

## Teachers' View on Bunia Secondary School 3<sup>rd</sup> Form Pupils' Poor Performance in English Composition Writing

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to get teachers of English's view on 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' poor performance on composition writing. The research adopted descriptive and exploratory designs. For collection of data, questionnaire was used as technique. It was addressed to 30 secondary school teachers of English teaching in secondary schools located in Mbunya township of Bunia. Sampling was done randomly among a population of 45 secondary school teachers. Data were coded and analyzed using the Descriptive Statistics such as frequencies and percentages with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Then, they were presented using frequency tables. Findings showed that problems encountered by pupils in composition lesson are as follows limited vocabulary, word misspelling, lesson teaching time management, incorrect structuring of sentences and conjugation of English verbs including lack of dictionary.

**KEYWORDS:** english composition, writing, teaching, performance, learning, skill.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

English has become the most spoken and written language all over the world; developing writing is essential to learners to improve communication skills and understanding of how English language works. In the DRC, the lesson of composition writing is usually regarded as a reinforcement activity that is supposed to be taught after vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension lessons. The reasons are that it gives pupils practice and opportunity to develop their writing skill, aids pupils to organize their ideas in written form and reinforces word spelling awareness. The teaching of writing skill through its program states that composition is one of the most important classroom reinforcement activities enabling pupils to learn the English language and communicate more clearly. For writer, the reason is that Composition writing provides pupils with practice to develop clear thinking and physical evidence of their achievement. However, it has been noticed that pupils poorly perform in composition writing practices; they lack the ability to achieve writing competence. i.e the capacity to effectively use writing skill knowledge and produce a well written text when demanded is limited. Agrees that Writing has become the most troublesome and challenging area of language learners; its learning requires adequate language knowledge including the ability to express ideas and thoughts in words. This study investigates teachers view on 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' poor performance in composition writing.

This topic has also been discussed by previous researchers. Reference says that composition writing is a necessary tool for learners to carry out learning activities because it improves their writing skills and gives opportunity to communicate their thoughts and ideas more effectively and organise their arguments in a coherent way. This way, pupils practice grammar rules, punctuations, as well as other aspects of the target language; composition writing pushes them to think beyond what they learn in the classroom, develop their research skills and improve on argumentation, they have to develop their knowledge of other subjects and value their education. This scholar's views on the importance of composition writing is still relevant as the benefit of composition lesson are many. As far as factors contributing to poor performance in English composition writing are concerned, researcher revealed that poor attitude, contact time, composition writing skills, poor teaching methods and techniques and teachers lacking skills in the areas are limits to its teaching. This researcher showed that the performance of pupils is usually low in composition writing because teachers lack skills in various important areas of the teaching of the lesson.

They include composition skills, lack of practice, lack of time, lack of motivation, feedback from the teacher and the nature of writing process. Moreover, according to the writer factors affecting pupils' composition learning are over crowdedness in schools, use of pidgin in schools, teaching methods, marking of assignments and evaluation, engagements of teachers, lack of use of library, little or no practice of essay writing and mental retardation.

Therefore, the article mainly concentrates on the following question what are teachers' views on 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' poor performance in composition writing lesson? The secondary questions guiding the research are: Why are pupils performing poorly in composition lesson? How does it impact the learning of the English language? The study aims essentially at finding out teachers' view on the factors influencing the teaching of composition lesson in Bunia secondary schools. The hypotheses to collect throughout the present work are teachers' opinions on poor achievement of pupils in composition writing. So, writing is still an important skill in ELT as it develops pupil's creative and critical thinking skills for effective communication in the target language; but there are many factors contributing to 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' poor performance in English composition lessons taught in Bunia secondary schools. Composition practice initiation should be well-organized since it improves writing skills and increases confidence; it should be well-planned and taught through effective strategies.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Descriptive and exploratory survey constituted the main frameworks for conducting this study. The first was adopted for the description of the characteristics of particular individuals and groups. The exploratory survey dimension was applied to explore and understand the phenomenon, generating insights and source ideas coming from informants that are secondary school teachers of English. Their views were considered critical and contributed a lot in the elaboration of the present scientific work.

### **2.2 POPULATION**

The study targeted teachers of English teaching in 3<sup>rd</sup> forms of Bunia secondary schools located in Mbunya Township as population. Indeed, it sought to assess their views on pupils' poor performance in composition writing practices. Indeed, the lesson is taught as a reinforcement activity to enhance pupils writing skill and provide communication. the total number of teachers of English found in Mbunya township is 47.

### **2.3 SAMPLE SIZE**

In this study, the sample comprised 30 teachers out of 47 found in the township; which was representative. Simple random sampling was used for selection. Following Stocker's formula of sampling, 64% of 47 were taken into consideration. After establishing sampling strategy, the method involved selecting participants at random to reach the required number of subjects for the sample. In fact, one teacher was taken from each school, and the selection requirements were respected. The reason was that every member had an equal chance to be selected. From the entire population

### **2.4 INSTRUMENTS**

Data collection was done using an anonymous questionnaire as the main technique. The instrument contained open and closed ended questions. For close- ended ones, the respondents had to choose from a predetermined set of answers typically one word answers such as yes/no, or a set of multiple choice questions. Whereas for open ended questions, they had freedom to share their thoughts and opinions in-depth by replying in their own words. It was the case of self- administered questions without the presence of the researcher. This strategy was used so that the respondents could complete the questionnaire in their private time and to avoid the potential effect of the researcher's presence. The questionnaire concentrated on 'Teachers' views on pupils' poor performance in composition writing. The aim was to know how pupils of Bunia secondary schools behave during composition lesson. The results obtained from the above instrument, were used to determine the challenges affecting the learning of English composition skill in Bunia secondary schools. Data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages) to show the general tendencies in the data. It consisted of identifying each variable before being presented through tables. Then, data were coded considering the arrangement in the questionnaires under thematic categories before being converted to frequencies and percentages.

### 3 RESULTS

As far as data presentation is concerned, frequency tables below were used to show each value's occurrence. The analysis is based on data collected from teachers of English on 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' poor performance in English composition writing taught in Bunia secondary schools.

**Table 1. Educational Level**

Level	F	%
Certificated	1	3.3
Undergraduate	19	63.3
Graduate	10	33.3
Other possibilities	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

**Comments:** it results from the chart above that 19 teachers (63.3%) are undergraduate, 1 teacher (3.3%) is certificated in English and 10 (33.3%) others are graduate in English.

**Table 2. Teachers' experience in ELT**

How long have you been teaching English?	F	%
One year	3	30
Two years	11	36.6
Six years	8	26.6
Nine years	2	6.6
More	6	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

As far as table 2 is concerned, one can notice that only 6 (20%) of the questioned teachers have more than nine year experience in ELT in secondary schools, Whereas 3 (30%), have just accomplished a year, 11 (36,6%) of them have reached two years, and 8 (26.6%) others have taught for six years.

**Table 3. The extent to which composition is taught**

How often do you teach composition lesson in 3 <sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy?	f	%
Rarely	13	43,3
Frequently	4	13.3
Sometimes	10	33.3
Occasionally	2	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

The table above shows that 13 teachers of English, covering 43.3% rarely teach composition lesson and 10 of them (33.3 %) sometimes organise its teaching. However, only 4 (13.3 %) teach it frequently.

**Table 4. The fact that pupils really write in composition**

Do your pupils actually write during composition lesson?	F	%
Yes	7	23.3
No	23	76.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

The chart above shows that out of 30 teachers who were questioned, 7 (23.3%) said that their pupils actually write during composition lesson. But 23 (76.6%) other teachers declared that most of them are unable to write during composition lesson.

**Table 5. Strategy used for the teaching of composition**

Strategy for composition	F	%
Through sentence order	5	16.6
by filling the blanks	16	53.3
By following lesson steps	7	23.3
By using description	2	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

Throughout chart 5, it has been revealed that 7 (23.3%) teachers follow the different steps of the lesson to teach composition writing. whereas 5 (16.6%) of them mainly use sentence order strategy. But 16 teachers (53%) apply fill in the blanks.

**Table 6. The extent to which composition influences pupils' writing skill**

How does composition writing lesson influence your pupils' writing skill?	F	%
Positively	11	36.6
Negatively	19	63.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

According to the chart above 11 (36.6%) teachers stated that composition lesson in 3<sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy influences their pupils writing skill in a positive way because it let them practice the language use. But 19 (63.3%) others said that composition lesson negatively influences their pupils learning.

**Table 7. Problems encountered by pupils in composition lesson**

What problem do 3 <sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy pupils face in writing assessments?	F	%
Limited vocabulary	11	33.3
Word misspelling	7	23.3
Lesson time mismanagement	5	13.3
incorrect structuring of sentences	2	6.6
conjugation of English verbs	4	13.3
Lack of dictionary	1	3.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

Concerning challenges faced by pupils, 11 (33.3%) teachers stated that the problem that 3<sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy pupils face during composition lesson is lack of words to generate their ideas, 7 (23.3%) of them said that their pupils encounter problem when spelling English words; for 5 (16.6%) others time management negatively affects pupils' performance during composition writing, still for 2 (6.6%) others pupils poorly write as they difficultly structure well English sentences, whereas 4 (13.3%) raised conjugation of verbs as one of problems. And a teacher evoked lack of English dictionary in the school.

Table 8. Impact of poor performance on the development of writing skill

What is the effect of poor performance of composition lesson on 3 <sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy pupils?	F	%
no improvement in writing skill	3	9
limited vocabulary	10	33.3
No mastering of English grammar	8	26.6
misspelling of English words	9	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

so far as the chart above is concerned, on the 30 teachers questioned on the effects of poor performance of 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils, 3 teachers (9%) stated pupils are likely not to improve their writing skill in English. 10 teachers (33.3%) said that pupils may not enrich their vocabulary to back up their speech and write down their ideas. 8 teachers (26.6%) said that pupils may not be able to structure well English sentences and 9 of them (30%) said, they cannot master English word spelling.

Table 9. Remedies to pupils' poor performance in composition writing

What is the remedy that you provide to solve the problem?	F	%
Teaching composition writing correctly and regularly	17	56.6
Teaching vocabulary words and their spelling	4	13,3
Giving enough time for the practice	3	10
Pupils should use dictionary	3	10
assign homework on composition	1	3.3
Practice on verb tenses	2	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

As far as remedies to pupils' poor performance are concerned, 17 (56.6%) teachers invited teachers of English to teach composition lesson regularly and make it attractive to pupils, 4 (13,3%) of them provided the teaching of vocabulary words and spelling, 3 (10%) others stated that teachers should be giving enough time for composition writing practice, still 3 (10%) others suggested the use of dictionary to check the meaning of words and their spelling, whereas for a teacher (3.3%) teachers should be giving pupils homework for composition practice and 2 other said teachers should let pupils practice language structure and verb tenses.

#### 4 DISCUSSION

This study gathers teachers' view on 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' poor performance in English composition writing; it has been noticed that there are several reasons why 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils poorly perform in composition lesson. The first is that pupils are not interested in it as composition writing is not taught regularly. In many cases, pupils neglect the exercise; as they cannot be centered and even write one paragraph; they like composition exercises such as filling gaps and ordering sentence words. For [9] negative attitudes to writing are manifested in a delaying and competing written assignments. Furthermore, in researcher [10] opinion, worry and fear are other negative factors impacting pupil's performance in composition writing because instead of focusing on ideas and quickly writing down their thoughts, they are held up and diverted by worries about how to formulate them and find English letters to start writing. Similarly, [11] adds that the poor performance impact negatively on pupils' learning of English language; with low esteem and lack of self- confidence, pupils are demotivated.

According to the respondents, pupils have ideas but miss words to generate them as [12] explains that limited vocabulary hinders expressing ideas when dealing with a composition writing as it restricts the range of words and phrases that could be used to convey the thoughts or arguments. This way they may struggle to express their ideas accurately and precisely and lead to repetitive and monotonous writing. This is due to the fact that pupils are not well prepared for the task. Teachers also revealed when lesson time is not well managed; pupils are unable to finish composition writing exercises in time because there is time constraint. They do not master English word spelling.

In addition, grammar is another aspect of language that pupils do not master well. They face problem of verb tenses to help them construct correct sentences. Similarly, the researcher [13] states that when referring to grammar, student make mistakes in verb-subjects agreement, pronouns, tenses, articles, prepositions and basic sentence structures. [15] argues composition refers to the process of collecting thoughts, arranging them in accordance with recognised standards form. This is why he suggests that first students have a fair knowledge of English language. i.e knowledge of sufficient English vocabulary, structure and spellings, then have ideas and good level of mental development to arrange them.

It was also found that teachers teaching at the level of 3<sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy section do not use appropriate methods for composition lesson; they ignore that the way it is taught has a significant effect on student' s attitudes towards the skill. **As result**, teachers should know that when pupils have positive attitude towards a language, they gain positive orientations and increase achievements or proficiency.

Referring to Mohammed (2012) pupils' poor performance in composition lesson occurs because of poor teaching of English tenses and grammar, there is lack of inventive ideas from teachers, their unproductive teaching methods, inadequate vocabulary, "and weak sentence structure, inexperienced teachers, inappropriate use of vocabulary and rhetorical convention. This writer's arguments are relevant to this finding that 3<sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy pupils' have very low capacity in sentence construction.

As solutions, writer [18] suggested that teachers should relentlessly control what pupils write first by scribbling relevant words to fill appropriate spaces given them in composition writing process. And the same writer adds that there should be qualified trained teachers for this level i.e. a teacher employed to teach English language in general must be the ones who are well endowed in with teaching material and effective methodology. Furthermore, reference [17] suggested that there should be the adoption of an instructional framework for writing based on purposeful eclecticism since writing is a basic skill to teach in language study. And it is believed to be the hardest one to teach and learn. The reason is that writing composition requires an amount of effort and practice on the part of learners in order to reach the standard acceptable level.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

This article is essentially concerned with issues related to Bunia secondary school pupils' performance in composition writing. It has assessed the reasons why pupils performed poorly in English composition writing and their effects on the target language learning. The study is structured as follows; it starts with an introduction followed by the research methodology. Then comes the presentation of the results of the research. The findings are discussed in the last part. A conclusion put an end to the elaboration of the article. The primary aim of this work was to examine the reasons why 3<sup>rd</sup> form pedagogy pupils poorly perform in composition writing. It also aimed at investigating on its impacts on pupils' learning of English language.

To reach it, the study was conducted using descriptive design. For data collection, the main concern was survey method applied using a questionnaire that was submitted to teachers of English teaching in 3<sup>rd</sup> form of secondary schools. Besides, documentary technique was also used to find relevant material related to the topic. Data were coded and analyzed using the descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, then data were presented using frequency tables. The study has revealed that 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils poorly perform because they miss words to use in order to write down their ideas and thoughts, they misspell them. Pupils are not given enough time for writing composition. Pupils are unable to structure English sentences correctly and conjugate verbs. There is lack of books such as dictionary, textbook and so forth. As effects of poor performance on the learning of English language, it has been noticed that there is no improvement in writing skill as well as in oral skill because pupils are not interested in writing practice, they can't master the different components of the language. Regarding the above results I suggest the followings:

- Respect of the different recommendations of the national program regarding the teaching of composition writing in secondary school levels;
- Plan composition writing lesson regularly, use appropriate methods to motivate pupils participate actively;
- Equip secondary schools with muni libraries to encourage pupils in self-discovery and spelling of English language words.

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