



Effective Strategies for Improving Essay Writing Skills: A Survey of the Teaching and Learning Practices of Essay Writing at Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Ordinary Level (O-Levels)

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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study of the teaching strategies practised for English essay writing at Secondary School Certificate (SSC/Matriculation) and the General Certificate of Education-Ordinary level (GCE-O-Level) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan. The study has the objectives to compare and contrast the teaching strategies for English essay writing at SSC and O-Level in order to propose effective teaching strategies for the improvement of students' English essay writing skills. The population of the study has included English Language teachers and students of SSC and O-Level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province through the Stratified Random sampling technique. By adopting the Mixed Methods Research approach, questionnaires having both open and close-ended questions were employed for collecting data from teachers and students. The data obtained through questionnaires were analyzed descriptively and by applying the T-test. The study has revealed that O-Level teachers follow students-centered approaches i.e. Direct and Activity-based methods that ensure the participation of the students during the process of teaching and learning. Whereas, the SSC level teachers frequently use teachers-centered approaches i.e. Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Lecture Method that ultimately develop cramming in students. The study has recommended the provision of proper professional training to SSC level teachers and modern facilities in classrooms in Government schools.

INTRODUCTION

According to Meyer (2005), O'Donnell and Paiva (1993), and Zemach and Rumisek (2003), an essay refers to a group of paragraphs about a single subject. Bereiter and Scardamalia (2013) are

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of the view that an introduction, body and conclusion are the pre-requisites of a good composition. An effective English essay must possess correct spelling as well as proper punctuation. The sentences should be accurately arranged and there must be recommended word division (Dawson, Drexler & E. Ferdig, 2007). In addition, an essay must be coherent and cohesive to make sense (Thornbury, 2005 & Wyrick, 2002). For Langan (2013), there must have a topic-related strong central idea (thesis) in a good piece of writing. In other words, the essay must have a clear and logical organization. Warburton (2007) calls essay writing the heart of education.

Across the globe, the major challenge for English language teachers is to flourish the knowledge and skills of students which are necessary for effective English essay writing (Oyedele & Chikwature, 2016). The findings of Nziramasanga Commission (1999) show that the failure of students in comprehending English essay writing techniques means failure in other subjects also because ineffective essay writing skills affect other content subjects as well (as cited in Oyedele & Chikwature, 2016). Many scholars assert that essay writing skills assist students to perform well at the higher level of education and also in professional life (Nunan, 2001 & Dovey, 2010). However, instead of involving the students in the process of writing, the central focus of the teachers in Pakistan hinges on the provision of oral or verbal instructions. The job of the students is limited to note taking and memorisation just to pass the examination which is alarming. Moreover, a number of Pakistani teachers are unable to improve the linguistics skills of their students which lead to a failure in written discourse, and when it comes to creativity, they find themselves paralysed (Sidiqi 2007, as cited in Haider, 2012).

Warsi (2004) states that the students after studying English for about 6 to 8 years find themselves unable to effectively and effortlessly communicate in English because creativity is not paid substantial heed in Pakistan (as cited in Haider, 2012). In the view of Abidi (1991), the main emphasis of our teachers is on rote learning and memorization instead of engaging the students in the learning experience. He further comments that Pakistani teachers should realise that in today's competitive world, our efforts to improve the standards of education should not only accord with our national needs but also with the international standards (as cited in Haider, 2012).

Aims and Objectives

This study aims to:

- Compare and contrast the essay writing skills of SSC and O-Level students.
- Compare and contrast the teaching strategies for essay writing at SSC and O-Level.
- Identify the weaknesses of SSC and strengths of O-Level students in essay writing.
- Propose effective teaching strategies for improving the essay writing skills of the SSC students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing has always been seen as an important skill in English language acquisition. This

importance is due to the fact that it reinforces grammatical structures and vocabulary that educators strive to teach their students. It is the area in which learners need to be offered adequate time to develop their writing skills; therefore, more time should be devoted to it in classrooms containing ELLs so that they will be prepared to effectively communicate in real life as well as academic situations (Ismail, 2011). Additionally, writing skills can be developed when the learners' interests are acknowledged and when they are given frequent opportunities to actually practice writing (Ismail, 2011). Thomas (1993) observes that problems in the writing of ESL students can lead to self-doubt and anxiety that hinder the process of achieving writing proficiency. Kasper and Petrello (1998) state that feedback and assessment by instructors and/or peers play a very vital role in improving the writing skills of the students, and also suggest that the type of feedback teachers provide plays a significant role in decreasing writing anxiety of ESL students. Beaven (1977) found that teachers who used shared experiences, discussed students' thoughts, and requested additional information as feedback were most successful in decreasing students' frustration thus, making them feel more confident. Peer feedback is one of the most influential methods of becoming a proficient writer of English. Studies show that school age children are more conscious of their peers' reactions and perceptions than their instructor's; therefore, they are more apt to construct their own knowledge and understanding (Bitchener, Cameron, & Young, 2005). Furthermore, Storch (2007) suggests that pair work allows learners to combine their linguistic resources in order to collaboratively create new knowledge about language, which leads them to more successful writing experiences.

Teaching practices play a significant role in developing students' essay writing skills. According to Dewey (1916), teachers should update their knowledge and skills in order to address the students' weaknesses, especially in their written works. Challenges are faced by the students mainly in three aspects which are conventions, the use of proper punctuation and the use of language, i.e. correct grammatical use (Ghabool, Kashef & Mariadass, 2012). Current research shows that it is more important to create an environment that encourages students to take risks in their writing which means less concentration on conventional rules of writing and more on the expression of ideas (Shaughnessy, 1998). This shift of focus is what MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991) calls a Fluency First Approach. She believes that only after students have learned to express themselves then they can move toward the correction of grammatical errors. Baradaran and Sarfarazi (2011) found that students who had the opportunity to receive scaffolding principles outperformed the ones who did not experience scaffolding as it has a significant impact on the ESL students' academic writing. Read (2010) suggests the IMSCI (Inquiry, Modeling, Shared, Collaborative, Independent) model for scaffolding and finds it extremely effective for second language learners. Gagne and Parks (2013) found that using this method of small group scaffolding was, in fact, a successful strategy to produce the language needed to complete a writing task.

Fareed, Jawed and Awan (2018) found that the majority of the students who come from non-elite schools in Pakistan do not possess the required skills and command in English. Resultantly, they face difficulties to pursue higher education and their professional careers. Muhammad (2011) is of the view that Pakistani students after completing their SSC from non-elite secondary schools encounter many difficulties in English writing (as cited in Fareed, Jawed & Awan, 2018). Pakistani students experience problems of the organization when writing essays. They lack the efficiency to come up with a good introduction by writing a clear topic sentence and thesis

statement. In addition, they cannot write a convincing conclusion as well (Lanjwani, Shah, Jarah, Ahmed & Mirani, 2019). According to Wattam (2016) and Hyland (2004), the best way for practicing writing is to adopt the process of writing i.e. planning, revising and editing (as cited in Fatima and Akbar, 2017). It is, however, regrettable that even in the twenty-first century Process approach is not commonly used at the SSC level for developing the writing skills of the learners in Pakistani Classrooms. Writing is taught here in such a manner that ‘it ends up killing the creativity’ (Boden, 2001). Haq (1995) quoted that majority of teachers are unaware of the modern techniques of teaching writing.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, English teachers ignore the practical involvement of the students because they do not arrange result-oriented activities for them. Resultantly, the students do not get ample exposure to the English language which is significant in developing various skills (Shah, 2019). Hussain (2005) states that at the SSC level non-elite schools, teachers never guide the students on writing effectively (as cited in Shah, 2019). Pre-writing activities, deficient vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, grammar, limited time and a lengthy syllabus are some of the major problems that teachers encounter when teaching writing to secondary school students in a non-elite setup (Fareed, Jawed & Awan, 2018). According to Aqeel and Sajid (2014), teachers in Pakistani non-elite schools focus mainly on building learners’ vocabulary and improving their grammar rather than writing skills. Moreover, lack of spelling and grammar correction in students’ written assignments and the absence of constructive feedback are some of the problems related to teachers (as cited in Fareed, Jawed & Awan, 2018). According to Jabeen (2016), private school teachers prefer using students’ centred methods such as group work and pair work activities while in public schools teachers widely use traditional methods and pay less focus on innovation. In Pakistani non-elite schools, students face copious problems to compose effective essays. One of the reasons is that they are not properly guided as to how a good paragraph is developed. The teaching methods of their teachers do not benefit them because their teachers do not go for innovation and stick to their traditional approaches. Hence, they are unable to assist their students in overcoming their challenges (Lanjwani, Shah, Jarah, Ahmed & Mirani, 2019). The current research is a survey of the teaching techniques practised by the teachers, and writing strategies employed by the students of SSC and O-levels with the objectives to identify the effective strategies for improving essay writing skills.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used mixed methods research design in the current study. It was a survey type study and the questionnaires were used as instruments to collect data from teachers and students of SSC and O-Level systems. The questionnaire of the Marquette University was used by the researcher (ESLP 82 Questionnaire: Self-Assessment of English Writing Skills and Use of Writing Strategies, 2019) for developing questionnaires for the teachers and students. Both open ended and close-ended questions were designed for collecting quantitative as well as qualitative data. The researcher has used the Stratified Random Sampling technique in this study. The sample is comprised of 18 schools (12 SSC Level and 6 O-Level), 72 English language teachers (48 from SSC level and 24 from O-Level), 180 students (120 from SSC level and 60 from O-Level) which are randomly selected from the districts of Peshawar, Mardan and Nowshera , Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan through a draw. The sampled population is comprised of 656 SSC level institutions, 4862 SST (General) teachers and 225962 10th Grade students from

the Public sector (The Independent Monitoring Unit, 2017), and 17 O-Level institutions, 44 O-Level English teachers and 694 O-Level students from Private sector in Mardan and Peshawar Divisions from District Mardan, Nowshera and Peshawar. When the data collection process was completed, it was tabulated and analyzed using IBM SPSS and interpreted by the researcher keeping in view the research objectives and research questions. T-test as a statistical tool was used to compare the means and to show the significance of the teaching strategies for English essay writing used by the teachers and the writing strategies practised by the students of SSC and O-level. The teachers' suggestions for improving the essay writing skills of the students are also presented descriptively.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data is analysed and discussed in two basic categories. In the first category, the comparative analysis of the data related to the teaching strategies used by the SSC and O-levels teachers is presented, whereas, in the second category the comparative analysis of the data related to the writing strategies employed by SSC and O-Levels is given. In each category, the data obtained from the questionnaires is analysed in a tabulated form followed by discussion.

Comparative Analysis of SSC and O-Level Teaching Strategies

Table: 1 General Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing

Q.No.1	I enable the students to summarize a text effectively and accurately.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.65	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.13	
Q.No.2	I teach them how to write for a variety of purposes.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.67	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.46	
Q.No.3	I use computers and word processors to assist students to write their assignments.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.54	.015
O-Level	24	23	3.25	
Q.No.4	I teach them how to construct complex sentences.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.60	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.08	
Q.No.5	I present them model essays for reading.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	3.10	.001
O-Level	24	23	4.13	
Q.No.6	I teach them how they can write an impressive conclusion for an English essay.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.69	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.25	
Q.No.7	I make them use dictionaries and grammar books to facilitate their writing process.			

Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.71	.000
O-Level	24	23	3.88	.000
Q.No.8	I provide them enough time for essay writing practice on daily basis.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.83	.000
O-Level	24	23	3.92	.000
Q.No.9	I teach them the skills and strategies necessary for effective essay writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.85	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.29	.000
Q.No.10	I provide them enough time for discussion before, during and after the writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.90	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.17	.000
Q.No.11	I provide them opportunities to read widely.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.92	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.29	.000

The table shows the responses of the SSC and O-Level teachers about the general teaching strategies for essay writing. It indicated that in all the cases the P- value was less than the level of significance which is 0.05, i.e. $P \leq 0.05$. The mean scores of O-Level and SSC were $4.13 > 2.65$, $4.46 > 2.67$, $3.25 > 2.54$, $4.08 > 2.60$, $4.13 > 3.10$, $4.25 > 2.69$, $3.88 > 2.71$, $3.92 > 2.83$, $4.29 > 2.85$, $4.17 > 2.90$ and $4.29 > 2.92$. It is clear that the mean scores of O-Level were greater than the SSC level. Thus, it can be summed up that the general teaching strategies for Essay writing were more appropriate at O-level as compared to the SSC level.

Table: 2 Pre-Essay Writing Teaching Strategies

Q.No. 12	I teach my students how to brainstorm ideas before writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.85	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.58	.000
Q.No.13	I teach my students how to plan their compositions.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.79	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.63	.000
Q.No.14	I set up pre-writing activities.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	3.13	.002
O-Level	24	23	4.08	.002
Q.No.15	I teach them the art of writing a good introduction.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value

SSC	48	47	3.13	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.22	
Q.No.16	I teach them how to develop an effective body for an English essay.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.81	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.50	
Q.No.17	I teach them the art of creating outlines.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.69	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.04	

The table depicts the responses of the SSC and O-Level teachers about the pre-essay writing strategies. It illustrated that in all the cases the P- value was found less than the level of significance which is 0.05, i.e. $P \leq 0.05$. The mean scores of O-Level to SSC were $4.58 > 2.85$, $4.63 > 2.79$, $4.08 > 3.13$, $4.22 > 3.13$, $4.50 > 2.81$, and $4.04 > 2.69$. It is clear that the mean scores of O-Level were greater than SSC level. Hence, it can be concluded that O-Level teachers used effective pre-essay writing strategies than the SSC level.

Table: 3 Teaching Strategies During Essay Writing

Q.No.18	I teach them the art of drafting.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.67	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.21	
Q.No.19	I teach them how to edit their Compositions.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.85	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.08	
Q.No.20	I provide them opportunities to work in groups.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.85	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.38	
Q.No.21	I teach them how to logically arrange paragraphs to develop and support their thesis statement.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.69	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.50	
Q.No.22	I give them opportunities to write on a topic of their own interest.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	3.00	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.00	

The table portrays the responses of the SSC and O-Level teachers about the teaching strategies that they used during the process of essay writing. In all the questions the P-value was 0.000

which was less than the level of significance 0.05 i.e. $P \leq 0.05$. There were significant differences between the mean score of the SSC and O-Level. The mean scores of O-Level to SSC were $4.21 > 2.67$, $4.08 > 2.85$, $4.38 > 2.85$, $4.50 > 2.69$, $4.00 > 3.00$. Thus, it can be inferred that the teaching strategies during the process of Essay writing were more suitable at O-level as compared to the SSC level.

Table: 4 Post-Essay Writing Teaching Strategies

Q.No.23	I give my students feedback.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.98	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.54	
Q.No.24	I teach them how to revise their compositions.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.79	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.25	
Q.No.25	I identify their weaknesses and help them overcome those weaknesses.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.92	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.50	
Q.No.26	I expect my students to memorize what they learn verbatim (word for word).			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	3.52	.000
O-Level	24	23	2.25	
Q.No 27	I provide them time for self-assessment.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.77	.000
O-Level	24	23	3.83	
Q.No.28	I establish a link between reading and writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	2.77	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.25	
Q.No.29	I evaluate their work.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	48	47	3.73	.000
O-Level	24	23	4.71	

The table shows the responses of the SSC and O-Level teachers about the post-essay writing teaching strategies. The calculated P- value was found 0.000 in all the cases which was less than the significance level 0.05 i.e. $P \leq 0.05$. The mean scores of O-Level to SSC were $4.54 > 2.98$, $4.25 > 2.79$, $4.50 > 2.92$, $2.25 < 3.52$, $3.83 > 2.77$, $4.25 > 2.77$ and $4.71 > 2.73$. The high mean score of O-Level reflected that the O-Level teachers practised effective post-essay writing strategies as compared to the SSC level.

Table: 5 General Strategies for Essay Writing

Q.No.1	I can write a good academic paragraph.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.98	.000
O-Level	60	59	3.97	
Q.No.2	I am capable of writing a topic sentence clearly that indicates the topic as well as the central idea of a paragraph.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.00	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.00	
Q.No.3	I am able to organize my ideas logically during writing a paragraph.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.09	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.42	
Q.No.4	I can communicate my idea effectively by using appropriate vocabulary.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.98	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.13	
Q.No.5	I can practise different sentence structures during writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.03	.001
O-Level	60	59	3.68	
Q.No.6	I am capable of using correct spelling, capitalisation and punctuation.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.59	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.38	
Q.No.7	After reading a text, I can produce an exact summary of it.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.76	.000
O-Level	60	59	3.97	
Q.No.8	After I have read a text, I can produce a correct paraphrase of it.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.05	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.32	
Q.No.9	I can write a good introduction for an English essay.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.53	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.48	
Q.No.10	I am good at using different organization patterns such as Process, comparison, and cause and effect.			

Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.70	.000
O-Level	60	59	3.65	
Q.No11	I can logically arrange paragraphs to develop and support my thesis statement.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.53	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.05	

The table indicates the responses of the SSC and O-Level students about the general strategies for essay writing. The P-value in all the cases was found to be 0.000 against 0.05 level of significance i.e., $P \leq 0.05$ which indicated that significant differences existed between the strategies that the students of both the systems used. The mean scores of O-Level and the SSC were $3.97 > 2.98$, $4.00 > 3.00$, $4.42 > 3.09$, $4.13 > 2.98$, $3.68 > 3.03$, $4.38 > 3.59$, $3.97 > 2.76$, $4.32 > 3.05$, $4.48 > 3.53$, $3.65 > 2.70$, $4.05 > 2.53$, $4.22 > 3.20$, $4.45 > 3.36$, $3.53 > 2.86$ and $4.68 > 3.34$. It is clear that the mean scores of O-Level were greater than the SSC level. Thus, it can be concluded that the general strategies of O-Level teachers for Essay writing were more appropriate than the SSC level.

Table: 6 Pre-Essay Writing Strategies

Q.No.16	Before writing, I understand the task well and read the given instructions carefully.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.64	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.53	
Q.No.17	I am capable to brainstorm ideas before writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.48	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.45	
Q.No.18	I can make an outline for organizing ideas logically before writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.74	.000
O-Level	60	59	.358	
Q.No.19	I use my native language for making plans and taking notes before writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.48	.536
O-Level	60	59	3.33	
Q.No.20	I look for the relevant vocabulary.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	.333	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.17	
Q.No.21	I use a dictionary when I am not sure about something before I write.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	.295	.006
O-Level	60	59	3.57	

Q.No.22	I use a grammar book to confirm the things I am not sure about before I write.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.47	.002
O-Level	60	59	.315	

The table demonstrates the responses of the SSC and O-Level students about the pre-essay writing strategies. It illustrated that in all the cases the P- value was found less than the significance level which is 0.05, i.e. $P \leq 0.05$ which showed that there were differences between the mean scores of the students at Matriculation and O-Level. An exception was found in the statement “I make plans and notes in my native language before writing” where the P-value was found to be 0.536 which was greater than the level of significance 0.05 i.e., $P \geq 0.05$. The mean scores of O-Level and SSC were found as $4.53 > 3.64$, $4.45 > 3.48$, $.358 > 2.74$, $3.33 < 3.48$, $4.17 > 3.33$, $3.57 > 2.95$ and $.315 > 2.47$. It is clear that the mean scores of O-Level were greater than SSC level. Hence, it can be summed up that O-level students used pre-essay writing strategies effectively than the SSC level.

Table: 7 Strategies During Essay Writing

Q.No.23	I put into practice my background knowledge to provide me assistance in developing my ideas.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.49	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.25	
Q.No.24	I enjoy writing in my native language first and then translating it into English.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.36	.047
O-Level	60	59	2.88	
Q.No.25	I consider editing my ideas during writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.90	.000
O-Level	60	59	3.77	
Q.No.26	During writing, I edit for organization.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.79	.000
O-Level	60	59	3.92	
Q.No.27	I consider changing my ideas to make it clearer during writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.11	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.42	
Q.No.28	I construct new words if I do not know the right ones in English during writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.08	.619
O-Level	60	59	2.97	
Q.No.29	I make my writing fun for myself.			

Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.25	.000
O-Level	60	59	4.08	

The table shows that there were significant differences at 0.05 regarding the strategies that the SSC and O-Level students used during the process writing essays. The calculated value was found to be less than 0.05. However, there were no significant differences for the statement “I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English when I am writing” where the value of significance was found greater than 0.05. The high mean scores of O-Level students clearly demonstrate that they practiced better strategies than the students of SSC level for writing essays. The mean scores of O-Level and SSC were found as 4.25>3.49, 2.88<3.36, 3.77>2.90, 3.92>2.79, 4.42>3.11, 2.97<3.08 and 4.08>3.25.

Table: 8 Post-Essay Writing Strategies

Q.No.30	I revise the content of my writing to make my ideas clearer.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.37	.310
O-Level	60	59	3.60	
Q.No.31	I revise my writing to improve the organization.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.75	.545
O-Level	60	59	3.87	
Q.No32	I revise my writing and edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation where necessary.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.96	.000
O-Level	60	59	3.63	
Q.No33	I consult a dictionary after writing a draft.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.71	.676
O-Level	60	59	2.80	
Q.No34	When I finish writing a draft, I use a grammar book.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.76	.685
O-Level	60	59	2.67	
Q.No35	I make discussions with other students regarding my work to get feedback and to improve my writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.73	.001
O-Level	60	59	3.48	
Q.No36	I make discussions with my teacher regarding my work to get feedback for improving my writing.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	2.42	.000

O-Level	60	59	4.35	
Q.No37	I note down the types of errors I have committed to avoid making the same types of errors again.			
Groups	Sample Size (n)	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean	P-Value
SSC	120	119	3.42	.056
O-Level	60	59	3.80	

The table depicts that significant differences exist in the post-essay writing strategies for the statements (i) “I revise my writing and edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation where necessary.” (ii) “I make discussions with other students regarding my work to get feedback and to improve my writing” (iii) “I make discussions with my teacher regarding my work to get feedback for improving my writing” where the value of significance was found less than 0.05. However, no significant differences were found at 0.05 level of significance between the students at SSC and O-Level for the statements (i) “I revise the content of my writing to make my ideas clearer” where the calculated value of significance was 0.310 which is greater than 0.05. (ii) “I revise my writing to improve the organization” where the value of significance was found 0.545 which is greater than 0.05. (iii) “I consult a dictionary after writing a draft” in which the calculated value was 0.676 which is greater than 0.05. (iv) “When I finish writing a draft, I use a grammar book” where the value of significance was 0.685 which is more than 0.05. (v) “I note down the types of errors I have committed to avoid making the same types of errors again” where the calculated value was 0.06 which is greater than 0.05. The mean score of O-Level and the SSC level was $3.60 > 3.37$, $3.87 > 3.75$, $3.63 > 2.96$, $2.80 > 2.71$, $2.67 < 2.76$, $3.48 > 2.73$, $4.35 > 2.42$ and $3.80 > 3.42$. The high mean score of O-Level students showed that they had used better Post-essay writing strategies than SSC level students.

Suggestions and Recommendations by the Teachers for Improving Essay Writing

O-Level teachers suggested that for improving the essay writing skills, students’ reading habits should be developed, their vocabulary should be enhanced, and they should be motivated to do ample practice on daily basis. In addition, their competency in grammar should be improved. Model essays should be presented to them for taking insight. The use of the Process Approach and group work must be ensured. They should be familiarized with the use of figurative language. They should be enabled to improve their syntax and the use of parts of speech. Their creativity is to be improved; regular assessment is to be done and feedback should be provided on daily basis. Moreover, they should be provided with interactive classrooms where learners centered approaches are to be used. The use of Collaborative teaching will also prove beneficial in this regard. Whereas, the teachers teaching the SSC level students suggested that the creativity of the students should be improved and they should be provided sufficient time to practice essay writing on daily basis. Their knowledge of grammar should be strengthened and their vocabulary should be enhanced. The use of modern teaching and learning strategies are to be practised in the classroom and students should be given different writing activities. Feedback should be given to them on regular basis. In addition to these, the use of the Process Approach should be put into practice. They must be taught the different types and structures of essay. Model essays are to be presented to the students so that they can get insight. They should be made familiar with the essay writing techniques. Moreover, students should be provided copious opportunities to read widely. The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) must be insured in the classrooms. Classrooms should be made interactive and group work should be encouraged.

Students should be motivated and involved in the process of essay writing. The use of Activity Based Teaching and Students' Centered Approaches will prove beneficial. Likewise, the syntax of the students should be improved. The habit of dictionary use must be inculcated in students. Students Based Curriculum should be taught. Classroom competitions among the students should be organized. Students should be presented essays in outlines and the art of expanding the outlines must be taught to them. Students' environment must be conducive and regular tests should be given to them for practice. The provision of regular feedback and the use of Direct Method should be ensured.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveal that the teachers who are working in the SSC level system of education need to adopt effective, innovative and research-based strategies to develop the essay writing skills of the students. They are required to ensure the best use of Pre-essay writing, during-essay writing and Post-essay writing strategies. In addition, they should focus on the Process Approach for developing students' essay writing skills. The SSC level teachers need to setup different writing activities in classrooms and ensure the maximum participation of the students to develop their essay writing skills. They should utilize the available resources in a better and judicious way in order to motivate their students towards achieving these skills. They should encourage creativity and strongly discourage cramming. Moreover, they should encourage group work. The teachers of both systems should provide their students sufficient time for essay writing practice on daily basis. They should equip them with the skills to write an effective introduction and a convincing conclusion of an essay. They should also pay proper heed to coherence and cohesion in students' written essays to enable them to compose well cohesive and coherent essays. For this purpose, they should present model essays to students. By going through the model essays, they will develop an insight as to how to write effectively and impressively. The provision of regular feedback should also be ensured to cope with the difficulties that students encounter when writing English essays. The researcher suggests the government to accommodate the SSC level teachers with professional training according to the needs and demands to enable them to cope with the difficulties that students face in composing effective and error-free essays. The government needs to ensure the provision of modern facilities in classrooms and reduce the teacher-students' ratio in public schools so that teachers can address the manifold needs of the students.

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