, she mentions explicitly about the subject will be discussed. Relevant information related to the subject were obtained from the students according to the knowledge they have to build a mind mapping. Teacher writes words or phrases from the students on the whiteboard. Based on the generic structure of descriptive text, it is usually started with “identification.” The word “love” was used to start the paragraph, for example: “I love my father very much.” The word “best” was also included in the opening statement, for example: “He is the best father in the world.” Therefore, the words “love” and “best” was placed under “My father” as the general statements about “My father.”
* In the next step, the teacher asks the students to give information related to more detailed description of their father. In this step, the teacher helps the students to get used to organize information systematically.
* Next, the students continue to work on the first sub-idea, for example is about the physical features. In order to help students to find information related to physical features, the teacher shows keywords, such as “age, figure, looks, and complexion.”
* Afterward, the teacher and students add words more specifically for each keyword. For instance, for the word “age”, the teacher asks students to mention words related to age, such as “young, old, and middle-age.” The same activity was continued for the other keywords, so the students can have a description about what they have to write in each sub-idea.

**3.5.3 Post-Intervention**

After the implementation of the intervention activities, the researcher conducted post-tests to gather feedback from participants about the effectiveness of the intervention and the extent to which it met their needs. Observation was also used in the post-intervention stage and records were taken.

**3.6 Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed and compared using frequency distribution and statistical techniques such simple percentages and graphs. Data obtained from the observation was also analyzed by categorizing the records under similar themes based on the research questions.

**3.7 Limitation of the Study**

The major limitation of the study was the uncooperative attitude of some of the participants. During the implementation of the interventional activities, some of the participants did not pay attention and others too engaged in conversations which had nothing to do with the study and that affected the findings of the study.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the pre-intervention and the post-intervention results based on the data collected. Data has been analyzed and interpreted using tables, percentages and graphs.

**4.1 Results**

* + 1. **Pre-test**

The purpose of the pre-test was to assess the students` baseline performance in writing descriptive essay.

**Table 1: Pre-test results**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quality** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Excellent | 3 | 9% |
| Very Good | 6 | 17% |
| Good | 14 | 40% |
| Poor | 7 | 20% |
| Very Poor | 5 | 14% |
| **Total** | **35** | **100%** |

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of pre-test results, providing a visual representation of the data presented in Table 1. The chart helps us better understand the distribution of student performance across different quality categories.

**Excellent (9%):** This category represents the top-performing students, where 9% of the total students achieved an "Excellent" grade. These students demonstrated exceptional mastery of the subject matter, setting a high standard for the class.

**Very Good (17%):** The bar for "Very Good" performance shows that 17% of students fell into this category. These individuals performed significantly well, indicating a strong understanding of the material.

**Good (40%):** The largest bar in the chart represents the "Good" category, which includes 40% of the students. This suggests that a significant portion of the class performed at a satisfactory level, indicating a solid grasp of the subject.

**Poor (20%):** The "Poor" category, comprising 20% of the students, shows that there is room for improvement for this group. These students may need additional support or resources to catch up with their peers.

**Very Poor (14%):** The smallest bar represents the "Very Poor" category, with 14% of the students falling into this group. This indicates that a smaller percentage of students struggled with the material and may require substantial intervention to improve their performance.

**Very Good**

***Figure 1: Showing pre-test results***

* + 1. **Post-test results**

The purpose of the post-test was to gather feedback from students about the effectiveness of the intervention and the extent to which it met their needs. The results of the post-test enable the researcher to determine the effectiveness and success of the use of the mind maps.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quality** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Excellent | 5 | 14% |
| Very Good | 14 | 40% |
| Good | 10 | 29% |
| Poor | 4 | 11% |
| Very Poor | 2 | 6% |
| **Total** | **35** | **100%** |

Building upon the information presented in Table 2, let's delve deeper into the significance of these results:

**Excellent (14%):** The "Excellent" category signifies a high level of performance, with 14% of students achieving this level. This is a notable improvement from the previous data (Table 1) where only 9% were in this category. The increase suggests that a larger proportion of students have demonstrated exceptional understanding and competence in the subject.

**Very Good (40%):** "Very Good" performance remains consistent, with 40% of students falling into this category. These students continue to exhibit a strong grasp of the material, contributing to the stable performance within this range.

**Good (29%):** The "Good" category shows a decrease from the previous data (40% in Table 1 to 29% in Table 2). While still representing a significant portion of the class, this decrease may indicate that some students who were previously categorized as "Good" have moved to higher performance categories.

**Poor (11%):** The "Poor" category, with 11% of students, remains relatively stable. These students may still require additional support or remedial efforts to improve their understanding and performance.

**Very Poor (6%):** The "Very Poor" category also exhibits a decrease from the previous data (14% in Table 1 to 6% in Table 2). This decrease suggests that a smaller percentage of students are struggling with the material, which could be attributed to interventions and additional assistance provided since the initial assessment.

***Figure 2: Showing post-test results***

* + 1. **Comparison of pre-test and post-test results**

**Table 3: pre-test vs. post-test results**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assessment Guide** | **Frequency** | | **Percentages** | |
|  | **Pre-test** | **Post-test** | **Pre-test** | **Post-test** |
| Excellent | 3 | 5 | 9% | 14% |
| Very Good | 6 | 14 | 17% | 40% |
| Good | 14 | 10 | 40% | 29% |
| Poor | 7 | 4 | 20% | 11% |
| Very Poor | 5 | 2 | 14% | 6% |

Table 3 provides a comprehensive comparison between the pre-test and post-test results, allowing us to gain deeper insights into how students' performance has evolved over time. Let's delve into the key takeaways from this data:

**Excellent Performance**: The pre-test had 3 students (9%) in the "Excellent" category, which increased to 5 students (14%) in the post-test. This indicates an improvement in the number of students who achieved the highest level of performance, suggesting that the instructional strategies or interventions had a positive impact on some students.

**Very Good Performance**: In the pre-test, 6 students (17%) were categorized as "Very Good." This number increased to 14 students (40%) in the post-test. This significant jump suggests that a substantial portion of the class made substantial progress, moving from "Very Good" to an even higher level of performance.

**Good Performance**: The "Good" category saw a decrease from 14 students (40%) in the pre-test to 10 students (29%) in the post-test. While the decrease is notable, it may indicate that some students who were initially in the "Good" category moved to higher performance categories, contributing to the improvement in the "Excellent" and "Very Good" categories.

**Poor Performance**: The "Poor" category had 7 students (20%) in the pre-test, which reduced to 4 students (11%) in the post-test. This suggests that some students in the "Poor" category improved their understanding and performance, although further support may still be needed for these individuals.

**Very Poor Performance**: The "Very Poor" category had 5 students (14%) in the pre-test and decreased to 2 students (6%) in the post-test. This decrease implies that a smaller percentage of students struggled significantly with the material in the post-test, indicating progress and potential effectiveness in addressing the needs of these students.

***Figure 3: Comparison of pre-test and post-test results***

4**.2 Discussion And Findings**

The section discusses the findings of the study in line with the research questions of the study.

**4.2.1 What are the challenges that Form Two General Arts students face in writing descriptive essays?**

The findings revealed that one of the major challenges the students face in writing a descriptive essay is generating detailed and captivating descriptions. It requires the ability to observe and depict sensory details effectively. Students struggle to find the right words to convey their observations, or they find it challenging to think creatively and imaginatively in order to bring their descriptions to life. The findings agree with Hendrawaty & Ambarwati (2017) who observe that students may struggle to organize their thoughts and ideas properly. Descriptive essays require a logical structure that makes sense to readers. If students fail to do this, their essays may seem disjointed or confusing. Similarly, Nyang’au (2014) argues that students may struggle with generating ideas and identifying relevant details. Descriptive essays require a student to provide sensory details that enhance the reader's experience. If students fail to provide these details, their essays may appear dull and unengaging. Another challenge is maintaining a clear and logical organization of ideas in the essay. Students find it difficult to select a coherent structure or to decide on the most effective order in which to present their descriptions. They need to arrange the descriptions in a way that makes sense to the reader, ensuring a smooth flow of information. In addition, incorporating figurative language, such as metaphors or similes, enhance the descriptive quality of an essay. However, the students struggle to use these literary devices effectively. They find it challenging to come up with original and creative comparisons that accurately convey their intended meaning without sounding clichéd or forced. Again, students face the challenge of editing their work to maintain concise and focused descriptions. It requires critical evaluation of their writing to remove unnecessary words, phrases or repetitions, ensuring that every sentence contributes effectively to the overall description. The above findings are strengthened by Owu-Ewie (2014) who says that writing a descriptive essay is often a challenging task for many students.

**4.2.2 To what extent does the use of mind map improves the descriptive writing skills of Form Two General Arts students in Nana Brentu senior high school.**

The findings show that the use of mind maps significantly improve the descriptive writing skills of students. Mind maps are visual tools that help with organizing thoughts and ideas, making connections, and facilitating brainstorming processes. It was observed that mind maps provide a clear and visual representation of the ideas and details that students want to include in their descriptive essay. By creating branches and sub-branches on the mind map, students easily organize their thoughts and ensure a logical and coherent structure in their writing.

Moreover, mind maps act as a catalyst for generating ideas and expanding on them. As students brainstorm details about a specific topic or scene, they jot down descriptive words, phrases or sensory observations on the mind map. This helps students to come up with a variety of descriptive elements that they can later incorporate into their essay.

Again, mind maps allow students to visualize and see the relationships between different ideas, details or descriptions. By mapping out these connections, students better understand how different elements interact and create a more vivid and engaging description. It helps them paint a clear picture in the reader's mind.

Finally, it was observed that mind maps offer a flexible and dynamic approach to organizing thoughts. Students easily rearrange or reposition branches, add new ideas or make connections between different descriptive elements. This flexibility encourages students to think creatively and to explore various descriptive options for their essay.

**4.2.3 What is the impact of the use of mind map on students’ descriptive essay writing?**

The findings revealed that the use of mind maps have a significant impact on students' descriptive essay writing. It was observed that mind maps help students organize their thoughts and ideas in a structured manner. By visually mapping out the main topic and creating branches and sub-branches for different details and descriptions, students develop a clear and organized structure for their essay. This leads to a more coherent and logical flow of information, making the essay easier to read and understand. Likewise, this technique also encourages them to think in English because it can stimulate them to deliver their ideas in written form (Hafiz, 2014). Similarly, Awalia, Gatot & Susilawati (2016) says mind mapping is a good way to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic for a short essay. Again, it was observed that mind maps facilitate brainstorming by allowing students to generate and explore a variety of ideas. By jotting down relevant details, sensory observations and descriptive words or phrases on the mind map, students expand their thinking and come up with a more diverse range of descriptive elements. This leads to richer and more vivid descriptions in their essays. Also, mind maps visually display the connections between different ideas and details. Students easily see how various descriptive elements relate to each other and form a cohesive whole. This helps them avoid disjointed or scattered descriptions and ensure that their essay has a consistent and unified focus. Moreover, mind maps encourage students to think creatively when developing their descriptive writing. The visual nature of the mind map allows students to explore different possibilities and experiment with various descriptive techniques. This fosters a more imaginative approach, resulting in unique and engaging descriptions that captivate the reader's attention.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

**5.0 Introduction**

The chapter five of the study focuses on the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

* 1. **Summary of Findings**

The aims of this study were to identify the challenges that Form Two General Arts students face in writing descriptive essays, explore the extent the use of mind map improves the descriptive writing skills of the students and to examine the impact of the use of mind map on students’ descriptive essay writing. Regarding the challenges the students face in writing descriptive essays, the study identified generating detailed and captivating descriptions, maintaining a clear and logical organization of ideas in the essay, incorporating figurative language, such as metaphors or similes, to enhance the descriptive quality of an essay and editing their work to maintain concise and focused descriptions. Again, the findings revealed that the use of mind maps greatly enhance students' descriptive writing skills by assisting with organization, generating ideas, visualizing connections and promoting creativity. It is a versatile tool that aids students in producing well-structured and engaging descriptive essays. Finally, the findings indicate that the impact of using mind maps on students' descriptive essay writing is a more organized, creative and engaging piece of writing. It helps students structure their thoughts, generate ideas and make visual connections, resulting in a well-crafted and compelling descriptive essay.

**5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the implementation of mind mapping technique positively influenced the descriptive essay writing skills of the Form Two students. Again, mind mapping helped students in generating ideas, organizing their thoughts and structuring their essays effectively. Moreover, the visual nature of mind mapping helped students to better understand the connections between ideas and enhanced their critical thinking skills. Finally, the majority of students found mind mapping to be a useful tool for brainstorming and drafting their essays.

**5.3 Recommendations**

1. The school should provide training workshops for teachers to learn and effectively implement mind mapping techniques in their classrooms.
2. Teachers should incorporate mind mapping activities regularly into their lesson plans to reinforce the skills and ensure continuous improvement.
3. Students could further enhance their writing skills by using mind mapping for other writing tasks, such as narrative or argumentative essays.
4. It is important to monitor and evaluate the progress of students regularly and provide individualized support to those who may struggle with the technique.
5. Further research can explore the long-term impact of mind mapping on students' writing skills and its applicability in other subject areas.

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