

## Improving Writing skills of Pakistani University Students through Movies

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### Abstract

*The present study aims to improve the writing skills of Pakistani University Students through movies at post graduate level. In Pakistan, despite several issues, grammar translation method is still in practice to teach English language even at post graduate level. Second language teachers have devised/adopted/adapted various language teaching methodologies for teaching English language where technology and learning with fun theories have paved the way for movies in the classroom which has not attracted Pakistani English language teachers. The present study is experimental in nature with one group pre-post research design. Twenty post graduate level students of a university affiliated college constituted the sample. The intervention lasted for eight weeks. The data were collected from pretest and posttest scores as well as the post research questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and paired sample t test were employed through SPSS for the analysis of the data. The findings of the study reveal a statistically significant increase in the writing skills of the students.*

**Keywords:** English as second language, English language teaching, Writing skills, movies

### 1. Introduction

English language is the strongest tool of communication used for connecting with the world around. For a developing country like Pakistan, the use of English language often guarantees success in the socioeconomic world (Shamim, 2017). That's why; education system in Pakistan incorporates English as a compulsory subject from the early primary level (Panzai & Channa, 2017). The students should be able to master the four skills in English which include productive and receptive skills. Writing and speaking

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are known as productive skills while reading and listening are known as receptive skills. As a second language in Pakistan, English is not easy to understand and the writing skill is difficult to learn. Writing skill needs a complex process to develop the students' writing skills. In writing skills, the students should express their feelings, ideas, experiences and of course, they should learn it actively (Wahono & Qodriah, 2019). It is normal if the students think that writing is a difficult subject because they must pay attention to many things (idea, concept, vocabulary and grammar). There are many kinds of texts in English such as narrative, descriptive, recount, spoof and many more, as each text has different characteristics. Usually the students can differentiate each text from another and sometimes, they intermingle the text types which becomes challenging especially for English as second language teachers to find out the ways of keeping the text types aside. Writing is regarded as the most difficult skill and it is motivating on the part of the English language teacher if different types of media are employed in teaching to make it a lively learning experience (Pangestu, Adiwijaya & Purnami, 2021). Teachers have to make teaching writing easier and fun. Teachers need to provide for effective writing instruction. Media can cover all the audio visual aids (Television, film, video, radio etc.) and the choice of the right type of media in the writing class is one of the several alternatives that an English language teacher has to choose from for making the teaching writing an effective activity (Little, Clark, Tani & Connor, 2018). English has the capacity to absorb and lead the languages. From years, several approaches and theories of language acquisition and learning are flowing in mainstream. Video teaching elevates the discernment, apprehension and interpretations of learners. Movies expose the language in natural setting that is why these are preferred to watch in the case of language learning. Movies-based learning makes the students smart and confident because natural flow and native settings bring the imagination of moviegoers into real first language environment and realism has more authenticity than that of artificial and mimic environment. In movies, vocabulary is situational and learners have a chance to get the words from movies for occasions and places. Movies play a fundamental role in ESL

environment, as these can be the integral and essential part of curriculum (Sommer, 2001). According to Tunacy (2014), feature movies are a more dynamic medium than a text book or an audio recording in an ESL context. The literature is replete with the use of movies for improving English language writing skills of students, this area has remained unexplored among Pakistani researchers.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Micro and Macro skills of Writing**

The micro skills of writing include graphemes and orthographic patterns of English language in order to produce an effective and well composed write up with the careful choice and use of words through the acceptable grammatical patterns using cohesive devices. However, the macro skills of writing include the use of rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse in order to effectively perform the communicative functions of written texts in accordance with the form and purpose so that there may be developed connections between events by communicating and supporting the main idea.

### **2.2 Aspects of writing**

Hughes (2003) stated that the assessment of writing includes five important parameters (content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics) where the content outweighs all the other parameters and is usually concerned with the ability to use the overall knowledge, the development of the material, interrelationship of language items, relevance of materials and topic. Content is regarded as the ability to think creatively and develop focused and relevant thoughts (Heaton, 1990), as the normal breakup of effective writing is divided into an introduction, body and conclusion. Grammar guides the writer to know about the possibility of available language forms and structures. Traditional language analysis was conducted at sentence level.

### **2.3 Importance of Movies in English Language Learning**

Movies are beneficial and helpful in the language learning process. Movies engage the learners and provide them a chance to notice variation in language, as students can be acoustic and diverse learners (Yaseen, 2015). Good movies have a larger impact on the socialization and learning habits

of ESL learners because students imagine the scenes when they are taught the text which helps them in retrieval and better performance in the academic achievement tasks. It has been found that feature films have the potential of increasing vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and writing skills of the learners (Seferoğlu, 2008). Bhatti (2015) conducted a 12-week experimental study on the role of movies in improving the vocabulary skills of Pakistani ESL students at Post-graduate level. The findings revealed that experimental students had a statistically significant increase in their performance. Movies are instructional tools for ESL teachers. Selection of movies is a very careful activity because movies can be violent, abusive, vague, farce and inappropriate. Teachers bear the responsibility to choose appropriate clips and videos as far as English language learning is concerned.

Movies have always been taken as a source of entertainment. According to Moore (2013), movies provide comfort to learners and enhance the comprehension of the students. According to Wright (1983), movies are motivational source of learning for many weak students who have little knowledge about the ongoing topics and their poor comprehension leads them towards disappointment but movies have power to take them out of complexity and stress of learning second language (Anderson, 1984). It has also been noted that the use of short stripes, clips and cuts of movies have produced significant results (Canning-Wilson, 2000).

Subtitles are surface words which are shown at the bottom of running screen (Wallace, 2000). Subtitles are connectors between image and sound and Zannon (2006) described three sorts of subtitles: first, there are English to English subtitles; secondly, mother tongue to English and last one is about translation of English into mother tongues. Buck (2001) found the use of subtitles very helpful by stating that these are the real facilitators of ESL learners. According to Chun and Plus (1997), subtitles stir the reading and listening comprehension of the learners.

Movies have been widely acclaimed as a form of authentic materials by many English language researchers (Widdowson, 1990). Almost considered as authentic, they have the potential to enhance students' motivation by providing authentic information of a foreign culture to provide room for creativity to both students and teachers. Therefore, movies are the good source to teach vocabulary, listening and speaking, reading and essay writing (Ergenekon, 2016). According to Butler et al (2009), movies provide a multisensory appeal to learners by making the learning material attractive (Brown, 2010). According to Gruba (2006), movies are the first possible indicator of English-speaking culture for many ESL students. Despite having the potential to develop speaking skills of the students, the students can learn different types of conversation features: accent, speech pace, pronunciation, tone and so on (Webb, 2010) and English subtitles provide the ESL students an opportunity to learn new words, idioms and phrases. Wang (2015) highlights the role of movies in developing listening skills of the students because for listening practice, the students cannot focus on long conversational chunks but when they are exposed to the movies, they can listen for more time. According to Perumal (2013), movies help significantly in the comprehension of the novels. Therefore, films can be used in the English language classes to improve the general comprehension of the students. Masiello (1985) is in favour of using movies for developing writing skills at university level by stating that movies have multiples modes to provide audiovisual information to learners for understanding everyday relationships. Being a type of mass media, movies help in developing the analytical skills of students by improving learners' consciousness (Saeideh & Sepehran, 2014), as critical thinking plays a significant in writing composition and movies can be used to polish the writing skills of students. Dupuy (2001) argues that movies are not only helpful authentic source of information but also a live source of teaching non-verbal communication--- as students can learn how to develop informative, argumentative and reaction-response compositions. Kasper (2000) further elaborates this idea by stating that movies help in understanding the cause and effect relationship which may help them in developing well organized and coherently composed composition. Basri (2011) conducted a study where he used "Tsunami Japan" documentary film to enhance the argumentative write up of students. In the same way, Haris and Abdullah (2013) state that technology documentary films provide an effective platform for writing the

content for news. Moreover, documentaries on natural world, environment, and animal life can be used for developing the writing skills of students (Hutahaean & Ernidawati, 2013). In the classroom settings, watching movies has often resulted in increasing the learners' observation skills which helps them increase their writing skills. According to Indrasari (2010), movies like "The Postman Pat and Surprise" help learners in comprehending the social function and generic structure of a narrative text whereas Tristy (2010) found the use of movies like "All about animals" helpful for improving the report writing skills of the students. In another study by Anggraini and Radjab (2014), the videos revealed a significant increase in the narrative text writing skills of the students. However, there is scarcity of research available on the use of movies for improving writing skills of Pakistani ESL learners.

## **2.4 Research Questions**

1. Are movies effective to increase the writing skills of Pakistani ESL learners?
2. What do Pakistani ESL learners opine about the use of movies for learning English language?

## **3. Research Methodology**

The present study is one group pretest and posttest experimental research in nature. The present study was conducted in the computer lab of a private college located in Sahiwal. Convenient sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample which consisted of twenty Pakistani ESL post graduate level students. Before the start of the study, all the participants appeared in pretest. Afterwards, the students underwent eight weeks intervention where they were exposed to *Pride and Prejudice* (text and movie) and *Hamlet* (text and movie) followed by a posttest. In the intervention session, students used to watch movie followed by text which helped in enhancing the text comprehension of the students. A post research interview session was also conducted to explore the learning experience of students. The pretest and posttest consisted of descriptive critical writing questions which require a thorough understanding of the text from the

students. Both the tests were conducted in a controlled environment where the students had to answer a critical question from the text which usually requires in depth knowledge of the text.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

In order to explore the effectiveness of the writing skills via using movies in classroom, there was conducted the comparative analysis of pretest and posttest scores. Pretest score is given below in table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pretest**

	N	Mean	SD
PRETEST	20	4.08	1.79
Valid N( list wise)	20		

Table 1 reveals that collective mean score of twenty students is 4.08 with standard deviation 1.79 which shows that there is a significant difference in the writing performance of the students. After the pretest, the students underwent eight weeks intervention where they were exposed to videos along with text of *Pride and Prejudice* as well as *Hamlet*. Afterwards, they appeared in posttest which was similar in nature to that of pretest. The descriptive statistics of posttest are presented in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Posttest**

	N	Mean	SD
POSTTEST	20	6.45	0.76
Valid N( list wise)	20		

From table 2, there can be seen a significant difference in the performance of students with mean 6.45 and standard deviation 0.76 which shows that there is little variation among the marks of the students---- improvement in the scores of almost every student, as compared to their performance in the pretest. To calculate the statistically significant difference in the performance of the students, the data was analyzed through paired sample t test using SPSS. The findings of paired sample t test are presented in table 3 below.

**Table 3: Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pair 1	PRETEST	4.08	20	1.79	.241
	POSTTEST	6.45	20	0.76	.285

The Mean difference between the performance scores of both tests is 2.37 (6.45 - 4.08= 2.37). From table 3, it can be seen that P value of this study is 0.000 which states that there has been a statistically significant difference in the performance of the students in pretest and posttest.

A post research questionnaire was administered among the students in order to explore their opinion regarding the use of movies for enhancing writing skills as is shown in table 4 below. All the questionnaire items have been discussed one by one below along with mean and standard deviation.

**Table 4: Use of Movies to Enhance the English Writing Skills of Students at Post Graduate Level**

	Mean	SD
1. Using movies in classroom is a waste of time.	2.02	1.30
2. Using movies in classroom does not affect the students' motivation	1.04	0.89
3. Using movies would facilitate the understanding of difficult concepts	4.06	0.64
4 Use of movies should be increased in Master classrooms	4.16	0.35
5 Recording some parts of the lesson on videotapes could provide the students the opportunity to comprehend the concepts properly	4.09	0.41



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6. Do you think that the use of movies can enhance the writing skills?	4.12	0.35
7 Movies are effective to enhance the grammatical skills of second language learners?	3.74	1.05
8 The use of new technologies in teacher training should be increased	4.02	0.54

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From table 4, it can be seen that the use of movies in graduate level classroom was rated at the highest level with a mean value of 4.16 (SD= 0.35). The use of movies in enhancing the writing skills of students has been highly appreciated by the students with a mean value of 4.12 (SD= 0.35). The students also supported the concept of recording some parts of the lesson on videotapes in order to comprehend the concepts properly with a mean value of 4.09 (SD= 0.35). The role of movies to make the difficult concepts easy was also applauded with a mean value of 4.06 (SD= 0.64). The students also urged to increase the use of latest technology in the teacher training programs with a mean value of 4.02 (SD= 0.54). Although the use of movies in an English language classroom is highly fruitful, yet it has some limitations as it can make your concepts very clear and to some extent helps in improving grammatical skills of the students (mean value = 3.74, SD= 1.05). However, the students disliked the notion that the use of movies in an English language classroom is a waste of time (mean value = 2.02, SD= 1.30). Using movies in classroom does not affect the students' motivation was highly disliked with a mean value of 1.04 (SD= 0.89).

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

From the above findings, it is very clear that the students should have the thorough knowledge of grammar so that they may convey their ideas in a cohesive and coherent way. It's clear that the students find the use of movies very beneficial in the classroom which is evident from their performance as well. Moreover, the students were in the favor of the motivational role of movies in enhancing the writing skills of students, as they have the multisensory appeal which empowers the learner from all the learning

channels because of the abilities to help students comprehend difficult concepts very easily. The students also urged that there should be increased the use of movies for teaching English language because these will not only enhance the understanding but also the writing skills of the students which is clear from the highest mean score of the questionnaire items. If in case the movie of the entire text is not available (Ying,2012), even recording of some parts can serve the purpose (Hsua & Lo, 2009). The students highly appreciated the use of movies in enhancing the writing as well as grammatical skills of the students. The students also wished to increase the use of new technologies in teacher training programs so that they may use these technologies in classroom for the better comprehension of the students because Pakistani English language teachers have been still using traditional pedagogical skills in the classroom.

Teachers depend on traditional method because they consider it hectic task to manage the technological tools (Kasper, 2002). However, young teachers value technological integration in English language classrooms more as compared to older teachers which results in students' disinterest in studies and they start relying on cramming the material and are therefore unable to express themselves confidently and independently.

This study was conducted to explore the importance of movies in enhancing writing skills of post graduate level students. There have been found basic slips like wrong use of tenses, wrong placement of punctuation, inappropriate sequence of tenses, and the wrong replacement of words (synonyms) in the students' write up. Effective teaching is very essential to uplift the students' writing skills. In the Pakistani society, students' creative and expressive writing is not promoted because grades and marks are more important than level of competency. Therefore, students do not like to waste their time on developing their skills rather they prefer to learn the content from supporting materials. The data which has been collected from students show that lack of interest of student is also a key factor in the underdevelopment of writing skills.

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