The Effects of Product Approach to English Language Writing Skills on Students Performance within Selected Secondary Schools of Kenya

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Abstract
The study analyzed the effects of product approach to language writing skills on students' performance.Product approach stresses on the final result of the writing process that writers go though in composing texts. The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of product approach to English language writing skills on students' performance within selected secondary schools of Kenya. The objectives were to determine the students' performance in the writing test before and after instruction using the product approach, and to analyze the effect of product approach on students' performance in English language writing test within selected secondary schools of Kenya. The study sample comprised 206 students and 2 English language teachers from 6 counties. A written task and lesson observation was used to collect data which was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics that included t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Data analysis revealed that product approach to writing skills had no significant effect on students' performance in the writing test (t = 0.115, p> 0.05). It was concluded that product approach did not improve students' performance in writing skills. Based on these findings it was recommended that teachers of English language should use other effective approaches to improve students writing skills.
Key Words: Product Approach, Writing Skills, Students Performance, Effect, Kenya

I.   Introduction

Product approach to writing skills in this study was defined as a method of teaching writing skills that stresses the finished product which is a written composition without errors that is an error-free coherent text (Oguta 2015: Eslami, 2014). The product approach is a model approach that concentrates on the product that is; the written text that acts as a model for the learner, with all students copying all the excellent aspects of writing from a model text and becoming successful writers as a result (Eslami, 2014).

Students are given a text of a good writer to study before embarking on their own writing (Oguta, 2015). It is founded on the notion that the creative components of the writing process are mysterious, therefore the teacher focuses on form, syntax, grammar, mechanics, and organization, with an emphasis on accuracy and fluency. Product approach is taken as an individual task where the teacher models a text representing a sample of the writing task, highlighting important features and the learner commences writing utilizing what has been taught to produce the final product. The instructor then rates the learner's writing by assigning a mark and making brief comments about the required revisions. Product approach does not givelearners chance to modify their texts based on the remarks given. The finished result takes precedence over the process of learning to develop the product (Christmas, 2011), where success is assessed by how well-structured and grammatically correct writing is. Because of the emphasis on linguistic forms in the product approach, students rarely develop the abilities needed to create and shape their work. Product approach to writing skills is a method of teaching writing skills concerned with the final result of the writing process or the written text that serves as the model for the learner (Eslami, 2004;Saedi&Sahebkheir, 2011). It is thought that if students read a model text written by an accomplished and competent writer, they will reproduce all of the positive aspects of writing and therefore become good writers. Whether emphasizing grammatical rules or rhetorical patterns, this technique focuses

pupils' exposure to written sentences and paragraphs. Proponents of the product approach believe that if students are given a competent writer's composition to read before beginning their own writing, they can learn how to write with few faults (Oguta, 2015). The major purpose of this method is to produce a manuscript that is cohesive and free of errors (Eslami, 2014). Writing assignments are offered to students to reinforce language structures learned through imitation and manipulation of grammatical patterns. Therefore the product approach to writing is regarded as a product generated by an individual writer. The teacher in this approach focuses on form, syntax, grammar, mechanics of writing, choice of vocabulary, accuracy and fluency of the final product (Gathumbi&Masembe, 2005).

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of product approach to English language writing skills on students' performance within selected secondary schools of Kenya.

Objectives of the study
1.To determine the students' performance in the writing test before and after instruction using the product approach to writing skills in English language within selected secondary schools of Kenya.
2. To analyze the effect of product approach to writing skills on students' performance in the writing test in English language within selected secondary schools of Kenya.

Hypothesis
HO1. There is no significant difference between the product approach control and experimental groups in students' performance inEnglish language writing test within selected secondary schools of Kenya.

II.   Review of Related Literature

The product approach is also called as the 'models method,' which focuses on the product or the written text that acts as a model for the learners. The controlled-to-free strategy, the text-based approach, and the guided composition are all terms used to describe a product-based approach. It involves learners in writing through four steps: introduction of writing principles, exhibition of a model text, and involvement of learners in writing based on the model text and final product revision (Tangpermpoon, 2008). A product-based approach also leads students to follow a number of set patterns, according to Shahrokhi (2017), regardless of the socio-cultural aspects involved in writing a written work. Furthermore, despite the fact that the technique is primarily based on modeling, the role of model texts in the approach is frequently confined to that of a teaching tool that provides students with feedback (Saedi&Sahebkheir, 2011).

It was believed that if a model text written by an accomplished and competent writer is given to students to read, the students will copy all the good qualities of writing and thus become good writers (Eslami, 2004). Whether emphasizing grammatical roles or rhetorical patterns, this technique focuses pupils' exposure to written sentences and paragraphs. Students can learn to write with fewer faults, according to proponents of the product approach, if they are given the composition of a good writer to read before beginning their own writing (Oguta, 2015). The primary goal of this approach is an error-free coherent text (Eslami, 2014); Students are given writing activities to reinforce language concepts that they have learnt through grammatical pattern imitation and manipulation. Controlled compositions, in which students are given a paragraph and required to execute substitutions, expansions, or completion exercises, are examples of such writing activities (Eslami, 2014). As a result, the product approach to writing is thought of as a product created by a single writer. According to Gathumbi&Masembe (2005), this approach has three common features: the instructor assigns a title, students are requested to create a composition within a set word limit, and teachers mark the composition without providing feedback to the students. It is founded on the premise that the creative components of the writing process are mysterious and cannot be taught. The study and teaching of writing is restricted to the rules and mechanics of discourse, such as discourse modes and structures, genre characteristics, style and usage norms (Gathumbi&Masembe, 2005). Form, syntax, grammar, mechanics, and organization are all areas where the teacher focuses. The emphasis is on choice of words, correctness and fluency, with a focus on the finished product.

Students are expected to develop the correct textual form that conforms to the model offered by their teacher in the product approach. The ultimate result, as the name implies, takes precedence over the process of learning to generate the product under this method. Students are trained to deconstruct and reconstruct model texts in order to "develop proficiency in particular styles of written communication" (Christmas, 2011). Many ESL/EFL teachers all around the world employed this method. The final result of the writing process is the focus of the product-based approach. It places a premium on classroom activities and encourages students to imitate and change example texts. Teachers using the product approach to writing skills put more focus on the grammatical features of the text and the organization of the text rather than the ideas and the thoughts within the

text (Ngubane, 2018). Teachers assess learners' writing based on how accurate they are in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Creativity is less appreciated because learners normally analyze the main components of the teacher's sample text and then copy the structure to reproduce as their texts (Akinyenye&Pluddemann, 2016). The goal of teaching writing in the product approach is for learners to reproduce a text that is similar in form and language conventions to the one they have learned. Imitation is used as a method in the product approach to help learners to be competent across different texts and become efficient writers.

According to Chow (2007), most ESL teachers in Malaysian schools learn to write using a product-based approach, which emphasizes linguistic aspects while downplaying the value of language abilities. Despite the evolution in writing teaching methodology over the last three decades, particularly the growth and use of the process-based approach to writing, Malaysian ESL students are still forced to follow traditional writing instructions derived from the product-based approach in order to meet the demands of producing results in school-based assessments and public examinations (Singh, 2013). The writing process has been harmed as a result of this. According to Palpanadan, Ismail, and Salam (2015), focusing on the end product at the expense of the writing process would not help students become successful writers. Teachers, according to Palpanadan, Ismail, and Salam (2015), are comfortable with their training and choose to adjust and embrace writing lessons based on how they learned to write in school, university, or teacher education institution. This raises the issue of teaching writing, which has traditionally been predicated on a product-oriented approach, which has resulted in unfavorable outcomes for Malaysian students, particularly in terms of their deteriorating ESL writing performance. The approach has a variety of drawbacks, with the primary issue being that it ignores the tactics, skills, and processes that are involved in writing. According to Robertson (2008), teacher-centeredness is often enhanced if instructors organize their curriculum using a 'product approach,' in which instructors teach and evaluate from a sample ideal text; additionally, in the product approach, successful learning is measured by how well-structured and grammatically correct a composition is (Brown, 2001). In product approach students rarely acquire the skills required for creating and shaping their work because of overemphasis on linguistic forms Robertson (2008).

III. Methodology

The study adopted a Quasi-Experimental research design in which Solomon four-group design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used. Quasi experimental research design was used that involved taking advantage of natural settings or groups with experimental and control groups. Solomon four-group design involved the random assignment of participants to four groups which controlled for both the effect of the pretest and the intervention on posttest scores (Leavy, 2017). A sample size of 206 students from public extra county secondary schools and 2 teachers of English were selected to participate in the study. Students were subjected to an English language composition test and the teachers to classroom observations during writing lessons for data collection. Data collected was analyzed with the help of SPSS version 20; results obtained were presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

IV. Results

Table 1 captures the frequencies and percentages of the product approach techniques observed on a five point likert scale of always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The highest score on the likert scale was 5 points for always, 4 points for often, 3 points for sometimes, 2 points for rarely and 1 point for never.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing frequencies and percentages of techniques used in Product Approach

Activities n=16	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Modeling a text	2(12.5%)	7(43.8%)	5(31.2%)	2(12.5%)	0(0)
Teaching language structure & general strategies	3(18.8%)	7(43.8%)	4(25%)	2(12.5%)	0(0)
Teaching grammar, vocabulary items& mechanics	2(12.5%)	6(37.5%)	6(37.5%)	2(12.5%)	0(0)
Learners write	5(33.3%)	9(60%)	1(6.7%)	0(0)	0(0)
Instructor analyses learners writing	6(37.5%)	6(37.5%)	2(12.5%)	2(12.5%)	0(0)
Instructor assigns grades & comments	6(37.5%)	5(31.3%)	5(31.3%)	0(0)	0(0)

Source: Field Data (2021)

Results in Table 1 show that classroom observations carried out used 'modeling a text' as a techniqueoften or always in the product approach 9 (56.3%) and the technique of 'teaching language structure' 10 (62.6%) was always and often used. Teachers often or always used teaching 'grammar, vocabulary and mechanics' technique 8 (50%) but sometimes or rarely used this technique 6 (37.5%). The technique where 'learners wrote compositions' 14(93%) was always and often used. Where the 'instructor analyzed learners writing' 12(75%) was always and often used. Lastly, the technique of 'assigning grades and writing comments

about learners compositions' 11(68% was always and often used. It was observed that specific events were used to confirm the use of product approach to writing skills as shown.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Showing Means and Standard Deviation of Product Approach Techniques

Techniques N= 15	Mean	Standard Deviation
Modeling a text	3.6667	.81650
Teaching language structure & general strategies	3.7333	.96115
Teaching grammar, vocabulary items & mechanics	3.5333	.91548
Learners write	4.2667	.59362
Instructor analyses learners writing	4.1333	.91548
Instructor assigns grades & comments	4.1333	.83381
Grand mean	**3.911**	

Mean	Variance	Standard Variation
23.4667	18.838	4.34029

Source: Field Data (2021)

From Table 2 'learners write' as a technique (mean = 4.26, SD = .59) was the most commonly used while 'teaching grammar, vocabulary items and mechanics' (mean = 3.53, SD = .92) was the least technique used. On the likert scale, total minimum score was 6 and the highest was 30. Mean score was 23.46, SD = 4.34 which was more than the average score suggesting that the teachers always or often used the product approach in teaching writing skills.The table below shows the independent sample t-test on students' pretest scores in product approach.

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test on students' Product Approach Pre-test Scores.

	Product	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean
	Treatment	54	10.6852	1.97937	.26936
Pretest	No treatment	49	10.6939	1.24506	.17787

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance				t-test for Equality of means				
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2 failed	Mean difference	Std difference
Pretest	Equal Variances Assumed	8.215	.005	-.026	101	.979	-.00869	.32971
	Equal variances Not Assumed			-.027	90.333	.979	-.00869	.32278

The students who participated in the treatment scored (M=10.69, SD = 1.98) and those in the control group scored (M=10.69, SD= 1.25) df = 101, p= 0.98> 0.05. This means that students in the experimental group and those in the control group did not differ in their pretest scores in product approach to writing skills. There was no significant difference in their post test scores. The following Table 4 shows independent sample t-test on students' product approach post-test scores.

Table 4: Independent Sample t-test on students' Product Approach Post-test Scores

	Process	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean
	Treatment	109	10.3991	1.75829	.16841
Posttest	No treatment	.97	10.5155	1.70852	.17347

Levene's Test for Equality of variance				t-test for equality of means			
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean difference
posttest	Equal variances Assumed	.142	.707	1.584	204	.115	.38362
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			1.587	202.412	.114	.38362

The mean values in the product approach post test scores for the experimental group was 10.8991 and control group was 10.5155. However, there was no significant differences in the post test scores among students who were in the experimental and control groups for the product approach as shown from the independent t-test results where M= 10.89, SD = 1.76) and M = 10.52, SD= 1.71 respectively, df = 204, p = 0.115> 0.05. The post-test scores for the experimental group and the control group were similar. In Table 5 Analysis of Variance of posttest product approach is shown.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance of Posttest Product Approach

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	7.857	3	2.619	.862	.462
Within Groups	613.813	202	3.039		
Total	**621.670**	**205**			

The results in Table 5 indicated no significant difference in the four means as indicated by lower F ratio (3.202) = .862, (p = .462 > 0.05. The F ratio is statistically not significant between and within the 4 groups (D_1, D_2, D_3 and D_4). It indicates that the post test scores obtained by the subjects in the four groups are not different. However, a post-hoc test of multiple comparisons using Tukey HSD was performed at alpha (α) = 0.05, so that the probability of any false rejection among all the comparisons made was not greater than 0.05 as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Multiple Comparisons Test Results of Product Post-test.

(1) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (1-J)	Sig
DI	D2	.36206	.719
	D3	-.09360	.992
	D4	.31019	.806
D2	DI	-.36206	.719
	D3	-.45566	.545
	D4	-.05187	.999
D3	D1	.09360	.992
	D2	.45566	.545
	D4	.40379	.645
D4	D1	-.31019	.806
	D2	.05187	.999
	D3	-.40379	.645

*The mean difference is significant at p < 0.05 level

From Table 6, there were no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental groups (D_1 and D_3) and control groups (D_2 and D_4). The results indicate that: (a) There were no significant differences in posttest mean scores between treatment and control groups that participated in pretest (group D_1 and D_2). (b) There were no significant differences in posttest mean scores of students in the experimental group who participated in pretest and control group who did not participate in the pretest (group D_1 and D_4). (c) There were no significant differences in posttest mean scores between groups of students of the experimental groups that participated in pretest and those who did not participate in the pretest (group D_1 and D_3). Therefore, the intervention of the product approach to writing skills did not lead to any increased scores of students in the writing test. Therefore the null hypothesis (H01) that states that: There is no significant difference between the product approach control and experimental groups in students' performance in English language writing test within selected secondary schools of Kenya was accepted.

V. Discussion

In this study, the product- approach to writing skills had six features that were observed in the writing classrooms. These techniques include modeling a text, teaching language structure, lexicon and general strategies, and teaching grammar, vocabulary items, coherence and mechanics. Three techniques scored below the grand mean of 3.911 implying that these techniques of product approach to writing skills had less influence on students' performance in the writing test. Also three techniques had a mean score above the grand mean of 3.911 meaning these techniques positively influenced the students' scores in the writing test. However there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. Therefore the techniques of the product approach to writing skills did not lead to improved scores of students' performance in the writing test.

Teachers modeled a text representing a sample of the writing task by highlighting the important features. The teacher embarked on teaching language structure, lexicon and general strategies of writing. There was also over teaching of grammar, vocabulary items and the conventions of coherence and mechanics. Then the learners commenced writing utilizing what they had been taught. The teacher analyzed learners' productions and lastly rated them by assigning grades and making brief comments about the required revisions. Learners were not given chance to modify their texts based on the remarks. Students in the product approach to writing were divided into 4 groups (D_1, D_2, D_3 and D_4). D_1 are those students in the experimental group that received treatment after a pretest. D_2 were in the control group and took the pretest, D_3 did not take the pretest but were in the experimental group and received treatment, and lastly group D_4 were in the control group and had no pretest. All the groups took a post test. Data from the four groups indicated that students in the experimental group and

those in the control group did not differ in their pretest scores. There were also no significant differences in the post test scores between students in the experimental group and those in the control group for the product approach to writing skills in the writing test. The scores were all similar.

The 'models method,' which focuses on the product or the written text that acts as a model for the learner is also known as the 'product approach.' It was thought that if pupils read a model book written by an accomplished and competent writer, they would copy all of the desirable features of writing and therefore become good writers (Eslami, 2004). Whether emphasizing grammatical roles or rhetorical patterns, this technique focuses pupils' exposure to written sentences and paragraphs. Proponents of the product approach believe that if students are given the composition of a skilled writer to examine before beginning their own writing, they can learn how to write with few errors (Oguta, 2015).The major purpose of this strategy is to produce an error-free, cohesive narrative in which pupils are given writing activities to reinforce language structures that they have acquired through grammatical pattern imitation and manipulation. Controlled compositions, in which students are given a paragraph and required to execute substitutions, expansions, or completion exercises, are examples of such writing activities (Eslami, 2014). As a result, the product approach to writing is thought of as a product created by a single writer.

In this study, it was discovered that the product approach has three common features: the teacher assigns a title, learners are asked to write a composition with a set word limit, and teachers mark the composition but do not provide feedback to the students. It is founded on the premise that the creative components of the writing process are mysterious and not taught. The study and teaching of writing using the product approach is limited to the conventions and mechanics of discourse, such as the modes and structures of discourse, the features of various genres, and the standards of style and usage, according to (Gathumbi & Masembe, 2005). The teacher focuses on form, syntax, grammar, mechanics, and organization, with a particular emphasis on vocabulary selection. Notably, precision, fluidity, and attention to the end output are prioritized. Brown (2001) claims that in the product approach, a lot of emphasis is placed on 'model' compositions that students would emulate, as well as how well a student's final product measures up against a list of criteria that includes content, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations like spelling and punctuation.

The product method is thought to be teacher-centered (Shahrokhi, 2017), and that the skills, strategies, and processes involved in writing are a key flaw in the approach since students are forced to follow a set of predefined patterns, regardless of the myriad aspects that go into writing a piece. Although the technique is generally centered on modeling, the role of model texts in the approach is often confined to a teaching tool that serves as a source of feedback to students, according to Saedi & Sahebkheir (2011). From the results shown in this study, students cannot write an error free coherent text through imitation and manipulation of grammatical patterns since there was no significant difference between the students pretest and posttest scores in the writing test. This implies that the product approach did not improve the learners' performance in the writing test.The product approach stresses the finished product while providing no insight into the path taken by writers to arrive at that final output, thus the composing process (Kadmiry, 2021). Students are only provided with standards to measure the goodness or badness of their finished product while emphasizing the product. In teaching writing to students using the product approach therefore, 'we have not taught them how to make that product.'

VI. Conclusion

The study found out that product approach had no significant effect on students writing performance in English language. It was found out that intervention of the product approach to teaching writing skills did not lead to higher scores in the writing test because the teacher focused on form, syntax, grammar, and mechanics of writing, choice of vocabulary, accuracy and fluency of the final product but did notprovide insight into the path taken by writers to arrive at that final output, thus the composing process.

VII. Recommendations

Students are not fully engaged in the writing process when using the product approach and therefore perceive writing as a classroom routine and an uninteresting activity. Teachers using the product approach should therefore assist students to learn writing skills better by encouraging post-writing activities, peer collaboration, personal responsibility and a positive learning environment to provide a path for students to use when writing. They should also incorporate other approaches that are learner-centred for effective learning of writing skills.

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