

**EFFECTS OF THE MASTERY OF DIFFERENT SENTENCE PATTERNS ON THE  
WRITTEN ENGLISH PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS IN  
TWO SCHOOLS IN BAUCHI METROPOLIS**

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the “Effects of the My **School Certificate** Students in Selected Schools in Bauchi Town”. One hundred and forty (140) students were sampled out of two hundred and forty-four (244) total population of two secondary schools. Seventy (70) students were selected in two (2) classes of the SS2 in Government Secondary School Miri, Bauchi State, and were used for the experiment. Another seventy (70) students were selected in the two (2) classes of the SS2 of GSS Shadawanka Barracks, Bauchi State who were used as the control group. The experimental group was treated with eight (8) types of sentence patterns, while the control group embarked on their normal writing lessons for same eight weeks. Both groups were pre-tested before the treatment on the experimental group. A post-test was administered to the two groups after the treatment. T-test was used to analyze the scores obtained from the tests. The overall results revealed significant difference between the written English mean performance scores of the experimental and control groups after the treatment. The study, therefore, recommended the inclusion of the teaching and learning of different sentence patterns in writing lessons among Senior Secondary School Certificate Students.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Variety in sentence length, style and structure makes writing more lively and interesting. It enables the writer to emphasize what he wants to emphasize and de-emphasize what he considers less important. Thus, it provides a match of thought and structure (Ogwuche, 2008). It is in this vein that the present study seeks to find out the effects of the mastery of different sentence patterns on school certificate students' written English performance in two secondary schools in Bauchi State.

This research came up as a result of the experience in the usual contact with the public examination bodies in Nigeria during the marking of students' English language scripts. The study is concerned with the candidates' persistent failure in senior school certificate examinations. Written essays are scored below standard, because students' writings are monotonous, boring and short. This means the target scores are hardly reached. The essay writing question demands 450 words, whereas the candidates write far less than that. This shortage of words and short constructions contribute immensely to the failure of English language certificate examinations, especially in the content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy components of the marking scheme.

Nigerian secondary school students have problems in the learning of English language as revealed in their performance in the subject at public examinations (Kolawole 1998; Anoma 2005). The poor performance in English is evident in the breakdown of May/June SSCE 2010/2011 in Nigeria as a whole. The failure rate was 72 percent in 2008, 74 percent in 2009 and 2010. In 2011/12, 451, 187 candidates of 1,351,577 who sat for the examination obtained credit in English language. NECO 2010 reveals that a total of 1,143,169 candidates registered for the examination but only 244,456 candidates

passed English language at credit level (Promise, 2013).

Based on the above statements, the present study intends to find out possible improvement or otherwise of the writing performance of students by exposing them to different sentence patterns. This would be done by paying attention to exposing students to the mastery of different sentence patterns and aspects of scoring patterns like content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy which are crucial in the treatment. Writing is a means of recording experience usually on paper. Such records of facts, opinion, and observations provide permanent records which can be referred to when we can no longer rely on our memory for undistorted version of the incident (Bloomfield, 1982). Thus, by discovering the effects of the mastery of different sentence patterns on students' writing in this study, it is hoped that students' writing ability and performance could be improved.

A sentence is the largest linguistic unit on which grammatical rules or patterns apply. It is at the opposite end of the scale of grammatical items from the morpheme, the smallest grammatical unit (Mcgrego,2009). The sentence pattern is the arrangement of words, phrases and clauses in a sentence: that is sentence variety and style (Benjamin, 2007). Almost all sentences in the English language fall into different patterns determined by the presence and functions of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. This means that a study of the influence of sentence patterns on students' writing performance may improve their writing ability.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The cry of the fallen standard of education in reference to the poor state of English among students is persistent all over the country. In most cases, the blame is generally on the school and accusing fingers are on teachers. The results of the public English language examination such as WAEC/SSCE have exposed a situation in

which students' essays hardly get the required words of 450 as expected by the examination bodies. Apart from the inability to meet up with the target number of expected words, the written essays are boring and lack differentiated sentence patterns and styles that can aid logical and functional communication.

The problem of lack of exposure to different sentence patterns in the process of writing essays and constructing sentences in schools is a critical issue that this study is concerned with. Also, lack of connection between the body of the essay and the content of the question is thus another problem. Although, most of the students' essays are not well organized and the expressions are vague, boring and sometimes lack adequate connection, however important points are outlined. The failure rate could be attributed to their low performance in English expressions and lack of the mechanical accuracy components of the written essays.

To sum up the statements above, the problem is:

- i. there is a mass failure in WAEC (English) attributed to poor mastery of writing skills.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to examine the effects of the mastery of different sentence patterns on the written English performance of school certificate students of two selected schools in Bauchi Metropolis. Another specific purpose of the study is to:

- determine the level of improvement, if any, in the students' expressions in written English performance before and after exposure to different sentence patterns.

### **1.4 Research Question**

The research question answered by

the findings of this study is:

- i. What is the effect of exposure to different sentence patterns on the expression component of school certificate students' written English?
- ii. Need to add more questions.

### **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

Going by the specific objective of the research, the following null hypotheses were tested

- There is no significant difference between the performance of those students exposed to different sentence patterns and those that were not in written English expression.

### **1.6 Basic Assumptions**

In this study, the following basic assumptions are made:

- i. constructing sentences with different sentence patterns could have a positive effect on the written English performance of school certificate students.
- ii. exposure to different sentence patterns may not influence students' writing performance of school certificate students and;
- iii. the sentence patterns exposed to the students would be generally good.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study could be of immense significance to students, teachers of English and educational administrators. Students' writing skills at secondary school level could be developed through the recommendations that would be made at the end of the study.

It is hoped that this study would contribute to knowledge, especially in teaching/learning and in assessing the

style of writing through sentence constructions in written essays. This is because the mastery of writing generally exhibits a demonstration of the knowledge of grammar, diction, mechanics and above all, discourse strategies.

The study could equally be of importance to teachers of the English language since it would suggest appropriate instructional options in teaching different sentence patterns for the improvement of the students' writing. Educational administrators, can initiate the inclusion of sentence patterns' teaching in secondary school curriculum if the result of the study turns out positive. This could be made possible through using the textbooks that discuss sentence patterns and including the patterns in the curriculum as it could be useful to textbook writers and curriculum planners.

### **1.8. Scope and the Delimitation**

The scope of this study is limited to two secondary schools in Bauchi metropolis. They are chosen because they admit different students from different parts of the state and with different backgrounds. The schools also produce results that are true of the situation of secondary schools in the state. The study is limited to finding out the effects of sentence patterns on students' writing performance. The design of the study also leads to the delimitedness of its scope. A quasi experimental design needs an in-depth study for a considerable period. Instrument of the research (test) also compels the limitedness of the scope.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This paper reviews related literature to the study. The reviewed areas include: written English performance of school certificate students; aspects of literary composition; content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy and sentence patterns. At the end of the review, analyses of the effectiveness of the mastery of different sentence patterns

would be presented.

### **2.2. Writing Skill: Issues and Effects**

This section discusses concepts, issues and effects related to written English performance of school certificate students. At the end of the discussion, areas important to the study are outlined.

Writing is an important skill that a language learner must master in a proficient manner. It can be in a continuous form as in essays, letter writing, technical and non-technical writing. It can also be in a non continuous form as in post bills, note making, charts and accounts (Olaofe, 2013). However, regardless of one's proficiency in speech, Brown and Yule (1998) indicate that writing may pose some challenges. As a skill, writing encompasses a large body of language activities. A good writer is required to take into account the reader and how to interpret the intended meaning,(Yerima,2013). The National Policy for English Language Arts (1989) suggests that "an appropriate writing task should always focus upon the explanation and awareness of what writers actually do and what choice they make when they write" (p.23).

Writing is more difficult to teach and learn than most people realize because it presents so much that is personal about the individual writer. It is seen to be a personal accomplishment and a lifelong skill that requires patience, practice and confidence building, product, thought and process. Instructions of English as a Second Language has often focused on improving students' skills and ability in speaking, listening and reading, while ignoring the development of the students' writing skills (Edelskey, 1982; Edelskey and Smith, 1989). Harris (1985) concluded that only 20% of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction is concerned with writing activities. Of the 75 percent, two percent were related to the mechanical aspect of writing such as syntax, punctuation and speaking. For L<sub>2</sub> learners, writing is an essential language reinforcing skill (Krashen, 1977). The lack of attention to

writing instruction has been an area of neglect compared to other skills of the language (Graves, 1984). The need for sound writing research is greater than ever.

Among the four skills of language that learners have to acquire, writing as the last skill, is very significant because it essentially involves the correctly developed production of what the learner has learnt, his experience in a context, meaning and possibility of sharing meaning with the reader. This is why Sawyer and Sawyer (1993) indicate that writing, which could be seen as the ability to produce correct forms of words and sentences, is a very important skill in language acquisition.

The West African Examination Council's 57<sup>th</sup> Report (2008-2010) on senior secondary school Certificate pointed out that in 2008, 23% of the candidates passed English language at credit level. In 2009, only 21% passed, same in 2010/11. Many students have their results seized due to their involvement in examination malpractice. Olayemi (1980) quoted the Chairman of WAEC as saying that candidates showed a lack of acquaintance with essay formats. Parents, teachers and employers of labour have all complained of near illiteracy of modern learners, especially concerning the inability to write good essays. It could also be as a result of writing monotonous, boring and short essays.

According to Olaofe (2009), sector analysis is designed for writing of English, since second language learners are more concerned with the written system of the language. It provides different mechanisms for generating different kinds of operations on the positions in a sentence layer. Some of these operations include: leaving some positions filled and unfilled to produce varieties of sentences, shifting some fillers of particular position that can accommodate such fillers, and postponing some positions by pushing such positions forward for emphatic purposes.

However, as in the case with SSCE

essay writing in Nigeria, a period of fifty minutes is allocated to the paper with the expectation of 450 word length. The evaluation is, therefore, based on the four aspects of the marking scheme: content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy. As such, good ideas are valued and flaws penalized. The content is expected to be well organized with demonstration of a very sound command of the language (expression) that is devoid of poor mechanics (WAEC, 2005 and NECO 1995).

The body of literature reviewed above did not particularly address the issue of sentence pattern variations in students' written English as the reason for students' failure. This is what the present study intends to investigate, that is how inclusion of sentence patterns in the curriculum will enhance writing performance. The study would be of immense benefit to students on the aspect of expression, which is the component that sentence variety and style is allocated highest score in an essay, based on the senior school certificate examinations' marking scheme.

Since sentence patterns have to do with sentential operation by the use of different mechanisms, the present study would borrow Olaofe's (2009) and Rosetta's (1998) shifting process patterning in teaching the subjects. Filler of slots in sentences would also be employed in the treatment. These are listed and explained below.

### **2.3. Sentence Patterns and Expression Component of Students' Written English**

According to WASSCE (2008), the positive quality to be looked for under expression includes the following: clarity and general appropriateness, variation of sentence structures and types, judicious use of figurative language and skilful and sophisticated use of punctuation. Ogwuche (2005) sees expression component of

essay writing as the overall style of an essay: the tone is appropriate (humorous, serious, reflective and satirical), whether there is sufficient and appropriate variety (factual, analytical, evaluative, reflective) and whether sufficient creativity is used. It can also refer to the style of individual sentences: whether there is the use of a variety of sentence lengths and styles, whether sentences are worded clearly and whether word choice is interesting and appropriate.

*Lagosbooksclub.wordpress.com* (2012) highlights that for each essay, expression has a maximum of 20 marks in the students' written essays. Expression refers to vocabulary chosen, which should reflect the general audience atmosphere or format of composition. Vocabulary must also be controlled and the sentences structured. Examiners are not expected to be unduly influenced by mechanical errors. Many candidates suffer from a severely restricted vocabulary and the sentences written are translations of the mother tongue, resulting in many un- English collocations (Setzler, 2002-2007). Students' written articles and formal letters are expected to use formal expressions. They should avoid slang expressions, shortened forms, colloquialisms and the likes (FME/STUP, 2007/2008).

Ibe (2005) looks at expression as how materials are presented. The good writer is the one whose expression is so captivating that the reader wishes to go on reading. This includes a properly articulated language style, a choice of appropriate words and the use of words are necessary to convey the intended meaning. Good expressions also mean being able to construct sentences that allow your ideas to be readable, that does not subscribe to ambiguity and the use of difficult words. This is an aspect that 20 marks are awarded to the answered question.

Therefore, Ibe's (2005) notion of expression as the ability to construct sentence that presents idea in readable and comprehensible manner is accepted in the present study. Subjects were exposed to

variety of sentence patterns such as beginning a sentence with *article* and *subject* like *The cat...* Starting with adverbs like *nevertheless, in contrast on the contrary* so that at the end of the study, their written expressive ability could be judged as improved or not improved.

## **2.6. Sentence Patterns: Concepts, Issues and Effects**

This section discusses concepts, issues and effects of sentence patterns on the written English performance of school certificate students. It looks at this aspect in the light of reviewing literature related to sentence patterns. At the end of the section, areas relevant to the present study will be outlined.

A sentence can be defined as the largest structural unit within which the grammar of a language is organized. Traditional grammar sees it as the expression of a complete thought. They classified sentence patterns into simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentence types. That means a sentence may consist of one subject-predicate unit, as opposed to more than one (Crystal, 2003).

Stageberg (1981) states that "speech should not be made by merely stringing words together in some random fashion. Instead, words should be carefully arranged into patterns". Repetitive applications of sentence patterns improve students' writing (Rau, 2008). Su (2001) opines that students would be able to learn how to write accurately if they are taught using explicit, systematic and repetitive structured sentence patterns.

Olaofe (2009) highlights that teachers can make pupils see different sentence patterns that can be produced through shiftable, unshiftable, filled and unfilled positions within sentences. This is because no sentence consists of one construction, but constructions within constructions infinitum.

## 2.7 Students' Writing Scoring Patterns

In assessing students' proficiency, essay writing has been the most tasking and detailed. This is because it combines the four language skills, reading, listening, speaking and writing. It is regrettable that many teachers of English have taught this aspect as theoretical stereotypes (Nwosu and Nanna, 2012).

One of the first decisions to be made in determining a scoring system is what type of rating scale will be used: that is, should a single score be given to each script, or will each script be scored on several different features? This issue has been the subject of a great deal of research and discussion over the past three decades. In the composition literature, three main types of rating scales are discussed: primary trait scales, holistic scales, and analytic scales (Ngo, 2012).

However, for the purpose of this study, analytic scoring scale would be used in scoring the students' written essays. This is because it is in conformity with the Senior School Certificate Examinations' marking scheme. In this scale, scripts are rated on several aspects of writing or criteria rather than a single score. Scripts would be rated on such features as content, organization, expression (cohesion, register, style, sentence variety, vocabulary etc) and mechanics (Jacobs *et al*, 1981).

One of the best known and most widely used analytic scales in English as a Second Language (ESL) was created by Jacobs *et al* (1981, cited in Weigle, 2002, pp. 115-116). In this scale, scripts are rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The five aspects are differentially weighted to emphasize first,

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This section presents the research methodology used in this study. It comprises the following: research design, population sample and sampling procedure,

content (30 points); next, language use (25 points), with organization and vocabulary weighted equally (20 points) and mechanics receiving very little emphasis (5 points).

## 2.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the present study is based on theories of sentence patterns and writing development. A lot of studies have viewed sentence patterns as a tool for achieving writing proficiency. This can be used for developing content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy components of students' written English (Su, 2001; Trudy 2012; Rosetta, 1998 & Bolaji, 2004). Sentence variations in writing could help in idea packaging, development and enrichment (Yates & Kenkel, 2001). Areas of writing proficiency and development such as the components of the assessment tools could possibly be linked to sentence patterning.

Patterns of sentence such as *periodic pattern* clearly results in compacting ideas for communicative purposes. It is meant to portray ideas relative to the topic sentence and relevant for idea development (Ring, 2010). In writing, precision and conciseness are very important. Sentence patterns such as Subject Verb Object (SVO) would help achieve such precision. However, in organizing a piece of writing, idea development and conclusion need be done via variation of sentences.

instruments, validation of the instruments, pilot study, method and procedure for data analysis.

#### 3.2. Research Design

The design for this research was quasi-experimental design. In this case, the

students were divided into two equal groups: control and experimental groups. Both groups were subjected to pretest. A posttest was conducted, after the treatment, in order to observe if there was any difference in the writing performance of the students after exposure to different sentence patterns. The treatment in this case is the independent variable and the written English performance scores-the dependent variable.

### 3.3 Population

The population of this study comprised all the 140 students of the four classes of SS2 students of Government Secondary School, Miri, and all the 105 SS2 students of Government Secondary School, Shadawanka Barracks, Bauchi State. This study considered SS2 more appropriate for the conduct of this experiment because they are the groups that are being prepared for senior school certificate examinations. The choice of the schools was that they enrolled students from all over the state with varied socio-economic backgrounds. This ensured fair representation of different backgrounds.

### 3.4. Sample and Sampling Procedure

Out of the 140 students, 70 were sampled out of the two (2) SS2 classes in Government Secondary School Miri, Bauchi State. Another 70 students were sampled out of the 140 students of the 2 classes of SS2 at GSS Shadawanka Barracks, Bauchi State. This made two groups of sampled students of 140 because half size of population is appropriate for sampling (Ferguson, 1965). The 70 students served as the experimental group, while the other 70 were the control group. The experimental and the control groups were not in the same school. The two schools are far from each other, so the influence of the treatment given to the experimental will not affect the control group.

#### 3.5.1 Research Instrument

The instrument for the study was essay writing tests. A pre-test was

administered then a post-test was also conducted after the treatment. Post-test result obtained from both control and experimental groups were used for the data analysis. The test corresponded to the SSCE essay writing type in terms of standard. Presented under, are the pre-test and the post-test questions administered. They were selected because they conformed with the WAEC/NECO examination. They also provoked students' writing ability and the three questions form the basis for comparison, since they are of the same genre. The students wrote one pre-test essay out of the two questions to test their ability level.

- i. **Pre-Test Question:** Recently, the first rain of the year in your area was quite stormy. It blew off the roof of a block of classrooms in your school. Write a letter to the Education Secretary of your Local Government Area, appealing to him/her for assistance to effect repairs on the damaged structures. (WASSCE, 2008).
- ii. Write a letter to your uncle staying in England, give him three reasons why you want to come and spend your long vacation with him in England. (SSCE, 2014).
- iii.

#### Post-Test Questions

- i. You have been invited to lead the motion in a school's debate for or against the proposition that "The Annual National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST), is a waste of government's fund". Write your speech. (NECO, 2013).
- ii. The last nation-wide strike by secondary school teachers affected your school adversely. Write a letter to the Minister of Education, suggesting at least four points to preventing future strike action (WAEC,

2001).

The students were given the choice of answering only one question out of the two in order not to restrict them to a particular essay type.

### 3.5.2 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was presented to English language teachers to certify and scrutinize the content validity and face validity of the instrument.

### 3.5.3 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability is the degree to which a test on repeated measurement yields almost the same result when administered to subjects with similar characteristics (Olaofe, 2010). To test the reliability of the instrument for this study, inter-rater reliability was used as it was used during the pilot study at ATBU International Secondary School, Bauchi State. The inter-rater reliability score was 0.7. It helped in ascertaining the difficulty level of the questions for standard of the experimental subjects.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The following steps were followed in collecting data for the study

- i. All the 140 sampled students were first given a pre-test to ensure homogeneity in their ability level. This was captured by considering their compatibility at the high, mid and low levels from each school.
- ii. The 140 students were divided into two groups of 70 each. One group was taught different sentence patterns to serve as the experimental group and the other group continued with the normal conventional classes; therefore they served as the control group.
- iii. The experimental group was trained for eight weeks on the eight different

sentence patterns. At least a pattern was taught in a week. They are:

**Sentence Pattern1:** Sentence beginning with an article and subject

*The car was old and rusty, but my father was determined to get it running.* (Ring, 2012)

**Sentence Pattern 2:** A Periodic Sentence, in which the sentence base (*independent clause*) comes last.

*Considering the free health care, the cheap tuition fees, the low crime rate, the comprehensive social programs, and the wonderful winters, I am willing to pay slightly higher taxes for the benefit of living in Abuja.* (Trudy,2012).

**Sentence pattern 3-***begin with a prepositional phrase:*

- i. With a smile on her face, the lady collected the money and left. (Rosetta, 1998)

**Sentence pattern 4- Dependent Clauses** (begin with a subordinating conjunction)

- i. Though, some critics have complained about his lack of personal warmth, the candidate is doing well in the presidential race.

*The subordinating conjunction may also be placed in the middle of the sentence:*

- ii. My pen ran out of ink **while** I was taking the test. (Rosetta, 1998)

**Sentence pattern 5:** The verb is followed by a **direct object** and an **indirect object**.

Subject	Transitive verb	Indirect Object	Direct Object
The sight of Ben	gave	M	relief
Nurse Joy	Handed	The child	Crayon

(Bolaji, 2004).

**Sentence pattern 6: Infinitive phrase** (“to plus verb”)

**To cope** with the new tax law, taxpayers must comprehend subtle variations in meaning.(Trudy,2013).

**Sentence pattern 7-Adverbs:** (show relationships) Place a comma after the adverb or adverbial phrases-

*-In contrast, on the contrary, however, nevertheless:* what follows will contrast or oppose the previous statement.

We enjoyed our trip to America;**however**, we will probably never visit this country again.

During our brief vacation, we are determined to visit Germany;**nevertheless**, we will make a way to visit London on the way.

**As a result**, Achebe's works are still valued and read today.

-Other adverbial beginnings: in comparison, *fortunately, finally, surprisingly, shockingly.*

**Surprisingly**, all the weak students passed the course.

(Doe,2010).

**Sentence Pattern 8:** *Simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentence patterns.*

- **Simple sentence pattern:**

- i. The work stops.

**Compound sentence pattern:**

- ii. John was here yesterday but he did not meet my father at home.

**Complex sentence pattern:**

- iii. Sam bought the ticket while John parked the car.

**Compound complex sentence:**

- iv. If Deborah refuses to listen to us, we would not hesitate to take her back to the village where she came from, or we would send her to Aiyetoro to continue her studies.

(Yakubuet *al.*,2005)

The training procedure on the sentence patterns was based on Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach – CALLA (Chamot&O'malley, 1994). This procedure includes Preparation, Presentation, Practice, Evaluation and Expansion. Below is an illustration of how each of the eight sentence patterns was taught using the CALLA procedure.

**Preparation:** The subjects were introduced to the idea of sentence pattern strategies. This was done by using sentence patterns' background knowledge such as reviewing sentence constructions, elements of sentences and their structures.

**Presentation:** One pattern was introduced as a style of writing and constructing sentences. For Example: ***the periodic sentence pattern***. This presentation was done in all the eight patterns. The sentences used were the students' constructed ones on the pre-test sheets, though teacher served as a guide.

**Practice:** The teacher together with the students used different sentences in the constructions and practised the different patterns in all the eight patterns after every lesson. At this level, the constructions were not just based on sentences alone but making it construction within constructions. The teacher did not particularly impose a style to be used or over-emphasized the selection of the sentence patterns to be used on the subjects. They were, therefore, given the freedom of selecting what to write. The teacher only scaffolded, by guiding.

**Evaluation:** The teacher encouraged the students to evaluate their construction progress as they used and practiced a particular pattern taught. The subjects were instructed to write an essay of not less than 450 word length.

**Expansion:** Finally, the subjects were encouraged to apply the sentence patterns they learnt not just at the sentence level, but expanded to paragraphs and beyond.

For example, expanding a simple sentence pattern to compound complex as: *Samuel came in (simple sentence)*. This can be expanded to *compound complex* as: *Samuel came in and told us that he was successful in the examination, although his score was very low.*

The control group only continued with their normal conventional writing classes.

At the end of the treatment, a post-test was administered to both control and treatment groups. The two groups were given the same essay test at both the beginning and the end of the treatment period. The subjects were instructed to write two essays. A formal letter and an argumentative essay that required them to express themselves in detail.

The answer scripts were marked using the Senior School Certificate Examination's marking scheme (analytic scale). Each script was marked based on its response to content aspect, which is 10 marks, organization; 10 marks, expression; 20 marks and mechanical accuracy; 10 marks respectively. This is the WAEC/NECO standard of allocating marks to the writing components.

Two English language teachers were used as research assistants. They were trained on the treatment administration before the commencement of the study. They marked the scripts of the students.

### 3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in ATBU International Secondary School, Bauchi State. This was done in order to test the reliability and validity of the research instruments used in the study. Twenty students were used in two equal groups after a pre-test was given to them. The test was on sentence construction. Ten students were taught four different sentence patterns and the other 10 were not. The final day of the treatment was used for narrative essay writing for both

treatment and the control groups. From the results obtained, 4 out of the 10 students that were taught different sentence patterns showed significant improvement over the control group that were not taught the sentence patterns.

### 3.10 Procedure for Data Analysis

This study employed T-test independent to test the research hypotheses. The analyses were based on the scores obtained at the beginning and the end of the treatment periods. All the hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

In furtherance of the investigation into the effects of the mastery of different sentence patterns on the written English performance of school certificate students of the selected schools in Bauchi State, data collected were statistically analyzed and results are presented in this section.

**Table 4.1. Presents pre-test scores of control and experimental groups of this study**

Variables	Group	Low		Middle		High		Total
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	
Content	Control	60	85.7	8	11.4	2	2.9	70
	Experimental	60	85.7	9	12.9	1	1.4	70
Expression	Control	69	98.6	1	1.4	0	0.0	70
	Experimental	69	98.6	1	1.4	0	0.0	70
Organization	Control	56	80.0	10	14.3	4	5.7	70
	Experimental	55	78.6	11	15.7	4	5.7	70

Technical	Control	5	4.3	7	0	0
Accuracy	Experimental	67	95.7	3	4.3	0
		0.0		70		

The table shows that the two groups were compatible. This is because their scores are almost close

#### 4.2 Answers to the Research Questions of the Study

**Research Question:** What is the effect of exposure to mastery of different sentence patterns on the expression component of school certificate students' written English? Table 4.3 shows the level of performance of the two groups

**Table 4.3: Results of effects of sentence patterns on performance of students in written expression component of control and experimental groups**

Express n	Status	Low		Middle		High		Total
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	
Before	Control	69	98.6	1	1.4	0	0.0	70
	Experimental	69	98.6	1	1.4	0	0.0	70
After	Control	68	97.1	2	2.9		0.0	70

(7)

*...I thereby appeal for the assistance to the effect and repairs of our school, there are many thing I want to ask on the local Government chairman for and is about the development of school, firstly is about roofing the school and chair, table, computer lap, and Biology lap should be available for with the science class, and moreover he should provide .*

*I thereby appealing that the local Government Chairman while use his or her sit to do something about the situation or problem thank you.*

The essay above lacks meaningful expression of the topic. Essential translation is found with little knowledge of English vocabulary, as in... "local Government chairman for and is about the development..." Frequent errors of words of word/idiom form like, "...thing" instead of things (plural), "...lap" instead of laboratory. Confused or obscured major problems are such as: "...there are many thing I want to ask on the local Government chairman for and is about roofing the school and chair, chair, table, computer lap and Biology lap should be available for with the science class, and moreover he should provide..." This is a clear indication that the writer made requests not mindful of the reasons for the requests.

Below is an extract(8) of the essay of the same low performer during the post-

Experimental	47	67.1	23	32.9		0.0	70
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The table shows that the performance of the two groups (Control and Experimental) were at the same level before the experiment. Both groups have 69 or 98.6% at the low performance levels respectively with only 1 or 1.4% each in the average category. There was none of the groups in the high performance category. After the treatment in which the students in the experimental group were treated, the performance greatly improved. Though none of the students in the treated group was able to improve or move to high performance category but those in average performance group increased from 1 or 1.4% to 23 or 32.9% which greatly reduce the low performance group from 69 or 98.6% before the experiment to 47 or 67.1% after the experiment.

To prove the remarkable difference in this section as shown statistically, the student's script is analyzed to show the difference on in the expression component. This comparison is at the pre-test compared to the post-test at low performance, middle and high performance levels.

Below is an excerpt (7) of the essay of a low performer during the pre-test on expression component:

test on expression component.

*Am Peter Rachael standing here to oppose/against the proposition that say the Annual National festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) is a waste of government's fund".*

*Permit me to define the co-word National means the nation, festival means that many (individual with petipate to the programs. Firstly, the annual festival ceremony help the nation to achieve their goal such as it will development . The people talent many will love to show their talent.*

*Secondly it helps in culture practice, such as the goga Africa festival in Abuja, that is being doing by the people of the particular place or village.*

*It good because it is not the waste of government fund, the reason is to avoid idleness of the people. And it improve National development.*

There is great improvement in the student's expression aspect of essay after the treatment. Effective but simple construction such as: "...the annual festival ceremony help the nation...". The essay has few errors of arrangement unlike that of the pre-test.

Below is the excerpt of mid performing student's pre-test:

(9)

LETTER OF APPEALMENT FOR OUR ASSISTANCE ON DAMAGES COURSE BY STORMY RAIN IN OUR SCHOOL

*The main reason for writing this letter, is to seek your assistance to repairs our classrooms roof that is blew off by storm the previous week.*

*The storm started at about 8"30 m, while everybody, is going to bed, the storm was very strong, and it lasted for about three (3) hours, the storm course lot of damages not only on the school classrooms,, but to so many people, many houses were down and the storm did not just damage houses and properties, but also drown so many people, some were very lucky they did not die, some unlucky one's are killed and some are badly injured. ...*

*A Fulani man who was living close to us loss most of his cows, goat hen and sheep to the storm, many people suffered loss property, some loss of asset and some the death animal and we the student are now no longer going to school because of the damage that have happen to it. Finally I want you and your agent to please look up to us and help us.*

*The storm started at about 8"30 m, while everybody, is going to bed, the storm was very strong, and it lasted for about three (3) hours, the storm course lot of damages not only on the school classrooms,, but to so many people, many houses were down and the storm did not just damage houses and properties, but also drown so many people, some were very lucky they did not die, some unlucky one's are killed and some are*

badly injured. ...

A Fulani man who was living close to us loss most of his cows, goat hen and sheep to the storm, many people suffered loss property, some loss of asset and some the death animal and we the student are now no longer going to school because of the damage that have happen to it. Finally I want you and your agent to please look up to us and help us.

The excerpt above shows frequent errors of words/idiom form and meaningful expression such as:..."some unlucky one's are killed and some are badly injured....". This is a clear grammatical error in words like *are* and *are* above instead of *were*.

Below is an extract of the same mid performer during the post-test on expression component:

(10)

On behalf of the our school (Government Day School Secondary School Miri) and many other schools in the state, who were affected by the last nation-wide strike, I writ to you in other that you should come to our aid, and we have the ability to go back to school.

On my on point of view, I think the strike is course out by many problems for instance teachers are hardly, paid properly and some are paid not on time, so many teachers have go on strike because government do not pay the on time and they also need money for solving of Domestic need when they arise.

He strike have badly affect many schools in the local government many schools do not open when the strike is on many teachers do not even care to go to schools were they teach, most of the student went to school and came back home having nothing as for our school it is even worst, we (student) have no choice than to stay at home doing nothing this seriously affect us, it affect the growth of our education since we no longer go to so se have no lectures at homes even, if we go to school there are no teachers to teach us, so our syllabus that e had to have covered is left uncovered.

So in my on point of view, I suggest that the following things must be adopted in other to prevent the reputation of such strike for example, the adoption of payment of teachers properly and on time should de done in other to stop them for going on strike which seriously affect the growth of our education. And also the provision of essential learning materials should be done in other for the school to have better learning facilities.

The essay above shows improvement in terms of expression component such as sentence variation and style as in..."I think the strike is course out by many problems, teachers are hardly paid...." and.... "some are not paid on time....".

Below is an extract(11) of the essay of a high performer during the pre-test on expression component .

(11)

*Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope work is fine? If so Glory be to God.*

*The main point why I am writing this letter, is to ask for an assistance in my school.*

*Firstly for sometime now my school had been closed down, this is due to the damaged the raining season came along with.*

*It happened that the first rain that recently fell cost so much damage because it was quite stormy, it blew off the roof of a classroom, the community also complained that the rain caused erosion, washed away some vial crops, brought down some houses flat, trees fell on children playing under the rain, this is due to the wind the rain came along with.*

*Secondly it had much effect on the arrival, the wind it came along with took some plants and hit the animal which were looking or places to hid themselves, thewq`ese really had cause the death of many animals and washing away of little chicks.*

This essay of higher performing student has shown effective expressions in terms of use of registers, effective complex constructions and few errors. A well expressed essay as shown in the..."I think the strike is course out by many problems for instance teachers are hardly paid properly..."

Below is an excerpt of the same high performer, performing better than in pre-test:

(12)

*Considering the delay in paying salary, and other factor, this has led it the nation-wide strike in secondary school. For that reason, school activities have been set back because student no longer go to school, read their books, visit the library and this poor attitude to-ward learning is gradually killing the knowledge which is already in them.*

*This long lasting strike has also killed our interest for school, many student have gone into some vices, while other wise student have gone searching for hand-work to avoid been idle. It has also cost some student more years than necessary in secondary school especially for those who are preparing for WAEC/NECO. They should have been through with their exams now, the reverse is the case.*

*I also personally have been brought back to square one, because irregular learning cost by the strike has affected my plan, and so many other things academically.*

*I would like to suggest that the minister of education should see to what is really causing the strike and put an end to it, by meeting the demands made by the teachers, since we can't do without them.*

*One way to go about this is by paying their salary on time. Since the token given to them is not much, it should be given on time to compensiate and appreciate their effect.*

*Another way to go about this, is to add value to their effort, not under-estimating the school teachers, giving them dew respect. Since we all know they are not just teachers but investors of the future generation. Paying them much earlier solves, but adding token to their salaries can also help in getting*

*the root of every cost of strike.*

The essay above has fluent expression. Ideas are clearly stated and supported. Cohesive and logical sequencing of point are stated as in:..."*one way to go about this is by paying their salary on time. Since the token given to them is not much, it should be given on time to compensate and appreciate their effect....*"

There was no such improvement among students who were not exposed to the treatment in the control group during the experimentation. As indicated in the table, only 1 or 1.4% of the students in the control group moved from the low performance category to the average performance category. This is clearly a demonstration of the efficacy of the mastery of different sentence patterns on the expression component of school certificate students' written English.

Type	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	DF	t-value	P	Decision
Control	70	6.16	1.332	.113	138	5.174	.000	Rejected
Experimental	70	7.69	3.250	.275				

(Critical t-value at 138 DF =1.96)

The result shown in the table revealed significant difference between students in the control group and those in the experimental group. The calculated t-value (5.174) is higher than the critical value of 1.96 at the 138 degree of freedom and at the 0.05 level of significance. The observed level of significance for the test as indicated in the table is 0.000 (P < 0.05). The null hypothesis that the exposure to mastery of different sentence patterns has no significant effect on the expression component of school certificate students' written English performance in Bauchi State could therefore be rejected. The result showed an improvement on the performance of students who were exposed to the treatment, whereas, those who were not exposed to the treatment did not obtain such improvement in their performance.

### 4.3. Test of hypotheses

The hypothesis formulated to establish statistically the efficacy of mastery of different sentence patterns on the different components of written English by the students are tested in this section. The tests were conducted as follows:

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference on the effect of the expression component of school certificate students' written English performance in Bauchi state.

The scores of the students in the two groups (Control and Experimental) on the expression component of the written English after the experiment were compared using two T-test procedure. The summary of the result is presented in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: Two sample T-test on performance in expression component of written English language by students in experimental and control groups after the experiment**

### 4.4 Overall Findings

The overall findings for the study is presented in this section. Mastery of different sentence patterns had significant effect on the expression component of students' written English. This is buttressed in the student ability to write better at the post-test level.

### 4.5 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the research. The discussion is based on aspects outlined in the overall findings

above.

It is established that the mastery of different sentence patterns has effects on the expression component of students' written English. This finding revealed that the treatment group was able to express themselves better than the control group. This made their essays to vary with the use of sophisticated range of vocabularies and at least selection of appropriate registers.

The finding is similar to the findings of Ogwuche (2005), WASSCE (2008), and Setzler (2002-2007) who looked at the ability of proper sentence construction to be able to enhance good expressions, clarity and general appropriateness of essays expression from the perspective of clarity and general appropriateness of written essays. This study, however, found out that mastery of different sentence patterns have improved students' writing of sentence variation, length and structure type.

The strength of this finding is that exposure to different sentence patterns was able to improve students' writing ability in terms of word selection and choice. This is because their written essays at the post-test were better than the ones written during the pre-test. The new ground broken is the achievement of the fact that the mastery of different sentence patterns can assist in developing various expression areas of essay writing when students are exposed to it.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This paper presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the investigation into the effects of the mastery of different sentence patterns of school certificate students' written English performance.

### **5.1 Summary**

The present study investigated the effects of mastery of different sentence patterns on the written English performance of school certificate students in two selected Secondary Schools in Bauchi State. This is as a result of the cry of the fallen standard of written English of senior certificate students that eventually leads to mass failure in the State. This study has one research question, thus:

- What is the effect of exposure to different sentence patterns on the expression component of school certificate students' written English?

The research has the following hypothesis:

- There is no significant difference in the expression of written English of school certificate students between those exposed to different sentence patterns and those that were not.

To provide a solution and determine the effectiveness of the mastery of different sentence patterns on the performance of the selected components of written essays, an experiment was conducted. Two groups each consisting of 70 students were selected. A pre-test of performance in the four components was conducted for them and the result was recorded. One group was then exposed to the mastery of different sentence patterns while the other was not. After the experiment, another test of performance on

the four components was conducted, scores were recorded and the two sets of data were then statistically analyzed.

The solutions to the research questions and test of the study's hypotheses were undertaken using experimental research design of pre-test and post-test

The four null hypotheses were tested. Two were found to be significant and therefore rejected while two were not significant and were retained.

The major findings from the analysis of the data and test of the study's hypothesis are summarized below:

- The Mastery of different sentence patterns had significant effect on the expression aspect of school certificate students' written English.

### **5.2 Conclusions**

This study concludes the investigation to the effect of mastery of different sentence patterns on ( expression ) of written English language by school certificate students of selected schools in Bauchi State as follows:

1. The Mastery of different sentence patterns had general improvement on two of the four components (expression) with minimal improvement on the aspect of organization.
2. Exposure to sentence patterns is observed to have improved students' performance in expression aspect of the written essays.

#### **5.2.1 Implications of the findings for students**

This study revealed that the mastery of different sentence patterns by school certificate students has the potential of improving their performance on the four components (content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy) of written English language test. Content could be achieved by exposing students through sentence pattern that will enable them to link the essay question and the assigned topic.

Organization – even though, its achievement in this research is not statistically significant, but can be achieved when integrated with teaching of sentence patterns by getting the students to manipulate their essay and linking the paragraphs to ensure cohesion between sentences and paragraphs.

Expressions will, therefore, be achieved by exposure to different sentence patterns that could aid their improvement in varying sentences, style of their write ups and getting the expected length of the essay.

The exposure to different sentence patterns will also aid their improvement to some extent, in reducing spelling errors, punctuations and capitalization.

#### **Implications of the findings for teachers of English language**

An adoption of the experiment for teaching school certificate students is, therefore, considered to be advantageous over the conventional approach. Teachers of English language will find the use of this strategy of teaching English very useful. An adoption of the strategy can not only improve components of written English language but improve constructive writing of test in other subjects and thus improve performance in examinations. This is because the study has provided sample lessons, showing step by step ways of teaching different sentence patterns for improving content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the outcome of this study.

1. Teachers of the English language can adopt the mastery of different sentence patterns by exposing their subjects to:

i. the step by step teaching and learning of sentence patterns for enriching writing content;

ii. manipulating the sentence patterns in achieving enriched expressions in

their writing;

iii. include the use of sentence patterns in all English essays and

iv. adopt the eight different sentence patterns provided by this study.

2. Students can also encourage themselves to read extra literary texts, identify and use varieties of sentence patterns that are found in the text.

3. Teachers themselves must engage in reading extensively by knowing what sentence patterns are and types in order to use them in teaching their subjects.

4. Writers/Authors of textbooks can include the concept of sentence patterns as a topic in their textbooks as an addition to sentence and elements so far treated in this study.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further studies**

1. This study could further be done in areas of grammar and vocabulary development. This may reduce the grammatical errors of mechanical accuracy.

2. The study could be replicated in the areas of communicative competence. This may be conducted in order to enhance the length of the student's essays as required by WAEC/NECO.

3. The senior school certificate (English language) students scoring scale in the content organization, expression and mechanical accuracy should be studied.

4. Research should be carried out on effects of sentence patterns on students' speaking performance.

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