

Effect of Intervention of Directed Activities Related to Text (DARTs) on Undergraduates' Writing Skill

Sameena Hameed ¹

Assistant Professor

Government Post Graduate College (Women) Shad Bagh, Lahore.

KEY WORDS

DARTS,
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ABSTRACT

The current experimental study examines the effect of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) on writing skill of undergraduates of public sector colleges of Punjab. Intervention of DARTs as scaffolding instruction underpinning reading-into-writing directional model was carried out for six weeks to determine the effect on improving writing skill in response to narrative texts oriented tasks. To accomplish the objective, a convenience sample of 40 students of a female public sector college in urban locality of district Lahore was randomly assigned to control and experimental group in equal numbers. Experimental group was exposed to DARTs, while control group was instructed without application of DARTs through traditional lecture method selecting six short stories from their prescribed syllabus. Pre- and post-tests were conducted using analytical open-ended questions. Selecting TEEP attribute writing scale by Weir (1988), the written performance was assessed at two levels i.e. relevance and adequacy of content and cohesion. Using SPSS-21.0, paired-samples t-test was applied to make statistical analysis between their pre- and post-test performance at $p < .05$. Results revealed significant improvement in relevance and adequacy of content and cohesion in the favour of experimental group. Thus, the findings signify the benefits of DARTs in improving writing skill of female students in public sector colleges as scaffolding instruction. So, English teachers are advised to intervene DARTs in their teaching methodology to teach English writing skill successfully.

Sameena Hameed has been serving in Punjab Higher Education Department collegiate branch since 1999. She is Assistant Professor at Government Post Graduate College (Women) Shad Bagh, Lahore. As an educationist she takes keen interest in research regarding latest English teaching methodologies and wishes to bring revolutionary changes in prevailing education system of Pakistan to teach English as a language rather than as a subject.

Introduction

Within the communicative framework of language teaching, the skill of writing enjoys special status and is extremely important in the modern world, whether in the form of traditional paper-and-pencil writing or the most technologically advanced electronic mail (Olshtain, 2001). Unlike speaking, the act of writing is less spontaneous and more permanent and the language which is used tends to be standardized (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill & Pincas, 1980). Hence, if the goal of the English teacher is to enable English Second Language (ESL) students to produce fluent, accurate and appropriate written English, the job is quite challenging.

Unfortunately, in public sector colleges of Punjab, getting through B.A. Examinations are considered a hard nut to crack. More than 50% regular students of public sector colleges get failed in English compulsory and prove at risk students. In B.A Annual examinations 2013, pass percentage of regular female students in the subject of English was 44% (Punjab University Statistical Data, 2013). On one hand, it badly affects students' future/career planning and on the other hand, it testifies teachers' bad performance. Sub examiners and teachers relate this failure to students' inability to cope with literature oriented reflective and critical questions set in English paper "A" constituting short stories, poetry, one act plays, modern essays and novel. Writing, as physical activity is a productive language skill in which students of public sector colleges are not good. They commit lots of mistakes regarding relevance and adequacy of content, and organization of ideas by using explicit linguistic devices to signal relations between sentences and parts of text. Actually, traditional teacher centered and subject centered lecture method provides little opportunity to develop basic comprehension and logical thinking skills in learners and they cannot attempt written literature oriented question in English (Compulsory) paper "A"

Background of the Study

National Education Policy of Pakistan (1998-2010) sets following objectives of education:

- Improvement of the quality of learning process
- Introduction of learner centered pedagogy
- To develop a self-reliant individual capable of analytical and original thinking
- Focus on promoting creative writing and analytical thinking for learner rather than rote learning (as cited in Jamil, 2009)

The learning process in public sector colleges has altogether failed to conform to the objectives of National Education Policy, 1998-2010. English language has assumed great substance in Pakistani social and cultural setup.

A Pakistani learner needs to acquire competence in English language skills to get good jobs (Adaptive English Language Teaching Tools, 2013) but unfortunately English is taught as a subject not as a language resulting in poor language skills. Age old grammar translation method is used, while the syllabus is in foreign context. So, the result is weak comprehension of content and organization of ideas. The need of the hour is accomplishment of objectives highlighted in National Education Policy 1998-2010 of Pakistan to make our young learners effective and responsible members of the society and Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) may prove fruitful to materialize these objectives. Application of DARTs in English class can inter-relate reading comprehension and writing skill of the learners successfully.

If reading activities following reading-to-writing directional model have proved effective to improve writing performance in terms of organization of ideas, language use and content information in other L2 contexts (Plakans, 2008; Yoshimura, 2009; Farahzad & Emam, 2010; Zainal & Hajar, 2011; Chuenchaichon, 2011), it is assumed that they may be equally helpful to bring a development in the writing skill of undergraduates in Pakistani scenario being learner-centered pedagogy. They may improve reading comprehension of the text leading to improve learners' writing skill to answer textual analytical questions of English compulsory (literature oriented).

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of the study are:

1. To find the achieved level of writing skill of learners in terms of relevance and adequacy of content and cohesion after the intervention of directed activities related to texts (DARTs).
2. To investigate the effect of DARTs on learners' writing skill.

Hypothesis

The study was conducted to test the following directional hypothesis:

$$H1: A > B$$

Undergraduates will perform better in writing in terms of relevance, adequacy of content and cohesion when taught through DARTs than those who are taught through traditional method. (A=Experimental group taught through DARTs, B=Control group taught through traditional method).

Significance of the Study

Since, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, in Pakistani context, no published research is in access to investigate the effect of DARTs on writing

skill at graduation level regarding English (compulsory) curriculum, the present study aims to fill this gap by suggesting an effective teaching and learning process in public sector colleges to improve English language writing skill in terms of relevance and adequacy of content, and cohesion. The study may be helpful for education policymakers, curriculum developers, text book writers, administrators of educational institutions, teachers and students

Literature Review

Writing is central to English language learning. Coherent and accurate expression of one's ideas in second or foreign language is considered a major achievement (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Writing plays the most important function in a students' life. Learning occurs while students are writing assignments, summaries, answering questions or writing a variety of essay-type passages. Writing tasks provide learners the opportunity to focus on both linguistic accuracy and content organization (Olshtain, 2001).

History of Teaching of Writing Skill

For better understanding of current attitudes and practices in the teaching of writing, Kroll (2001) traces the history of teaching of writing. According to him, Prior to themid-1960s, teaching writing at college levels primarily focused on responding in writing to literary texts in text books. Teaching model was fairly standard and included the following steps:

- Instruct the students, rules for writing.
- Provide a text for classroom discussion, analysis, and interpretation.
- Require a writing assignment based on the text; and
- Read, comment on, and criticize students' papers prior to beginning the next assignment. This approach is known as "the traditional paradigm" (Hairston, 1982) or "product approach". Since, the basic concern was just with the completed written product.

Today the dominant teaching writing trend is referred as "process approach" or "a process classroom" which contrasted "product approach". In L1 process courses, much emphasis was laid on a personal voice in writing because it developed the idea of learner-centered classroom. However the term "process" does not reflect a single philosophy or any specific curriculum. Rather, the "process approach" serves as the umbrella term for many types of writing courses offering different curriculum. A writing course is based on a greater or lesser amount of reading on the part of the students in different genres as students written texts, fiction, business communication, or academic reports. The term "process approach" suggests acyclic approach while engaging in written tasks manipulating text and DARTs are a good example of process approach.

Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs)

DARTs are text processing strategies covering a wide range of text based activities developed by Lunzer and Gardener in the 1970s. They are basically classroom reading comprehension activities which provide students opportunity to make active involvement in and with the texts (Interacting with Texts, 2003). DARTs focus on prediction, sequencing, tabulation, cloze exercises (word substitution) and so on. The text is divided into different parts by categorizing and recording information (Green, 2005). This enables them to create meaning from the words on the page.

Types of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs)

DARTs encompass two types of activities: 1) Reconstruction Activities, and 2) Analysis Activities.

Reconstruction Activities

Reconstruction activities aim at reconstructing a text by inserting missing words, phrases or sentences or sequencing jumbled text. The teacher modifies the original text, omitting words, phrases or sentences, or text is cut into segments (Interacting with texts, 2003). These types of activities include: Text completion/ cloze procedures, sequencing, and prediction activities.

Text completion/ cloze procedures

Text completion or cloze procedure activities are quite common and helpful about text structure. A teacher deletes some words, phrases, or sentences from the original text. Students in pairs or groups make discussion and fill the gaps with appropriate words or phrases according to grammar, style, and original text. Three types of students, less able, more able, and possessing middle ability can easily be incorporated in these activities providing different levels of guidance. Students can complete the text with their own words or subject specific words which prove their comprehension of the words and the background concepts.

Sequencing

Sequencing is helpful to establish cause and effect in the text. A learner is required to think logically. The text is jumbled into lines, sentences or paragraphs. Students are asked to arrange them into meaningful and coherent text in a logical or time sequence. It assists students to structure the text. For successful completion of this activity, students must focus on the correct use of discourse markers and connectives and logical organization of content. Such activities are quite helpful in developing understanding towards

chronological events, clearly stated instructions, and text structure. It also assists readers to go through informative texts by fitting together different components (DARTs, n.d.).

Prediction activities

The students are asked to guess the next step or stage of a text, or end the text by analyzing the available information (Interacting with texts, 2003). Logically conclusion is drawn and students are required to justify their prediction through ideas and evidence with close reference to the text (DARTs, n.d.).

Analysis Activities

In these activities students are asked to find and categorize information by marking or labeling an unmodified text. These include text segmenting and labeling, open-ended questions, and summarizing.

Text segmenting and labeling

This activity is not so simple. It tests their understanding level of text structure and subject specific content. A text is provided to students with no paragraphs. They are asked to break the text into meaningful paragraphs and to label each paragraph appropriately. New paragraph symbol (//) is inserted before each new paragraph (DARTs, n.d.).

Open-ended questions

A few challenging and thought provoking questions are set on the text for which there is no single correct answer. Learners think logically, collect information and develop ideas based on provided evidence. They answer the questions and justify them.

Summarizing

Students are asked to read the text carefully and write the summary with the help of key points of the text and express as briefly as possible in their own words. Marking the text and statement sort can be helpful for this intensive work.

Benefits of DARTs

DARTs have the following benefits.

- Interaction with texts improves reading comprehension.
- Learners get information, how texts are constructed.
- Make learners more critical and analytical of text.
- Think about the words and sentence construction.

- Understanding about the text construction improves their writing skill.
- Research proves that DARTs improve students' cognitive ability.
- For successful conduction of DARTs, there is no need of any expensive equipment or resources. Text books can be used as a material. So, DARTs can be used in under-resourced institutions.
- DARTs create students' interest in textbooks.
- DARTs help students learn creativity.
- Being problem-solving activities, DARTs promote thinking skills
- Less able students are facilitated through collaborative work in pairs and groups and support by teacher or more able peer.

Reading-into-Writing Directional Model

During the last three decades, several studies (Carson et al. 1990; Carson & Leki 1993; Chuenchaichon, 2011; Flahive & Bailey, 1993; Grabe, 2003; Krashen, 1984; Rodriguez-Kessler, 2006; Stotsky, 1983) investigated the close link between reading and writing and drew the conclusion that there is a deep connection between them and they follow the "similar cognitive processes of meaning construction" (Chuenchaichon, 2011, p.3). Krashen (1984) proved that self-motivated reading for interest or pleasure develops writing competence.

On another level, there is sample evidence that writing tasks assigned by many teachers require students to do a great deal of reading in order to synthesize and analyze academic material in particular content areas (Hale et al., 1996). So, teachers can assist students in preparing academic writing assignments by using readings as a basis to practice such skills such as summarizing, paraphrasing, interpreting and synthesizing concepts.

Branden (2000) found that when children negotiate the meaning of the original text while reading, either through whole class discussion with facilitation by the teacher or with a peer of a different level of language proficiency, they comprehend better and put the information in written form than to read on their own. Kroll (2001) points out that reading serves some very practical purposes in improving writing skills. Readings provide models of what English language texts look like, and even if not used for the purpose of imitation, they provide input that helps students to develop awareness of English language prose style. Further, readings help students develop and refine genre awareness (Johns, 1997), an important criteria for being able to produce a wide range of text types.

A number of researches (Plakans, 2008; Yoshimura, 2009; Zainal & Hajar, 2011) proved the positive effect of reading on the students' writing skill regarding organization of ideas, cohesion and content knowledge. As the students read and write the processes of comprehending and composing reinforce each other.

Zainal and Hajar (2011) investigated the effect of reading on writing performance among civil engineering students. The study was conducted in two writing sessions followed by questionnaires, and observation. The results favored the positive effect of reading on writing performance at tertiary level. It confirms that reading and writing are interconnected. Reading can help students in writing in several ways. Reading is the appropriate input for acquisition of writing skills because reading passages somehow functions as primary models through which writing skills can be learned (Krashen, 1984).

Chuenchaichon (2011) investigated the use of reading-into-writing method for development of paragraph writing skills in an experimental study. The study was conducted on 54 EFL Thai learners to examine variation in their writing performance regarding grammatical complexity, grammatical accuracy, and coherence and cohesion. The experimental group comprising 26 EFL Thai students was instructed reading-into-writing method while control group consisting of 28 learners was not subjected to such treatment. The results confirmed that the reading-into-writing method improved paragraph-level writing of lower intermediate EFL undergraduates. The most significant improvement was in grammatical complexity. However, grammatical accuracy, and coherence and cohesion were two variables showing no significant difference between two groups.

In several recent studies, reading comprehension activities (DARTs) have been investigated as successful scaffolding instruction in the background of Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) to improve reading comprehension and writing skills of learners (Reiser, 2004; Safadi & Rababah, 2012; Walqui, 2006).

To conclude, in the light of previous researches cited above, the present study aims at exploring the effect on writing development of writing skill in text oriented assignments of English compulsory at graduation level through the use of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) in the public sector colleges of district Lahore, Punjab province of Pakistan.

Research Methodology

The current study examined the effectiveness of directed activities related to text (DARTs) on undergraduates' writing skill at two levels, i.e. relevance and adequacy of content, and cohesion. The study assessed the reading-into-writing directional model through the application of reading comprehension activities called DARTs as scaffolding instructional technique.

Research Design

An experimental research design suggested by Campbell and Stanley (1966) was followed to examine the effect of intervention with directed

activities related to text (DARTs) on students' writing skill. As per design, the sample of the study was divided into two equal groups: control and experimental group. The researcher compared the two different teaching methodologies for effective teaching of writing skill, i.e. traditional vs. learner-centered DARTs.

Population

The population for this study was female students of a public sector college in district Lahore, Pakistan at graduation level with age, ranging from 19-21 years. The study was conducted on English, a compulsory course constituting short stories, poetry, modern essays, plays, and a novel.

Sampling procedure

An intact class of 40 female students was the convenience sample of the study by virtue of their accessibility. As, it was an experimental study, so, it was convenient for female students and teacher to be of the same institution in their locality. The researcher teaches at the same college.

By applying random assignment, the convenience sample of 40 female students was divided into two equal groups: control group and experimental group. Each group constituted 20 students. In this way, everyone already selected for the sample had an equal chance of being assigned to the different treatment conditions (e.g., experimental and control). Randomization was achieved by numbering students, "1" and "2" alternately. Students with number "1" formed one group and students with number "2" formed another group. Tossing a coin, group 1 and group 2 were assigned to experimental and control group.

Data Collection Tool: Pretest and Posttest

An essay/ subjective type pre-test to assess initial level of writing skill and post-test to assess achieved level of writing skill were conducted. According to Best and Kahn (2010), "as data gathering devices, tests are among the most useful tools of educational research, for they provide the data for most experimental and descriptive studies in education". In the current study, to assess students' writing performance non-standardized or teacher made essay type tests were designed as pre-and post- tests because they were for a particular group of students. The students were asked to attempt one subjective type (analysis based) question and their writing skill were assessed at two levels, i.e. relevance and adequacy of content, and cohesion (See appendix A and B).

Validity and Reliability

1. Experienced teachers were consulted to ensure content validity of

- tests and in designing relevant activities for two levels of writing.
2. To avoid subjectivity in marking and to maintain inter scorer reliability, the tests were analytically scored according to TEEP (Test in English for Educational Purposes) scale by Cyril Weir (1988) at two different levels: (1) relevance and adequacy of content, (2) cohesion. These two levels were evaluated through general view carrying four levels with score points ranging from 0 to 3. (see appendix C)

Procedure of the Experiment

The study proceeded for six weeks. Six classes a week and 50 minutes a day were dedicated to teach each group i.e. control and experimental group. The researcher herself taught to experimental and control group in different periods.

Experimental group was exposed to directed activities related to short stories individually, in pairs or in groups, employing prediction, cueing, marking or sequencing the text, allowing them to open book, read the material and then answer the given questions or write summary. Strategies were suggested to them to critically probe the text through designed activities. The teacher played the role of a facilitator and the students were active participants of the learning process. At the end of the week, questions (written assignments) about that particular story were given as homework (see appendix D). Throughout the week class room activities were conducted dividing text into different parts and at the end of week when the story was completed, questions based on analysis of the story were given as an assignment.

To control group, traditional lecture was delivered. Initially, the teacher herself introduced the writer and the central idea of the particular short story. The teacher made the reading of the story, told the meanings of difficult vocabulary, translated the text into L1, and explained the text ideas in L1 and L2. However, to experimental group, reading input through different activities was provided. But the control group was restricted to ensure control for variables.

Limitation

Every research whether it is conducted by students or academic professionals, suffers from some limitations/weaknesses. As the current study is based on convenient sampling of female students of a single female college of Lahore, so the results of the study can be generalized only about those public sector colleges of Punjab where the same academic, social, and economic conditions prevail. Further irregularity of students and lack of reading fluency in some participants of the study were observed by the researcher also proved hindrance to some extent.

Data Analysis and Results

Results of pre-tests and post-tests of both groups were manually tabulated in each sub-construct i.e. relevance and adequacy of content, and cohesion. Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS 21.0) was used to make statistical analysis. In the first step, the descriptive statistical analysis reported performance of each group in pre- and post-tests in terms of mean value and standard deviation (SD) respectively.

In the second step, Paired Samples t-test was applied to show the significant statistical difference between the mean scores of pre- and post-tests of each group to make a comparison between two groups' performance, because the paired sample t-test compares two means that are from the same individual, object, or related units like the means of two paired measurements such as pretest/ posttest scores.

The current study attempted to test the following directional hypothesis: Undergraduates will perform better in writing in terms of relevance and adequacy of content and cohesion when taught through DARTs than those who are taught through traditional method.

Relevance and Adequacy of Content

Table 1
Experimental Group's Results of Relevance and Adequacy of Content

	Sample	Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair1	Pre-Test	1.467	15	.7432	.1919
	Post-Test	2.200	15	.6761	.1746

The mean scores of pre-and post-tests, summarized in table1 indicate an increase in the performance of experimental group at the level of relevance and adequacy of content in posttest. To know statistical significant difference between mean scores of pre- and post-test, paired- samples test was performed.

The relevant results for the paired t-test are in bold. The analysis of "t" statistics in table 1.1 declares, $t = -3.556$, and $p = 0.003$. Since $p < 0.05$ (in fact $p = 0.003^{**}$). It is concluded that there was significant mean difference between pre- and post-test at the level of relevance and adequacy of content in experimental group. Thus, in experimental group, relevance and adequacy of content improved from pre- to post-test within six weeks attributed to intervention of DARTs.

Table 2
Experimental Group's Paired Samples Test of Relevance and Adequacy of Content

	Sample	Paired Differences			t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	SD			
		Mean	Mean	Error			
Pair 1	Pre-Test Post-Test	-.7333	.7988	.2063	-3.556	14	.003**

Control group results of relevance and adequacy of content are summarized in table 3. The result shows an increase in mean score from pre-to post-test in relevance and adequacy of content in control group. Paired-samples test was applied to find statistical difference.

Table 3
Control Group's Results of Relevance and Adequacy of Content

	Sample	Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair1	Pre-Test	1.400	15	.9103	.2350
	Post-Test	1.733	15	.5936	.1533

It was concluded that there was no significant mean difference between pre- and post-test at the level of relevance and adequacy of content in control group after six weeks, who was taught through traditional method.

Table 4
Control Group's Paired Samples Test of Relevance and Adequacy of Content

	Sample	Paired Differences			t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	SD			
		Mean	Mean	Error			
Pair 1	Pre-Test Post-Test	-.3333	.7237	.1869	-1.784	14	.096

As $p > 0.05$ (in fact $p = 0.096$)

Cohesion

Table 5
Experimental Group's Results in Cohesion

	Sample	Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair1	Pre-Test	1.200	15	.6761	.1746
	Post-Test	1.867	15	.7432	.1919

The mean scores of pre and post-tests of experimental group summarized in table 3 show an increase in the mean score of cohesion from pre-to post-test. It means that experimental group improved its performance. Table 5 shows whether this improvement is statistically significant or not.

Table 6
Experimental Group's Paired Samples Test in Cohesion

	Sample	Paired Differences			t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD Mean	SD Error			
Pair 1	Pre-Test Post-Test	-.6667	.8997	.2323	-2.870	14	.12*

When 't' statistics are observed, $t = -2.870$, and $p = 0.012$, since $p < 0.05$ (in fact $p = 0.012^*$), so, it is concluded that there is significant mean difference between pre- and post-test at the level of cohesion in experimental group. Thus students/learners of the experimental group improved in cohesion in six weeks with the intervention of DARTs.

Table 7
Control Group's Results in Cohesion

	Sample	Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair1	Pre-Test	1.000	15	.7559	.1952
	Post-Test	1.467	15	.8338	.2153

The mean scores of control group in cohesion show improvement from pre-to post-test (table 7). But the researcher was interested to find out whether this change was significant. So paired samples test was performed.

Table 8
Control Group's Paired Samples Test of Cohesion

	Sample	Paired Differences			t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD Mean	SD Error			
Pair 1	Pre-Test Post-Test	-.4667	.9155	.2364	-1.974	14	.068

The 't' statistics organized in table 4.1 indicate, $t = -1.974$, and $p = 0.068$. As $p > 0.05$ (in fact $p = 0.068$), the result leads to the conclusion that there is no significant mean difference between pre and posttest in cohesion. It means, traditional method of teaching as caused no improvement in learners' performance, as for as cohesion is concerned.

So, comparison of control and experimental groups in their performance of cohesion mentions that DARTs have caused significant improvement in experimental group, while control group did not improve significantly in six weeks (control group: $p = 0.068$, experimental group: $p = .012^*$).

Discussion

The results proved that experimental group students achieved better mean scores in two levels of writing skill in post-test than pre-test. Even, the statistical mean difference in the pre- and post-test of experimental group

also proved significant at two skills of writing, i.e. relevance and adequacy of content and cohesion. It signifies that DARTs have provided helpful scaffolding to improve writing skill on the above mentioned two different levels by providing them an opportunity to manipulate the text.

The current results also indicate that less skilled readers (as observed by the researcher during treatment) can also be benefitted if strategies are taught to them to pay attention to linguistic markers in the text. Grabe and Stoller (2001) argue that when learners are consistently guided to see the text structure, it enhances their comprehension skills.

The results of the current study showed an improvement in overall writing skill mean score. This positive change in the written performance of learners could be attributed to the activity based teaching and learning process which scaffold the learners during the writing process and provided them an opportunity to participate actively in the learning process. Kowalski, Weaver and Henson (1994) contend that teachers' activity has undoubtedly its own significance, but actual learning takes place when students actively participate in the learning process. So, the application of DARTs provided the students an active environment where they utilized their potential in an effort to approach the set goal following the guided process under the instructions of the teacher. The results of the current study are congruent with that of Tabatabaei and Ali (2012) who examined the effect of reading-based pre-writing activities on pre- and post-intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension and writing. The results revealed significant change in the writing performance of both groups.

Application of DARTs provided an environment where learners experienced active interaction with their peers. In such an environment, even shy students found encouragement which might have led them to feel confident, independent, and self-regulated. The learners themselves acknowledged that working in pairs and groups was quite interesting and facilitating. It provided collaborative environment in which students received guidelines to manipulate the text. Ultimately, it might have improved their comprehension and writing of textual questions removing their confusions and developing their zone of proximal development. Teale and Sulzby (1986) argue that how to read and write a language is a natural developmental learning process. But, the literacy of language (the process of learning to read and write competently) depends upon the opportunities which facilitate the learners to develop their language reading, and writing process.

Henson and Eller (1999) maintain, "When provided encouragement, opportunity, verbal interaction with peers and adult instruction, literacy skills normally develops at incredible rates" (p. 67). The results of the current study are in favour of the Bruch's study (2007). Her study established the use and effectiveness of teachers' scaffolding techniques making students independent learners who were initially at risk students.

The reading and writing performance of students consistently progressed due to support and scaffolds in literacy program.

In short, directed activities related to texts (DARTs) proved their effectiveness to improve writing skill of female learners. So, DARTs helped in making learners independent and autonomous developing the ability to take responsibility of their own learning. DARTs provided scaffolding to female learners and raised their ZPD through social interaction with teacher and peers. Because variety of classroom talk like individual, pair talk, group talk, teacher to whole class talks and teacher to individual students talk led to effective language learning in reading and writing skills.

DARTs required the learners to make intensive reading for detailed comprehension of meaning and mastering the structures. Finally, DARTs may provide a more proactive way to promote written skill specially highlighting particular structures.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A detailed discussion on results leads to the following conclusions. The current study supports that DARTs are successful scaffolding instruction which can enhance writing skill of students at relevance and adequacy of content and cohesion. DARTs can serve as successful integrated-skills instruction joining reading and writing skills. DARTs reflect learner-centered pedagogy which makes possible the active participation of learners in the accomplishment of written tasks. DARTs enabled the teacher to play the role of a facilitator and guide rather than just transmitter of knowledge. The learners got encouragement and confidence to learn more for getting improvement in their writing skill.

The study affirms that DARTs are an effective technique to improve reading comprehension and writing skill among the students in public sector colleges as compared to traditional lecture method. So, the study supports the implementation of DARTs at undergraduate level in public sector colleges of Punjab.

To teach English writing skill effectively, DARTs should be implemented in public sector colleges to scaffold learners following the latest English language integrated-skills instruction. Reading should be an important component of English language class, because non proficient readers are not highly proficient writers. So, special programmes with reading and writing emphasis should be conducted.

For the successful implementation of DARTs, teachers' training, appropriate designing of syllabus and textbooks at B.A. level for English compulsory, availability of instructors' manual or teaching guides, and lesson planning by teachers is paramount.

To conclude, the findings of the current study will contribute to develop understanding about the application of DARTs as a scaffolding instruction relating reading and writing skills in public sector colleges of Punjab to

teach English writing skill. They will also be advantageous in suggesting different activities to develop comprehension of the foreign text which seems to be beyond the learners' ZPD in public sector colleges. In addition, the English teachers at graduation level will realize the significance of using DARTs to improve writing skill of learners, because the results proved positive effect of DARTs on writing skill of learners at graduation level in public sector colleges. The major contribution of the study will be to equip the public sector colleges of Punjab with the latest technique of teaching English writing skill, making teaching and learning process effective and innovative.

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Appendix ‘A’**Pre-Test**

Class: Part-1 (B.A.)
Subject: English Compulsory

Time: 45minutes
Max. Marks: 12

Answer the following question in 100-150 words according the short story “The New Constitution” by Saadat Hassan Manto.

- Q.** “The New Constitution” reflects the Muslims’ hatred towards imperialism in the sub- continent? Justify the statement.

Appendix 'B'**Post-Test**

Class: Part-1 (B.A.)
Subject: English Compulsory

Time: 45minutes
Max. Marks: 12

Answer the following question in 100-150 words according to the short story "The Necklace" by Guy De Maupassant.

- Q.** "The Necklace" is a story of human vanity. Substantiate the statement with your own views.

Appendix 'C'**TEEP Attributing Writing Scale (Weir, 1990)**

Adopted from Weigle, S. (2005)

- A. Relevance and adequacy of content
 - 0. The answer bears almost no relation to the task set. Totally inadequate answer.
 - 1. Answer of limited relevance to the task set. Possibly major gaps in treatment of topic and/or pointless repetition.
 - 2. For the most part answers the tasks set, though there may be some gaps or redundant information.
 - 3. Relevant and adequate answer to the task set.

- B. Compositional organization / coherence
 - 0. No apparent organization of content.
 - 1. Very little organisation of content. Underlying structure not sufficiently controlled.
 - 2. Some organisational skills in evidence, but not adequately controlled.
 - 3. Overall shape and internal pattern clear. Organisational skills adequately controlled.

- C. Cohesion
 - 0. Cohesion almost totally absent. Writings fragmentary that comprehension of the intended communication is virtually impossible.
 - 1. Unsatisfactory cohesion may cause difficulty in comprehension of most of the intended communication.
 - 2. For the most part satisfactory cohesion although occasional deficiencies may mean that certain parts of the communication are not always effective.
 - 3. Satisfactory use of cohesion resulting in effective communication.

- D. Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose
 - 0. Vocabulary in adequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication.
 - 1. Frequent inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps frequent lexical in appropriacies and/or repetition.
 - 2. Some inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps some lexical in appropriacies and/or circumlocution.

3. Almost no inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Only rare in appropriacies and/or circumlocution.
- E. Grammar
0. Almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate.
 1. Frequent grammatical inaccuracies.
 2. Some grammatical inaccuracies.
 3. Almost no grammatical inaccuracies.
- F. Mechanical accuracy I (punctuation)
0. Ignorance of conventions of punctuation.
 1. Low standard of accuracy in punctuation.
 2. Some inaccuracies in punctuation.
 3. Almost no inaccuracies in punctuation.
- G. Mechanical accuracy II (spelling)
0. Almost all spelling in accurate.
 1. Low standard of accuracy in spelling.
 2. Some inaccuracies in spelling.
 3. Almost no inaccuracies in spelling.

Note: Only two levels i.e. adequacy of content and cohesion are chosen out of seven levels. They were generally viewed each carrying 6 marks.

Appendix 'D'**Intervention of Directed Activities related to text as scaffolding
Instruction****Sample Lesson Plan****Short Story: Take Pity**

Time: 6 classes a week (Each class of 50 minutes duration, on Friday of 30 minutes)

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. develop better understanding about the short story answering questions.
2. use different cohesive devices like pronouns and conjunctions correctly.
3. predict about what will happen next by reading text and finding cues from title.
4. answer questions at analyzing level.
5. Summarize important ideas in the story.
6. draw their own conclusion of the story.
7. describe the title events and characters at symbolic level.
8. work in pairs, in groups and individually.
9. work cooperatively.

Teaching Procedure**Pre-Reading:**

- Cueing: For brain storming the teacher will ask certain questions in the beginning e.g.
 - a. If you find some needy person, what will you do?
 - b. Why will you help such a person?
 - c. What this passion will be called?
 - d. Is it a good thing to take pity on someone?
 - e. Have you taken pity on someone or been pitied upon? (arising curiosity)
 - f. What was your feeling, when you pitied upon someone?
 - g. What was your feeling when were pitied upon by someone else?

- The teacher will announce and write the title of the story, "Take Pity" on the board.
- The teacher gives a brief introduction about the writer of the story, "Bernard Malamud".
- Prediction: The teacher arises curiosity of the students by asking, "What do you think the story is about?" Students are asked to make prediction about the theme of the story working in pairs. They are asked to write down the prediction. Some pairs are given an opportunity to speak aloud their prediction.

While Reading (reading + writing)

- The teacher asks the students to open their books and read the two pages of the story.
- Marking the Text & Summarization: Students are asked to mark the important information and then out of these marked lines, write the brief summary. In this way, students read the text of the whole story in turns and get understanding about the story. Where required, the teacher provides them help and guideline. In beginning, the activity is given in groups of five, then in pairs and in the end they are given independent task to summarize the whole story.
- Graphic Organizer and Text Marking:-

- Learners are given an activity in pairs to mark the text and fill the given columns by finding out, "How many times Rosen offered help to Eva? What was the offer made by Rosen and what type of response he found from Eva?"

Attempt No.	Offer made by Rosen	Response given by Eva

- In the groups of THREE, learners are directed to read the text and compare and contrast Rosen and Eva in the following aspects:

Aspect	Rosen	Eva
1. Gender		
2. Profession		
3. Marital Status		
4. Financial Status		
5. Symbolic Significance		

- Text Completion

An incomplete passage from the text with blanks is provided to learners. First of all students are asked to read the actual passage from the book. Then they are asked to shut the book and fill in the following blanks by using but, however“, „, thus“, and insert commas where necessary: (single student activity)

When Eva fails in running the store Rosen advises her to leave the store to the creditors _____ all in vain. He also asks her to shift into his two family house _____ she refuses to do so. He also tries to give her some monetary assistance every month. She is, not ready to live on charity. He also asks her to marry him as he_ being sick cannot live long. She will get all his property after his death.

- Prediction: when Rosen proposes Eva for marriage, what happens next?

While conducting activities teacher facilitates the learners, keeps them under observation, provides opportunities to work in groups, pairs and independently. Different students need different level of assistance.

Post Reading (Written Feedback)

- After complete reading of the story, questions are demanded from students making group discussion. Then some short questions are given them for answering in written as home work.
 - a. Was Rosen in love with Eva or he just wanted to help her out of sympathy? Give evidence from the text.
 - b. What should be the end of the story?
 - c. Rosen and Eva mobilize for which two qualities of character?
 - d. Suggest some other suitable title of the story.
 - e. If you were Eva, what would have been your response to Rosen’s offer of help?

Their homework is evaluated to judge their performance in written. Mistakes are highlighted and they are asked to rectify them.

Gradually, scaffolding is withdrawn, when instruction proceeds towards next lessons. Students learn to take responsibility of their learning.