TEACHERS' AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL TOOLS FOR ENHANCING SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated teachers' awareness and utilization of digital tools for developing writing skills in English language in public secondary schools in Delta State. Three research questions and three hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consists of 844 English language teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State. Samples of 186 teachers were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Teachers' Awareness and Utilization of Digital Tools for Developing Writing Skills in English Language (TAUDTDWSEL). It consists of two sections: A and B. Section A demographic variable. In contrast, section B consists of the items patterned after a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly.

Disagree (SD). The instrument's reliability was estimated using Cronbach Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.93 was obtained to measure internal consistency. The investigators collected Data for the study from the practising teachers. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions formulated, and t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The findings, among others, showed that many English language teachers are not knowledgeable in surfing the net to elicit digital tools to improve writing skills, and many English language teachers are unaware of grammar check websites and Apps that save students writing. Based on the findings, it was recommended that English language teachers be sent for in-service training to acquire knowledge for surfing the net for authentic digital writing materials that suit the student's needs, which is in tandem with the current trend.

Keywords: Teachers' awareness, Teachers' utilization, Digital tools and Writing skills.

Introduction

The skill of writing is taught as an essay in secondary schools. It is a complex process that involves a range of tasks. It meets various goals (Irum, Bhatti, Mohammad & Dilshad, 2019). Writing is used to clarify and express personal thoughts and feelings; it is used primarily to communicate. It is also a powerful medium for persuading others. Writing is not only one of the four basic language skills in English language learning, but it is also an essential means of exchange of ideas in social lives. It is usually considered a sign of one's English language competence and comprehensive quality.

Writing skill is one of a literate community's most important activities (Shubhada Deshpande (2014). It means that to be literate requires proficiency in writing skills. Students need to read so they can learn about the world, but they need to know how to write so they can change the world. Writing skills can be a satisfying and mind-expanding activity to those who have acquired the necessary skills through exposure to current digital writing materials but a frustrating and even aversive experience when the skills are lacking. To get students out of this plight and improve their writing power and efficiency, English language teachers need to be aware of digital

tools and their utilization, thereby taking the teaching and exploration of writing very seriously to enable the students to master the fundamentals of effective writing.

Baran and Thompson (2011) described digital tools in writing as the tools used to stimulate writing and assist students towards understanding the language they need to write effectively. These are some of the digital tools that English language teachers should be aware of and utilize for the student's writing development. Kaizena is meant to be paired with Google Docs, and its purpose is to provide feedback with a twist. With Kaizena, the English language teacher can record voice notes, which are much more encouraging since they preserve your tone of voice. Jones et al. (2012) had positive results with screen capture video feedback - a recording that captures the image on a computer screen with audio commentary - instead of simply getting marks on margins telling them what is wrong with their writing, students will get meaningful feedback. No Red Ink is another tool to promote constructive and actionable feedback instead of frustrating notes in the " here's-what-you-did-wrong style and red ink. Instead, students get adaptive practice, track their progress, independently identify their more robust and weaker sides and decide which skills they need to improve. Hemingway is an online editor that can help with all sorts of mistakes, but its primary purpose is to improve the readability of the text (Arif et al., 2020). Students can work on their style and see the errors that occur more often than others. American Word Speller is an app that can help you find a word by how it sounds. You start typing in the first letters and get a list of suggestions. Cliché Finder is another app that cross-checks the extensive list of cliches from the Associated Press Guide to News Writing.

These materials for developing writing skills represent the interface between teaching and learning, the point at which needs, objectives and syllabuses are made tangible for teachers and students. They provide most of the input and language exposure that learners receive in the classroom and are indispensable to how teachers stimulate, model and support writing (Tan & Wan, 2019; Arif et al., 2020). The choice of writing materials available to teachers is almost infinite, ranging from existing digital tools such as YouTube clips to research articles. Still, their effectiveness ultimately depends on the role they are required to play in the instructional process and the extent to which they relate to the learning needs of students.

Using digital writing materials in English language teaching is very important as it helps the teacher reach the instructional goals. Within Nigeria's context presently and Delta State, most teachers prefer textbooks. Some important roles of textbooks as a material for enhancing writing are it is efficient, provides instructional standard, offers structure and syllabus for a program, has a variety of learning resources, and has quality maintenance Yunus et al. (2020). Yunus further stated that besides its advantages, textbooks also have many weaknesses. Among others, textbooks contain inauthenticity in terms of language use, content, and students' needs, as well as reducing the teacher's skill to create their teaching materials. This does not mean to say that the use of textbooks in the English language classroom is terrible. Still, it indeed conveys that education is tending toward surfing the internet for digital writing materials which are authentic and suitable to the student's needs, which is in tandem with the current trend. Some essential requirements for surfing the internet for digital tools in designing and developing digital writing materials for English language learning are the writer's knowledge and understanding of the language and its use, the focus of the materials, and the activities accompanying them Seow (2002). The digital tools are more expansive and packed with more content and models to extract from the works of

renowned authors or teachers. These will be examples for learners to study and manipulate to perform their writing tasks.

Hyland (2014) opined that it is difficult to imagine how we might teach students to develop their writing skills without using digital materials of some kind. Defining digital materials broadly as anything that can help facilitate the learning of the English language, we can see that learning writing in the English language does not only include paper and textbooks but also electronic resources audio and visual aids. Digital materials are used to stimulate writing, assist students towards understanding the language they need to write effectively, and as ideas for organizing writing activities. English language materials may be the only opportunities students have to study target texts in many contexts.

English language teachers should help all students in schools succeed in writing to their fullest potential by utilizing digital tools (Panezai & Channa, 2016). Within the confines of their classrooms in Delta State, it is pertinent that teachers focus and reflect equally on the proper use of writing with digital materials. They should continuously make good pedagogical choices to meet individual student's needs. While this, at first, may seem like a daunting set of tasks for schools and teachers wanting to remain with the old structure of just using textbooks, the stand of this research is that English language teachers should utilize the existing digital tools for the development of the student's writing skills, seeing that the use of computers for writing has been shown to offer many benefits to English language learners of various ages both now and in the future Zheng, et al. (2015). Some work has focused on particular digital tools within word processors Gagne & Parks (2013), such as supplying prompts for the writers, making spelling mistakes visible, making the editing of work easy, as well as more advanced features, such as speech recognition, audio feedback, and word prediction, etc.

As connectivity, technical sophistication, and access to technology have continued to increase, expect that technology will be used as a natural part of teaching and learning by new cohorts of students entering English language classrooms. The assumption is that these are tech-savvy and digitally literate learners (Lavin, Korte & Davies, 2011). This applies to both tertiary and lower levels. It has been observed that students find it challenging to expand paragraphs with different ideas or from different perspectives. It seems that they cannot venture beyond the instruction of teachers and textbooks because of their limited absorption of knowledge and fixed ways of thinking. Thus, their writing becomes complicated and stressful, let alone free creation. It is on this premise that the researchers want to carry out this research.

Statement of the problem

In today's digital era, technology offers numerous opportunities to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Digital tools can be powerful resources for improving students' writing skills, particularly in the English Language subject. However, effectively utilising these tools depends on teachers' awareness, skills, and willingness to integrate them into their instructional practices. This research aims to assess the level of awareness and utilization of digital tools by teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State to enhance senior secondary school students' writing skills in English Language.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1.   What is the extent of teachers' awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in Delta State secondary school students?

2.   What is the extent of teachers' utilization of the available digital tools for developing writing skills among Delta State secondary school students?

3.   What is the perception of male and female teachers on using digital tools for developing secondary school students writing skills in English language?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formulated guided the study.

Ho_1:   There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on the awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Ho_2:   There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on utilising the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Ho_3:   There is no significant difference between the mean rating of the perception of male and female teachers on the utilization of digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate teachers' awareness and utilization of digital tools for developing writing skills in English language in public secondary schools in Delta State. The population consists of all the teachers in public secondary schools in Delta State. All English Language teachers were sampled using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Teachers' Awareness and Utilization of Digital Tools for Developing Writing Skills in English Language (TAUDTDWSEL). It consists of two sections: A and B. Section A demographic variable while section B consists of the items patterned after a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument's reliability was estimated using Cronbach Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.93 was obtained to measure internal consistency. The investigators collected Data for the study from the practising teachers. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions formulated, and t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

Presentation of Results

Research question 1

What is the extent of teachers' awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean rating of teachers' awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

S/N	Items	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	Decision
1.	Many teachers are trained on the innovative ways of teaching writing.	3.18	.546	Accepted
2.	Teachers are aware of the ease of writing with tech tips	3.00	.569	Accepted
3.	Using digital tools to enhance student's writing skills is common knowledge among English teachers.	3.12	.674	Accepted
4.	Few English language teachers know they can use digital tools to teach online writing classes.	3.10	.598	Accepted
5.	Many English language teachers are knowledgeable in surfing the net to elicit digital tools to improve writing skills.	2.32	.780	Rejected
6.	Many English language teachers know grammar check websites and Apps that save students' writing.	2.46	.786	Rejected
7.	English language teachers know the innovative ways to co-author a book online.	2.44	.689	Rejected
8.	English language teachers know ways to add tech to their writing lessons.	3.03	.559	Accepted
9.	English language teachers know they can rework existing writing lesson plans using digital tools.	3.52	.729	Accepted
10	Only a few English language teachers know how digital tools like digital eBooks can enhance writing skills.	2.84	.751	Accepted

Table 1 showed that the respondents accepted items 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10 because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was above 2.50, which was used as the benchmark and rejected items 5, 6 and 7 because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was below 2.50. It showed that many teachers are trained on the innovative ways of teaching writing, teachers are aware of the ease of writing with tech tips, not many English language teachers are aware that they can use digital tools to teach online writing classes, English language teachers are aware of ways to add tech to their writing lessons, English language teachers are aware that they can rework existing writing lesson plans using digital tools and only a few English language teachers are aware on how digital tools like digital eBooks can enhance writing skills. Items 5, 6 and 7 were rejected because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was below 2.50, which was used as the benchmark. This indicates that many English language teachers are not knowledgeable in surfing the net to elicit digital tools to improve writing skills, many English language teachers are not aware of grammar check websites and Apps that save students writing and English language teachers are not aware of the innovative ways to co-author a book online.

Research question 2

What is the extent of teachers' utilization of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Mean rating of teachers' utilization of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

S/N	Items	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	Decision
1.	I always tell my students that writing can be done digitally.	2.54	.901	Accepted
2.	I do not encourage my students to use digital tools regularly for writing.	2.47	.896	Rejected
3.	I use digital writing tools like scratch block-based programming language to improve my student's writing.	2.15	.924	Rejected
4.	I utilize digital tools to provide stimulus to writing for my students.	2.47	.859	Rejected
5.	I use digital tools to assist my students in English language writing effectively.	2.93	.721	Accepted
6.	I use models and sample text as examples for building writing skills in my students.	3.09	.652	Accepted
7.	With digital tools, learners are assisted in English lessons.	2.49	.846	Rejected
8.	I usually expose my students to digital tools for grammar in writing classes.	2.96	.656	Accepted
9.	I utilize digital tools to encourage students' critical thinking and creative writing in English.	2.84	.725	Accepted
10	Digital tools help me to co-ordinate writing lessons in secondary school English language.	2.80	.779	Accepted

Table 2 showed that the respondents accepted items 1, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was above 2.50, which was used as the benchmark and rejected items 2, 3, 4 and 7 because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was below 2.50. It showed that teachers always clarify to their students that writing can be done digitally. To assist their students in English language writing effectively, they use digital tools; teachers use models and sample text as examples for building writing skills in their students. Teachers usually expose their students to digital tools for grammar in writing classes. Teachers utilize digital tools to encourage students' critical thinking and creative writing in English language, and digital tools help them to co-ordinate writing lessons in secondary school English language. Items 2, 3, 4 and 7 were rejected because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was below 2.50, which was used as the benchmark. This implies that teachers encourage their students to use digital tools regularly for writing. They use digital writing tools like scratch block-based programming language to improve their student's writing. Teachers utilize digital tools to provide stimulus to writing for their students and with digital tools, learners are assisted in English lessons.

Research question 3

What is the perception of male and female teachers on using digital tools to develop writing skills in Delta State public secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean rating of the perception of male and female teachers on using digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

S/N	Items	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	Decision
1.	Male and female English teachers have different perceptions that digital tools help students to interact with words, images and ideas.	3.68	.738	Accepted
2.	Only female English teachers perceive digital tools as unlimited resources for developing writing skills.	3.10	.637	Accepted
3.	Both male and female English teachers perceive digital tools to enhance students' vocabularies and sentence structures.	2.49	.800	Rejected
4.	Both male and female English teachers' perspectives of the digital tool in setting writing tasks must reflect so the teaching objective is not gender-based.	2.27	.801	Rejected
5.	All English language teachers want their students to get certificates through Google Get Scratch and Robotics curriculum to improve their writing skills.	2.73	.878	Accepted
6.	To male English language teachers' digital tools for writing skills are too easy and can make students lazy.	2.53	.889	Accepted
7.	Both male and female English language teachers hold the opinion that digital tools communicate writing skills more uniquely.	2.89	.798	Accepted
8.	Male and female English language teachers believe that students' writing motivation can increase with digital tools.	2.90	.675	Accepted
9.	The view that flexible digital tools for improving students' quality of writing can reduce boredom is only upheld by female English teachers.	2.87	.774	Accepted
10.	Both female and male teachers believe that students' needs in writing should form the basis of the selection and utilization of digital writing tools.	2.83	.814	Accepted

Table 3 showed that the respondents accepted items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was above 2.50, which was used as the benchmark, and rejected items 3 and 4 because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was below 2.50. It showed that male and female English teachers have different perception that digital tools help students to interact with words, images and ideas, only the female English teachers are of the perception that digital tools present unlimited resources to development of writing skills, all English language teachers' wants their students to certificate through Google, get scratch and Robotics curriculum to improve their writing skills, the opinion that digital tools communicate writing skills in a more unique way is held by both male and female English language teachers, the opinion that digital tools communicate writing skills in a more unique way is held by both male and female English language teachers, male and female English language teachers believe that students' motivation in writing can become higher with digital tools, the view that flexible digital tools for improving students' quality of writing can reduce boredom is only upheld by female English teachers, and both female and male teachers believe that students' needs in writing should form the basis of selection and utilization of digital writing tools. Items 3 and 4 were rejected because the mean ($\overline{X}$) was below 2.50, which was used as the benchmark. This

implies that both male and female English teachers do not perceive that digital tools will enhance students' vocabularies and sentence structures, and both female and male teachers do not believe that students' needs in writing should form the basis of the selection and utilization of digital writing tools.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on the awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Mean, standard deviation and t-test of male and female teachers on the awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State

Variables	N	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	82	27.89	2.558				
				184	-4.134	.000	Rejected
Female	104	29.89	4.017				

Table 4 shows that males had a mean value of 27.89 and a standard deviation of 2.558, while females had a mean value of 29.89 and a standard deviation of 4.017. It also showed a t-value of -4.134 and a p-value of .000. Testing at an alpha level of .05. The p-value is less than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies a significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on the awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on utilising the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 5: Mean, standard deviation and t-test of male and female teachers on utilising the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Variables	N	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	82	25.61	4.192				
				184	-2.634	.009	Rejected
Female	104	27.63	6.210				

Table 5 shows that males had a mean value of 25.61 and a standard deviation of 4.192, while females had a mean value of 27.63 and a standard deviation of 6.210. It also showed a t-value of -2.634 and a p-value of .009. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p-value is less than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on utilising the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers' perceptions of using digital tools to develop writing skills in Delta State public secondary schools.

Table 6: Mean, standard deviation and t-test of male and female teachers' perceptions of using digital tools to develop writing skills in Delta State public secondary schools.

Variables	N	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	82	27.67	4.184				
				184	-1.566	.119	Accepted
Female	104	28.80	5.628				

Table 6 shows that males had a mean value of 27.67 and a standard deviation of 4.184, while female had a mean value of 28.80 and a standard deviation of 5.628. It also showed a t-value of -1.566 and a p-value of .119. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p-value is greater than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means there is no significant difference between the mean rating of the perception of male and female teachers on using digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Discussion of Results

Findings on teachers' awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State showed that many teachers are trained on the innovative ways of teaching writing, teachers are aware of the easy of writing with technology tips, not many English language teachers are aware that they can use digital tools to teach online writing classes, English language teachers are aware of ways to add technology to their writing lessons English language teachers are aware that they can rework existing writing lesson plans using digital tools and only a few English language teachers are aware on how digital tools like digital eBooks can enhance writing skills. It further revealed that many English language teachers are not knowledgeable in surfing the net to elicit digital tools to improve writing skills, many English language teachers are not aware of grammar check websites and Apps that save students writing and English language teachers are not aware of the innovative ways to co-author a book online. Hypothesis one tested showed a significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on the awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State. This means that some male and female teachers have different views concerning the awareness level of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State. This is related to a study by Vickneasvarie Romamuthic and Azlina Abdul Aziz (2014).

The findings on teachers' utilization of the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State revealed that teachers always make it clear to their students that writing can be done digitally. They use digital tools to assist their students in English language writing effectively. Teachers use models and sample texts to build their students' writing skills. Teachers usually expose their students to digital tools for grammar in writing classes. Teachers utilize digital tools to encourage students' critical thinking and creative writing in English language, and digital tools help them to co-ordinate writing lessons in secondary school English language. The findings further showed that teachers encourage their students to use digital tools

regularly for writing. They use digital writing tools like scratch block-based programming language to improve their student's writing, teachers utilize digital tools to stimulate their students' writing, and with digital tools, learners are assisted in English lessons. Hypothesis two tested showed a significant difference between the mean rating of male and female teachers on utilising the available digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State. This means that male and female teachers have different views concerning utilising the available digital tools for developing writing skills. This corroborates a study by (Liong & Yunus, 2019; Tan & Wan, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings on the perception of male and female teachers on the utilization of digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State showed that male and female English teachers have different perception that digital tools help students to interact with words, images and ideas, only the female English teachers are of the perception that digital tools present unlimited resources to development of writing skills, all English language teachers' wants their students to certificate through Google, get scratch and Robotics curriculum to improve their writing skills, all English language teachers' wants their students to certificate through Google, get scratch and Robotics curriculum to improve their writing skills, the opinion that digital tools communicate writing skills in a more unique way is held by both male and female English language teachers, the opinion that digital tools communicate writing skills in a more unique way is held by both male and female English language teachers, male and female English language teachers believe that students' motivation in writing can become higher with digital tools, the view that flexible digital tools for improving students' quality of writing can reduce boredom is only upheld by female English teachers, and both female and male teachers believe that students' needs in writing should form the basis of selection and utilization of digital writing tools. More so, the findings showed that both male and female English teachers do not believe that digital tools will enhance students' vocabs and sentence structures, and both female and male teachers do not believe that students' needs in writing should form the basis of selection and utilization of digital writing tools. Hypothesis three showed no significant difference between the mean rating of the perception of male and female teachers on the utilization of digital tools for developing writing skills in public secondary schools in Delta State. This is related to a study by Selvaraj and Aziz (2019).

Conclusion

The significant findings from the interpretation of the results are as follows: Many English language teachers are not knowledgeable in surfing the net to elicit digital tools to improve writing skills. Many English language teachers are unaware of grammar check websites and Apps that save students writing. English language teachers are unaware of innovative ways to co-author a book online. Both male and female English teachers are not of the perception that digital tools will enhance student's vocabs and sentence structures. Both female and male teachers do not believe that students' needs in writing should form the basis of the selection and utilization of digital writing tools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

- Many secondary schools' English language teachers need to avail themselves of the numerous opportunities for digital knowledge acquisition paramount to discharge their duties as teachers.

- Digital education, specifically for teaching and learning, should be a core part of teacher's preparation to make relevant in present and future education in Nigeria.

- Students at different levels should be encouraged to always access the internet for valuable materials that can aid their academic achievements. English language teachers should assist their secondary school students in digital information securing and utilization for personal studies.

- English language teachers should be sent for in-service training to acquire knowledge for surfing the net for authentic digital writing materials that suit the student's needs, which is in tandem with current trends.

- Many English language teachers should be exposed to digital tools that they can use to teach online writing classes.

- English language teachers need to be aware of these digital tools and their utilization, thereby taking the teaching and study of writing very seriously to enable the students to master the fundamentals of effective writing.

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