

Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Factors Affecting English Essay Writing of O Level Students

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Abstract: *The aim of this empirical study is to explore O level English language teachers' perceptions regarding teaching practices and methods used in teaching English essay writing. The population of study comprised O Level English language teachers (N=131) schools of Karachi. Through simple random sampling technique, data were collected from (n=58) participant schools which forms approximately 44% of the targeted population. Total sample size was n=73 (n=22 male and n=51 female) teachers. To carry out the cross sectional survey of the chosen sample, two instruments i.e., Factors Affecting English Essay Writing for Teachers (FAEWT) and teachers' structured interviews were developed to collect the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Data were tabulated, calculated, analyzed, and interpreted through SPSS Version 20, in the light of objectives of the study, and the research hypotheses. Central tendency i.e. mean and measures of dispersions i.e. Standard Deviation and t-test were used for testing hypotheses. Results revealed that students were lacking in understanding the principles of English grammar, difficulty in word spelling and use of punctuation marks in writing essays. On the basis of these findings, it is recommended that Cambridge-affiliated schools' management should provide Cambridge professional development training to teachers continually and also provide well-furnished library, language laboratory and classrooms so that teachers can provide quality input to develop students' written discourse. This study plays an important role in contributing to researchers, policy makers, curriculum developers, teachers and students to enhance students' skills of writing an essay with no errors and coherently.*

Keywords: English Essay Writing, O level Teachers and Students, Cooperative Learning, Learning Strategies, Peer Review, Composing Processes.

Introduction and Background to the Study

The current study is aimed at investigating teaching for quality learning and to find out the perceptions of teachers related to creating conducive learning environment for students to develop and refine their written discourse. It also explored the factors that helped or hindered the writing skills of the students. Thus, this study primarily focuses on students' academic achievement and perceptions of teachers related to students' essay writing as well as the impact of

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hindering factors on quality teaching and learning approaches to teaching in terms of enhancing the skill of writing among students.

In Pakistan, English is taught as a foreign language in all the educational institutions. It is considered to be lingua franca and is a requirement to get ahead in today's world. Undoubtedly, it is the language of science, technology, business and international relations. Without English, we shall lag behind in our development and our advancement will gravely be impeded in a number of significant fields of life (Younis, 2004).

In Pakistan, Cambridge University, UK has been playing an important role in imparting quality education. Cambridge University has introduced O level and A level system of education equivalent to matriculation and intermediate system of education in Pakistan. This system is considered to be unique because it has changed the outdated beliefs and conventions in the education system of Pakistan. Its wide range of subjects caters to the needs of students in this era of science and technology (Junaid, 2005).

Likewise, the Cambridge system of education has been in progress over five decades. This system has fulfilled all the demands and needs of the students in order to face the innumerable challenges of the world easily. They use quality textbooks because their books are based on updated and comprehensive syllabi to serve the purpose of meaningful education in the true sense of the word (Fahim, 2000).

The British O Level and A Level system of education were initiated in Pakistan in 1959. There are numerous examinations which are proffered by different examination Boards of United Kingdom existing in Pakistan. It is broadly believed that the UK Boards have been worldwide recognized. It counts upon the individual curiosity of the students to select the board and subjects in order to accomplish his/her aim in life. It also relies on the geographical location of the affiliated educational institutes which have been carrying out examinations under any particular board (Guruge, 1981).

The system of education in UK is globally considered to be one of the best because it provides quality education to the students who are fifteen or sixteen years old. These students are endowed with a number of opportunities to get a chance to go for higher studies in colleges or universities of an international repute and get lucrative job opportunities on completing their educational degrees successfully. It also provides a wide range of subjects in order to cover the entire curriculum. Students are offered a range of subjects to meet their requirements in the first place. They choose any number of specific subjects related to their area of study within the availability of the subjects. It has been observed that most of the O level students preferably choose seven to ten subjects (Joseph, 2000).

The Cambridge system of education is extremely capable of providing skillful and accomplished pupils in comparison to a matriculation or intermediate system of education in Pakistan. The increasing admiration of the Cambridge education is a testimony in the Pakistani culture that it has achieved an advantage over the other equivalent educational systems (Junaid, 2005).

The Cambridge education system has been gaining ground in providing qual-

ity education with exceptional features in Pakistan. The Cambridge students are educated in consonance with the global criterion. It aims at providing an extensive variety of wide-ranging quality schooling to the pupils. Some instructors have also got their hands on an overseas experience. In the Cambridge institutes in Pakistan, numerous teachers are foreign trained (Younis, 2004; Umbreen, 2008).

Review of Related Literature

The development of the conceptual framework of the present study highlights all the significant aspects put forward by the renowned researchers in the field of teaching and learning processes in the educational system. Many educators and different school of thoughts have played a pivotal role in revamping the educational system. They are of the view that schools and colleges around the world should fulfill their key role in imparting quality education on priority. Moreover, the teachers should be cognizant of the modern teaching methods and practices in order to provide quality teaching to their students and should make out the existing problems faced by students. The teachers should update themselves to address the weaknesses of students particularly in written discourse (Dewey, 1916).

The teachers should adopt student-centred approach instead of teacher-centred approach. The concept of teaching in which learners are considered as puppets and that encourages passive learning among students needs to be changed. Students should not be considered as mere recipients of knowledge but viewed as agents of the learning process. The authoritative role of teachers in quality teaching and learning process has been completely changed to facilitators in educational processes and practices. The learners can be given an opportunity to develop a sense of conscientiousness for their own erudition, the capabilities in making decisions, the ways to have an access to knowledge being shared in groups if the inquiry-based teaching process is being applied (Koyalan, 2010).

Since students faced difficulty in using correct English grammar in their writing in terms of frequent errors in the use of articles, subject-verb agreement, and copula 'be'. Therefore, the teaching materials and teaching practices within and outside the classroom need to be ensured to overcome the existing problems of students' written discourse (Maros, Hua, & Salehuddin, 2007).

Integrated approach need to be introduced in order to help the students to enhance their understanding of a thought process behind a particular way of expression (Alant, 2013). The teaching of context awareness could help students to enhance the knack of academic writing in English (Gómez, 2011). Dialogic interaction provides scaffolding opportunities in understanding writing as a process and the use of samples and explicit instruction to facilitate writing (Chala Bejarano & Chapetón, 2013).

The students should have freedom of expression and teachers should motivate them to work independently to write an essay appropriately, accurately and effectively (Soehadi, 2008). The students faced challenges in three aspects of

writing development process, conventions, punctuation, and language use means proper use of grammar (Ghabool, Kashef, et al., 2012).

Teachers assessed students' essays on a variety of linguistic dexterity both at surface and deep-levels of text. On the contrary, students' ratings were associated with only surface-level features of text (Varner, Roscoe, & McNamara, 2013). The pupils, who were given timely feedback, turned out to be proficient writers (Huang, 2012). The score obtained by the student varied from examiner to examiner, topic to topic, and from one marking scheme to another. Moreover, they obtained a higher score in narrative essay as compared to descriptive essay (Archer, 2007).

Portfolio assessment and self-assessment enhanced writing ability of students and their autonomy in writing (Khodadady & Khodabakhshzade, 2012). The learners with positive approach performed considerably superior to those with negative approach on writing task (Sarkhoush, 2013). Making use of brainstorming method contributed greatly in producing thoughts, exchanging views and shaping innovative opinions about the raised subjects in writing process (Ibnian, 2011).

The teachers ought to be well-resourced with updated knowledge which was required for fair assessment (Ch'ng & Rethinasamy, 2013). Most of the students considered group work beneficial because it required less time to complete assigned tasks and enhanced interpersonal benefits whereas some students rejected the group work and these students required constant support and help of the instructors in order to complete group work (Mustafa, Chiew, & Slee, 2013).

In another study it was revealed that, autonomy does not indicate an innovative methodology rather it is an approach implemented by the learners in the learning process and the learner's conscientiousness requires to be identified an enhanced (Andreu, Cerdá, Ausina, & Sala, 2007). Crystal (1997) emphasized that a language attains a universal status when it extends a pivotal role being distinguished all over the world. Besides this, for the most part, words acquired in the first language are learned unintentionally because the language learners become cognizant of them repeatedly in a wide range of perspectives (De Bot, Paribakht, & Wesche, 1997). Roediger, Weldon, Stadler, and Riegler (1992) examined that memorization in L2 learning is given paramount importance. McDaniel, Einstein, Dunay, and Cobb (1986) stated that there is particular benefit in learning by doing. It produced an enhanced memory power. As Keshavarz and Bahreini (2006) expressed that second language learnt during early years has a greater accomplishment in learning another language as grown-ups. Hoffmann (2001) pointed out that compared to the monolingual students; bilingual pupils perform better on reading comprehension of a variety of texts.

Figurative language clarifies a concept and puts emphasis on meaning by indicating a word or phrase related to something recognizable in order to attain a particular meaning or outcome (Abkarian, Jones, & West, 1992). Youngsters commence to use and appreciate figurative language instead of a literal function (Nippold & Haq, 1996; Nippold, Moran, & Schwarz, 2001). Nippold (1998)

highlighted that it is essential to be proficient in figurative language in order to become ethnically erudite and linguistically superior to others. Despite the fact that school-going children and teenagers do not normally come across societal circumstances on the practice of figurative language they do frequently encounter it in their classrooms as well as in textbooks (Hollingsed, 1958; Boatner, Gates, & Makkai, 1975; Lazar, Warr-Leeper, Nicholson, & Johnson, 1989; Nippold, 1990, 1991, 1993; Kerbel & Grunwell, 1997).

According to Oxford and Scarcella (1994), learner can turn out to be autonomous of instructor or self-sufficient by enhancing vocabulary learning strategies, and such helpful instrument can be brought into play inside or outside of the classroom. Different researches have pointed out that diverse aspects may possibly have an effect on the choice of vocabulary strategies such as conviction or language adeptness. According to Carter and McCarthy (1988), it is a dire need to develop understanding and enrich vocabulary by discussion with teachers and pupils.

To sum up, the points illustrated above put forward several general conclusions regarding the skill of essay writing among the students. The teachers ought to provide students a clear understanding and base for mastering the approach. They should realize the difficulties in writing skill and come up with pragmatic approaches to address the weaknesses of students in their written discourse. The students should be given individual attention to rectify their mistakes and encouraged to practice great deal. Above all, they need to be given regular feedback in time in order to improve their skills of essay writing.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is demarcated precisely in the words given as identifying teachers' perceptions regarding the factors affecting English essay writing of O level students. Moreover, identification or exploration of this issue is extremely important and will help teachers and teacher educators to find ways to develop plans to address and minimize this issue. Some cultural, academic, and disciplinary influences hinder students' assimilation of the conventions of written English (Gómez, 2011; Zheng, 2013). Furthermore, it is very challenging to produce a well-organized piece of writing, particularly in one's second language (Nunan, 1999). Williams and Andrade (2008) illustrated that acquisition of language in classroom atmosphere depends on three stages: input, processing or mental planning and output. Kroll (1990) highlighted that without prewriting guidance, students have trouble expressing ideas clearly owing to restrictions of linguistic structures. Prewriting techniques assist students in putting thoughts on paper, even if not generally in an organized form but just brainstorm ideas may ultimately enhance written discourse. According to D. M. Murray (1973) once students finished their first draft, they thought that the task of writing was done very well and their teachers also agreed. According to Hyland (2003), the plan of good writing assessment tests and tasks incorporated four fundamental basics i.e., rubric; prompt; anticipated response; and post-task assessment. Moreover, McCutchen (1986) highlighted that producing well-written texts, accomplished

writers focus on understanding the writing process and the differences e.g., text structure, organization, and language between a diversity of genres. According to Barbeiro (2011), juvenile students primarily considered writing as an activity wherein the objective was to satisfy their teachers by sticking to rules for written language e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation, and grown-up students put emphasis on writing as a process involving meaningful structure of text for their self-expression. Based on the aforementioned criticism and literature review the current study attempts to answer seven research hypotheses.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to explore the teachers' perceptions regarding the factors affecting English essay writing of O level students. Besides this, the specific objectives of this study are to identify approaches used by students in attempting to write essays in English and receiving the required feedback of teachers; regarding the sentence structure used by the students, their level of understanding in using parts of speech, the relevance in content, cohesion, and coherence, diction used by students as well as analyse the spelling mistakes and use of punctuation marks in writing an essay in English. Moreover, to prepare the suggestions, recommendations on the basis of collected results of this study for the betterment of further studies in developing skills in writing an essay in English.

Research Hypotheses

The present research formulated seven hypotheses:

1. The students of O level who possess knowledge and understanding of different types of essay writing will compose comprehensive essays.
2. The students of O level with a good command over the use of correct and standard language will reflect a variety of expressions through their essay writing.
3. The students of O level with in-depth study, knowledge and understanding of different basic parts of speech will show their linguistic dexterity.
4. The students of O level who are aware of using relevant content with respect to the topic and also know the proper organization of content will produce a worth reading, worth enjoying, and worth remembering essay.
5. The diction used by the students of O level will show their wide range of vocabulary and reflect the different styles of the past and contemporary writers.
6. Reading of the modern day English writers and the practice of writing will enable students of O level to spell English words correctly.

7. The more qualified, CIE trained, and experienced the teachers of O level, the better will be the performance of students in writing an essay in English.

Methodology and Instrument's Reliability

Research Design

This study deals with seven hypotheses based on three main objectives and data were collected from 30 April 2013 to 29 June 2013 in two phases.

Phase 1

In order to accumulate data for the study, cross-sectional survey method was adopted which has been widely used in the field of educational research and survey research comprised of conducting an interview personally or by phone or of administering a questionnaire in person, by phone or through mail. If the nature of survey was brought under discussion, the perceptions of others would be considered in the first place (L. M. Cohen & Manion, 2000).

Data were collected through Factors Affecting English Essay Writing for Teachers (henceforth, FAEWT) from 30 April 2013 to 10 June 2013. This instrument was piloted to find its reliability. On the whole, 85 items (82 close ended and 3 open ended items) were included in this instrument. The allocated time was 100 minutes in order to fill up the questionnaire.

Phase 2

Structured interviews were also conducted from the same participants from 13 May 2013 to 29 June 2013. Ethical and legal consideration were also strictly followed wherein; voluntary and informed consent, privacy, anonymity, and no harm/risk were discussed with the participants prior execution of the study.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this research comprised all O level teachers at the Cambridge affiliated schools of Karachi. For the selection of schools, 50% of N=131 participant schools were randomly selected which was equal to n=65. From these n=58 schools responded positively.

From the selected schools, three teachers were randomly selected which were equal to n=174. For the selection of research participants, 50% of n=174 were randomly selected which were equal to n=87. From these n=73 participants responded positively. Targeted population was all the O Level English Language Teachers. Total number of participant schools was n = 58 and these form 44% of the targeted population. Total sample size was n = 73 (n =22 (30%) male teachers; n = 51 (70%) female teachers) were research participants. Majority of respondents were female. Designation of sample size was n = 2 (3%) were Headmasters/ Headmistress cum O Level English language teachers, n = 6 (8%) were Head of Department cum O Level English language teachers, n = 2 (3%)

were Subject Coordinators cum O level English language teachers, $n = 6$ (8%) were Coordinators cum O level English language teachers were included in this study in order to meet the required number of research participants.

Instrument's Reliability

To carry out the survey of the chosen sample, FAEWT, the research instrument was developed which consisted of 85 questions highlighting five-point Likert Scale that is strongly disagree, disagree, average, agree and strongly agree in which 82 (96%) questions were close ended and 3 (4%) questions were open ended for collecting the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The reliability of the questionnaire was found to be significant in pilot study. Statistical reliability was estimated through SPSS which was $\alpha = 0.91$ in the pilot study. In the main study, the reliability was improved and the value of alpha was $\alpha = 0.98$. Moreover, the cut off for Cronbach Alpha is $\alpha = 0.7$ (Nunnally, 1978; Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2004; Arif & Aslam, 2014; Sharif & Bukhari, 2014). It is calculated for each variable separately. We have separated hypothesis for each variable. All the hypotheses have got coefficient value more than $\alpha = 0.7$ and so does the overall.

Data Analysis and Procedure:

The data were collected through survey method using FAEWT questionnaire and after the collection of data from 73 participants, the researcher constructed tables by calculating the percentage of collected data, including measures of central tendency (i.e. mean) and measures of dispersions (i.e. Standard Deviation) for data analysis. Likewise, the researcher also used inferential statistics for testing hypotheses i.e. t-test. As far as entry of the data and analysis process are concerned the responses of FAEWT were coded according to the five-point Likert scale method (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Average, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree). Two negatively worded items were coded reversely. Gender was coded as (0 = male and 1 = female). Missing data were coded as 99 and run frequencies to detect incorrect entry of data. Central tendency (Mean and Standard Deviations) and the normality of data (value of skewness) were ensured respectively. The results are shown in descriptive, numerical and figural context.

Table 1 indicates the participants' age, designation, academic and professional qualification, experience and the type of institutions where they teach. But the influence of research participants' gender, age, academic and professional qualifications, and teaching experience were not included in the findings of this study because of time limitations, unequal number of male and female and difference of designations of the research participants.

Table 1: Demographic Factors of O level English Language Teachers

		f	%
	Male	22	30
	Female	51	70
Age (In Years)	20-30 Years	24	33
	31-40 Years	21	29
	41-50 Years	9	12
	> 50 Years	10	14
	No response	9	12
Type of Institution	Boys	14	24
	Girls	19	33
	Coeducation	25	43
Designation	Head master/Headmistress & O Level ELT	2	3
	Head of Department (HOD) & O Level ELT	6	8
	Subject Coordinator & O Level ELT	2	3
	Coordinator & O Level ELT	6	8
	O Level English Language Teacher (ELT)	57	78
Academic Qualification	MA	34	47
	MSc	4	5
	MBA	3	4
	BA	13	18
	BSc	4	6
	BBA	3	4
	O Level	2	3
	A Level	4	5
	No response	6	8
Professional Qualification	MEd	4	6
	BEEd	12	17
	MA in TEFL	3	4
	Diploma	4	5
	Certificate	14	19
	No response	36	49
Experience	1-5 Years	15	21
	6-10 Years	18	25
	11-15 Years	12	16
	16-20 Years	8	11
	> 20 Years	13	18
	No response	7	9
N = 73			

Results and Key Findings:

Example of Testing Null Hypotheses

There will be no significant difference in the opinion of the students of O level who possess knowledge and understanding of different types of essay writing and composing comprehensive essays.

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 \text{ (no significant difference)}$$

$$H_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2 \text{ (there is a significant difference)}$$

For hypothesis testing t-test was performed at the 5% significant level, or $\alpha = 0.05$, i.e.

$$t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = +1.96$$

$$\text{TestStatistic} : t = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu}{\frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}}$$

(All values for hypotheses testing are taken from Table 2 & 3)

Step 1: Degree of freedom (df)

$$\text{df} = (n_1 - 1) + (n_2 - 1) = 72$$

Step 2: Standard Deviation (S_N)

$$(S_N) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$$

$$S_N = 0.63524$$

Step 3: Computation of t

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu}{\frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}}$$

$$t = 10.904$$

It was found that the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 10.904$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus, we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the opinions of the students of O' Level who possess knowledge and understanding of different types of essay writing and composing comprehensive essays.

Null Hypothesis 2:

There will be no significant difference among the opinion of the students of O level with a good command over the use of correct and standard language will reflect a variety of expressions through their essay writing.

In Table 3 it is observed that t with $\text{df} = 72$, therefore we find that the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 7.906$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus, we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the opinions of the students of O level with a good command over the use of correct and standard language will reflect a variety of expressions through their essay writing.

Null Hypothesis 3:

There will be no significant difference between the students of O level with in-depth study, knowledge and understanding of different basic parts of speech will show their linguistic dexterity. In Table 3 it is observed that t with $df = 72$, so we find that the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 10.047$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus, we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the opinions of the students of O level with in-depth study, knowledge and understanding of different basic parts of speech will show their linguistic dexterity.

Null Hypothesis 4:

There will be no significant difference between the opinions of the students of O level who are aware of using relevant content with respect to the topic and also know the proper organization of content will produce a worth reading, worth enjoying, and worth remembering essay.

In Table 3, t with $df = 72$, and we find that the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 8.690$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus, we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the opinions of the students of the students of O level who are aware of using relevant content with respect to the topic and also know the proper organization of content will produce a worth reading, worth enjoying, and worth remembering essay.

Null Hypothesis 5:

There will be no significant difference between the opinions of the diction used by the students of O level will show their wide range of vocabulary and reflect the different styles of the old and contemporary writers.

In Table 3 showed that t with $df = 72$, and the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 5.156$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus, we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the opinions of the diction used by the students of O level will show their wide range of vocabulary and reflect the different styles of the old and contemporary writers.

Null Hypothesis 6:

There will be no significant difference between the opinions of Reading of the modern day English writers and the practice of writing will enable students of O level to spell English words correctly. In Table 3 revealed that t with $df = 72$, we find that the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 7.218$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus,

we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between Reading of the modern day English writers and the practice of writing will enable students of O level to spell English words correctly.

Null Hypothesis 7:

There will be no significant difference between the opinions of the more qualified, CIE trained, and experienced teachers of O level, and the better will be the performance of students in writing an essay in English.

Similarly Table 3 it is revealed that t with $df = 72$, therefore we find that the critical values for $t_{\alpha/2} = t_{0.05/2} = t_{0.025} = 1.96$. The value of the test statistic is $t = 8.302$, which falls in the rejection region. Thus, we reject H_0 . At 5% significance level, the data provides sufficient evidence to conclude that a significant difference exists between the opinions of the students of O level more qualified, CIE trained, and experienced teachers of O level, and the better will be the performance of students in writing an essay in English.

Table 2: One-Sample Statistics

	N	M	SD	Std. Er Mean
H1	73	3.8107	0.63524	0.07435
H2	73	3.5538	0.59854	0.07005
H3	73	3.7819	0.66494	0.07783
H4	73	3.6849	0.67344	0.07882
H5	73	3.3662	0.60678	0.07102
H6	73	3.4795	0.56750	0.06642
H7	73	3.9041	0.93042	0.10890

Source: Author's Estimation

Table 3: Inferential Statistics (One-Sample Test)

Test Value = 3						
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Mean Difference	95% C.I of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
H1	10.904	72	0.000	0.81071	0.6625	0.959
H2	7.906	72	0.000	0.55382	0.4142	0.694
H3	10.047	72	0.000	0.78188	0.6267	0.937
H4	8.69	72	0.000	0.68493	0.5278	0.842
H5	5.156	72	0.000	0.36617	0.2246	0.508
H6	7.218	72	0.000	0.47945	0.3470	0.612
H7	8.302	72	0.000	0.90411	0.6870	1.121

Source: Author's Estimation

Discussions:

Findings from the close ended questions of Factors Affecting English Essay Writing for Teachers FAEWT were quite surprising as compared to the findings from the open ended questions of Factors Affecting English Essay Writing for Teachers FAEWT and teachers' structured interviews provided a new debate to reveal the ground realities regarding essay writing.

The current findings revealed that the skill of writing cannot be enhanced overnight but it demands concerted and untiring efforts put in by the students and the teachers should provide feedback in time in order to overcome the weaknesses in writing. Many studies have been conducted (Rutherford, 1987; Morelli, 2003; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Nation, 2008) related to essay writing all over the world in order to address difficulties encountered by students and the teachers' teaching methodology and the practices being used in this regard. On the subject of the above, the factors influenced essay writing of O level students therefore the teachers' perceptions were analysed. Moreover, the results yielded from five-point Likert scale questionnaire revealed that mostly the input given to the students in the classroom was not up to the mark and resulted in poor performance in writing.

The results of the study demonstrated that majority of the students did not receive feedback. So, how is it possible for them to write a good essay because this finding also concurs with the finding of Nation (2008) who was of the view that constructive feedback enhances the content of learners' writing and their attitude to writing? Feedback absolutely develops the quality of written discourse of the students by checking and correcting their mistakes. The teacher should ensure feedback, peer feedback and self assessment in the class. Teachers' appreciation and feedback enhances students' motivation and their curiosity to reflect and write down in a better manner.

Moreover, the results revealed that students were not proficient enough to use grammar appropriately as a result it was difficult for them to write an essay. This finding also harmonizes with the finding of Rutherford (1987) who stated that the teaching of grammar has repeatedly been considered indistinguishable with overseas language instruction for centuries. Furthermore, Morelli (2003) examined that Grammar was taught conventionally or contextually whereas students' suppositions should be evaluated by teachers in the decision-making process. Students should feel confident that experts have met their prerequisites and educators should be eager to reflect on the approaches and perceptions of students related to teaching of grammar.

This study also revealed that the students were lacking in a wide range of vocabulary. So, many researchers have come up with the significance of vocabulary in writing an essay. For example, the studies carried out by Oxford and Scarcella (1994) who were of the view that learner can turn out to be autonomous of instructor or self-sufficient by means of enhancing vocabulary learning strategies, and such helpful instrument can be brought into play inside or outside of the classroom. Different researches have pointed out that diverse aspects may possibly have an effect on the choice of vocabulary strategies such

as conviction or language adeptness. According to [Carter and McCarthy \(1988\)](#), it is a dire need to develop understanding and enrich vocabulary by discussion with teachers and pupils. Besides this, [A. D. Cohen and Aphek \(1980\)](#); [Laufer and Shmueli \(1997\)](#); [Marefat and Ahmadishirazi \(2003\)](#); [Atai, Akbarian, and Afzali Shahri \(2004\)](#) wherein the findings of the current research make available additional verification for the results of the preceding studies conclude that language learning strategies and vocabulary learning strategies have special effects on retention and recollection of words and idioms used in spoken and written discourse. However, the findings of the study carried out by [Atai et al. \(2004\)](#) revealed that sentence writing as a word-focus vocabulary learning strategy had a considerable effect on both instant recollect of the idioms and their deferred memorization. This study disclosed that the students were not provided congenial learning environment to develop their written discourse. According to [Eraut \(1994\)](#) instructors work on scientific information and also relocate it through accomplishment. How it is implemented in the classroom environment to achieve the smart objectives. It is essential to know that mere production of these strategies is not sufficient but the teachers should regularly carry out research in their own classroom to develop understanding regarding these learning approaches.

Moreover, this study also uncovered that O Level ELTs were not using internet and AV Aids in their classes while teaching essay writing. As a result the students did not take keen interest in learning. According to researches carried out by [Derewianka \(1999\)](#); [Singhal \(1997\)](#); [Silc and Adjunct \(1998\)](#); [Graus \(1999\)](#); [Warschauer and Kern \(2000\)](#); [Warschauer, Shetzer, and Meloni \(2000\)](#); [D. E. Murray \(2005\)](#) the internet made available indisputable language learning perspectives that were enriched in communication and international multiplicity. If it was efficiently utilized, the Internet facilitated students to contribute extensively in purposeful and interactive chores. Furthermore, [Antil, Jenkins, Wayne, and Vadasy \(1998\)](#) also maintained that the largest part of teachers who implement cooperative learning in their classrooms use small groups of three to four students.

This study also revealed that O Level ELTs failed to understand the difficulties faced by their students. As far as many studies were concerned, [Nunan \(1999\)](#) viewed that indeed, it was very challenging to produce a well organized piece of writing particularly in one's Second language. According to [Chakraverty and Gautum \(2000\)](#) who reported that writing was a thoughtful process which necessitated time to reflect about the topic, to evaluate and categorize background information. Nevertheless, [Shokrpour and Fallahzadeh \(2007\)](#) believed that writing was a multifaceted activity or a societal work which reproduced the author's communicative skills and it was complicated to expand and discover, particularly in an EFL perspective.

This study also discovered that the students faced difficulty in maintaining coherence, using appropriate connectors and they lacked in peer review and cooperative learning in their classes. In this nexus, [Abdollahzadeh \(2010\)](#) considered that enhancing the knowledge of essay writing in a competitive learning atmosphere explicates the lack of peer review and cooperative learning. While

student writers are scared of their thoughts being stolen and losing their exceptional opinions, the student writers are disinclined to share their writing with their peers.

In so many researches in Pakistani context, the problems related to students' learning have been highlighted. For instance, the studies by [Kachru \(1986\)](#); [Hamid \(2009\)](#) divulged that it is unquestionable that English plays a pivotal role as an international language. It is a source of getting access to quality education, worldwide trade, science and machinery. Similarly, [Williams and Andrade \(2008\)](#) illustrated that acquisition of language in classroom atmosphere depends on three stages: input, processing or mental planning and output. This study revealed that the students were lacking in grammar, spelling and punctuation marks. The findings of this study confirm the results of the previous studies. For example, [\(Klein & Rose, 2010\)](#) established that Canadian students in grades 5 and 6 were more familiar about persuasive writing than explanatory writing. Moreover, in both cases, students' information was imperfect. Similarly, [Rice \(1903\)](#); [Asker \(1923\)](#); [Macauley \(1947\)](#); [Robinson \(1960\)](#) carried out many studies wherein it was suggested that the learning of formal, traditional grammar had no useful effect on students' written discourse whereas, the training in formal grammar did not develop pupils' writing skill. According to [Hyland \(2003\)](#) who viewed that the plan of good writing assessment tests and tasks incorporated four fundamental basics i.e., rubric; prompt; anticipated response; and post-task assessment.

According to [Qaddumi \(1995\)](#) research papers across Pakistan have drawn attention to student as authors' organizational predicaments in English written discourse. It has been revealed that reiteration, parallelism, sentence length, lack of discrepancy and wrong use of definite cohesive devices are most important sources of organization and textual discrepancy. The present study highlights the significance of written discourse at all levels. Thus, getting a good command over a foreign language requires having a wide range of vocabulary and its accurate use in different contexts in order to convey the message effectively.

Furthermore, it is very important to learn collocations in order to enrich your expressions in English language. However, it has been observed that the teachers do not pay attention in this regard. It is need of the hour that the teachers should realize the difficulties the students face in essay writing. They should keep themselves updated and use new methods, techniques and technologies in order to create interest among EFL learners in their classrooms. To sum up, we conclude that essay writing is a complex issue so more research should be carried out all over Pakistan in order to meet the challenges ahead of the young generation. If the youngsters are capable of writing an essay in English language then they can enjoy their future career and render their services efficiently in any organization of international repute.

Recommendations Based On Findings

Some recommendations are given below:

1. The teachers need to challenge their key beliefs and perceptions regarding context, socio-economic backgrounds and abilities of students. With positive treatment and behaviour, the curriculum developers, management, O Level English language teachers can address and reduce this issue and improve students' skill in English essay writing.
2. Teachers require amending and revisiting their teaching practices and reconsider their viewpoints and convictions for creating critical thinking among students.
3. The British Council should take some immediate initiatives in organizing the International English Essay Writing Competitions annually for Pakistani students at middle, secondary and higher secondary level.
4. The management of the Cambridge affiliated schools of Karachi should hire the services of highly qualified; Cambridge trained, and experienced English language teachers and conduct workshops.
5. O level English language teachers should adopt child-centred, Task-based Techniques (TBT) by involving them in pair work, group work, and peer correction in order to develop their interest for learning enthusiastically. English language teachers should ensure that every student receives individual attention and is encouraged to be more creative and receives timely feedback in order to get over his or her weaknesses in the classroom.
6. It is the need of the hour to comprehend, address and think over this problem in teacher tutoring, programme of study and policy expansion. Professional Development Programmes (PDP) and instructors' training programmes necessitate educating teachers on how to minimize negatively affecting factors so that students become capable of participating actively subjects taught in English.
7. The Federal and Provincial governments of Pakistan should ensure that the Curriculum Wing has been playing its required role in designing English language course in order to cater the needs of students at all levels and meeting the international standards in order to enable the students to develop their four skills of English language in the first place.
8. The content of the English language textbooks for the government schools in Pakistan require to be modified and revised so as to enhance the information of pupils. The students should be provided a wide range of texts in order to develop their understanding and critical thinking as well. English curriculum should contain a number of task-based activities for the enhancement of written discourse of the students. It should promote the pair work, group work, and cooperative learning strategy in order

to create interest and enthusiasm among the students so that they can enhance their four skills of language development. The contents in the textbooks designed for Pakistani students should discourage rote learning which spoils their intellect and abilities. It should rather promote the understanding and critical thinking abilities of the students.

9. The students in Pakistan should be provided a congenial and conducive environment for English language learning and they need to be provided the required facilities so that they can learn and grow in a better manner.
10. The government of Pakistan should earmark at least 4% to 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for promoting the education to one and all in the first place. The existing GDP utilized in Pakistan is lower than the countries such as; Bangladesh 2.5%, South Korea 4.6%, Thailand 4.2%, Malaysia 6.2%, Iran 4.7%, and India 3.8% (World Bank, 2007).
11. The Cambridge University or the British Council should organize a number of workshops separately for O level English language teachers and the O level students periodically in order to enhance the written discourse of the teachers as well as students.
12. The school management of the Cambridge affiliated Schools of Karachi should bear the expenses of Cambridge training for O level English language teachers and ensure the participation of O level English language teachers in Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) seminars, workshops, conferences, and trainings for their professional growth and development so that they can engage students in fruitful activities in their classrooms while teaching English language effectively.
13. O level English language teachers should encourage their students to participate in debates, speeches, elocutions, spelling bee competitions, essay writing competitions in order to build their morale and overcome the fear of public speaking in the large audience.
14. O level English language teachers ought to show a variety of texts of old and contemporary writers in order to enhance the written expressions and style of writing an essay in English language effectively. The teachers should plan the smart objectives in order to teach essay writing in English language effectively in the class.
15. O level English language teachers ought to inculcate the habit of reading among students so that they should become voracious readers and bibliophile.
16. O level English language teachers should make their students aware of the acronym 'POWER' (plan, organize, write, edit, and rewrite) strategy. The students should respond '5WHs' (who, what, when, where, why and how) before they start writing an essay.

17. The students must stick to the topic and introduce an essay with interesting thesis statement and organize the required information by using cohesive devices or linking words to interlink the structured paragraphs together. Coherence and clarity should be sustained throughout the essay and they should use a wide range of vocabulary. They should be very particular about the correct use of grammar, spelling mistakes, and punctuation marks. The teachers ought to ensure that the beginning, body, and conclusion of essay must be up to the mark. The students must use Standard English from the beginning till the end of the essay.
18. O level English language teachers should provide ample practice and a wide range of topics of the interest of students so that they develop a keen interest for writing an Essay in English language appropriately, accurately, and effectively.
19. This study can be replicated or can be extended to a larger population of the whole country, Pakistan.

Limitations of the Study:

The study was delimited merely to the Cambridge affiliated schools of Karachi. This study was not conducted on a large sample across Pakistan due to lack of resources, material, finance and time. Moreover, this study was limited to the current teaching procedures regarding the factors influencing English essay writing. The English language teachers who were engaged in teaching English essay writing to O level students in the classrooms were restricted to the Karachi (Sindh). The sampling procedure selected for this study was slightly changed because of unavailability of O Level English language teachers owing to their personal reasons. Therefore, Headmaster or Headmistress cum English language teacher, Head of Department cum English language teacher, Subject Coordinator cum English language teacher, Coordinator cum English language teacher were included in this study in order to meet the required number of research participants.

The results could not be generalized even in Karachi. Qualitative part was also in the scope of this study which has enriched the findings. This study was also confined to Pakistani context of O Level English language teaching strategies and conditions which did not mainly focus on a global perspective of Cambridge education system. The results generated through this study ought not to be generalized on global context of O level teaching strategy for the skill of English essay writing. The influence of research participants' gender, age, marital status, academic and professional qualifications, teaching experience and salary were not included in the findings of this study because of time limitations, unequal number of male and female and difference of designations of the research participants.

Recommendations for Further Research:

The researcher has suggested some areas for enhancing essay writing skill of students at all levels in which further research could be carried out. These include:

1. Problems faced by the students in writing dissertation/research articles in the Public and Private Universities of Pakistan.
2. Difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching Essay Writing Skill at O Level and mainstream schools (Karachi Board), public and private educational institutions.
3. Difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching Essay Writing Skill at A Level and Intermediate System of Education in public and private educational institutions.
4. Difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching essay writing skill at undergraduate level of education in public and private educational institutions.
5. Difficulties faced by the University teachers in teaching essay writing skill at public and private universities of Pakistan.
6. Teaching methodology and approaches of teachers in teaching English essay writing skill in private and public educational institutes of Pakistan.
7. A comparative study of enhancing writing skill of English language teachers in public and private educational institutions.

Conclusion:

The results of this study were quite surprising and baffled researchers' expectations. On the basis of findings, the following main conclusions concerning 'Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Factors Affecting English Essay Writing of O Level Students' were drawn:

1. Since each hypothesis's significance is measured following Likert Scale of 1 to 5, therefore, the average value across the sample for individual hypothesis is equated with 3-the midpoint of Likert Scale. Output shows that mean difference for the hypothesis is significant as t value is greater than 2 and sig. value is less than 0.01. This means that if the average of the hypothesis is greater than 3 and the difference is statistically significant, therefore at 99% confidence interval then we conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected.
2. The findings of close ended items yield from FAEWT revealed that the respondents agreed that the students were not facing any problem regarding 82 close ended items. Therefore, only in the light of the results of close ended items all the hypotheses of this study were rejected.

3. It was surprising to note that the teachers' perceptions were quite different from the findings close ended items of FAEWT and the findings open ended items of FAEWT. Therefore, it is obvious that the problem does exist and as result of the findings open ended items of FAEWT and teachers' structured interviews, all the hypotheses of this study were accepted.
4. The gender of teacher might have an impact on students' essay writing skill which is a complex issue and needs further research and understanding.
5. The results revealed that the majority of the students were lacking in grammar, spelling and use of appropriate punctuation marks. Moreover, in their writing they were also not trained how to use cohesive devices and maintain coherence.
6. The results of this study may be used as a baseline for further studies.
7. It was recommended that the students should read extensively, practice essay writing continuously and get their teacher's feedback frequently.
8. There is also a need to modify all significant existing parameters. For instance, what sort of teaching methods and techniques should be practiced by O Level English language teachers? How the students' grades could be enhanced? How can the English language teachers facilitate and encourage the students in order to get over their weaknesses in essay writing? How should the school management play their productive part and ensure in providing congenial atmosphere to students in order to enhance essay writing skill? How can English language teachers encourage healthy competition regarding essay writing between male and female students? How can school management raise awareness among O Level English language teachers, parents and students regarding essay writing skill? How can English language teachers make the students realize the importance of writing in their daily life? How can private and public educational institutions work together in order to address this issue? What is the rationale of gender diversity in learning essay writing skill and so on?

The findings of this study are indeed very helpful for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as Second Language (ESL) teachers. It is hoped that these findings will also be helpful for the teachers, curriculum designers, material developers, and test constructors to improve teaching and learning in enhancing written discourse of students. To date, no study has been carried out in Pakistan to facilitate O Level English Language teachers so that they come up to the expectations of the students. Therefore, it is expected that this study will contribute considerably to the field of Cambridge system of education in enhancing writing skill of students and will also ameliorate formative and summative assessments in essay writing in Pakistan. The context of the schooling system and the teachers' perceptions had a slight influence on the students' essay writing skills. The affecting factors on students' essay writing is a complex issue and requires further research.

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