

Effect of Reconstruction Activities on Intermediate Level Students' English Writing Skills

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Abstract

The study aimed to find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills. A semi-urban public sector Degree College was selected conveniently as sample for the current study. Eighty students of grade XII were selected randomly. They were divided into two equal groups randomly. One group was given intervention of reconstruction activities continuously for 12 weeks. To measure the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills, a supply type test was developed. Data of pre and post-tests from experimental and control groups were analyzed with repeated measure paired sample t-test. Data analysis revealed that there was statistically significant improvement in post-test mean scores of experimental group on English writing skills. On the other hand, control group showed statistically insignificant improvement in post-test mean scores. Teachers were recommended to use reconstruction activities for teaching English writing skills. Grade XII students were recommended to experience reconstruction activities for learning English writing skills.

Keywords: Reconstruction activities, English writing skills, Cohesion, Coherence, Grammar.

Introduction

A language is used as a tool by a person to communicate ideas and feelings to other persons. A common language in the world is necessary so for the purpose of communication (Al-Mansour, 2014). This status has been gained by English language. The background of English language shows that it was West Germanic language which was first spoken in Anglo-Saxon England exactly in the early middle ages (McNamara, 2012). It is now widely used language in the world and has become international language. It has become the first language of various countries like, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, and a number of Caribbean nations. In fact there is no branch of study that has not been communicated in English (Nabati, 2018).

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The original works of many philosophers, scientists, economists, psychologists, and others, whose first language was not English, have been translated into English. Therefore, a person having sound and good knowledge and skills competency of English language can access various sources of information easily (Gay, Djibat, & Umahuk, 2018). Now the research in various fields is being written and disseminated in English language. Developing countries like Pakistan cannot do research independently in all fields of sciences and social sciences and have to borrow it from advanced countries. Advanced countries do research in English language. On the other hand, Pakistan has to import the technology from the western developed countries to meet the challenges of the day. Pakistani students go abroad for study and scholarship to conduct research in various fields of science and technology. They face many challenges but those who have competency in English language skills, especially in writing, can cope and handle them easily (Niño & Páez, 2018).

English is a language which is used worldwide. Students having well knowledge and skills competency in English language can get employment having good incentive within country and abroad as well. Unemployment can be reduced by learning English language in these days. There are various companies that demand well versed English personnel for their business. A student having good command on English language skills can get admission in well reputed and high ranked educational institutions of the world for higher education (Supakorn, Feng, & Limmun, 2018).

National education policies of Pakistan i. e. 1947, 1959, and 1970 recommended English as unavoidable evil to be adopted as medium of instruction for higher education only. Later, it would be replaced with Urdu as medium of instruction but English got so high rank among educational languages that it could not be replaced with Urdu till now. In spite of Urdu as our national language, English is being used as official language in Pakistan. Every official document is printed in English language. Most of the research work at graduate, postgraduate, and higher level is also being published in English language. Due to these facts competency over English language skills is inevitable for every student especially at higher education level so that he/she may work effectively and efficiently (Tulgar, 2018).

Various activities have been suggested by educationists and linguists for teaching languages. Among them some are known as reconstruction activities which have been propounded by Lunzer and Gardner (1979). They claim that these are effective activities for teaching English language. These activities include: 1. Text completion (cloze), 2. Diagram completion, 3. Table completion, 4. Completion activities with disordered text and 5. Prediction (what comes next). These activities enable a learner to develop the ability to reconstruct text and read it closely by becoming more critical in reading (Sudiran, 2018).

Reconstruction a text is also known as retelling or reproducing a text in modified form by using your own words or phrases and sentence structure (Ferris, 2012). Text is given to students in disordered form to arrange or reconstruct it in its original or proper format. Reconstruction a text is more than retelling (Mohammad, Masum, Ali, & Baksh, 2018). A writer while reconstructing a text has to make inferences based on evidence and reasoning. These inferences help him to determine the sequence and arrangement of phrases, sentences, and events (Niño & Páez, 2018). It is to arrange text into a logical order just the idea of building a new building. It will follow a logical sequence and pattern of construction. For example, does it happen to build the roof first than walls? Do we construct walls first than floor? Of course the answer is no. Logically we have to build foundations first then walls, roofs, and floor. Same goes for reconstruction activities in writing a text.

How do we make inferences while reading a text for effective use of reconstruction in writing process? At first sequence and arrangements of events, characters, setting, conflicts is determined. It will help to encapsulate the whole information and topics covered in written text. Second step in inferences involves reader to find the end of the story. It is easily recognized in any form of writing. In a story, reader will find out whether characters will be happy ever after that or not? In an essay, the author will summarize the whole discussion and arguments. Author in article will bring topic to an end. Lastly in inferences process reader tries to find out what has left out in the written text. It will be easily indicated by looking at transition words which connect thoughts and ideas and indicate the sequence of events. This sequence will, automatically, help reader to find out the gap in written text (Tulgar, 2018).

Current study is to find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills: cohesion and coherence and grammar of grade XII students. It will be helpful for English teachers of intermediate level to practice reconstruction activities for teaching English writing skills. Students of intermediate level will also experience these activities to learn English writing skills.

Review of Literature

Reconstruction activities have numerous advantages in learning a language. Nabati (2018) has explained some of them as; they improve reading comprehension of a reader while interacting with text. Reader becomes aware of how the text has been constructed by using various transitory words and phrases. Author further elaborates that reader becomes more critical in reading a text and raises questions on what has been included and excluded in the text. It helps reader to construct sentences in this own writing as he/she observed in written text. Interacting with text improves cognitive ability of reader. These activities can be developed without any costly material. They can be developed on the basis of textbook and will make students' textbook more interesting (Supakorn, Feng & Limmun, 2018). The practice of reconstruction activities

in learning English language will help students to resolve reading problems in other subjects successfully. Finally, it will help students to use text without plagiarizing it.

How to construct reconstruction activities while teaching a text? Chuenchaichon (2011) has suggested an empirical view of how to develop them. Author says if the text is to give comparison of two or more ideas or things, you may develop a table of Venn diagram. If the text describes a process, fictional or non-fictional sequence of events, you may develop a flow chart. A branch diagram development helps reader to infer classification of ideas/things. An object description can be comprehended by using a labeled diagram. A spider diagram or mind map helps to infer the concept of an argument in written text (Alqadi & Alqadi, 2013).

English Writing Skills

Writing is one of the four language skills i. e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is defined as process of using symbols (alphabets, letters, punctuations and spaces) to convey thoughts, ideas to other persons. It helps writer to preserve information for him and others to retrieve it later when needed. It is more reliable and everlasting form of communication (Alshammari, 2015). Good writing conveys clear and accurate message. Cohesion, coherence, relevance and adequacy of content, adequacy of vocabulary for purpose, grammar, mechanical accuracy I (punctuation), and mechanical accuracy II (spelling) are all essential skills of writing for effective and good writing (Chuenchaichon, 2011).

Writing is language skill used widely for the purpose of communication. Written communication form is vital important in every walk of life because words are everything as they give meaning to everything in the world and life. It is authentic and reliable form of communication (Sudiran, 2018). Through writing pieces of information are accomplished more deeply, effectively and efficiently by writing emails, letters, memos, social media posts, newsletters etc. Students, businessmen, lawyers, doctors, scientists, officers, and officials all receive and convey information through written form of language. Literary writers utilize their intelligence, perceptions, educational gains, and critical thinking skills in written form of language to facilitate their readers and make their writing food for their thoughts. Books, the most widely and authentic form of communication, are in written form. Success and failure of a student largely depends upon writing skill. Students entering into college sphere of educational life face more challenging tasks of writing. They have to write assignments, presentations, letters-officials and non-officials, reports, papers, projects, and dissertations. All these forms of writing require effective writing skill (Nabati, 2018).

Teaching Writing Skills

Khan (2012) has suggested various reasons behind this scenario of teachers' inability to use activities in classroom for the purpose of teaching English language.

The author elaborates that there are the number of students in class. Single teacher cannot manage any such creative activity in class for teaching English language. Teachers are accounted by higher authority due to less passing number of students in board and university examination. Teachers prefer activities which help students to pass board and university exams rather than become creative writers. Boards and universities examinations ask questions which compel students to memorize and reproduce lessons in examination. Language laboratories are not available in any public sector school of Pakistan in the province of the Punjab. The above detail suggests concluding that education system needs to be refined to make students creative in writing skills.

To teach writing skills various models and approaches have been suggested by various scholars. These models of teaching writing are claimed effective for the teaching English writing skills. Among them there is descriptive writing which functions like a window which opens into other world. In this writing writer describes a person, place, or a thing. The effective descriptive writing appeals multiple senses of reader at one-sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017).

Another writing type of writing is informative/explanatory writing. Its primary aim is to spread and increase knowledge on a topic. Writer answers questions of how or why in explanatory writing (Howard, 2018). It is to educate the reader rather than change reader's mind or thinking or stimulate reader to take action (Mohammad, Masum, Ali & Baksh, 2018). The authors have counted constituent components of well explanatory/informative writing as: 1. It must have introduction that introduces the topic to grab the attention of reader. 2. Information necessary about the topic should be conveyed properly and clearly. 3. Topic should be developed with the help of specific and relevant details, facts, examples, anecdotes, and quotations. 4. Ideas should be organized by using various techniques like compare and contrast, cause and effect, defining, and classifying. 5. Language should be precise and appropriate to the reader and topic. 6. To develop coherence among ideas, transition words should be used appropriately. 7. The tone and style should be formal. 8. The writing should be ended with appropriate conclusion that gives summary, main idea or points that cohere with information presented. Narrative writing is another type of writing which presents events or happenings in a logical sequence and order (Quirk, 2010). These events or happening may be imaginary or real. If imaginary, it is fiction and if not, it is nonfiction based on real incidents.

There are many skills a writer should consider while writing e. g. cohesion and coherence, relevance and adequacy of content, adequacy of vocabulary for purpose, grammar, mechanical accuracy I (punctuation), and mechanical accuracy II (spelling). All these skills together make writing effective and communicative. Studies (Ferris, 2012; Hameed, 2017) have revealed that intermediate students were weak in developing cohesion and coherence in their academic English writing. Similarly their grammar has

been observed weak in their English writing. Authors have suggested important role of reconstruction activities in teaching English language at different levels of language learning.

Reconstruction Activities for Teaching English Writing Skills

Whether reconstruction activities have any effect on students' English writing skills i. e. cohesion and coherence and grammar, at higher secondary level? This study was designed to answer this question and to find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills of higher secondary level students. English in Pakistan is taught is second language. Various activities have been suggested in literature for the teaching of English language. Reconstruction activities suggested by (Lunzer & Gardner, 1979) are considered effective for teaching of English language. These activities include: 1. Text completion (cloze), 2. Diagram completion, 3. Table completion, 4. Completion activities with disordered text, and 5. Prediction (what comes next). These activities enable the readers to reconstruct segmented text and ideas into to their complete and cohesive whole. These help readers to rearrange the ideas or text into new whole which make them critical reader. Intermediate level is like a door opening into higher level of education where critical reading is essential for the improvement of English writing skills (Sudiran, 2018).

English writing skill requires cohesion, coherence, and grammar to be incorporated while writing an idea (Government of the Punjab, 2006). Cohesion in writing is defined as connection of ideas at sentence and paragraph level. It is syntactic consideration in writing. Connectors and transitory adverbs are focused while developing cohesion in writing. On the other hand, coherence is rhetorical aspect of writing in which ideas are developed and supported in a logical way to synthesize, organize, classify, and integrate the ideas. Grammar is science of a language. It is briefly defined as the sound, structure, and meaning system of a language. In this study, only two aspects of grammar skills have been taken i. e. the proper use of tenses and sentence structure (Pamelasari & Khusniati, 2013).

Significance of the Study

Study is significant for teachers to teach English effectively at intermediate level students by adopting reconstruction activities. It will produce effective results in the improvement of students' English writing skills. Intermediate level students are direct beneficiaries of this study. They can practice reconstruction activities for the improvement of their English writing skills. Study is also helpful for the curriculum developers to incorporate reconstruction activities in their curriculum to achieve the SLOs of English language subject at intermediate level. Study is significant for teacher training institutes to include training of reconstruction activities for teaching English writing skills. It will enable prospective teachers to practice reconstruction activities in real classroom teaching while teaching English writing skills.

Research Objectives

The study was designed to:

1. Find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills-cohesion and coherence of grade XII students.
2. Find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills-grammar of grade XII students.

Hypotheses of the Study

The study was designed to test the following null hypotheses:

H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence of grade XII students.

H₀2: There is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skills: Grammar of grade XII students.

Research Methodology

Nature and Design of the Study

It was an experimental study which adopted true experimental pre-test post-test control group design. Study had single independent variable (reconstruction activities) and two dependent variables (cohesion and coherence, grammar). Reconstruction activities is collective name of five activities known as: Text completion (cloze), diagram completion, table completion, completion activities with disordered text, and prediction. Study was conducted on the assumptions of post-positivism philosophical research paradigm. Post-positivists were of two assumptions-deterministic and reductionist. Deterministic in the sense that there are causes which determine effects or outcomes which are measured through experimental designs. Reductionist in the sense to reduce the ideas into small measureable and verifiable units. This is possible through quantitative studies designs.

Sample of the Study

A semi-urban public sector degree college for boys was selected conveniently as sample of the study. Eighty students of grade XII out of 400 enrolled in the current session 2018-19 were selected randomly as sample of the study. These 80 students were divided randomly into two equal groups. One group (experimental) was taught English through reconstruction activities, second group (control) was taught through conventional teaching methods i. e. grammar translation method, textbook reading method, and lecture method. Intervention period was 12 weeks, 45 minutes period 6 days a week, whereas Friday had 30 minutes period. Lessons were planned focusing intermediate English textbook II. The content for intervention was selected from English textbook-II and English essay writing for intermediate students published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore (PCTB).

Instrumentation

A supply type achievement test was developed having 6 supply type questions on English Textbook II and essay writing. Validity of the test was ensured through 4 experts having expertise in reach and teaching of English language. Test was also piloted on 20 students other than selected as sample. Statistical analysis of pilot study revealed .75 reliability Chronbach's alpha values.

Data Collection

Data were collected on pre-test and post-test basis. The solved test was marked according to the rubrics i. e. Test of English for Educational Purpose (TEEP) developed by Reading University America. Data were analyzed through repeated measures paired sample t-test statistical test. Pre-test scores and post-test scores were compared of each group (experimental and control) to find out the difference between their pre-test and post-test mean scores. Statistical test was used with .05 significance level.

Data Analysis and Results

This section gives complete view of data analysis and its interpretation. Each hypothesis was discussed separately. Null hypotheses were developed to find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills. Data analysis had been presented in tabulate form along with detailed interpretation.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence of grade XII students.

Table 1
Comparison of English Writing Skills, Cohesion and Coherence

	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental Group Post Test	16.45	.504	31.708	39	.000
Experimental Group Pre Test	12.55	.597			
Control Group Post Test	12.65	.483	1.599	39	.118
Control Group Pre Test	12.45	.552			

Note: p=0.05 and n=40

Table 1 results showed the comparison of English writing skills-cohesion and coherence on the basis of pre-test and post-test results. Results showed that experimental group performed better in post-test (mean = 16.45, SD = 504) with reference to cohesion and coherence in English writing skills whereas pre-test results were (mean = 12.55, SD = .597). Repeated measures paired sample t-test found this

difference to be statistically significant, $t(39) = 31.708$, $p < 0.001$, due to the intervention of reconstruction activities for teaching English language.

On the other hand, table 1 showed control group results on English writing skills: cohesion and coherence. Results showed that control group post-test results showed minor improvement in cohesion and coherence of English writing skills as (mean = 12.65, SD = .483), pre-test results were (mean = 12.45, SD = .552). Repeated measures paired sample t-test showed that difference statistically insignificant as $t(39) = 1.599$, $p > 0.118$. This minor improvement may be by chance.

So, the results failed to support the null hypothesis H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence of grade XII students, and accepted alternate hypotheses as H_A : There is statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skill: Cohesion and coherence of grade XII students.

Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skill: grammar of grade XII students.

Table 2

Comparison of English writing Skills: Grammar.

	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental Group Post Test	16.28	.452	60.194	39	.000
Experimental Group Pre Test	12.25	.439			
Control Group Post Test	12.43	.549	1.433	39	.160
Control Group Pre Test	12.28	.452		39	

Note: $p = 0.05$ and $n = 40$

Table 2 results showed comparison of experimental and control groups in reference of English writing skill: grammar, on the basis of pre-test and post-test scores. Results showed that experimental group gained more scores in post-test on grammar as (mean = 16.28, SD = .452) than pre test-scores as (mean = 12.25, SD = .439). Repeated measures paired sample t-test showed that difference statistically significant as $t(39) = 60.194$, $p < 0.001$, due to intervention of reconstruction activities for the teaching of English language.

On the other hand, table 2 showed the results of control group on English writing skills: Grammar. Post-test results showed minor improvement in English writing skills: grammar as (mean = 12.43, SD = .549) and pre-test (mean = 12.28, SD = .452). Repeated measures paired sample t-test showed this difference statistically

insignificant $t(39) = 1.433$, $p > 0.160$, that may be by chance rather than conventional teaching methods adopted for the teaching of English language.

So, the results failed to support the null hypothesis H_0 : There is no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skill: grammar of grade XII students, and accepted an alternate hypothesis H_A : There is statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups mean scores on English writing skill: grammar of grade XII students.

Findings

Study was conducted to find out the effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence and grammar. Reconstruction activities were selected as classroom instructional activities for teaching English textbook II and English composition (essay writing). Data analysis revealed the following findings:

1. Reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence at grade XII.
2. Reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English writing skills: Grammar at grade XII.

Discussion

Results of this study showed statistical significant effect of reconstruction activities on English writing skills-cohesion and coherence, and grammar. Significant effect of reconstruction activities on cohesion and coherence result is consistent with Alshammari (2015) and Chuenchaichon (2011). The studies were conducted through experimental design. Authors recommended the use of reconstruction activities for teaching English writing skills.

Reconstruction activities showed statistically significant effect on English writing skills-grammar. These results were consistent with the Pamelasari and Khusniati (2013). McNamara (2012) also discussed statistical significant effects of reconstruction activities on English writing skills and reading comprehension.

Present study findings were consistent with Hameed (2017) which was conducted in Pakistan to find out the effect of directed activities related to texts on English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence. The study showed statistical significant improvement in English writing skills due to intervention of directed activities related to text. Reconstruction activities are one of them. Results revealed that reconstruction activities significantly improved students' English writing skills-cohesion and coherence, at intermediate level in Pakistan.

Grammar is one of the English writing skills. Reconstruction activities significantly improved students' grammar competency at intermediate level. These results were consistent with Dossoumou, Mehounou and Koukpossi (2018) and Ferris

(2012). Grammar plays vital role for the purpose of proper communication in writing of second language. Grammar is actually the science of any language. It enables a writer to construct sentences, paragraphs and text for comprehensive communication through written language. Teaching English language with the help of reconstruction activities enhances students' writing skills competency.

Reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English writing skills: grammar finding were consistent with Hashemi and Daneshfar (2018) and Pamelasari and Khusniati (2013).

Intermediate level education is door way for higher education. At this level, a student should be competent enough to write effectively in English language because the medium of instruction in higher education is English. In Pakistan, English is inevitable part of our official communication and also medium of instruction in education. The success in higher education depends upon students' competency in English language. Therefore, to make intermediate level students competent in English writing skills, reconstruction activities were recommended to be incorporated in instructional plan for English language.

On the basis of above discussion, it was summarized that reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English language at intermediate level in Pakistan. These activities significantly affected English writing skills-cohesion and coherence, and grammar.

Conclusion

Research findings and results revealed that reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English language at intermediate level in Pakistan. These activities directly developed to improved English writing skills: cohesion and coherence of grade XII students. Study also findings also revealed that reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English writing skills: Grammar competency at grade XII. Learning English language through the experience of reconstruction activities will enhance grammar competency of intermediate level students. So, it was concluded that reconstruction activities were effective for teaching English writing skills-cohesion and coherence and grammar at intermediate level in Pakistan.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings, the study had following recommendations:

1. English teachers teaching English as language at grade XII may adopt reconstruction activities as instructional activities for teaching English writing skills: cohesion and coherence. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate reconstruction activities in their teaching methodologies for the development of cohesion and coherence in English writing of higher secondary level students.

2. English teachers were recommended to use reconstruction activities for teaching English writing skills-grammar at grade XII. It may enable students to write in English language grammatically correct.
3. Grade XII students were also recommended to experience reconstruction activities to learn English writing skills: Cohesion and coherence.
4. Grade XII students were recommended to experience reconstruction activities to develop their competency in English grammar which may help them to write grammatically correct in English.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Future researches were recommended to conduct a study to find out the effect of reconstruction activities on other English writing skills: relevant and adequate use content, vocabulary for purpose, mechanical accuracy I (punctuations), and mechanical competency II (spellings).

There were other activities like analysis activities which were also suggested as useful for teaching English language by the educationists and researchers. Researchers were recommended to conduct study by intervening analysis activities to find out their effect on students' English writing skills as well as reading comprehension. These activities, reconstruction and analysis, can also be intervened at secondary and elementary level to find out their effectiveness for teaching English language.

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