

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS FACED BY PAKISTANI STUDENT WRITERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (LD) IN EFL WRITING**Ghulam Haider**, Ph.D. (Scholar)Department of Special Education
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ABSTRACT: *The current study focuses on the organizational problems the Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) face when they write an English essay. In particular, the current study aims at investigating student writers' organizational problems in EFL essay writing. A mixed method research design was used including a questionnaire and a semi-structured in-depth interview. Analysis of findings revealed that student writers face some problems in the organization of EFL essay writing. Discussion and implications of these findings are presented.*

1. Introduction

Student's writing in an EFL classroom context should show their awareness of their own communicative goals, of the reader, and of the writing context. Essay writing, which constitutes a problem for many ESL/EFL student writers worldwide, is a major challenge for many Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD). Despite numerous approaches to the teaching of writing have evolved from different methods, tackling EFL writing is still one of the most challenging areas for teachers of student writers with LD and student writers. Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) have to pass many academic exams in English. Nevertheless, these student writers still experience some problems in the organization and organizationof their English essay writing as indicated by the results of a preliminary essay writing questionnaire administered to one hundred student writers.

To the best of my knowledge, in Pakistan yet not a single study has been conducted in the field of essay writing. The current study is concerned with exploring the organizational problems that Pakistani student with learning difficulties (LD) face while writing their essays in English.

Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties face certain problems in writing. As many teachers of student writers with LD of English have noted, acquiring the writing skill seems to be more laborious and demanding than acquiring the other language skills (Zheng, Y. (1999). In fact, producing a well organized piece of writing is an enormous challenge, especially in one's second language (Nunan, D., 1999). This is magnified by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English texts-the structure style, and organization-often differ from those in other languages (Leki, I. (1991) as they require a great effort to recognize and manage the difference. This is

particularly true of the rhetorical conventions of the Urdu language as student writers' mother tongue.

In Pakistan, the education system emphasizes writing for taking tests. In this respect, some studies in Pakistan were conducted offering different approaches and remedial programmes to overcome the de-contextualization of writing and to develop student writers' EFL essay writing skills (21).

The current study attempted to find answers to the student writers with learning difficulties and their teachers of student writers with LD perceive the organization of the written essays.

1. How do Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) and their teachers of student writers with LD perceive the organization of the written essays?

2. Literature Review

Writing is "a reflective process and requires time to think about the topic, to analyze and classify background knowledge (Chakraverty, A., & Gautum, K., 2000). Writers need a suitable language to structure these ideas in the form of a well organized discourse. Writing is a complex activity, a social act which reflects the writer's communicative skills which is difficult to develop and learn, especially in an EFL context (Shokrpour, N., & Fallahzadeh, M.,2007). L1 writing is perceived as: a cognitive psychological perspective, a socio-cultural perspective and a linguistic perspective (Myhill, D., 2009). In line with the process writing approach, I perceive EFL writing as a multi-dimensional process composed of a cognitive activity affected by a number of linguistic and contextual factors; EFL linguistic proficiency, instructional, psychological, socio-cultural, and socio-political issues. If these factors are well-addressed, this will make writing an easy experience.

L2 Writing has always been considered an important skill in teaching and learning. According to Rao, Z. (2007) EFL writing is useful in two respects: First, it motivates student writers thinking, organizing ideas, and developing their ability to summarize, analyze and criticize. Second, it strengthens student writers learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language.

In relation to the context of the current study, essay writing is significant to the learning of Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) because it facilitates student writers and teachers' acquisition of the basic study skills needed for understanding what they study and expressing it in their own words. This will assist them to keep away memorization, rote learning and plagiarism that are much discouraged in the recent theories of teaching learning. In addition, competence in essay writing will help student writers pass all their academic courses successfully. Moreover, being proficient in essay writing in English will enable student writers

with LD and their teachers of student writers with LD to be successful teachers of student writers with LD and action researchers in the future.

Coherence, or texture, is the combination of semantic configurations of two different kinds: register and organization (Halliday, M., & Hasan, R., 1985). Organization in written text is “a complex concept, involving a multitude of reader and text-based features” (Johns, 1986: p.247). Text-based features mean organization (i.e., the linking of sentences) and unity (i.e., sticking to the point). Reader-based features mean that the reader interacts with the text depending on his/her prior knowledge. Organization is defined as “the organization of discourse with all elements present and fitting together logically” (Heller, M., 1999). This denotes that a well organized essay consists of an introduction, a thesis statement, rhetorical support, and a conclusion.

A number of research papers across Pakistan would have spotlighted student writers' organizational problems in English writing. For example, Arab student's written products revealed that repetition, parallelism, sentence length, lack of variation and misuse of certain cohesive devices are major sources of organization and textual deviation (Qaddumi, M., 1995). In addition, other studies asserted that Yemeni and Moroccan student writers have some weaknesses, in terms of organization and organization, manifested in the student writers' written texts.

In relation to EFL essay writing organization, many researchers agree that organization, on the macro level is related to linking ideas whereas on the micro level, it is concerned with connecting sentences and phrases. “The concept of organization is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text” (Halliday, M., & Hasan, R., 1985). Many researchers have highlighted the importance of text organization claiming that a text stands as a text by means of organization. But for organization, sentences would be fragmented and would result in a number of unrelated sentences (Hinkel, E. (2004).

Reviewed studies identified that organization constitutes a serious problem to student writers with learning difficulties (LD). Many researchers in different countries across Pakistan have paid attention to the different aspects of organizational problems from which student writers and their teachers of student writers with LD complain.

However, to the best of my knowledge, no single Pakistani study has discussed organization in the English essays of student writers with learning difficulties and their teachers. Hence, the current study is exploring the organizational problems that Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) and teachers of student writers with LD face in their English essay writing. This, in turn, will inform my research whether these problems in the Pakistani context are similar to or different from those of the previously reviewed studies.

3-Methodology

In view of the exploratory nature of the current study, and its context-specificity, the interpretive, qualitative research was selected. The interpretive approach will help the researcher explore and understand the context within which essay writing in English is taught and learnt in typical Pakistani intermediate level colleges. This, in turn, will help the researcher reveal the problems that Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) and teachers of student writers with LD face in the organization of their texts.

The sample of the current study consisted of one hundred student writers with learning difficulties. Student writers with learning difficulties were identified with the help of a check list developed by the researcher. Ten out of one hundred student writers were selected to be interviewed. In addition, five teachers of student writers with LD of student writers with learning difficulties filled in the questionnaire and were interviewed to supplement the data and findings. The current study made use of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

4-Findings

Findings of the current study revealed that student writers with learning difficulties have to face organizational problems in their English writing. In relation to organizational problems in their English writing some problems were revealed such as difficulty in writing the introduction, the thesis statement, the topic sentence, writing concluding sentences and writing the conclusion. In the same vein, the teachers of student writers with LD of student writers reported that their student writers have difficulty writing the thesis statement, the topic sentences, transition of ideas, and sequence of ideas.

A number of reasons are associated with student writers' organizational problems in English essay writing. First, the effect of topic-specific background knowledge was seen as influential on the general quality and local organization of student writers' writing (Langer, J., 1983). Second, it was highlighted that low English proficiency student writers find it difficult to develop well organized writing due to paying attention to language matters rather than making meaning (Lee, C., 2004). Moreover, my finding supported Atari, O. (1983) who claimed that student writers tend to follow certain techniques in their written English that make their writing poorly organized such as including a broad statement in the opening sections of their essays before introducing the topic sentence the same was found with Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties. In addition, Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties overused coordinate sentences and misused topic sentences which were the reasons for their poorly organized and unacceptable quality of writing. This finding is associated with the findings of Elkhatb, A. (1983) who found Arab student writers overusing coordinate sentences.

In reference to student problems in organization, some were reported such as difficulty in using cataphoric and anaphoric reference, ellipsis, substitution, and genre related organizational

ties. In addition, overusing certain cohesive ties was also reported by university lectures. Diverse studies have acknowledged the importance of text organization in English writing as a mechanism that facilitates discourse flow. These studies also added that constructing well organized texts by second language learners requires focused instruction and additional attention (Reid, J., 1993a). Besides, many reviewed studies asserted that production of well-organized text in English constitutes a serious problem to Pakistani student writers.

4. Discussion

Findings of the current study revealed that there are a number of factors and contexts lying behind these organizational problems. At the psychological level, student writers faced a number of challenges including lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and writing anxiety.

Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) are not motivated to write English essays for a number of possible reasons. First, they are taught in a large class characterized by physical as well as intellectual distance between teachers of student writers with LD and student writers. Second, Pakistani teachers of student writers with LD of student writers with LD tend to use traditional teaching techniques such as lecturing, reading aloud, and book reading; they are frequently indifferent to student writers' communication in class; and student writers report negative attitudes towards essay writing as a difficult course. These factors are similar to the factors revealed by Holliday, A. (1996) as "sings of boredom", "passive watching" and "teaching spectacle". Recently, it has been referred to the impact of student passive listening on their learning in general and creative writing in particular (Abdollahzadeh, E., 2010). Finally, this lack of motivation can have a strong negative effect on student writers' development in essay writing as confirmed by (Bacha, N., 2002) who claims that Arabic speaking student writers are known to face such problems in compulsory English composition courses at the university level. Furthermore, another study has corroborated that student writers' low motivational intensity contributed to student writers' vocabulary problems in writing (Al-Akloby, S., 2001).

Student writers' lack of confidence could be ascribed to a number of socio-cultural issues. First, parents' culture of control and power might be a contributing factor as they indirectly implant a lack of self-confidence in their children by marginalizing their opinion and voice in the family. Student writers fear their parents; this is common in the Pakistani context where many parents are ready to punish their children when the need arises. This punishment could be psychological in most cases and physical in some cases. Furthermore, student writers frequently have a culture of dependence on someone else to tell them what to do. It is widespread among many Pakistanis that they depend totally at home on their parents or elder siblings. Independence in study is an uncommon phenomenon in the Pakistani culture. Another important factor is the unrealistic academic/scholastic expectation that beyond his/her intellectual abilities. In reference to the educational system in Pakistan, student writers in classroom are not given the

opportunity to argue or negotiate meaning with their teachers. This might be due to the fear of the teacher's strong authority in the classroom. Moreover, Pakistani teachers of student writers with LD tend to attract student writers to their private tuition where they can get all content knowledge summarized and memorized. All these factors might be the original source of lacking self-confidence among most Pakistani student writers.

Most learning environments at Pakistani public intermediate colleges do not tend to promote student writers self-confidence. This is magnified by the fact that highly confident student writers are not provided with the learning opportunities at college/or in classroom that enhance their confidence and abilities due to the lack of time and teachers' awareness of these psychological aspects in promoting student writers learning as well as scarcity of teachers' feedback on student writers' writing performance. It is underscored that writing multiple drafts, putting emphasis on the "publication" of student writers work, and teachers' comments that focused more on content and organization than on grammatical errors helped them produce better pieces of written composition and develop more self-confidence in writing (Tyson, R., 1997). Similarly, it is claimed that when student writers are self-confident/competent in their reading and writing skills, they are able to adapt to new teaching/learning methods quickly (Albertson, K., 2006). Therefore, a psychologically supportive and nurturing learning environment is needed within the Pakistani context to boost student writers' self-confidence and alleviate their psychological challenges.

Writing anxiety is said to negatively influence both the learners' motivation (Cheng, Y., 2002) and their academic achievement (Macintyre, P., Noel S, K., & clement, R., 1997) on one hand and their attitudes towards writing on the other hand (Atay, D., & Kurt, G., 2206). Research has shown that high apprehensive writers, in comparison with other low apprehensive ones, tend to stop more while writing and are less concerned with planning the overall structure of their essays (Selfe, C., 1984).

Data revealed a number of factors that might have contributed to Pakistani student writers' writing anxiety such as lack of written feedback, negative oral criticism, working under time pressure, and writing about difficult topics. A study across the Pakistani context highlighted that student writers with low apprehension wrote better quality pieces of written composition and had higher self-esteem than those with high nervousness (Hassan, B., 2001). In addition, it is pinpointed that student writers' writing anxiety is caused by their prior negative evaluations or by more complex psychodynamics (Rose, M., 1985). In reference to feedback, it was shown that the peer feedback group of prospective teachers of student writers with LD experienced significantly less writing anxiety than the teacher feedback group as they received opinions from their classmates to elaborate on, and this collaboration helped them look at their essays differently and lessen their writing anxiety (Rose, M., 1985). Moreover, it is implied that writer's block that leads to their anxiety in writing may be due to student writers' writing under time

pressure (Lee.S., 2006). Finally, it was reported that student writers with high apprehension selected topics that were more familiar to them and avoided unfamiliar topics (Lee.S., 2006).

At the teaching level, a number of factors contributed to Pakistani student writers' different writing challenges such as teaching workload, limited lecture duration, scarcity of teachers' professional development, teachers' negative attitudes towards teaching essay writing, and the essay writing course.

Teaching workload is one of the factors affecting teachers' performance and quality of teaching. Academic English language (Compulsory) courses are taught at all levels and a teacher has to teach almost five periods per day that is 30 periods per week. Furthermore, they are responsible to accomplish their course within time limit. This results in over workload. An appropriate academic workload is one among other factors that contributes to efficient learning and teaching: when workload increases, learning and teaching might not be as efficient as it should be (Ramsden, P., Prosser, M., Trigwell, K., & Martin, E., 2007). In addition, it is implied that heavy teaching loads might hinder student writers' involvement in different writing activities (Abdollahzadeh, E. ,2010). Similarly, the issues of workload and pupil behavior are two of the most important factors that discourage teachers of student writers with LD from joining the profession or push them to leave teaching (Barby, p., 2006).

The lectures on the essay writing course are scheduled to last for a period of 45 minutes in the last two days of a week or vary teacher to teacher. Throughout the classroom observation of the three different lectures, it has been noted that the lecture time is short, ranging from 35-45 minutes, according to the lecturer. Moreover, all teachers of student writers with LD combine the two lectures that are supposed to be in different days in only one lecture because they want to find time to teach other things that earn better grades. This reflects the lack of administrative organization and lack of accountability. This issue has also been noted in other international research studies and led to a call for greater accountability and improvement in the quality of teaching in higher education (Ballantyne, R., Borthwick, J., & Packer, J. ,2000).

Staff development refers to providing teacher with opportunities to reflect considerably on their practice and to acquire new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners (Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M., 1995). Pakistani teachers of student writers with LD of students with LD lack training not only in classroom management techniques, but also in syllabus planning, design, classroom interaction techniques and teaching methods (Holliday, A. , 1996). This is also true of the lecturers in this study, who, as mentioned above, may not have received appropriate training. Professional development could take place through special programmes or through encouraging greater teacher collegiality, which is important for two reasons: it may enhance better working relationships that may yield quality teaching and learning and, it encourages through social interaction a better emotional health environment among staff, which decreases emotional strain and burnout.

Pakistani teachers of student writers with LD of students with LD are assumed to be developing themselves professionally and academically. However, not all of them do so regularly in their areas of expertise. In reference to teaching EFL, they are supposed to have command on English. They rarely make efforts to enhance their skills that are related to their classroom teaching practices. They lack research and teaching productivity for a number of reasons including lack of time, teaching support, collegiality, financial and institutional resources, as well as limited salaries, family commitments and daily routines.

Teachers' work as researchers is advantageous for three reasons (Cochran-Smith, M., 2005). Firstly, teachers of student writers with LD can relate research to practice in a significant way that would positively affect teacher way of thinking and teaching practices, and student achievement outcomes (Mitchell, s., Reilly, r., & Logue, M. ,2009). Secondly, it will enable teacher to question policies affecting teacher education. Additionally it will lead them to find out new problems continuously and enhance their research and teaching productivity (Hong, W., Xuezhu, C., & Ke, Z.,2007). In this way, they would be leaders in researching their disciplines and pioneers in promoting more critical and creative student writers.

There are socio-economic reasons that might impede teachers of student writers with LD of student writers with LD from reading the latest periodicals and books in their area of expertise: namely, low monthly salaries, high living expenses, the high cost of books and the expensive periodical subscription. Second, they do not have time to do research as most of them work in other tuition centers and private academies to increase their limited incomes. Moreover, using deficient libraries that are full of outdated books in different specializations is another reason for not reading regularly. Furthermore, EFL teaching experience that requires them to enhance their professional qualifications, to be promoted to a higher position of assistant professor or professor might contribute to their limited reading. Finally, from a personal experience in buying books for the library, the annual limited budget to buy new books is not enough to buy ten books in English at most, in different specializations.

Teachers' attitude towards teaching is considered a contributing factor to their success and effectiveness in teaching. Pakistani teachers' attitudes towards their work is mostly negative, with six participants commenting on it as 'difficult', 'hard', and 'challenging'. This attitude might have resulted from some reasons: large classes, the lack of essay writing syllabus, lack of good collegiality, lack of experience and knowledge and the multi-componential nature of essay writing.

In reference to the Pakistani context, there are other factors related to the course that added to the challenges teachers of student writers with LD face in their teaching of essay writing. First, there are neither course description, clear course objectives nor course structure to guide student writers and teachers. This leads to the varied teaching focuses of the difference teachers of student writers with LD involved in the writing course, as well as the range in

materials selected and used, which include essay writing books, extracts of books, internet articles and essays, grammar extracts, idioms and collections...etc. These factors result in an essay writing course lacking in organization, structure and guidance.

At the socio-political level, restriction of Pakistani student writers' voice in writing was underscored. Socio-politically, the Pakistani constitution granted each citizen the right to express his/her opinion freely and clearly. This is well-expressed in article 19 of the Pakistani constitution as follows: "Every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be freedom of the press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam or the integrity, security or defense of Pakistan or any part thereof, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court[commission of] or incitement to an office."

Due to the lack of freedom to express one's opinion, the teaching and learning in Pakistan have been negatively affected. EFL essay writing is also affected by this opinion suppression. The effect of this lack of freedom of expression is seen in the essay writing course, for example, in the case where a teacher of student writers with LD asked his student writers to avoid writing their essays about sensitive issues such as religion, politics or sex. There may be a number of reasons including the difficulty of addressing 'taboo' subjects, the concerns of the teacher about doing anything against the regime and which might put her job at risk.

In compliance with the above mentioned example of the essay writing teacher, there are two other student-related examples in writing that took place at my own college. The first one tells of a Part-II college male student in Lahore. He criticized in his writing the act of burning the houses of Christians by some un-known people. He defended the poor Christians. As a result, the young man has been deprived of good grades. When asked about this, his friends said that he is a true Muslim but thinks differently, the teacher who marked his essay disliked his liberal approach and failed him in the exam.

The second example narrates the story of a first year college student at the same college. He criticized in writing the USA and Israel of polluting the environment. Unlike the former student, he got good grades and passed the exam successfully. The above two examples show how dangerous it is to express your opinion frankly in writing. This might result in capturing student writers' critical and creative thinking skills which are required for better student writers who could lead future generations.

Finally, Pakistani student writers' essay writing was reported to be affected by a number of socio-cultural contexts such as the reading culture and its effect on essay writing development, student writers' prior knowledge, pre-university learning experience such as the use of formulaic expressions, rote learning, lack of discussion and competitive learning environments, Arabic interference in English writing, and proficiency level in English.

Findings of the current study highlighted that teachers of student writers with LD have voiced their concern about their students' lack of reading authentic English texts resulting in considerable challenges with regards to topic prior knowledge, coherence, organization, style, range of vocabulary, and grammatical structures and punctuation. Moreover, teachers of student writers with LD reported that student writers frequently read the simplified texts of novels and plays. They are not used to reading for long hours and they are not ready to exert that effort. This is likely to impact on English writing because the more one reads the better writing style and vocabulary one develops.

To highlight how strong and close the relationship between reading and writing should be, it is capitalized that the teaching of reading and writing are inseparable (Zheng, Y., 1999) pedagogically, it was suggested that L2 reading would help improve L2 writing at the primary and the higher levels (Bell, T. 1998). In line with this, it has been confirmed that reading for pleasure and mandatory reading affect developing writing skills positively (Feeris, D., & Hedgcock, J., 1998). In reference to the Pakistani context, the importance of reading to enhance student writers' previous knowledge was highlighted (El-koumy, a., 1983). He added that the teaching of reading and writing should be integrated to better prepare English teachers of student writers with LD to read like writers and write like readers.

There may be a number of reasons for this lack of extensive reading, including lack of encouragement from parents, lack of financial resources, lack of sufficient and well-equipped libraries, lack of interest in collecting books and keeping them in a home library and associating reading with homework or study.

Previous knowledge plays an important role in one's comprehension and composition (Hinkel, E., 2004). Gaining previous knowledge about general issues enables student writers to compose an essay about a topic in which they might be interested. Previous knowledge and experience that student writers bring to the composition classroom are pinpointed as major distinctive characteristics between native and non-native speakers of English (Ferris, D., & Hedgcok, j. ,2004). They add that background knowledge and strategic proficiency can be clearly seen in ESL/EFL student writers' responses to texts and topics, in their reactions to the activities of ESL writing classrooms, and in their familiarity with the rhetorical patterns of academic and professional discourse communities.

Findings of the current study revealed that Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) lack topic previous knowledge. This was supported by the views of both student writers as well as their teachers of student writers with LD. In agreement with this, it was claimed that there is a strong and consistent relationship between topic-specific background knowledge and the quality of student writers writing (Larios. J., Marin, J., & Murphy, L. , 2001). She further found out that different kinds of knowledge were predictive of success in different writing tasks. In the same vein, Previous knowledge and writing experiences seemed to affect

student writers' revision processes more than any other factors (Selfe, C. ,1984). Previous knowledge about written English is thought to be one among other influential factors in student writers success (El-Mortaji, L. ,2001). Moreover, it is spotlighted that when content and form are familiar, reading and writing are relatively easy. But when one or the other (or both) are unfamiliar, efficiency, effectiveness, and success are problematic.

Characteristics of the way EFL writing is taught at the intermediate might be attributed to a number of reasons. First, Pakistani in service teachers of student writers with LD have not been adequately taught how to teach EFL writing well to their student writers. Therefore, they resort to teaching them formulaic expressions and traditional writing topics. Second, EFL teachers of student writers with LD might lack the content knowledge about the different composition writing topics because they do not have time to read in English whether at school, as they are busy teaching, or after school when they start giving many private lessons to increase their limited salaries that hardly suffice their basic needs. Moreover, teachers of student writers with LD do not have time to read student writers' pieces of writing and give them written feedback. Finally, teachers of student writers with LD marking scheme of student writers written pieces in the final exams is rather subjective depending on their personal evaluation only.

Rote learning is one of the features characterizing the Pakistani educational system. Student writers are encouraged to memorize what they study rather than engage in critical and creative thinking processes. Culturally, Pakistani student writers who memorise what they study are regarded as cleverer than those who do not. This is reinforced by most exams in the different educational stages in most courses which ask student writers questions that mostly require them to recall what they have memorized during their study. This leaves no place for the development of critical or creative thinking skills. Schooling is thereby driven exclusively by the need to score high grades in national examinations, which determine access to university places. These exams do not only engender a culture of fear and frustration, but also reinforce rote memorization and suppress critical thinking and creative expression.

Another reason might be that memorization is a successful learning strategy with some student. This might date back to the time when children were enrolled in what was called at the time 'Muktab', referring to a place where student writers used to memorise to the Holy Quran under the instruction of a religious teacher called 'Qari'. Furthermore, many Pakistani primary and secondary school teachers of student writers with LD lack the knowledge and the skills of using differentiated teacher strategies that help them develop student writers' critical and creative thinking skills.

Additionally, the gap between what Pakistani teachers learn at university and what they practice inside the classroom might help explain why memorization and rote learning are still encouraged. Experience in-service teachers of student writers with LD transfer their experience to the newly-graduated teachers of student writers with LD by telling them what works in

teaching and what does not work. From a personal experience as an EFL teacher for one year and a supervisor of student teachers of student writers with LD of English at different schools for many years, I was told that I should forget all about the teaching techniques that I learnt at university and follow what experienced teachers of student writers with LD do in their classrooms by helping student writers memorize list of words and grammar rules without understanding them. Furthermore, teachers of student writers with LD used to train student writers to memorise steps for answering exam questions correctly. This suggests that learning that is based on memorization and rote learning is soon to be forgotten. This justifies why teachers of student writers with LD should pay attention to using a number of different teaching techniques that could help widen their student writers' minds to think critically and creatively. This might cultivate a better learner who is adaptable to the rapidly-changing education worldwide.

Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD) "were never in a position to negotiate what the lecturer put on the blackboard. This denotes that they are lacking the opportunity to discuss or negotiate meaning in what they learn. This could be attributed to the border political concept of the so-called 'democracy' where democratic slogans are not put into practice. In other words, the decisions made by the government in relation to certain issues in Pakistan are unquestionable. The same thing applies to the small classroom in the Pakistani educational system where 'a democratic class' in which meaning is co-constructed and equal participation is everyone's right, is rare to be found.

The Pakistani educational system, at all levels, is believed to encourage competitive learning environment. In a Pakistani classroom, student writers are ranked according to achievement that is based on competition. This has resulted in teachers of student writers with LD making some challenging exams that allow only smart student writers to pass and require other student writers to resit some exams or repeat the whole scholastic year. Student writers compete due to some socio-cultural factors such as teachers of student writers with LD and parents' encouragement of such kind of learning in classroom and at home. The learning of essay writing in such a competitive learning environment explains the lack of peer review and co-operative learning, as student writers are afraid of their ideas being stolen and losing their unique thoughts. This is also confirmed by a research study in another EFL context at the university level which reported student writers' unwillingness to share their writing with their peers in Iran (Abdollahzadeh, E., 2010).

Pakistani student writers seem to be the product of an educational system that does not encourage cooperative learning or interaction between learners. Data analysis revealed that student writers have no access to recent books in the libraries. As a result, they have acquired a number of psychological traits that encourage selfishness, jealousy of other competitors, love of self and monopoly of knowledge. The lack of resources and facilities makes competition more fierce which might justify the lack of co-operation. This draws our attention to the bad

psychological effects of this kind of competitive learning environment that should be eliminated from our Pakistani educational system by looking ahead at how more developed countries with their ample resources and facilities nurture a supportive environment that encourages knowledge dissemination and stresses collaborative work that leads to ongoing productivity and progress.

It has been acknowledged that producing a well organized and cohesive, piece of writing is a challenging task. This is magnified by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English texts such as the structure, organization, lexis and grammar-differ from those in other languages and particularly in Arabic. With special reference to EFL/ESL student writers in general and Urdu speaking student writers in particular, learning English essay writing is not easy due to the difference between the two languages in phonological, morphological, transfer, lexico - grammatical and structural aspects that allow problems in student writers writing to arise. Thus, these differences need to be recognized and managed.

In line with the findings of the current study in relation to Urdu (L1) interference in student writers' English writing, a handful of other studies have revealed how Urdu (L1) negatively interferes in EFL writing. First, the contrasting features between Urdu (L1) and English have been identified as potential contributors to observed error production and weaknesses in some reading skills, but most particularly in writing skills. Second, weakness in mastering ones native language such as Urdu (L1) in the current study might account for their weakness in EFL writing skills. Third, the interference of Urdu (L1) in the English writing might justify the errors in English grammar and punctuation.

Due to differences between Urdu and English, Pakistani student writers might find English writing argue that the cultural differences between Urdu (L1) and English speech communities are directly responsible for the different use of cohesive devices in the two languages. They claim that Urdu (L1) organization is characterized as context-based, generalized, repetition-oriented, and additive. In contrast, English organization is described as text-based, specified, change-oriented, and non-additive. In my view, I think that Urdu (L1) affects the organization of Pakistani student writers writing. This is represented in Pakistani student writers many literal translation and use of formulaic expressions in their writing. In addition, writing the run-on sentences and repetition were another two features of Pakistani student writers poor writing style.

Findings of the current study highlighted that Pakistani student writers' low proficiency in English is an influential factor contributing to their writing problems. This is clear in two aspects: first, teachers of student writers with LD reported that their student writers join college with a poor proficiency level in English. This foreshadows the numerous problems student writers are expected to face in the various academic courses in general and in EFL essay writing in particular. Second, student writers themselves voiced their concern about not peer reviewing

each other written essays because they think that they share a low proficiency level which would not enable them to spot each other's mistakes.

In consistency with the findings of the current study, some researchers argued that proficient learners of English are said to produce good quality pieces of writing. For example, a number of factors including student writers' L2 proficiency might influence student writers' level of knowledge and writing in English. In a similar vein, it has been revealed that L2 higher proficiency participants devoted less time to formulation, concentrated formulation in the central stages of writing in English. In addition, it is proved that second language proficiency is a significant factor in developing the overall quality of student writers written products. However, he added that proficiency did not obviously influence the processes of writing.

5. Implications for Teaching of Writing

The current study contributes significantly to EFL education in Pakistan in terms of English language pre-service teacher education, educational research, and curriculum planning and design.

From the perspective of English language pre-service teacher education, the current study has the potential to improve English language teacher education in a number of ways:

- a) It provides an understanding of the problems faced by student teachers of student writers with LD in the organization and organization of their written essays. This, in turn, is significant for teacher educators since it aims to provide implications for developing their essay writing syllabus, methods of teaching, and assessment.
- b) It also sheds light on the importance of student writers' needs as this will enable teacher educators to know how to satisfy these needs and conduct successful and memorable learning.
- c) It also highlights the significant development in the academic achievement of student writers in other courses due to their ability to produce well organized and cohesive essays. This will help better prepare highly qualified teachers of student writers with LD of English who could write well organized and cohesively. At the level of educational research, the current study makes a significant contribution summarized in two respects.
 - a) It serves as an example for further studies in education in terms of using the interpretive-constructivist research framework. This approach has been totally neglected in Pakistan, no previous study having used an exploratory approach to investigate the organization and organization problems faced by Pakistani student writers with learning difficulties (LD).
 - b) It also serves as an example of the triangulation of research methods has not been extensively used in Pakistan before to study Pakistani participants. In terms of curriculum planning and design, the study is potentially significant as it highlights the following:

- a) It helps curriculum designers take into consideration student writers' needs and interests in designing their curriculum.
- b) It opens curriculum planners and designers' minds to different approaches to the teaching and assessment of essay writing in general and organizational skills in particular.

6. Conclusion

- The teaching materials used with Pakistani student writers should cover a wide range of organizational skills coping with student writers' different proficiency levels.
 - The teaching techniques adopted by Pakistani teachers of students with LD should be varied to help meet the needs of student writers with different abilities.
- Teaching and learning tasks should be graded and varied to help student writers make the most out of them, especially in large classes of different abilities and skills.
- The feedback practices employed by the essay writing lecturers should combine both types of oral and written feedback, be promptly given to student writers, be critical and constructive in nature to challenge student writers and help them develop the different organizational skills.
- The assessment practices used should be formative and summative. The formative assessment practices should be regular, insightful and guiding. Use of portfolio and assignment could be good practices. The summative assessment practices should work according to a list of criteria and marked by two markers.
- Essay writing teachers of student writers with LD should be trained to use different classroom interaction techniques and teaching methods such as pair work and group work, peer-review, student-teacher conferences and any other related techniques. It is also suggested that teachers of student writers with LD should be acquainted with using technology in the classroom to help student writers with different learning styles learn efficiently and rapidly.
 - It is suggested that essay writing lecturers should be engaged in conducting research in general and action research in particular where they can find student writers' weakness areas and try to improve them.

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