



Effect of Teaching Strategies on Students' English Writing Skills at Secondary School Certificate

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ABSTRACT- Teaching strategies have a significant effect on students' English language writing skills at the secondary school level. Secondary School teachers use an array of teaching strategies for developing English writing skills. However, it is a common observation that students of SSC have inadequate English writing skills. This research paper aims to examine which teaching strategies are used by SSC teachers for teaching English writing and which of these have their effect on student performance regarding students' low achievement in English writing at the SSC level. The study opted for a cross-sectional study design. Data were collected from students of SSC to determine the teaching strategies used by their teachers. Instruments of the study consisted of an achievement test and a questionnaire. The test was given to students to know the existing skill in English writing. Similarly, a questionnaire was administered to students to know teaching strategies used by their teachers. The effect of teaching strategies was measured on three domains of English writing such as development and organization of ideas as well as language conventions. Although various strategies affect students' achievement results of the study showed that certain strategies that significantly affect students' English writing skills such as self-review, pair work, oral feedback, the teaching of grammar, and translation. It is recommended that teachers of SSC should actively engage in the process of writing by using student-centered strategies that may result in effective writing skills.

Keywords: Secondary School Certificate, English Writing, English teaching strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

It is generally assumed that the English writing skills of students of government schools of SSC are less developed than privately managed schooled students. Several reasons have been explored including the use of less effective teaching strategies. Teaching methodologies have a direct effect on student learning especially for performance in English language writing skills. The research study focused at first to explore what types of teaching strategies are being used at the SSC level. And second, if these strategies effect students' achievement in English writing skills. There are various levels and aspects of English writing skills determined by the national curriculum at the SSC level. But we focused on three aspects; generating ideas, organizing ideas, and language conventions of English writing. The common strategies that are used to teach were editing, presentation, written feedback, self-review, peer review, extensive reading, pair work, group work, and model text. This study explores the teaching strategies being used by teachers of SSC. Generally, English writing skills are assessed on three domains such as generating and organizing ideas as well as language conventions (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018). Research shows that writing skills can be best learned when teachers involve students in process of writing (Hyland, 2004; Harmer, 2007).

Literature shows that there are certain strategies that Hyland (2007) pointed out that brainstorming and feedback were being widely used for the development of writing skills. Brainstorming is a teaching strategy that is used by teachers of secondary level to produce effective writing skills. During brainstorming teacher give chance to students to think about the topic assigned to them. Students share their ideas with other students and with the teacher. This strategy helps students outline of the writing topic which in later stages of writing helps them to produce an effective piece of writing. This strategy can be used with all grades from lower to higher for any topic.

Similarly, extensive reading (Harmer, 2007; Ahmed & Rajab, 2015) and discussion (Hyland, 2004) were also used for the development of students' writing skills. Reading extensively to enhance writing proficiency is considered important at every stage specifically the secondary level. The reason for the poor proficiency of students is a limited type of reading habit (Abbas, Farid, Iqbal & Parveen, 2020). They don't read extensively because they think that it is not important according to the examination point of view. Research findings of Walczak, Harrison, Muratorio, Flores, Bruner, and Docherty (2017) showed that students who have the habit

of cramming the lessons or didn't find the opportunity to read extensively have poor writing skills as compared to those who are engaged to read extensively in the form of books, stories, and magazines. The extensive reading covers all aspects of English writing including vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.

Writing skills can be improved by relevant and appropriate questioning techniques. The importance of questioning can't be denied in any learning environment (Abbas, Pervaiz & Arshad, 2018). English language teachers make their students learn effective writing skills by using questioning techniques. Through this strategy, students brainstorm and discuss their points with teachers. It develops self-confidence as they came to know each other's points which broader their exposure.

Peer review is another teaching strategy used by teachers in classrooms of secondary level to develop writing skills. Feedback given by peers is as important as given by teachers. Some students learn fast from their peers and better able to understand their work. Peer feedback is equally important as peer assessment as both help students to focus on the weaknesses and strengths of their writing as Ali (2011) elaborated that peer assessment develops constructive criticism as well as social skills among students. In this way, shy students get a chance to learn from their peers as they feel more comfortable with their peers to help them.

Lectures are frequently used by SSC teachers for English teaching. Consequently, causing a lack of knowledge and skills in English Language writing and low performance of students in achievement tests. The lecture method can be an important strategy if the teacher considers the learning needs of students. Ahmad (2010) discussed that lecture without interaction is a traditional method of teaching. It may give good results if used with discussion and questioning. The lecture is considered the traditional method of teaching at any level of education. Bolaji (2014) expressed that if there is an interaction between students and teacher during lecture then this is better than the traditional lecture method having little effect on the writing skills of students. However, at the secondary level it is a convenient method of teaching due to her level, of students and it also saves time for the teacher.

Similarly, teaching grammar in an English writing classroom is part of traditional classroom settings. Teachers of SSC also use the grammar-translation method instead of a direct method of teaching. Although grammar includes all the rules, principles, and structures but being used for those who have poor skills of writing. In this method, teacher use the native language to teaching English. Korhonen (2010) discussed that the grammar - translation method is followed where the proficiency level of students is low and they found it difficult to understand English writing when teachers use methods other than this. Teachers explain all rules of grammar in their native language.

Indeed, a little research has been conducted in Pakistan on English writing skills at various levels but there is still a need to explore it in depth. Studies conducted by Khan (2011, 2012) explored the development of writing skills and creative writing in higher education. Various studies have been conducted to examine the impact of the styles of teaching on the examination system at SSC and O level in the subject of English (Mirza, Nosheen & Nasir, 1999; Naeem, 2011; Behlol & Anwar, 2011). Chughtai (1990) investigated the nature of difficulties in English at the secondary level. For the present study, an achievement test based on the similar intended learning outcomes from the curriculum was developed and used as an instrument to assess English writing skills. To examine the teaching strategies at SSC and O level, the questionnaires for students and teachers were used. Moreover, classroom observations were also conducted to verify the actual implementation of teaching strategies used in the classroom.

Examining the difference in learning outcomes and teaching strategies used by teachers is worth studying because teaching writing is essential at schools specifically at the secondary level. It is a common observation that private schools have high-resourced classrooms for children whereas Government schools have low resources, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of specialized teachers (Naeem, 2011).

II. METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional research design was adopted for this study collecting data from two types of instruments that enabled inter-method mixing (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) which means two or more methods of data collection were used in this research study. The questionnaire was used to collect data about various teaching

strategies used by SSC teachers for teaching English writing. Later, an achievement test was used to measure students' performance on English writing skills.

Hypothesis of the study

Following hypotheses were formulated:

H₀₁. There are no overall teaching strategies significantly affecting students' overall achievement scores.

H₀₂. No common teaching strategies significantly affect students' scores on the generation of ideas

H₀₃. No common teaching strategies significantly affect students' scores on the organization of ideas

H₀₄. No common teaching strategies significantly affect students' scores on language conventions.

H₀₅. There is no significant effect of specific teaching strategies for the generation of ideas on students' scores

H₀₆. There is no significant effect of specific teaching strategies of organizing ideas on students' scores

H₀₇. There is no significant effect of teaching strategies specifically used for language convention on students' achievement scores

III. FINDINGS

The data were analyzed through SPSS to see whether a direct effect of teaching strategies is present on English writing skills. The results showed that for English writing teaching at the SSC level, not a single particular strategy or a group of teaching strategies was effective. Overall, pair work and self-review had a significant effect on students' performance in English writing at the SSC level. On the contrary, different teaching strategies were found significantly effective for teaching different components of English writing skills to secondary school level students. For teaching "generation of ideas" out of all teaching strategies only "oral feedback" was found effective for students' performance in English writing. However, none of the strategies were found to have a significant effect on "organization of ideas" in English writing for SSC students. Teaching strategies like "grammar and translation" methods were found significant for student performance related to the "language conventions" component of English writing. The following section presents the effect of all common teaching strategies already identified through the questionnaire by students on three components of English writing by using multiple linear regression.

Table 1
Effect of common teaching strategies on students' English writing scores at SSC

| SSC | Overall achievement scores | | | | Achievement scores on 'generation of ideas' | | | | Achievement scores on 'organization of ideas' | | | | Achievement scores on 'language conventions' | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|-------|------|--|---------|-------|------|--|---------|-------|------|---|---------|-------|------|
| Common teaching strategies | B(SE) | β | t | P | B(SE) | β | t | p | B(SE) | β | t | P | B(SE) | β | t | P |
| Constant | 8.56(2.49) | | 3.43 | .000 | 5.69(1.07) | | 5.31 | .000 | 4.26(.89) | | 4.77 | .000 | 3.60(.95) | | 3.77 | .000 |
| Editing | -.07(.35) | -.017 | -.20 | .839 | -.12(.15) | -.07 | -.81 | .419 | -.14(.12) | -.09 | -1.16 | .245 | -.05(.13) | -.03 | -.44 | .661 |
| Presentation | .69(.39) | .155 | 1.79 | .074 | .20(.17) | .11 | 1.23 | .219 | .22(.13) | .14 | 1.63 | .104 | .03(.15) | .01 | .20 | .841 |
| Written feedback | .13(.34) | .033 | .39 | .696 | -.19(.15) | -.11 | -1.32 | .187 | .03(.12) | .02 | .24 | .806 | .22(.13) | .15 | 1.74 | .083 |
| Self-review | -.62(.38) | .172 | -1.63 | .014 | -.10(.16) | -.06 | -.60 | .544 | -.12(.13) | -.09 | -.92 | .355 | -.15(.14) | -.11 | -1.07 | .028 |
| Peer review | .14(.39) | .034 | .36 | .715 | -.03(.71) | -.01 | -.20 | .842 | -.01(.14) | -.00 | -.09 | .927 | -.05(.15) | -.03 | -.35 | .726 |
| Extensive reading | .54(.34) | .135 | 1.59 | .113 | .19(.15) | .11 | 1.33 | .184 | .15(.12) | .11 | 1.30 | .194 | .11(.13) | .07 | .86 | .389 |
| Pair work | .95(.44) | .170 | 2.15 | .03 | .03(.19) | .01 | .16 | .869 | .22(.15) | .11 | 1.43 | .155 | .38(.17) | .18 | 2.25 | .026 |
| Group work | .39(.34) | .100 | 1.14 | .255 | .09(.15) | .06 | .67 | .501 | .16(.12) | .11 | 1.30 | .194 | .09(.13) | .06 | .68 | .496 |
| Model text | .22(.37) | .050 | .61 | .542 | -.02(.16) | -.01 | -.15 | .875 | -.10(.13) | -.06 | -.78 | .431 | .05(.14) | .02 | .34 | .728 |

The overall effect of common teaching strategies on student's achievement scores at the SSC level

The study was conducted to find out if there is a significant effect of common teaching strategies on overall achievement scores of English writing for SSC level students (Table 1). Different hypotheses Ho1, Ho2, Ho3 and Ho4 were tested to see the effect of common teaching strategies on three domains of writing. The model significantly predicted the effect of teaching strategies on student performance in English writing ($F(9,157) = 2.067, p = .03, R^2 = .106$). Out of all included teaching strategies in the model 'pair work' ($\beta = .170, p < .05$) and self-review ($\beta = .172, p < .05$) significantly predicted students' achievement scores in English writing. Other teaching strategies were non-significantly related in this data.

Overall the model predicted the effect of teaching strategies for teaching the *generation of ideas* component of English writing at the SSC level $F(9,157) = .682, p = .724, R^2 = .04$. None of the teaching strategies used at the SSC level significantly predicted students' performance on the generation of ideas for all ($p > .05$). In the case of organization of ideas, the regression model non-significantly predicted students' achievement on all teaching strategies used at SSC level $F(9,157) = 1.353, p = .214, R^2 = .07$. None of the teaching strategies used at the SSC level predicted students' performance on English writing-related to language conventions ($F(9,157) = 1.49, p = .154, R^2 = .08$). Based on the analysis H_{01} - H_{02} are rejected as some common teaching strategies have an effect on students' overall achievement scores at the SSC level. And H_{03} & H_{04} are accepted as no teaching strategies were found significantly predicting students' English language achievement in this sample.

Effect of teaching strategies and students' achievement scores related to the generation of ideas at SSC level

To determine the direct effect of teaching strategies (lecture, brainstorming, questioning, and oral feedback) on students' scores on the generation of ideas, a linear regression was run to test hypothesis no.5. The following table describes the results of the analysis.

Table 2

Effect of teaching strategies on students' achievement scores in generating ideas at SSC level

| | B(SE) | B | T | p |
|---------------|------------|-------|-------|------|
| (Constant) | 3.495(.49) | | 7.094 | .000 |
| Lecture | .224(.17) | .138 | 1.295 | .197 |
| Brainstorming | -.116(.12) | -.076 | -.963 | .337 |
| Questioning | .279(.26) | .183 | 1.069 | .287 |
| Oral feedback | .247(.26) | .165 | .951 | .04 |

$p < .05$

The study hypothesized (H_{05}) that teaching strategies that are specifically used for teaching the generation of ideas component of English writing will have a direct effect on students' performance/achievement scores at SSC level $F(4, 162) = 8.91, p < .001, R^2 = .18$. The analysis concluded that none of the specifically used teaching strategies have a direct significant effect on students writing scores except oral feedback ($\beta = .165, p < .05$). This suggests that at the SSC level classroom level oral feedback as a teaching strategy may help in increasing students' ability of ideas generation related to English writing.

The effect of teaching strategies on 'organization of ideas' scores at the SSC level

The study hypothesized (H_{06}) that specific teaching strategies will have a direct effect on the organization of ideas component of English writing scores among students at the SSC level. To find out the effect of teaching strategies specifically used for teaching organizing ideas in English writing a multiple linear regression was conducted $F(3,163) = 2.263, p = .08, R^2 = .04$ however, the null hypothesis was retained as none of the teaching strategies (lecture, oral feedback, and questioning) were found to have an effect on achievement scores on the organization of ideas ($\beta = .30, p > .05$; $\beta = -.126, p > .05$ and $\beta = -.45, p > .05$). This suggests that teaching strategies used at the SSC level for teaching organization of ideas in English writing were found ineffective in this sample.

Table 3*Effect of teaching strategies on achievement scores regarding organization of ideas*

| Teaching strategies | B(SE) | β | T | P |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|--------|------|
| (Constant) | 5.24(.50) | | 10.317 | .000 |
| Lecture | .40(.34) | .309 | 1.163 | .246 |
| Oral feedback | -.16(.11) | -.126 | -1.539 | .126 |
| Questioning | -.17(.38) | -.122 | -.454 | .650 |

Table 3 shows that none of the teaching strategies was found effective for teaching organization of ideas $F(3,163) = 2.263$, $p=.08$, $R^2=.04$. No significant effect was found of lecture, oral feedback, and questioning on scores ($\beta=.30$, $p>.05$; $\beta=-.126$, $p>.05$ and $\beta=-.45$, $p>.05$)

The effect of teaching strategies on 'language conventions' scores at SSC level

The study hypothesized (H_{07}) that specific teaching strategies will have a direct effect on the language conventions component of English writing scores among students at the SSC level. To find out the effect of teaching strategies specifically used for teaching language conventions in English writing a multiple linear regression was conducted $F(4,162) = 2.72$, $p=.031$, $R^2=.06$. The null hypothesis was rejected as out of four specific teaching strategies (lecture for punctuation, oral feedback, grammar, translation) two strategies (grammar and translation) were found to have a significant effect on achievement scores of language convention ($\beta=-.09$, $p>.05$; $\beta=.20$, $p>.05$). This suggests that teaching strategies such as grammar and translation can be effective for students' achievement in English writing. However, the beta of grammar teaching strategies was negative, therefore the increase in English writing scores with this teaching technique is likely to decline. Further studies may explore this to build consistent results.

Table 4*Effect of teaching strategies on students' achievement scores on L & C at SSC*

| Teaching strategies | B(SE) | B | t | p |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|-------|------|
| Constant | 4.08(.63) | | | .000 |
| Oral feedback | .06(.40) | .03 | .037 | .867 |
| Lecture for punctuation | 0.17(.25) | .11 | .115 | .486 |
| Grammar | -.14(.26) | -.09 | -.091 | .000 |
| Translation | .33(.37) | .20 | .202 | .001 |

There was significant effect of teaching strategies on students' achievement scores $F(4,162) = 2.72$, $p=.031$, $R^2=.06$. The table shows that a significant effect was found for grammar and translation strategies on scores of students.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the a) effect of commonly used teaching strategies for teaching English writing skills at the SSC level and b) if any particular teaching strategies are more effective than others for teaching three components of English writing on which the students were tested. Overall, student-centered strategies seemed to be having a significant effect on students' performance in English writing. This suggests that for improving the performance of SSC students in English writing, SSC English teachers should use student-centered strategies often in classrooms. However, teachers of SSC less frequently use student-centered

teaching strategies in SSC classrooms in the Pakistani context. Therefore, the general English writing skills of these students remain less developed compared to others among the same level and age (students of O level). This finding is aligning with Naeem (2011) who discussed that students of SSC do not go through the process of writing because of traditional methods of teaching used by teachers.

In this research study, writing skills were compared on three components of the writing process. In English writing teaching, on the “generation of ideas” component out of all teaching strategies (lecture, brainstorming questioning, and oral feedback) only *oral feedback* was affecting students' achievement. Various research studies support this finding that oral feedback improves students' writing but it is important along with written feedback with highlighting and correcting errors (Haider, 2014; Farooq and Hassan, 2012). Through written feedback teachers do not let them repeat their mistakes consistent with Khan (1999), Sawalmeh (2013), and Brooker, Lloyd, Robinson, and Casals (2017).

Organization of ideas in English language writing requires some creative and critical thinking as well as brainstorming strategies for better stimulation of ideas. Study results revealed that lecture, oral feedback, and questioning were used as teaching strategies to teach this English writing aspect to students at the SSC level. All three were found ineffective in the analysis. On this occasion, it is important to point out that teachers of SSC may also be facing problems in completing the whole syllabus on time. This could be the reason to rely on strategies that help teach the concepts according to the examination point of view in a classroom where time is short and a lot of material needs to be covered.

The grammar-translation method is used to teach language and conventions for English writing. The study revealed that teachers of SSC teach grammar to clarify the grammatical rules to students. Literature shows that this method is used where teaching strategies and medium of instruction are based upon mother tongue and rules of grammar are explained in the native language (Hassan & Wahid, 2012; Bibi, 2002; Villanueva, 2008).

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study determined the effect of teaching strategies on achievement scores of students of SSC on English writing skills. English writing skills were determined on three domains of writing such as developing and organizing ideas as well as language conventions. Results showed that there is a significant effect of teaching strategies on students' achievement. Four teaching strategies were significantly influencing students' achievement such as self-review, lecture, pair work, oral feedback, and grammar-translation method. The study concluded that for teaching English writing skills to SSC students there is an important role of teaching strategies that are implied in SSC level classrooms. SSC teachers may need to unlearn and relearn how to teach English writing skills in order to improve students' achievement in English writing over time. Teaching strategies also need to be aligned with the type of writing skills that are being taught. For example, teaching strategies for the *generation of ideas* may entirely be different from effective teaching strategies for teaching *language conventions* or *organization of ideas*.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on study results, it is recommended that a variation in teaching strategies and their effectiveness for teaching English writing skills exists at the SSC level in Pakistan. In future research, the sample size may be increased to get a more comprehensive picture of the teaching and learning situation of English writing at the secondary school level. The academic motivation of teachers to teach English writing may also be explored in future research to get contextual information for the use of teaching strategies being taught. Due to a shortage of time researchers were able to collect cross-sectional data. In the future, a longitudinal study would be most suitable to see the effect of teaching strategies on students' performance with special reference to teaching English writing skills at the SSC level.

In this study, researchers used a teacher-made achievement test. But for the assessment of English writing skills a general proficiency test may be more suitable for accuracy of measurement of students' achievement. Teachers may be trained in how to teach writing in SSC schools. And more time may be dedicated to the school timetable to improve the learners' English writing skills overall. Future studies may be designed to

meticulously-y investigate this phenomenon where all aspects of English writing skills, teaching strategies, and their effect on student achievement may be studied in depth.

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