

PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING EMERGENT WRITING SKILLS AMONG PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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Abstract

Emergent writing is a foundational aspect of early literacy that begins with children's initial attempts at symbolic representation and progresses through developmental stages toward conventional writing. This examined pedagogical strategies for enhancing emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 100 pre-primary school teachers selected from ten schools. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire (TPEQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.81. Findings revealed that while teachers actively supported activities such as scribbling, phonetic spelling, and the use of instructional materials, there were notable gaps in creating consistent writing opportunities, providing guided interaction, and fostering positive teaching attitudes. Pedagogical practices such as demonstration, use of diverse materials, and play-based approaches significantly contributed to pupils' writing development. However, limited emphasis on interactive and child-centered strategies constrained optimal outcomes. The study concludes that effective teacher roles, attitudes, and pedagogical methods are critical in promoting emergent writing skills. It recommends continuous teacher training, improved classroom environments, integration of play-based learning, and provision of adequate instructional materials to enhance early writing development.

Keywords: Emergent Writing, Early Childhood Education, Pedagogical Strategies,

Introduction

Early childhood education assumes a significant role in the development of children's cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional skills, with literacy development being one of the most important outcomes of early childhood education. In this respect, emergent writing can be viewed as one of the most important skills in early literacy development, with early writing skills starting before children attend school and continuing through children's early experiences with symbols, language, and print. Emergent writing encompasses children's first attempts at written communication, such as scribbling, drawing, and the use of letter-like marks, all of which are manifestations of children's growing knowledge of written language systems (Papadopoulos 2026). Emergent writing is a critical component of early literacy development, serving as the foundational, non-conventional precursor to writing proficiency that begins as early as age two. It is a developmental process rather than a random act whereby children move through stages, including scribbling, drawing, letter-like forms, and invented spelling, to understand that writing is a tool for communication and symbolic thought. Shanahan posited that emergent writing is young children's first attempts at the writing process.

Children as young as 2 years old begin to imitate the act of writing by creating drawings and symbolic markings that represent their thoughts and ideas.

Emergent writing points to the early stages of writing development that involve the construction of meaning through the use of graphics, symbols, and language, which gradually progress from drawing and writing marks to the use of letter-like symbols, inventive spelling, and more conventional writing (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014; Rowe et al., 2022; Schickedanz & Collins, 2013). Recent studies on emergent writing development underscore the complex nature of this skill. Research that investigates writing among preschool and primary school children points to the fact that the early transcription skills of children, such as knowledge of letters, writing, and letter formation, can predict their spelling and reading abilities, emphasizing the role of writing in literacy acquisition rather than its role as a mere outcome of literacy acquisition (Papadopoulos 2026). Longitudinal work also suggests that early writing development is shaped by multiple interacting factors including language and cognitive skills, self-regulation, and learning opportunities particularly as children move from informal mark-making toward more conventional representations (Puranik et al., 2014; Puranik & Al Otaiba, 2012). This perspective is especially relevant in linguistically diverse contexts, where children's early literacy trajectories may reflect both strengths and constraints linked to home language experiences and exposure to the majority language in preschool settings (Jiménez et al., 2024). In line within this evolving evidence base, the present study investigates the Pedagogical Strategies for Enhancing Emergent Writing Skills among Pre-Primary School Pupils

Writing in early childhood is an essential aspect of literacy development, as it lays the groundwork for the development of subsequent reading abilities in children. Writing in early childhood not only helps in the development of the understanding of print concepts in children but also helps in the development of the processes that they will be exposed to as readers in the future (Dennis, 2013). Writing in the early childhood stage needs to focus both on the basic writing mechanics, such as the spacing of words, and the purpose of writing as an essential tool for communication and expression in children. Writing, in this aspect, is not just an essential skill but also an effective tool for the construction and communication of meaning in children. Exposure to rich language, especially through the reading aloud of books, also plays an important role in the development of writing in children. As Votteler (2013) states, reading aloud to children stimulates their imagination, helps broaden their understanding of the world, and also helps in the development of their language and listening skills, all of which are essential in the development of writing in children.

Learning to achieve writing competency in pre-primary is an important component of literacy education foundational for a pupil to be able to document information from primary education across to higher educational levels (Datchuk, 2016). In a guide to effective instruction in writing from pre-primary education to primary education, the Smiths (2015) identifies five key instructional approaches to writing as: modelled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing. Writing competency is learned through a variety of strategies.

Researches have shown the different strategies that can be used to teach preschool children writing, such as Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) which has been used in the United States of America (USA) (Graham & Harris, 2005). Also, to help pupils achieve writing competency is the provision of areas equipped with materials and with spaces for children to experiment with writing by scribbling (Burke, 2010). Smiths (2015) notes that writing areas should contain engaging materials such as magnetic letters and boards, chalkboards, alphabetic and picture books, a variety of type of papers (like scratch pads, envelopes, and construction paper), and a variety of writing materials in order to be most successful in encouraging pupils to write.

Teachers play a critical, multifaceted role in developing writing skills by acting as instructors, motivators, and facilitators who guide students through the entire writing process. They scaffold learning by modeling techniques, encouraging brainstorming, drafting, revising, and providing constructive feedback. Effective teachers foster confidence and authentic communication, tailoring instruction to diverse needs.

Pedagogical approaches in early childhood education play a significant role in promoting emergent writing development. These approaches include play-based learning, guided writing, modeling, scaffolding, and interactive storytelling. All these approaches create a meaningful context for children to explore written language. The recent literature on early childhood education highlights a growing emphasis on a child-centered and participatory approach, where children are actively engaged in knowledge construction through their interaction with teachers and learning materials. For instance, play-based learning has been found to have a significant effect on early writing development among children with learning difficulties and the acquisition of early literacy skills by learners depend on the degree to which teachers utilising play-based learning methods in classroom (Betty cherulyot 2024)

Moreover, teaching approaches with a strong foundation in sociocultural theory and constructivist theory emphasize the role of teacher-child interaction in literacy learning. The social construction of writing learning is through guided participation, feedback, and collaborative learning. The recent literature emphasizes the significant role of teacher-child interaction, including modeling writing, giving feedback, and encouraging children's expression, in promoting children's motivation and competence in writing. The study of Nel Jean Deocares et.al (2025) reveal a strong positive correlation between teacher-child interactions and language development, highlighting the significant influence of these interactions on children's linguistic growth. In addition, emergent curriculum approaches emphasizing children's agency have been found effective in improving early literacy learning globally for instance the study of Charmaine Bonello et.al (2025) reveal that emergent curriculum fosters democratic, child-centred, and participatory learning environments by validating children's interests, strengthening educator – child partnerships, and embedding inquiry and reflection into daily practice. Moreover, the evidence demonstrates that pedagogical documentation and collaborative leadership are critical drivers of professional growth and curriculum innovation.

However, research indicates that emergent writing skills continue to receive minimal emphasis in the classrooms of pre-primary schools, especially in developing countries. This implies that children are not exposed to the right conditions to develop their writing skills appropriately. In addition, there is an emerging need to conduct research aimed at establishing effective pedagogical strategies that can improve the emergent writing skills of children, especially in diverse educational settings.

The study, therefore, sought to investigate the pedagogical strategies for improving the emergent writing skills of pre-primary school pupils. This study aimed to contribute to the body of research and aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of evidence-based practice in the education sector.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine pedagogical strategies for enhancing emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils.

Specific objectives are:

1. To determine teachers' instructional roles that influence emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils
2. To examine teachers' attitudes that affect emergent writing development among pre-primary school pupils
3. To investigate teachers' pedagogical methods that enhance emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

4. To what extent do teachers' instructional roles influence emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils?
5. To what extent do teachers' attitudes affect emergent writing development among pre-primary school pupils?
6. To what extent do teachers' pedagogical methods enhance emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population for the study consisted of all pre-primary school teachers in Ijero-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Sample of one hundred (100) teachers from ten (10) pre-primary schools were reached. Ten (10) pre-primary teachers were chosen from each school using random sampling technique. A questionnaire tagged Teachers Pedagogical for Emergent Writing (TPEQ) Questionnaire was used to collect all the relevant data for this study. It was divided into two sections. Section A was designed to collect demographic information. B of the questionnaire contained fifteen (15) items on a four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in counselling, early childhood education and measurement. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final draft. A pilot

study was conducted with 20 teachers from another institution, and the reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, which indicated high internal consistency. Data was analysed using percentage and frequency count. The findings of this study revealed that pedagogical strategies play a significant role in enhancing emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils.

Results

Table1: Simple Percentage of how teachers' instructional roles influence emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1	I create writing opportunities during daily activities in preschools.	18 (18%)	13 (13%)	30 (30%)	39 (39%)
2	I support drawing, letter-like shapes and letters as children develop writing skills.	61 (61%)	36 (36%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
3	I discuss daily with children on writing process.	16 (16%)	25 (25%)	31 (31%)	15 (15%)
4	I gradually assist the children to write independently.	18 (18%)	13 (13%)	30 (30%)	39 (39%)
5.	I do permit children to spell phonetically and support them to write the sounds they utter.	51 (51%)	46 (46%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)

Table 1 revealed that 18% of the respondents strongly agreed that they created writing opportunities during daily activities in preschools, 13% of them agreed, 30% disagreed and 39% strongly disagreed. Moreover, in item 2, 61% of the respondents strongly agreed that they supported drawing, letter-like shapes and letters as children develop writing skills, 36% of them agreed, 3% disagreed and none of them strongly disagreed.

It is obvious from item 3, that 16% of the respondents strongly agreed that they discussed daily with children on writing process, 25% of them agreed, 31% disagreed and 15% of them strongly disagreed. In the same vein, in item 4, 18% of the respondents strongly agreed that they gradually assisted the children to write independently, 13% of them agreed, 30% disagreed and 39% of them strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 51% of the respondents strongly agreed that they did permit children to spell phonetically and support them to write the sounds they utter, 46% of them agreed, 2% disagreed and 1% of them strongly disagreed.

Table 2: Simple Percentage of teachers' attitudes affect emergent writing development among pre-primary school pupils

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I enjoy teaching my pupils how to write numbers and alphabets.	16 (16%)	25 (25%)	31 (31%)	15 (15%)
2.	I am more patient with preschool	12 (12%)	31 (31%)	19 (19%)	38 (38%)

	children who do not know how to write very well.				
3.	I give enough time to the preschool children to practice how to write while teaching writing.	26 (26%)	31 (31%)	27 (27%)	16 (16%)
4.	I make writing interesting to the pre-primary school children by singing songs related to writing while teaching them how to write.	23 (23%)	34 (34%)	34 (34%)	9 (9%)
5.	It is good to allow the pre-primary school children to play along as they learn to write.	49 (49%)	39 (19%)	12 (32%)	0 (0%)

Data presented on Table 2, showed that 16% of the respondents were of the opinion that they enjoyed teaching their pupils how to write numbers and alphabets, 25% of them agreed, 31% disagreed and 15% of them strongly disagreed. The table also showed that 12% of the respondents strongly agreed that they were more patient with preschool children who did not know how to write very well, 31% of them agreed, 19% disagreed and 38% of them strongly disagreed. In item 3, 26% of the respondents strongly agreed that they gave enough time to the preschool children to practice how to write while teaching writing, 31% of them agreed, 27% disagreed and 16% of them strongly disagreed.

In item 4, 23% of the respondents strongly agreed that they made writing interesting to the pre-primary school children by singing songs related to writing while teaching them how to write, 34% of them agreed, 34% disagreed and 9% of them strongly disagreed. In item 5, 49% of the respondents strongly agreed that It is good to allow the pre-primary school children to play along as they learn to write, 39% of them agreed, 12% disagreed and none of them strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Simple Percentage of teachers' pedagogical methods enhances emergent writing skills among pre-primary school pupils.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I demonstrate writing on chalk boards to pupils.	46 (46%)	29 (29%)	15 (15%)	10 (10%)
2.	I use writing materials (books, charts, letter cards, chalk, pencils, and slate) to teach effectively in writing class.	37 (37%)	32 (32%)	21 (21%)	10 (10%)

3	I use to practice letter writing with pupils through scribbling and imitation in preschools.	33 (33%)	39 (39%)	10 (10%)	18 (18%)
4	I use tasks or assignments to form letters or numbers in various forms involving joining of letter-parts to form a whole letter or number.	35 (35%)	25 (25%)	32 (32%)	8 (8%)
5.	I use molding letters or numbers using mud or sculpture clay for learning the different 'stages' of writing letters.	43 (43%)	30 (30%)	19 (19%)	8 (8%)

Data presented on Table 3 showed that 46% of the respondents strongly agreed that they demonstrated writing on chalk boards to pupils, 29% of them agreed, 15% disagreed and 10% of them strongly disagreed. In item 2, 37% of the respondents strongly agreed that they used writing materials (books, charts, letter cards, chalk, pencils, and slate) to teach effectively in writing class, 32% of them agreed, 21% disagreed and 10% of them strongly disagreed. In item 3, 33% of the respondents strongly agreed that they used to practice letter writing with pupils through scribbling and imitation in preschools, 39% of them agreed, 10% disagreed and 18% of them strongly disagreed.

In item 4, 35% of the respondents strongly agreed that they used tasks or assignments to form letters or numbers in various forms involving joining of letter-parts to form a whole letter or number, 25% of them agreed, 32% disagreed and 8% of them strongly disagreed. In item 5, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that they used tasks or assignments to form letters or numbers in various forms involving joining of letter-parts to form a whole letter or number, 30% of them agreed, 17% disagreed and 8% of them strongly disagreed.

Discussion of Findings

The use of appropriate strategies for teaching and learning to write is crucial. In this study, it was found that demonstration of writing on the chalkboard assist pupils to learn writing effectively. This is in tandem with the findings of Dallos, (2012) who noted that demonstrating writing on the chalkboard for pupils motivate to learn writing passionately. The provision of instructions to pupils is of great importance as without it, pupils would have no clear direction to take in their learning. Furthermore,

invention/independent writing needs to be encouraged by the teachers. This is line with Mark, (2014) who says writing skills contribute to the child's ability to hold and use a pencil, and the ability to draw, write, copy, and colour.

Independent writing makes pupils improve their skills in holding pen or pencil when writing in their exercise books, while simultaneously developing higher-order skills like spelling and story composition. Independent writing makes pupils work individually while applying and practicing the taught language structures in their writing. The approach encourages pupils to write on their own with the teacher interacting to further support their writing development. Scribbling and imitation as discussed by teachers in this study is also supported by experts such as Feder and Majnemer (2013), who suggest that these activities help to develop pupils in the full range of skills needed for proper writing. Furthermore, scribbling and imitation are essential learning strategies as they make pupils enjoy the act of writing.

According to Mark, (2014) the use of writing materials is a crucial strategy in that teachers demonstrate or act as exemplars providing children models for doing and using writing explicitly in the classroom. While there experiences like talking or stories help children make meaning of the written language, talking in the current study was minimally considered by teachers as a strategy to develop pupils with several issues including stages involved in writing. Contrary to the study findings on the strategies used to develop pupils with writing competency, the Samuel, (2016) informs that teachers use different teaching strategies to help pupils develop and practise their writing skills such as shared writing that involves the whole class and the teacher composing the text collaboratively.

With regard to the challenges faced by teachers, the study findings are consistent with Feder and Majnemer (2007) and Burke (2010) who describe the importance of a quality writing area when learning to write properly. It seems clear from the study findings that the height of the chairs/desks, sitting positions, and the type of writing materials used by the pupil affects teachers' ability to develop good writers. Therefore, developmentally appropriate materials and appealing learning environments will be necessary during the implementation of any improved curriculum which aims to raise standards or learning quality.

Conclusion

The study has concluded that pedagogical practices, teacher roles, and attitudes play a vital role in the development of emergent writing skills in pre-primary students. It has been found that modeling, using materials, and supporting early attempts to write, though practiced, lack consistency and child-centeredness. It is a fact that optimal development of early writing skills is dependent on effective pedagogical practices. Further, the study should focus on the impact of specific pedagogical interventions on the development of early writing skills, especially in a variety of educational settings, and the role of inter-school collaboration. It is suggested that the role of technology in developing emergent writing skills should also be explored.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made

1. Teachers should be provided with continuous training on effective pedagogical strategies for teaching emergent writing, including play-based and child-centered approaches.
2. School administrators should encourage and monitor teachers to develop positive attitudes such as patience, enthusiasm, and commitment when teaching writing skills.
3. Writing instruction should be integrated with play activities such as songs, storytelling, drawing, and modeling to enhance pupils' engagement and creativity.
4. Schools should supply adequate and developmentally appropriate materials such as charts, letter cards, clay, pencils, and writing boards to facilitate effective teaching.
5. Teachers should gradually guide pupils toward independent writing by allowing phonetic spelling, scribbling, and self-expression without fear of criticism.
6. Classrooms should be well-structured with appropriate furniture, writing spaces, and supportive environments that promote writing activities.
7. Educational authorities should regularly supervise teaching practices to ensure the use of effective pedagogical strategies in pre-primary classrooms.
8. Parents should be encouraged to support writing development at home through activities like drawing, storytelling, and practicing letter formation.

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