

# Action Research Framework and Process Writing Approach for Teaching College ELLs Essay Writing<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Writing anxiety in Pakistan is one of the significant issues arising amongst students because of ineffective writing instruction that is heavily dependent on product approach (Hassan et al., 2020). The present study was undertaken to measure the efficacy of the Process Writing Approach through an Action Research Plan to bring a meaningful change in teaching practices of the teacher researcher for the alleviation of writing problems faced by students. The writing problems faced by students in compulsory English courses at Higher Secondary Schools (HSSC) and Undergraduate Level face problems in verb-tense usage, inappropriate placement of punctuation marks, incorrect subject-verb agreement, prepositions, articles, sentence structure, and paragraph structure (Ali et al., 2021; Haider, 2012; Javed et al., 2013). The present Action Research was administered to two groups of students in a higher secondary school. Thirty-four HSSC & twenty-nine Undergraduate Urdu-speaking English language learners (ELLs) were selected through purposive sampling and were subjected to a Writing Intervention Plan (WIP). The WIP was developed after amassing the students' and teachers' perceptions of 'Writing Skills'. WIP was initiated in two cycles, for six weeks; each week had six sessions of forty minutes each. After intervention, the data were analyzed in two ways: a questionnaire was used to record the writing experience of students, and was analyzed via descriptive and thematic analysis, whereas academic improvement in the writing of students was assessed by three teachers against a rubric to ensure inter-rater reliability. The findings revealed considerable improvement in students' writing skills. The outcome of the study reflects a positive impact of the action- reflection cycle.

## Resumen

La ansiedad por la escritura en Pakistán es uno de los problemas importantes que surgen entre los estudiantes debido a una instrucción de escritura ineficaz que depende en gran medida del enfoque del producto (Hassan et al., 2020). El presente estudio se llevó a cabo para medir la eficacia del Enfoque de Proceso de Escritura a través de un Plan de Investigación Acción para lograr un cambio significativo en las prácticas docentes del docente investigador para aliviar los problemas de escritura que enfrentan los estudiantes. Los problemas de escritura que enfrentan los estudiantes en cursos obligatorios de inglés en las escuelas secundarias superiores (HSSC) y en el nivel universitario enfrentan problemas en el uso del tiempo verbal, ubicación inapropiada de los signos de puntuación, concordancia incorrecta entre sujeto y verbo, preposiciones, artículos, estructura de oraciones y estructura de párrafos. (Ali et al., 2021; Haider, 2012; Javed et al., 2013). La presente Investigación-Acción se administró a dos grupos de estudiantes de una escuela secundaria superior. Se seleccionaron treinta y cuatro estudiantes del idioma inglés (ELL) de HSSC y veintinueve estudiantes universitarios de habla urdu mediante un muestreo intencional y se los sometió a un Plan de intervención de escritura (WIP). El WIP se desarrolló después de recopilar las percepciones de los estudiantes y profesores sobre las "habilidades de escritura". WIP se inició en dos ciclos, durante seis semanas; cada semana contaba con seis sesiones de cuarenta minutos cada una. Después de la intervención, los datos se analizaron de dos maneras: se utilizó un cuestionario para registrar la experiencia de escritura de los estudiantes y se analizó mediante análisis descriptivo y temático, mientras que tres profesores evaluaron la mejora académica en la escritura de los estudiantes comparándola con una rúbrica para garantizar fiabilidad entre. Los hallazgos revelaron una mejora considerable en las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes. El resultado del estudio refleja un impacto positivo del ciclo acción-reflexión.

## Introduction

Pakistan's past status as an English colony in the Asian subcontinent gave it a unique status in relationship to the English language since after partition it soon assumed its role as an official language. It became an empowering tool for social, economic, and educational development (British Council, 2015; Mansoor, 2004; Rahman, 2003; Shamim, 2011). Therefore, competency in the English language is deemed

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synonymous with educational and professional success, and it is being taught as a second language in schools from the primary level and further takes up the role of medium of instruction at tertiary stages. However, unfortunately, college teachers have been expressing a growing concern over the fact that students at the upper secondary level lack competence in writing skills despite having studied how to write in English as a second language (ESL) for more than ten years in school. Consequently, it has negatively impacted on their learning of all subjects which are taught in English for the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) and Undergraduate level (Dar et al., 2014; Mansoor, 2004).

English language learners (ELLs) are still facing difficulties in productive language skills, particularly writing. The problems include insufficient vocabulary, incorrect usage of the verb tense, punctuation marks, subject-verb agreement, prepositions and struggle in the sentence as well as paragraph construction (Bhatti et al., 2020) due to inadequate instructional input (Dar et al., 2014; Nawaz et al., 2015) indicating a need to align English language teaching and learning with the contemporary skills-based, learner-centered approaches employing technically sound and outcomes-driven pedagogy (Sultana & Zaki, 2015). Furthermore, it has been shown that by introducing learner-centered teaching instructions and reflective practices, teachers can play a pivotal role assisting students in acquiring competence in writing (Khan & Zaki, 2018). Therefore, organized strategies for teaching writing skills, including active learner involvement, must be devised and implemented to obtain writing competency in Higher Secondary School (HSS) students (Arif et al., 2019).

According to Silva (1993), a writing classroom may be transformed into a collaborative writing workshop environment, where learners have a free hand to compose and the teacher would facilitate and guide them while planning, drafting, and editing. Chen & Hapgood, (2021) proposed collaboration in evaluating and proofreading to review the vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics – presenting writing as a recursive and re-creative process of discovery results in improved learning.

One of the key reasons associated with this situation is insignificant skill-based teaching since the entire focus of the course is on syllabus completion and HSSC Board Exams (Khan, 2013). According to Fareed et al. (2018), teachers still teach writing through traditional ways: learners are provided with model essays which they rote-learn and reproduce in exams. Henceforth, this practice in schools generates writing apprehension and students never find the confidence to express themselves independently as they have never been provided with an opportunity to express themselves. (Arif et al., 2019; Awan et al., 2021; Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015) have stressed the point that owing to over-reliance on the ready-made notes and essays the teachers had provided them using traditional approaches, students find it difficult to write autonomously. Cheung (2016) has rightly pointed out that teaching the art of good composition in English is an arduous task for both native and non-native students. It is observed that most ESL writing problems emphasize students' needs and the teachers' role in the process of writing is overlooked; hence there is also a need to look into writing instruction practices of teachers in this regard. For this purpose, a praxis of effective teaching of ESL writing may be introduced to English Language teaching (ELT) professionals; consequently, these teachers can incorporate these instruction strategies in their class contexts and dynamics (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007; Lee as cited in Zhang & Chueng, 2018).

Most of the Pakistani schools, both public and private, do not follow a systematic writing instruction pedagogy in sync with contemporary trends of the process approach and not enough practice is provided to the students to help them overcome problems while writing. Also, very few researchers have so far conducted studies in their classrooms with a perspective to inform the researcher about his teaching practice, and how new theories of ELT practice may further evolve (Galloway, 2017). Kasi (2010) is cognizant of the view that Pakistan requires an alternative model for teachers' professional development centered on their local needs and context, and one solution lies in teachers implementing the Action Research (AR) model.

So far, no holistic teaching writing module exists that addresses the needs of Pakistani ELLs at the HSSC or Undergraduate Level. In general, the research conducted in the Pakistani context has focused more on problems and challenges faced by students while learning writing, but no context-based and effective writing intervention plan (WIP) has been adapted according to contemporary needs. Hence, this study developed and evaluated a WIP.

The action research for developing this WIP started with the perceptions of teachers, and students about writing skills, writing problems students face, and the need to develop writing skills among students.

Perceptions of English major teachers and other discipline teachers were collected to identify the problems, the needs, and the solutions for resolving writing issues. Along with teachers' perceptions, students were also probed for their writing problems, experiences, and shortcomings. Based on these perceptions, a WIP was developed and evaluated at the HSSC and undergraduate level. The plan began with a diagnostic test, designed by the teacher-researcher around expository and persuasive essay topics. The topics for essay writing were consciously selected to cater to the language proficiency level of HSSC and undergraduate students.

### Research Question

The question (s) that guided this study were:

1. What is the effectiveness of the writing intervention plan employed as part of action research by an ESL teacher to address the writing challenges of the students in HSSC and undergraduate compulsory English courses at a college?
2. What is the efficacy of the process writing approach employed in the writing intervention plan on students' perceptions and skills at HSSC and in undergraduate compulsory English classes?

### Literature Review

Several studies have been carried out about L2 writing, reporting empirical research that promotes different approaches or orientations towards writing instruction and academic achievements (Badger & White, 2000; de Larios et al., 2002; Hyland, 2003; Kim & Kim, 2005; Paltridge, 2007; Yan, 2005;). The most influential approaches of the twentieth century included controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, and the cognitive approach revealing different forms of process approach (Silva as cited by Kroll, 1990). The earliest was the controlled or guided composition model, based on the oral approach of Fries (1945).

In the mid-sixties, Kaplan (1966). presented the theory of contrastive rhetoric as "the method of organizing syntactic units into larger patterns" (p. 5). This resulted in pattern drills and aimed to focus on the logical construction of discourse. Contrastive rhetoric states that writing is about arranging sentence patterns into paragraphs. These two approaches were followed by the most significant approach in writing, which took the writing orientation to the next level—the cognitive approach which led to various directions of the process approach, as the earlier approaches were not able to produce the desired outcomes in teaching writing. This psychological insight into the process approach towards the last quarter of the twentieth century was discussed by Scardamalia & Bereiter (1987). It says that writers face difficulty in writing tasks due to the nature of the task and lack of knowledge on the given topic; feedback and revision also play an important role in developing writing skills. Their contrasting models further revealed the significance of knowledge transformation during the composing phase in writing. The 'immature' writer mainly relies on their existing knowledge or teacher-guided tasks; whereas the 'mature' writer refines the pre-existing knowledge into a processed and coherent format indicating cognitive input.

Silva (1993), while further exploring teaching L2 writing through a process approach, discovered that the composing pattern adopted by L1 and L2 writers was almost the same; the difference was found only between an expert and a novice. In addition, L2 writers did not give enough time to planning and goal setting and despite revision, they proved to be less fluent and accurate. These findings can contribute to help in devising an effective writing intervention plan.

### *Why the Process Writing Approach?*

The process approach continued to evolve in the twenty-first century. It was established on the belief that writing involves various stages: planning, drafting and composing, editing, and proofreading. However, it is never a linear process; instead, it is a recursive cycle that is constantly evaluated by the writer at each step. The process approach is best adapted in workshop-formatted classes, where students are provided with an autonomous environment to write and assess their progress independently as well as with peer consultation. They organize, compose, and edit their work, developing, growing, and realizing their strength and weaknesses together (Zampardo, 2008).

According to Hyland (2004):

*In the classroom teachers build models based on such analyses of texts and adopt a highly interventionist role, acting as a guide leading students through the typical rhetorical patterns of the genres they need to produce (p. 161).*

This research measures the efficacy of the Process Writing Approach, along with its shortcomings as well. Unlike the product approach, in which writing results because of model text without any freedom to handle other problems faced during a compositional phase, the process approach adopts a recursive strategy in writing; where writing follows a series of stages, providing the composer with flexibility in expression. It consists of three basic steps, including pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing.

Keen (2017) has further referred to several studies and surveys conducted to study the writing approaches in the UK and USA (Emig 1971; Holbrook, 1964; Kohl, 1967), which reveal that the educational institutions emphasize on teaching writing through process approach, and it results in improved writing competency. The following table represents some noteworthy and contemporary approaches employing process writing.

Author	Description
Tricia Hedge (1988, 2005)	This approach is based on the belief that writing is a 'process', involving several stages. Hedge, simplifies the complex process of writing into three major steps: Pre-writing, While-writing and Post-writing
White & Arndt (1991)	Their stance on writing received its impetus from an understanding that it has tended to be a much-neglected part of language program The approach proposed that writing is an intricate process of a non-linear nature, involving simultaneous processes to produce one holistic process
McCrimmon (1994)	To write effectively, McCrimmon developed 'The Process Approach to Composition.' He stated that before the process approach, writing instruction focused on the finished product. Therefore, he designed a strategy for writing instruction that learners can easily follow while moving through different writing steps.
Contemporary Studies	Various studies have been conducted recently, to gauge the efficacy of the process approach to writing and they have indicated that the process writing approach to developing writing skills has been very effective, and students found improvement in their writing skills. Additionally, it was noted that teachers need to follow contemporary trends to make their classrooms the center of effective learning (Abbas & Aziz, 2018; Bayat, 2014; Bozatzi, 2021; Ghulam & Ghulam, 2010; Hashemnezhad & Hashemnezhad 2012; Jee & Aziz, 2021; Johnson & Johnson, 2020).

Table 1: Structural approaches to writing

Figure 1 illustrates the process writing approach that has been adopted by the teacher-researcher in developing the WIP and the relevant handouts for the students.

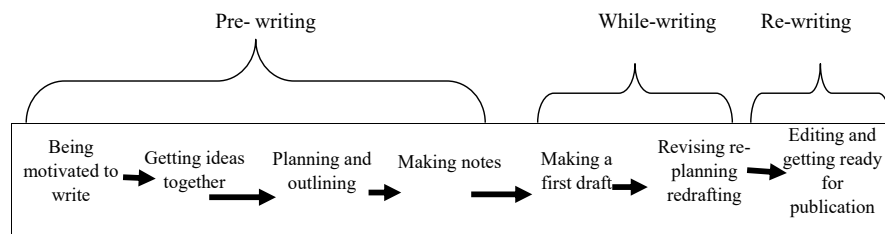


Figure 1: Process writing approach (Hedge, 2005)

Action Research (AR)

Lewin (1946) is given the credit for evolving AR, which is based on the belief that if we involve people in decision-making regarding the work they are involved in, they will become motivated and this, in turn, can result in improved efficiency. Corey (1953), wrote a book advocating AR to bring about improvement in the domain of teaching practice. He viewed teachers as exceptionally skilled individuals who ought to be in command of their practice. Kemmis et al, (2019) carried on the work in three different parts of the world and as a result, teacher input was considered significant and AR became a widely acceptable means of research, where teachers were motivated to learn from reflective practice.

The following study is rooted in AR Design, which according to Creswell (2012) is the most commonly applied and practical design to explore a problem to find a solution. This research method is distinctive in the sense that it tries to bring theory and practice together for the ease of educators and professionals (Brown & Jones, 2001) it aims to 'improve practice.' This improvement can be manifested through the

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recursive process suggested in the Spiral model of AR (Stringer, 2007), which involves three phases, i.e., *Look*, *Think*, and *Act*. The first phase – *Look* enables the teacher to investigate existing problems in their education practices, leading to deliberation for solutions in the second phase – *Think*, following into the final phase of *Action* to inculcate the modified practices through a systemic framework. According to Herr and Anderson (2015), in AR, the teacher is an insider whose role as a practitioner is enhanced, and academic researcher takes a back seat.

Vogrinc and Zuljan (2009) have said that AR contributes to multifarious domains of teachers' professional development; such as diagnosing the problem area, relations with students and professionals around them, taking action to overcome the problem, and acting as an agent of change, and consequently leading to self-reflection and growth. Thus teachers, who contribute to enhancing teaching skills and standards through playing an investigative role, are the main beneficiaries of AR. Table 2, further presents some significant studies in the domain of AR.

Authors	Description
Kemmis & McTaggart (1988)	The most popular study of educational AR is presented by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). They proposed a recursive spiral produced as a result of self-reflection, including planning, action, observation, and self-reflection.
Burns (2010)	Burns stated that AR is an activity based on two modes i.e., 'action' and 'research', in which the action occurs in a social setting e.g, an educational institution where the intervention is planned, and in research, analyzing the outcomes of undertaken action to adopt desired modification.
Mills (2011)	According to Mills, AR encourages a positive change in educational institutions as educators reflect and improve their practices, it narrows the gap between theory and practice and promotes testing of new ideas.
McNiff & Whitehead (2006; 2011)	"Action research is a form of inquiry that enables practitioners in every job and walk of life to investigate and evaluate their work. They ask, 'What am I doing? Do I need to improve anything? If so, what? How do I improve it?'" (p. 9)
Contemporary Studies	Parida et al. (2017) carried out an AR study with a writing intervention plan to observe positive change in writing skills. It was found that intervention brought about significant improvement in composition writing skills. Nasir et al. (2013) worked through AR to find a solution to the incompetent writing skills of their students. In addition, AR can be an alternative model for teachers' professional growth as once an Action-Reflection cycle is established it can contribute towards teachers' progression (Bughio, 2013 Guo, 2016; Kasi, 2010)

Table 2: Benchmark and contemporary studies on action research

### Methodology

An Action Research Design has been adopted for this article. AR is used to explore 'immediate solutions' to 'concrete problems' (Oso, 2013) and enhance instructional practice (Mertler, 2019). Classroom AR combines reflective practice, teacher growth, and inquiry-based learning (Godínez Martínez, 2021). The teacher-researcher is a social constructivist, who draws meaning through self-experience as a practitioner, and the qualitative perspective of the study helps in achieving this target (Cohen et al., 2007).

### Population and context

The research study was conducted at a renowned College for Women. It offers HSSC and Undergraduate courses in three major fields, i.e., science, art, and commerce. The groups were taught by the researcher herself. The two -groups of different English proficiency levels were selected to investigate the effectiveness of WIP in resolving writing problems faced by Pakistani students (Awan et al, 2021; Mahmood, 2020; Rizwan,2015; Zafar, 2016;), and developing effective writing skills with students of all levels. The student participants were all females who were non-native English speakers at a B2 language proficiency level. The students were divided into two groups: HSSC students from the Arts department (Humanities) studying in BIEK and undergraduate students from the Commerce faculty affiliated with the University of Karachi. These students had the following in common: enrolment in a private college, ages ranging from 16 to 19, experience studying in English-language middle schools, and a B2 proficiency level (minimum requirement to enter in the college). Action Research (AR) is intended to be carried out on a specific and limited group of students who haven't been extensively studied by the teacher. This approach aligns with the concept discussed by Burns (2010). The idea is to focus the research efforts on a particular subset of students, providing a more in-depth understanding of their experiences.



The teacher-researcher chose convenience sampling for selecting her students (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). There were 40 students enrolled in the HSSC course and 29 in the undergraduate. Students were informed about the study and were asked to volunteer. Another sample set consisted of all ELT professionals (twelve in total) from the institution and a selected group of teachers (eleven in total) from the science, commerce, and arts departments. The valuable input from both ELT professionals and teachers from various disciplines supported the WIP.

AR gives teachers autonomy and systematic strategies to observe, challenge, and improvise their teaching practices to enhance their teaching-learning practices, and ultimately the skills of their students. Since the teacher-researcher was teaching in a Girls' College, the population and sample of the study were all females. Hence, the findings of the study may not be generalized to male populations. The intact groups of HSSC and undergraduate classes were selected because the respective classes were assigned to the teacher-researcher by the college and therefore access to other groups was limited. Hence, the varying size of the two groups will be a limitation. The writing classes were conducted during the academic session and the writing instruction was carried out for six weeks.

*Ethical considerations*

Before the initiation of research, formal permission was obtained from the head of the institution to carry out this study, (Burns, 2010). Participants were informed about the purpose and process of the study (Neuman, 2006). Their anonymity was assured while making them realize the positive impact of this research on teaching and learning of writing.

*Questionnaires*

In the course of this research, a meticulous questionnaire design was implemented to elicit perspectives from both educators and students. The initial survey scrutinized students' antecedent writing experiences pre-intervention, employing a methodologically enriched approach encompassing both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The questionnaire structure, adapted from Horverak & Haugen (2016), underwent a preliminary pilot study involving 25 students, validating its reliability through a substantial Cronbach alpha value ( $\alpha > 0.8$ ) as computed in the SPSS tool. Subsequently, the second questionnaire, gauging post-intervention students' contemporary writing experiences, featured combination of open-ended and close-ended queries, inspired by the work of Raoofi et al. (2017). A parallel pilot study, involving 25 students, reinforced its reliability, with a notable Cronbach alpha value ( $\alpha > 0.8$ ). The third and fourth questionnaires addressed the preferences of ELT professionals in terms of writing instruction and the writing perceptions of instructors from diverse disciplines, respectively. Modeled on Hartley & Betts (2010) and Awan et al. (2021), these open-ended instruments were subjected to pilot testing with professionals and teachers, affirming their unproblematic nature and aligning responses with the stipulated inquiries.

No.	Questionnaire	Questionnaire Type	Adapted from	Reliability and Validity
1	Students' previous writing experiences (Pre-Intervention)	Mixed = Quantitative + Qualitative	Horverak & Haugen (2016)	Piloting 25 students from the same institution Findings: The data of 25 students was run through Cronbach alpha in SPSS and showed significant value, i.e., $\alpha > 0.8$ .
2	Students' current writing experiences (Post-Intervention)	Mixed = Open-ended + Close-ended	Raoofi et al. (2017)	Piloting 25 students from the same institution Findings: The data of 25 students was run through Cronbach alpha in SPSS and showed significant value, i.e., $\alpha > 0.8$ .
3	ELT professionals' preference for writing instruction	Open-Ended	Hartley & Belts (2010) Cohen et al., (2007)	Piloting 5 ELT Professionals of the university before implementing them at the research site Findings: The participants did not find it problematic, and their responses were following the questions probed.
4	Writing perceptions of teachers of other disciplines	Open-Ended	Awan et al. (2021)	Piloting 5 teachers of other disciplines of the university before implementing them at the research site Findings: The participants did not find it problematic, and their responses were following the questions probed.

Table 3: Instrument and data collection

### Rationale of Action Research

Action research is a formal form of classroom inquiry conducted by the teacher who understands the specific classroom dynamics in a far better way than a researcher detached from classroom practice. An added reason for adopting AR for the following study is that large-scale research projects do not suffice to handle everyday classroom dilemmas. This method also allows the teacher to begin a reflective practice and modify teaching methodology, as it empowers her to make informed decisions. In this case, a teacher becomes a strong professional, who not only improves practice but achieves student learning successfully. The teacher not only undertakes problematization, but works towards problem-solving, thus, fulfilling professional goals simultaneously (Burns, 2010; Gay et al., 2014).

### Intervention plan

The research at HSSC Level 2, commenced during the final six weeks of the students' last term, precisely after they had completed the syllabus of their English subject. This timing was chosen to ensure that the research activities did not disrupt their ongoing studies. On the other hand, at the degree level, the research cycle unfolded during the initial six weeks of the students' yearly term. In practical terms, the study began with a baseline phase aimed at identifying the specific problems. This initial phase laid the groundwork for developing and implementing tools for data collection, coupled with the creation of an intervention plan. Table 4 describes the AR cycles the teacher-researcher employed in the course of the study. It began with a diagnostic test, leading its way to developing grammar, and writing skills among the students through a process approach. The Table also provides information about the number of teaching hours both groups received.

Week	Intervention Plan	Activities completed	No. of Sessions (Each session of 40 minutes)
1	Diagnostic Test	Expository & Persuasive Students' Self-Evaluation (Pre-Intervention)	1 + 1 1
2	Grammar Skill Building	Vocabulary Homophones Tenses Punctuation Narration	1 + 1 1 + 1 1 + 1 1 + 1 1 + 1
3	Introduction to Essay Writing	Task-based activities on coherence and cohesion in discourse Differentiating between general and supporting statements Multimedia presentation on steps of the writing process	1 + 1 1 + 1 1 + 1
4	Writing Workshop 1	Scaffolding of Expository Essay + Writing introductory paragraph (Hook, building sentences, thesis statement) Construction of body paragraphs (Topic sentence, supporting sentences & examples Writing conclusion Editing + Proofreading through peer assessment.	1 + 1 1 + 1 1 1
5	Writing Workshop 2	Scaffolding of Persuasive Essay + Writing introductory paragraph (Hook, building sentences, thesis statement) Construction of body paragraphs (Topic sentence, supporting sentences & examples Writing conclusion Editing + Proofreading through peer assessment.	1 + 1 1 + 1 1 1
6	Practice Writing Tasks	Writing answers based on explaining and defining, comparing and contrasting questions Composing character sketches and detailed persuasive answers	1 + 1 1 + 1
7	Final Assessment & Students' Feedback	Post-Intervention questionnaire Post Tests (Expository + Persuasive)	1 + 1 1 + 1

Table 4: Writing Intervention Plan (WIP)

The diagnostic test was evaluated by three teachers with an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) writing assessment rubric to objectively score each essay. The teacher-researcher then introduced the writing mechanics needed by the students including; vocabulary, tenses, punctuation, and narration styles. Once the writing mechanics were practiced, essay writing was introduced in smaller

chunks to students through writing workshops based on topics such as cohesion and coherence in writing, process writing, scaffolding in writing, and task-based writing practice. The WIP ended with the post-intervention test. The test was structured with similar criteria as that of the diagnostic test. Lastly, the perceptions of students about their writing experience were collected through a questionnaire (for a visual presentation, see Table 4).

The same strategy was employed for Group 1-HSSC and Group 2 Undergraduate participants with a few changes in the Writing Intervention Booklet for Group 2, which included the addition of one major grammar topic, sentence construction, including active and passive sentence transformation, advanced pre-writing activities . Essay writing topics were taken from the units of their prescribed text.

*Data analysis*

The data gathered through quantitative and qualitative means were sorted, arranged, and presented visually through tables in this section. The descriptive statistics of diagnostic and posttest (HSSC and Undergraduate level) of both persuasive and expository essay writings were calculated by observing mean, standard deviation, and range between minimum and maximum as presented in Table 5 below. The mean scores for both genres of essays at both HSSC and undergraduate levels are greater in the post-test than in the diagnostic test. Specifically, the mean scores are 6.2 and 6.22 for HSSC, and 5.02 and 5.03 for the undergraduate level, compared to the diagnostic test mean scores of 4.22 and 4.23 for HSSC, and 3.46 and 3.68 for the undergraduate level. This illustrates that writing instruction made a significant difference in students’ performance and their writing proficiency had increased in the post-test also, the range in the scores at all levels between the minimum and maximum values is high in the post-test (8, 8, 8, 8) as compared to diagnostic test (7, 7, 6.33, 6). This indicates greater the range more the dispersion. Hence, it can be stated that improvement was observed in post-test performance as a result of WIP.

Category	Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Inter-Persuasive	Average - Diagnostic Test	34	4.22	1.32	6	1	7
Inter-Persuasive	Average - Post Test	34	6.2	1.63	4	4	8
Inter-Expository	Average - Diagnostic Test	34	4.23	1.39	6	1	7
Inter-Expository	Average - Post Test	34	6.22	1.65	4	4	8
B. Com-Persuasive	Average - Diagnostic Test	30	3.46	1.73	6.33	-	6.33
B. Com-Persuasive	Average - Post Test	30	5.02	2.59	8	-	8
B. Com-Expository	Average - Diagnostic Test	30	3.68	1.74	6	-	6
B. Com-Expository	Average - Post Test	30	5.03	2.57	8	-	8

Table 5: Comparative descriptive analysis of diagnostic and post-test of HSSC and undergraduate classes (persuasive & expository essay writing)

Besides answering the research questions, the study also tested a hypothesis to verify the significance of WIP in developing writing skills among intermediate and undergraduate students. The hypothesis stated:

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship in persuasive/expository writing performance of ESL (HSSC/Undergraduate) learners before and after the intervention of the Writing Intervention Plan.*

Category		Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Inter-Expository	Pretest	1		34
	Posttest	.862**	.000	34
Inter-Persuasive	Pretest	1		34
	Posttest	.845**	.000	34
B. Com-Expository	Pretest	1		30
	Posttest	.805**	.000	30
B. Com-Persuasive	Pretest	1		30
	Posttest	.734**	.000	30

Table 6: Correlation matrix



Table 6, given above presents the correlation matrix between diagnostic and posttest results of expository and persuasive essays at HSSC and Undergraduate level, respectively. Where R= .862, .845, .805 and .734 which is > -1 and < +1, thus indicating a fairly strong correlation. The p value=.000 is consistent for expository and persuasive writings at both intermediate and undergraduate levels. Hence, it indicates that there is a significant relationship between WIP and writing achievement, thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

The hypothesis was further tested against the Paired Sample T-test on the rationale that the T-test is usually performed in case-controlled studies or repeated measure designs. AR in this study was case-controlled and was based on repeated measure designs to test the effectiveness of WIP in developing writing skills among the students. Table 7, provided below, shows the paired difference between diagnostic and post-test. The results are significant for expository and persuasive writings at both levels (p value .000). This test also strengthens the view that the writing intervention plan resulted in the improvement of students’ writing competence.

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig (2- tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Inter – Expository	Pretest Posttest	-1.99088	0.83911	0.14391	-2.28366	-1.6981	13.835	33	.000
Inter – Persuasive	Pretest Posttest	-1.98118	0.87574	0.15019	-2.28674	1.67562	13.191	33	.000
B. Com – Expository	Pretest Posttest	-1.85567	0.88174	0.16098	-2.18491	1.52642	11.527	29	.000
B. Com – Persuasive	Pretest Posttest	-2.42133	1.0178	0.18582	-2.80138	2.04128	-13.03	29	.000

Table 7: Paired Sample T-Test

Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis using techniques of analytic induction, a research logic used for qualitative data analysis in which data is scanned to develop various themes and categories (Katz, 2001). Also, a constant comparative method was employed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which compares various responses to one question and assesses similarities and differences between respondents through triangulation. Kolb (2012) believed that data analysis should not just focus on surface responses, but that it requires extensive probing to reach a substantial understand of these ideas. Hence, qualitative data provides basic insights into students’ perceptions about past writing experience, current practices, and possible explications to overcome the identified challenging areas in SL writing practices. The themes are presented in Table 8.

Pre-Intervention Responses	Post-Intervention Responses
Problems like organizing the text, grammar skills, and vocabulary usage are common.	Vocabulary building and grammar skills contributed to significant improvement in their writing skills
To overcome the problems in writing they expected the teacher to assist them during the process of writing and provide them with guidelines for writing.	They found the writing instruction framework as a very helpful strategy during writing class; which focused on instructions on steps of writing, grammar skill exercises, vocabulary building, and group discussion.
The students’ past writing experience revealed that they had been following the product approach of writing and no formal class was assigned for essay writing purposes in English and Urdu courses.	The process approach to writing helped them in enhancing their writing competency and made them independent writers not only in English but also in Urdu; as class cum workshop environment helped with error correction, and peer assistance.
They heavily relied on notes, prepared essays, and teachers’ essays to be written on board for the copy.	They experienced to attempt the given writing tasks independently, based on group discussion and brainstorming.

Table 8: Pre- and post-intervention perception and feedback of participants on writing instruction

## Findings

AR was carried out in the quest of finding a feasible WIP that could alleviate the predicament of deficient writing skills of HSSC and Undergraduate students. In this regard, three major stakeholders were involved. teachers of English Language, teachers of other subjects, and students of HSSC and Undergraduate level. The application of WIP through AR apparently has proven to be of significance in developing writing skills among students.

Since the WIP was consciously developed to cater to the writing needs of students after the critical analysis of the responses received from language and other subject teachers, the holistic efficiency of WIP in developing writing skills among students can be gauged through Tables 5, 6, and 7. Because the plan incorporated elements of grammar, writing expressions, academic vocabulary, and task-based activities that walked students through the writing process, as outlined in Table 4, it proved to be efficient in dealing with some weaknesses in writing skills that have been listed by Ishaq et al. (2020)

Besides this, scaffolding of the writing tasks provided during the intervention was carried out through brainstorming, guided discussions, gradual release of the tasks, and self and peer assessment and was quite productive for students (See themes in Table 8). It helped the students become more independent and confident writers. The students also showed an increase in their self-assuredness in handling the writing tasks assigned to them. The collaboration was ensured to keep the affective filter low and enhance the chances of learning among peers (Johnson & Johnson, 2020).

Two percent of the responses from the students indicated that they did not receive formal training in writing in their national language (Urdu). This WIP helped provide these students with strategies they could adapt in composing essays in their national language as well. Along with English, the national language is also taught as a compulsory language course until graduation in the country. In the Pakistani context, the component of writing skills holds equal significance in the national language as well. However, it is observed that writing skills in the national language are often overlooked to a considerable extent when compared to the emphasis placed on English writing skills (Arif et al., 2016). This discrepancy in attention and focus raises important questions about the overall development of writing proficiency in both languages within the educational landscape of Pakistan. Addressing this imbalance is crucial for fostering comprehensive language competence among students, recognizing the cultural and linguistic diversity within the country. The impact of WIP in developing writing skills and improving writing achievements was successful and therefore action research reflects that developing writing frameworks according to students' needs and contemporary trends might bring productive results, motivating ELLs to undergo another cycle of modification in the future.

## Future Action Plan

The findings of the study made the teacher-researcher reflect on aspects that could help in straightening the future action plan. The plan could work best in similar teaching-learning situations like this study. However, a plan has been laid out as a suggestion for teachers with different situations. The WIP could be adopted/adapted to suit the situation and needs of the students. The following steps of action have been devised as a result of reflection on the findings of the Action Research study, which makes it distinct from other research methodologies:

### *Action step 1: Revise teaching*

Following the findings, observations, and reflection of the study, reform in the methodology of teaching writing through the implementation of a process approach should be adopted. The focus should be on student-centered classes, where the teacher would assume the role of a facilitator (as much as the administrative setup allows). But above all, the idea of providing a customized writing booklet, based on grammar topics from the syllabus, vocabulary-building skills, and writing activities targeting their examination needs, seems very feasible since it gave a constructive impact on students in this study.

### *Action step 2: Reformulate assessment strategies*

Peer assessment and self-assessment practices could be introduced to empower students to take charge of their learning journey and enhance their critical skills, thereby contributing to improved accuracy in writing. Additionally, key emphasis should be placed on providing corrective feedback to minimize errors

made during the writing process. This approach not only encourages a more active engagement of students in their own learning, but also cultivates a culture of continuous improvement, fostering a more effective and supportive learning environment.

#### *Action step 3: Continue daily reflections*

Finally, following the tenets of AR, regular self-reflection sessions and the adaptation of teaching plans and strategies could be focused on.

#### Recommendations and Future Directions

The study suggests some essential measures to further augment the teaching-learning sphere: It was conducted to discover a viable framework for teaching writing aligned with the contemporary models of writing and teaching ESL at colleges needs to be ranged with outcome-driven pedagogies. Teachers should reflect on their current teaching practices in regular cycles to avoid stagnant learning. Administrative authorities should ensure in-service teachers' training sessions for the implementation of contemporary teaching pedagogies.

In addressing students' writing proficiency at the HSSC level, a comprehensive and multifaceted reform is deemed imperative. The recognition of writing as an intrinsic component across various disciplines and educational tiers underscores the necessity for a concerted effort. It is incumbent upon educators to appreciate that competence in writing extends beyond the college milieu and necessitates the collective involvement of instructors in earlier formative stages of education (Graham & Perin, 2007). To instill adept writing skills in college students, the collaboration of educators from elementary and secondary levels becomes integral. Such an inclusive approach ensures a seamless transition and cumulative development of writing skills throughout a student's educational journey. Furthermore, this underscores the pivotal role of teachers in the foundational years, contributing significantly to the cultivation of effective writing capabilities. Aligning with the proposition by Kiuwara et al. (2009), there emerges a call for educators to adopt flexible instructional adjustments. This approach involves tailoring teaching methodologies to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. By acknowledging the multidimensional nature of writing, teachers can adapt their instructional strategies, providing students with a more personalized and effective learning experience.

#### Conclusion

The findings of the study have strengthened the significance of the use of a writing intervention plan (WIP) in the teaching Essay Writing skills among English language learners. The process approach used in the plan showed to have promising outcomes in terms of providing students with a systematic approach to tackling writing tasks as a step-by-step process. Additionally, the scaffolding strategies used in the WIP were quite useful in making the students reflective and independent learners. To add to the positive results of the study, it is safe to call Action Research (AR), a useful means to achieve excellence in teaching through systematic observations, plans of action, reflection, and modification. Therefore, there is a need to promote more AR in the domain of language learning as it helps teachers become more systematic and reflective in their practices.

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