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**AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS’
ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF COHESION AND
COHERENCE IN ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING AT
HIGHER SECONDARY LEVELS OF SINDH, PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing is a form of testing; moreover, most of the writing tasks and assignments across the country school curriculum, the designers of the writing assignments is also the audience and the evaluator, and that designer-evaluator expects student-writers to demonstrate particular knowledge and skills. Hence, like all the tests designers, developers of writing assignments should carefully consider different purposes, the parameters and constraints, and the evaluation criteria for each writing assignment. In this paper, we discussed organizational problems in essay writing such as, topic sentences, thesis statements, cohesion, coherence, completeness and unity. We applied a qualitative method for data collection. For this, we selected one hundred students to write essays on different topics. Among them, we chose twenty written essays for data analysis. The findings suggested that students have organizational problems in English essay writing. It was found in their writings that most of the students have difficulties in organization their essay. Students get difficulties in introduction, topic sentence, thesis statement, transition of ideas, and use of cohesive devices, sequence and writing conclusion. There are certain reasons. Firstly, the effects of background information of particular topic and general information. Secondly, the low language proficiency, the students get it difficulty to create coherence and unity in their writings. It is because they give more importance to language and meanings

KEYWORDS

Writing, Organizational, parameters, constraints, curriculum, assignments, cohesion

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a productive skill and it has a great important in English language learning. Mostly, students get difficulties in writing essay. It constitutes a trouble for many ESL students globally and is a big challenge for most of the students of English at higher secondary levels of Sindh, Pakistan. Although various approaches to the English teaching of writing have been developed from numerous teaching methods. But ESL writing is still a major challenge for the learners. Students have organizational problems especially in cohesion and coherence of their English essay writing as investigated by the results of first essay writing questionnaire designed for one hundred students. To the best of this research study, most of the researchers in Pakistan have carried research studies in context to essay writing at university levels and also quantitative ones. The main focus of this present study is concerned with the investigation of organizational problems that Pakistani students of English language encounter while writing their essays in English. ESL learners come across various problems in learning writing. As many students of English have noted that attaining and developing writing skill looks more painstaking and challenging than acquiring other three skills. In fact, constructing and developing a coherent piece of writing is a massive challenge, if one is second language learner. It is because English texts' structure, organization and style differ from other languages. Students get difficulties in recognizing and managing the differences. This is fact of rhetorical conventions and different parameters of Sindhi and Urdu language as learners' mother tongues. In Pakistan, the education system only gives emphasis on writing for taking tests and examinations.

Zheng (1999), the learners of English language face various problems when they write essays. Many researchers noted, acquiring writing skills looks more difficult and demanding more than other skills of language learning (Zheng, Y. (1999). Nunan (1999) believed that creating a well-balanced and well-organized piece of writing is herculean task and challenge for the second language learning (Nunan, D., 1999). Furthermore; Leki (1991) said that the style, structure and organization of English language differ from other languages (Leki, I. (1991). It requires many efforts to know and organize the differences.

Aims and Objectives

- Aims: An investigation of students' organizational problems of cohesion and coherence in English essay writing at higher secondary schools of Sindh Pakistan?

Objectives

- How do students identify the coherence of the written essay at higher secondary levels of Sindh, Pakistan?
- How do students identify the cohesion of the written essays at higher secondary schools of Sindh Pakistan?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this research paper is threefold: first definition of ESL writing, highlighting some important features of writing to ESL learners, and give some aspects of ESL Pakistani students' organization problems in writing with context to cohesion and coherence at higher secondary levels of Sindh, Pakistan.

2.1. What is writing?

Writing is "a very thoughtful and reflective activity that needs much time and thinking to on any specific topic in order to analyze, classify and organize the background knowledge. The writers require a solid and a suitable language and style to structure background knowledge and information in the form of coherent discourse." Currently, writing is considered as a complex and social activity that can reproduce the writer's communicative skills which are very hard to learn and develop, in context to ESL. While L1 writing is supposed to be a composed of three different domains: a psychological, a socio-cultural, a cognitive and a linguistic perspective. The process writing is adopted in this present study. I consider ESL writing a multi-dimensional process based on cognitive activity influenced by various contextual and linguistic factors; psychological, socio-political, socio-cultural issues, instructional and linguistic issues. If one overcomes on these factors, he can make his writing unforgettable experience.

2.2. Significance of ESL Writing

Writing has a great significance in modern teaching and learning. It is always considered a very important skill in learning and teaching language. It is very useful two grounds: First, it boasts and motivates learners' brainstorm, thinking, collecting and organizing ideas as well as developing their skills to organize, analyze, criticize and summarize. Second, it can strengthen learners' thinking, learning, getting and reflecting on English language.

In Pakistan, writing create troubles for the young learners, they are unable to create coherence and cohesion in their writings. They face organization problems and they face a lot of difficulties to analyze and organize the ideas. The current study is a very much significant to learning of Pakistani students of English language because it can facilitate them to acquire basic skills which are required for understanding and knowing what they study and how they covert such knowledge and information in their own words. This enables students to keep themselves to away from rote learning, memorization and plagiarism which are widely discouraged by new learning and teaching theories. Moreover; the competencies in essay writing could help them to get academic and professional successes. They can pass all competitive tests and examinations successfully.

2.3. Coherence

Coherence is combination of semantic structures of two different kinds: register and organization (Halliday, M., & Hasan, R., 1985). Organization in essay writing is "a complex phenomenon, involving multiple readers and also text-based features" (Johns, 1986: p.247). The term "text-based features" called organization such as, linking the sentences, sticking to the point and unity. While reader-based features in essay writing mean that the reader interacts with text depending on writer's prior knowledge and understanding. The word "organization" is defined in this way that "the organization of the discourse will all the elements present and fit together logically" (Heller, M., 1999). This indicated that a well-organized and well-balanced essays are consisted of an

introduction of the topic, a thesis statement, cohesion and coherence, rhetorical support and last one conclusion. A many research articles across Pakistan would have highlighted essay writers' organization problems in essay writing in English. For instance, Pakistani students' write-ups revealed that repetitions, parallelism, range of sentences, lack in variations and exploitation of different cohesive or connective devices are considered a major source of the organization and textual deviation.

In context to ESL organization of essay writing at higher secondary levels, many researchers have agreed on this point that students get problems on two grounds: micro level and macro level. The micro level means students' troubles in the use of linking words. Whereas, macro level is broadly concerned with relating phrases and sentences. Halliday and Hassan (1985) denoted that the idea of organization is at semantic level; it widely states relations of the meaning which is within text, and it defined it as text (Halliday, M., & Hasan, R., 1985). The researchers have spotlighted the significance of organization in text claiming that the text stands as text by its organization. But for the organization, the sentences would be disjoined and resulted in huge amount of unrelated sentences (Hinkel, E. (2004). Reviewed studies suggested that cohesion and coherence problems (organization) can cause serious problems for the student writers. Most of the researchers have paid more attention to various aspects of the organizational problems including different countries and Pakistan. However, in context to research in Pakistan, the less focus is given to research in academic writings and their organizational problems. Therefore, the present study is to investigate of students' organizational problems of cohesion and coherence in English essay writing at higher secondary schools of Sindh Pakistan.

2.4. Cohesion

Cohesion is exceptionally imperative component of writing. Most of the analysts are concurred that the cohesion is on the large scale level which is additionally related to connecting thoughts. It is related interfacing and joining the expressions and sentences. The thought of cohesion is semantic one; it indicates the relations with meaning which exist inside the content, most of the analysts have talked almost the noteworthiness and significance of cohesion in composing claiming that the content stands as a content by the implies of the cohesion.

But for the cohesion, the sentences would be disjoined and would result in a number of disconnected sentences. The research studies have looked into that cohesion constitutes a few enormous issues to Pakistani students. Numerous analysts in different nations in Pakistan have paid our consideration to distinctive highlights of cohesion issues from which learners complain.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current research study is context-specificity and explanatory in nature. This is interpretative qualitative research method was selected which is usually used in such kinds of studies. The interpretative method is very authentic method for the researcher because this approach explores and comprehends the context in which essay writing is taught and learnt in English in English in distinctive Pakistani school levels. This also helped us to reveal the issues and difficulties that Pakistani students face in learning as well as in essay writing. There are a lot of learning difficulties that students and teachers face in the development and organization of texts. The fifty students were selected for this study and taken as samples from different schools of Sindh, Pakistan who

have organizational issues and problems of cohesion and coherence in their essay writing. Among them 20 essays were selected for data analysis while using purposively sampling. Their write-ups were assessed and checked.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that Pakistani students of English language experience organizational problems such as thesis statement, unity, cohesion and coherence in their writings. It was found in their writings that most of the students have difficulties in organization their essay. Some problems were revealed such as difficulty in introduction, topic sentence, thesis statement, transition of ideas, and use of cohesive devices, sequence and writing conclusion. There are number of reasons which are associated with the learners' coherence in English essays. The first most important is the effects of background knowledge and information on particular topic on the quality of coherence of learners' writings. Secondly, low language proficiencies and skills of the students in knowing and developing coherence in writing because they mostly give more focus to language matters rather than meanings. This study revealed that most of students at IBA Community colleges and schools follow different techniques in their writings which cause writing incoherent. They follow long introduction without thesis statements if they give thesis statement then it can be a broad one either in introduction of after the introduction. They also forget to give thesis statement in their introductory paragraphs. In addition, they also overused cohesive devices, coordinate sentences and misusing topic sentences. These are such caused which create problems for students for their coherent and quality of writing. In context to students' organizational problems in cohesion and coherence, some were reviewed difficulties in using anaphoric and cataphoric references, substitutions, connective devices, connotations, ellipsis and genre associated cohesive connections. They were unaware of correct using of cohesive ties and devices in their writings.

The findings of present study showed that there are multiple factors and situations which are lying behind such different cohesion and coherence problems. The students face a lot of problems and challenges at psychological grounds including lack of self-confidence and motivation as well as writing anxiety. In Sindh, Pakistan at higher secondary levels, the students are not much motivated to write paragraphs or essays for many reasons. Firstly, there is strong gap between teachers and students due to large enrolment in the class. The teachers do not focus on giving writing practices to the students because it is difficult for the teachers to give them proper feedback. Secondly, teachers who teach at higher secondary levels are not trained enough and they follow traditional methods of teaching, lecturing, book reading, reading aloud and homework. They only give importance to reading over other language skills. Thirdly, teachers' negative attitudes towards writing. They believe that writing is very difficult skill to teach the students and it is time consuming skill. Therefore, they demotivate the students. Thirdly, teachers do not follow writing techniques such as process of writing, guided writing and controlled writing. Finally, the lack of motivation which have adverse effects on the students' organization development in essay and paragraph writing. Besides these factors, another factors have been also observed that learners' low motivation factor contributed to their vocabulary issues in writing. Learners' lack of confidence and self-belief could be caused by number of socio-cultural problems. Family backgrounds and

parents' culture of power and dominancy over children could contribute indirectly in their self-confidence by marginalizing their thoughts, views and opinions in family. The learners have fear of their parents; this is very common in context to Sindh where parents always give punishment to their children. This attitude of punishment by parents have psychological effects on the learners. Another factor is scholastic expectations of families that they put on the shoulders of young learners. Parents want more expectations from their children beyond their intellectual approaches and abilities. In context to educational system of Sindh, Pakistan, the students are not allowed to ask or raise any questions in the class from the teachers. Even they do not encourage to argue with teachers and negotiate the meanings. Teachers are the supreme authority in the class. They only tend to convince the students to their private coaching centers where they provide content knowledge. It is because learning environment in public schools do not create self-confidence among the students and highly talented students are not provided solid opportunities to show their confidence and abilities due to the lack of proper time. It is also observed that most of the teachers give more focus on grammatical errors but not on organizational problems. They are unable to perceive cohesion and coherence in their writing. Moreover; the learners who have confidence, they are competent enough to convert their content knowledge and thoughts in writing. It is because every student is competent but there are many students who have low confidence they cannot write good composition. Therefore, they need psychological support and good learning environment which is very low in context to Sindh at higher secondary school levels to boost students' self-motivation and self-confidence as they can ease their psychological problems and challenges. Because writing anxiety has many negative influences on their academic enhancement and achievement.

The research has indicated that those writers who have self-confidence in comparison with other who have low self-confidence tend to stop more while writing and are less hesitant with planning of overall the organization or development of their essays. In reference to Sindh, Pakistan, data analysis showed multiple factors that could have caused writing anxiety in the students such as negative feedback, negative oral criticism, lack of written feedback, not involving the students during feedback, time pressure, over work load and writing on difficult topics.

Findings have appeared that tall anxious journalists, in contrast with other more uncertain ones, incline to halt more whereas composing are fewer concerned with arranging the generally structure of writing. Within Pakistani setting, knowledge of examination uncovered the different kinds of variables that could have added to Pakistani students' composing uneasiness such as need of composed criticism, negative verbal feedback, working beneath time weight, and composing around troublesome subjects. The Pakistani setting highlights that those students who have background knowledge and have higher self-esteem level, they can produce good piece of writing as compared to those who have no background knowledge and also having low self-esteem level. Furthermore, it is also determined that students' low performance in their composition is affected by their earlier negative assessments or by more multifaceted psychodynamics. In context to input, it was appeared that peer criticism and bunch of imminent teachers experienced altogether less composing uneasiness than the instructor criticism bunch as they gotten suppositions from their peers to expound on, and this collaboration made a difference them see at their writings in an unexpected way and reduce their composing uneasiness. Additionally, it is inferred that writer's piece that leads to their uneasiness in composing can be due to the students' composing beneath

time weight. At instructing level, a number of factors added to Pakistani students' distinctive composing encounters such as educating workload, constrained lecture time, shortage of the teachers' proficient advancement, teachers' demotivation towards teaching paper composing, and the composition course.

Rote learning is one of the highlights characteristics that the Pakistani high school educational system. Students are energized to memorize what they consider instead of lock in in basic and creative thinking forms. Socially, Pakistanis understudies who memorize what they ponder are respected as cleverer than those who don't.

Typically strengthened by most exams within the diverse instructive stages in most courses which inquire alternates questions that generally require them to review what they have memorized amid them ponder. This takes off no place for the advancement of basic or inventive considering abilities. Tutoring is subsequently driven only to get good grades in national examinations, which decide for them get to the college. These exams don't as it were cause a culture of fear and dissatisfaction, but too strengthen repetition memorization and smother basic considering and imaginative expression.

Prior knowledge plays a vital part in one's comprehension and composition. Picking up earlier information is almost common issue that empowers them to compose a paper approximately a point in which they could be interested. Background knowledge brings students to classroom writing that determined as major unmistakable features between local and non-native learners of English language. They include foundation knowledge and capabilities that can be clearly grasped in ESL/EFL learners' reactions to their writings and themes.

In line to the findings of the current research study in context to Sindhi/Urdu language and their influence on students' English writing, a modest bunch of other considers have uncovered how Sindhi/Urdu defiantly interfering in EFL Writing. To begin with, the differentiating highlights between Sindhi/Urdu and English have been distinguished as potential supporters to watched error generation and shortcomings in a few perusing skills, but most especially in composing abilities. Moment, shortcoming in acing one's local dialect such as Sindhi/Urdu within the current consider might account for their shortcoming in EFL composing aptitudes. From this country study, we have observed that Pakistani students' in context to Sindh, could not identify the coherence and cohesion in their writings. They have a lot of organizational problems of unity, thesis statement, and development of paragraphs, coherence and cohesion. They write essays without following rules and techniques of writings.

5. CONCLUSION

The Pakistani students do not utilize educating materials which can shelter a wide run of coherence and cohesion because they have distinctive capability levels. They are not being taught to organize the paragraph. The instruction methods that they apply are not giving benefits to them. It is because teachers do not change their approaches to assist them to overcome their challenges. The main reason behind this issue is that students have distinctive abilities. Another reason is that teaching and learning materials and assignments are not reviewed and delivered in the classes to guide the students particularly in huge classes of distinctive capacities and skills. The criticism hones utilized by the paper composing teachers ought to combine both sorts of verbal and composed criticism, be

instantly given to the students for a basic and helpful to challenge students and also offer assistance in order to create the diverse coherence and cohesion abilities. The evaluation hones utilized ought to be developmental and summative. The developmental appraisal hones ought to be normal, shrewd and directing. Utilize of portfolio and task can be great hones. For the improvement of writing in context to Sindh, Pakistan, there are many areas which might be studied in future for the better understanding of essay writing. Such as, survey on the impacts of teaching trends and technology on students' organization skills in composition, conducting research on the challenges which learners face in different forms of writing, investigating the feedback mechanism that affect students writing, survey on the teaching mechanism of the teachers in writing and research on the role of revision and editing strategies on organization skills.

Such as, conducting a research studies on the effects of different teaching techniques on the development of Students' organizational skills in writing, investigating the challenges that students face in essay writing, exploring teachers' views about teaching the mechanics of writing in an essay writing course, investigating the role played by different revision and editing strategies on the development of students' organizational skills and analyzing students' vocabulary learning strategies and its effect on the development of coherent and cohesive written essays.

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