

The quantity of marking, and children's response to it, does not improve the quantity of correctly used features used in genre-specific, independent writing

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Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research was to ascertain whether quantity of marking, and children's response to it, has an impact on how effectively children can write within a specific genre.

Children are increasingly being asked to write for a specific purpose or audience. In order to effectively do this, the children should ensure that the correct features of specific genres are included, along with age-appropriate grammatical structures. It is the genre-specific features and grammatical structures which will be measured.

The research design

A within-subject design was used with a pre-and post-test. The independent variable 'teacher feedback through marking' was operationally defined by creating three counterbalanced conditions:

IV Level I – Control condition: Normal school policy

IV Level II – Active control: Singular positive and developmental feedback

IV Level III – Experimental condition: Singular positive and developmental feedback with an actionable activity/target for children to respond to.

Methods

Participants, sample size and randomisation

Two classes of 8- and 9-year-old children took part in the study. This gave a sample size of 53 participants. Stratified randomization was used against the current level of attainment in writing. In order to ensure minimal risk of order effects, counterbalancing was used to ensure that no one condition benefited more from the order in which they were presented.

Procedures

At the beginning of a unit of work in writing, children undertook a 'cold-write'. This was an opportunity to write a text on the genre, e.g. instructional texts, with no initial teacher direction. This was the pre-test.

Over the course of the teaching and learning for this genre, teachers will mark children's work, with reference to the rubric, using one of the following conditions:

- **Control:** all work highlighted and stated in pink for accurate application of features and green for areas of development. This was in line with the school policy.
- **Active control:** one accurately used feature was clearly highlighted and stated in pink and one area for development highlighted and stated in green.
- **Experimental condition:** one accurately used feature was clearly highlighted and stated in pink and one area for development highlighted and stated in green. The children were then required to complete a task related to the area for development.

This level of marking continued until the writing genre unit was completed. The children then completed a 'hot-write'. This was an opportunity to correctly write their own text against the rubric, using the previous teaching, learning and feedback to assist. This was the post-test.

In both the pre- and post-test, the children had the number of correctly used features recorded against their name. The difference in correctly used features between the pre – and post-test provided interval data as to the improvement in that child's writing quality.

Materials (and apparatus)

The rubrics/ success criteria differed between the different genres to ensure that genre-specific features were included.

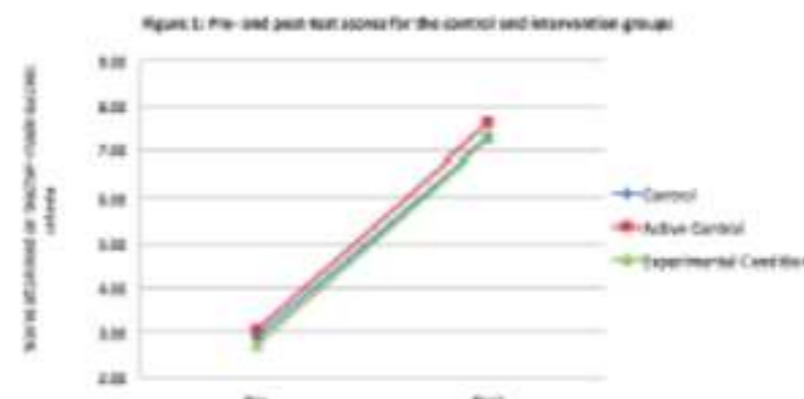
Pre-test: Cold write. Children were allowed the opportunity to write a genre-specific text with no immediate teacher-led input.

Post-test: Hot write. Children were allowed the opportunity to write a genre-specific text following teacher-led input and marking.

Measures: How many features were accurately used in the cold-write and then again in the hot-write.

Results

Gains scores, calculated from Pre- and Post-test scores (Figure 1), were used in the analysis below.



A repeated measures ANOVA (one-tailed) indicated a non-significant result across all three variables ($p = 0.89$); and when compared to each other, the different marking strategies were also non-significant. In addition, the effect sizes between and across the marking styles were negligible (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

	Effect Size (dz)	Probability (p)
Control vs. Active Control	0.07	0.316
Control vs. Experimental Condition	0.05	0.376
Active Control vs. Experimental Condition	-0.02	0.441

Limitations

As this was the preliminary study, it would need replicating over a longer period of time and with different age children in alternative settings. This study was carried out with one cohort within the same school year and setting. The results should be interpreted with caution, as they may have been effected by family-wise error.

Conclusions and recommendations for future research

The quantity of marking, and children's response to it, does not improve the quantity of correctly used features used in genre-specific, independent writing. The results show that there is no difference between the correlation of attainment and marking style. In practice, this allows teachers to complete less invasive marking, therefore reducing workload, without damaging pupil attainment. A larger study would be needed to verify these results.