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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Challenges of Teaching Writing to ESL Learners in a Pakistani Public High School: Issues, Contributing Factors, and Solutions Based on Personal Reflections

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is an in-depth effort to investigate issues and contributing factors usually faced by Pakistani ESL learners in learning writing skills. Learning English language writing has always been a daunting task for second language students to master, especially in high schools as the nature and amount of written work in English increases at this level. Not only that, but Pakistani ESL high school teachers also do face many challenges in teaching writing skills. The study investigates problems and issues faced by public high school students in learning writing skills along with the strategies teachers can use to cater the problems. This study identifies problems faced by students and offers suggestions for improvement. The challenges, issues, contributing factors, and suggested solutions are based on the personal reflections of the researchers. The researchers have a great deal of experience of teaching English at public high schools in Pakistan. Its findings not only reveal the problematic factors but also suggest some practical solutions. The findings and recommendations may help ESL teachers reflect on their teaching practices and assist them in supporting their efforts to help students improve their writing skills.

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**KEYWORDS** ESL Learners, Personal Reflections, Public Schools, Writing Skills

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**Introduction**

I (Tasawar Shah) still remember and can feel the anxiety when, on the first day of class in ninth grade, our English teacher, Mr. Mazhar, asked us to introduce ourselves. We were all unable to introduce ourselves to a new teacher who recently joined the school. He assumed we were shy and uneasy speaking in front of her. In fact, that was one of the reasons for our nervousness. Then, for our ease, he asked us to write a paragraph about ourselves and the results were same. It was the first time we had an unexpected or unseen task in English class. Usually, we did not do as we always had every task which we learnt by heart under our teacher's supervision. The other reason that made us unable to write and speak about ourselves was our inefficiency of the English language. Although we have been learning English as a second language since elementary school, however, we were still hesitant to write about ourselves. I believe the main reason behind our failure was that we never did unexpected and unseen writing practice in class. We used to learn and practice English from the textbooks and key books only within the four walls of the classroom to pass the exam.

English is and has always been very much in demand in Pakistan as it promises better chances towards an illustrious career (Abbas, 1993; Rahman, 2007). The teaching of

English in Pakistan has its roots back in the colonial era. Elite schools like *Aitchison College Lahore* have been teaching English to the elite of the country since independence (Rahman, 2020), but for masses, the teaching of English started a little late. The teaching of English as a compulsory subject in all public schools started in late 90s (Mahboob, 2007). Over the period of three decades, and especially in the new millennium, English language education in Pakistan has seen remarkable progress. However, the quality teaching, especially at the public schools, is still a dream (Rahman, 2010).

Writing is an important skill in the teaching of English and the ability to teach it effectively becomes crucial at high schools because of its significant role at that level. Research shows that writing is “one of the most important means to examine the performance of students in their respective fields of study” (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016, p. 105). The significance of writing emerges from its being the key tool to assess students’ performance inside the classrooms. The ability to write in English becomes decisive for Pakistani high school students as those years’ performance decides their future areas of studies. English being the only medium of examination at high schools puts great challenges to students. Moses and Mohamad (2019) state “writing is not only vital in order to develop their academic performance, but also contributes to their social and emotional development. Moreover, in this competitive world, writing is also one of the skills that is necessary to excel” (pp. 3385-86). Therefore, teachers at high schools take it as one of the biggest challenges in the classrooms. We faced many challenges while teaching writing skills to high school students. We witnessed that our students were not well prepared for writing assignments, and they had great difficulty and anxiety towards learning it. We found that writing is difficult owing to its cognitive complexities and research also supports my understanding as Vasu, et al. (2016) state writing is a multiplex activity.

### **Context Information**

According to Yaseen (n.d.), there are a total of 31,392 high schools in the country. Out of these 13,448 (43%) schools are in the public sector, whereas 17,944 (57%) are in the private sector. The total enrolment at high school stage is 3.349 million, of which 2.353 million (70%) is in public sector, whereas 0.996 million (30%) is in private sector. We started our teaching career as an ESL teacher at public high schools back in 2010. As an ESL teacher, we were supposed to teach the aspects of English linguistics and literature to students. There was no curriculum for linguistics but there was a textbook (based on short essays) for literature. When we were students, we always had grammatical issues and insufficient words to write, but after becoming teachers, we always worked to ensure that our students should have less structural issues and sufficient vocabulary to write confidently. For writing purposes, there were few questions at the end of each lesson but answers to those questions were provided by the teacher and students were supposed to reproduce the same answers in their class tests that ultimately affected students’ writing skills. Based on our personal experiences after serving as English language teachers for almost a decade at different high schools, in this paper, we tried to attempt to identify the challenges that we encountered in teaching writing skills in English and propose several recommendations to address these challenges.



Figure 1. Percentage distribution of enrolment by sector and provinces/regions 2017-18. Adapted from *Pakistan Education Statistics 2017-18* by M. Yaseen, n. d. <https://myaseen208.com/PakEduStat2017-18/index.html>.

As an experienced English as a second language (ESL) teachers, we honed valuable teaching skills, such as language teaching methods and approaches, curricular design, and classroom management; and expanded our understanding in all these domains through experiential learning. We do not want to imply that our prior experiences were not helpful; but for different reasons, they simply did not help us well for the challenges presented by the teaching of writing skills in English language. We always went through various challenges while learning it at school throughout our academic career both as a teacher and a student. Our perceptions regarding our inadequacies were not unfounded. Research shows “teaching writing has become difficult because of the challenges faced by the students in learning writing skills. Some of the challenges that are faced by the ESL students are lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor spelling, students’ readiness, and lack of exposure to books and reading materials” (Moses & Mohamad, 2019, p. 3386), and Pakistani high school students are no exception. They do face similar kinds of challenges particularly in learning writing skills.

The purpose of the study is to share our personal experiences and give some thoughts to ESL teachers. ESL teachers should collaborate with one another to find ways to help students, particularly high school ESL students learning English writing skills. Students’ academic lives are now at the mercy of the English language, so teachers should try to devise strategies that can be helpful in learning writing over the long term. To guide our line of inquiry, we frame our investigation around the following research questions:

1. What are the major problems and factors that affect ESL learners’ learning of “writing skills” at Pakistani public high schools?
2. What strategies and tactics can help ESL teachers and students enhance their writing processes?

## Literature Review

To be clear in the start, this paper is based on our personal experiences, being as an English teachers and students of the language. The challenges we're going to identify are not restricted to Pakistani public schools only as we can see that similar kind of challenges can surface from other countries, too, where English is taught as a foreign language. Research shows there have been numerous studies on English language education in different contexts in Pakistan (Akram & Mahmood, 2007; Coleman, 2010; Mansoor, 1993; Mansoor, 2005; Rahman, 2007; Rahman, 2010; Shamim, 2008; Warsi, 2004; Waseem, 2014). However, since the focus of our study is on challenges of teaching writing to ESL learners in Pakistani public high schools, we're going to review only those studies that have been done by researchers in the context of teaching English writing skills to Pakistani high school students.

Writing, owing to its appropriate usage of words, communicative potential aspects, and structural accuracy, becomes the most challenging area for ELLs (Hyland, 2003). Therefore, learning how to write has always remained considerably important. However, during the last two decades, it has got significance because of the growing numbers of ELLs and the consistently growing usage of English language (Dar & Khan, 2015; Graham & Perin, 2007; Haider, 2012; Hyland, 2003).

Fareed et al. (2016) in their study entitled "ESL Learners' Writing Skills: Problems, Factors and Suggestions" have discussed the writing problems of Pakistani ESL learners. The study investigates problems in Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners' writing and factors that hinder their writing skills. It also discusses suggestions on how to improve Pakistani ESL learners' writing skills. Researchers conducted study through focus groups of Pakistani English language teachers and undergraduate ESL students. The writing samples of 30 students and the interviews of both teachers and students were collected and analyzed to discover the difficulties in writing and some remedial suggestions. The findings of the study revealed poor linguistic knowledge, weak structure accuracy, writing anxiety, and reliance on L1 are the major difficulties faced by the ELLs in their writing skills. The study found these challenges are influenced by various factors including untrained teachers, ineffective teaching methods and examination system, lack of reading and writing practice, and large classrooms.

Al Badi (2015) in his small-scale survey study entitled "Academic Writing Difficulties of ESL Learners" has investigated the English writing challenges of ESL students of four different nationalities at an Australian university. The study explored the academic writing difficulties of ESL learners and the factors causing those difficulties. Twenty students were given two questionnaires. The first questionnaire asked close-ended questions while the second asked open-ended questions from the participants. The findings revealed that ELLs share common challenges in writing English irrespective of their previous academic background. The most common challenges included the transition, cohesion, and cohesiveness of thoughts. Among few others, lack of knowledge of academic writing conventions was the most common factor behind those difficulties.

Akhtar et al. (2019) did a systematic literature review of academic writing studies which focused on investigating students' academic writing challenges and their solutions. The paper they reviewed was published between 2010 and 2019. Using the exploratory approach, researchers reviewed 27 papers published in reputed peer-reviewed journal to discover the challenges of ESL learners. The findings of the review show there is a broader context of ESL students' academic writing challenges and factors influencing students' academic writing skills. Researchers found that teaching methods, students' attitude

towards English, and language ability were the common challenges faced by students in their academic writing. Common solutions of the problems among all papers were the suggestion to employ active learning English language teaching methods, for instance, Task-Based learning (TBL), Blended learning, Collaborative learning, and cognitive approach, in teaching writing.

The studies reviewed for this paper highlight the different difficulties and various challenges of ELLs in learning English writing skills. Studies reveal that traditional methods of teaching, weak structure ability, lack of knowledge of academic writing conventions, reliance on L1, and writing anxiety are the common challenges for learning writing skills. The research gap between our study and this investigation stands very clear in many aspects. First, none of the reviewed studies have been done with the students attending a public high school in Pakistan. Second, all those studies have been conducted with different student groups learning writing skills; however, our study is based on our learning challenges of English writing skills both as a teacher and a student. Last, the tools for collecting data in reviewed studies usually consisted of questionnaires, interviews, and writing samples, whereas our study includes our personal reflections only.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of human learning, learning is a social process and human intelligence emerges from society or culture. The central theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social contact is crucial to cognitive growth. According to Vygotsky (1987), everything is taught on two levels: first through interaction with others, and secondly by integration into one's mental structure. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This framework emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in the development of cognitive processes. Within this framework, the challenges faced by ESL learners in acquiring writing skills could be examined in relation to the social and cultural context of Pakistani public high schools. Factors such as language proficiency, classroom environment, teacher-student interactions, and cultural norms related to writing could be explored to understand how they impact ESL learners' ability to develop writing skills. Incorporating Sociocultural Theory into writing instruction in Pakistani public high schools can create a culturally responsive and supportive learning environment that promotes ESL learners' writing development. By emphasizing social interaction, authentic tasks, language mediation, individualized feedback, and scaffolding the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), ESL teachers can provide effective writing instruction that aligns with the principles of Sociocultural Theory and supports ESL learners' writing skills development.

### **Materials and Methods**

#### **Problems and Issues**

In this section of the paper, we have reflected on the major problems and the factors that affect ESL learners' learning of English and general and "writing skills" in particular at Pakistani public high schools.

#### **Large and Overcrowded Classrooms**

Overcrowded classrooms are a reality in the educational context of south Asian countries like Pakistan. A research study conducted in Pakistan by Khan and Iqbal (2012)

found 'the average number of students in most (Pakistani) classrooms ranges from 70 to 120' (p.162). They claimed that effective teaching was not possible in overcrowded classes and most of the teachers were facing instructional, discipline, physical and evaluation problems; this problem is magnified when dealing with language writing skills, where acquisition of a foreign language is the expected outcome. Teaching of writing skills demands feedback on students' written scripts and an overcrowded classroom makes it hard. A writing teacher cannot provide timely feedback to a class of such a large number of students. Further, writing skills require an interactive session with numerous instances of interaction between a student and their teacher; and such interactions are not possible in an overcrowded classroom. Teachers cannot interact with their students as and when needed; hence, students remain poor in learning their writing skills. Research (Fareed et al., 2016) also found that Pakistani students' learning of English is influenced by various factors including untrained teachers, and large classrooms.

### **Untrained Teachers**

Due to a lack of funds and grants, many public-school teachers do not get the chance to get professional training very often. For effective teaching, teachers must receive continuous professional development. Untrained teachers just lead to ineffective teaching practices. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that just 60% of Pakistani teachers had any pre-service education. Teaching writing skills are influenced by teachers' training and knowledge about writing skills. A trained teacher can teach in a better way. Jokhio, et al. (2020) citing (Brindle et al., 2016; Hsiang & Graham, 2016; Rietdijk et al., 2018; Troia & Graham, 2016;) state "teachers devote more time and attention to teaching writing if they are better prepared to teach it, feel more confident in their capabilities to teach it, and consider it an important skill" (p. 30). Unfortunately, many undergraduates are employed as an English teacher at public high schools in Pakistan and they do not have any formal or pre-service training of teaching language. Their qualification is their degree in that foreign language, only. Hence, they do not perform well inside the classroom and their students could not grasp a command over writing skills.

### **Influence of L1 on L2 Learning**

Since there are five provinces in Pakistan, and every province has its main first language (L1), the country, in its present form, is a multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural society (Abbas, 1993). Mansoor (2004) noted that according to the national census undertaken in 1998, the population of the country speaking first languages/mother tongues in Pakistan is as follows: Urdu speaking people consists of 7.57%, Punjabi speaking 44.15%, Sindhi speaking 14.1%, Pashto speaking 15.42%, Balochi Speaking 3.57%, Seraiki speaking 10.53%, and 'others' 4.66%.

Discussing the multilingual milieu, Mansoor (2004) further observed in this context that there are "no less than 24 languages and a number of dialects spoken in Pakistan" (p. 334). Hence, almost all Pakistani students are at least bilingual. They use Urdu, the national language of the country, at schools while their native languages are at their homes. They learn English as their third language at schools. Their fluency in their first two languages impact their learning of English. Their L1/L2 proficiency influences their learning of English at schools. Research shows that a second language is different from the first language strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically (Silva, 1993, p. 669). Based on our personal experiences, we have seen that the written assignments of our students were semantically and syntactically loose. Their written assignments lacked transition, coherence, and paragraph connections. We found repetition of thoughts and ideas in their

assignments. There were many redundant sentences in their assignments. We believe that their L1 differences were the cause behind their issues in writing in English. Hyland (2019) states that differences between L1 and L2 affect the thinking ability of learners, also. We have seen our students thinking in their first language and then translating their thought in English in their written assignments. They remain under the influence of their L1 and as a result fail in learning writing skills in English.

### **Limited Proficiency in Structure**

Wang (2010) state “in the formal education, it is inevitable for teachers who teach foreign languages to teach grammar” (p. 78). High school students at Pakistani high schools are taught grammar in classrooms on regular basis, however, they remain weak in getting command over the structure of English language. Writing, owing to its appropriate usage of words, communicative potential aspects, and structural accuracy, becomes the most challenging area for ELLs (Hyland, 2003). Their regular exposure to grammar teaching cannot be categorized as extensive because first, it happens only inside the school, second, the focus is to teach grammatical rules and point out the errors. We know that this pointing out of errors and limited exposure is not sufficient for getting a better command over writing. We know that grammatical proficiency is important for writing. Nyang’au Benard (2014) states “grammatical knowledge is a crucial element that needs to be taken into account in improving academic writing skills” (p. 19). Poor structure makes writing difficult to understand. We have seen that teaching grammar at schools is not helpful to the extent that we need for writing. We need to include modern practices of teaching grammar inside our classrooms. We need to make interactive sessions of grammar teaching. My (Shah) teaching experiences guide me that there are many ways to create a good learning environment in the classrooms; for example, most of the students memorize tenses so I prefer to encourage them to speak up, before I explain the rest of given topic. In this way students feel confident and can learn things even better. Therefore, for this purpose I consider using the Grammar Translation Method to help students in learning grammar. Research (Khan, 2007) also supports that grammar can be better taught through Grammar Translation Method.

### **Limited Exposure to English Vocabulary**

Writing is not only knowing the grammar but a process of arrangement of thoughts into words. It is a process of words organization and acceptable content. Thus, vocabulary becomes important for students to write in English. Research states “in order to write English, which is in accordance with the institutional literacy expectation, learners are supposed to enrich more vocabularies including words and popular technical terms” (Wahyuningsih, 2018, p. 17). I (Hussain) have seen during my writing classes that students have a limited set of vocabulary; hence, they cannot write well. Very often, they have an idea to write but because of their insufficient vocabulary they cannot write it down. Many a time I have seen that students put a word from their national language, Urdu to complete their sentences. Above all, their exposure to English is very limited. Society at large around them do not use English; therefore, they remain poor in English vocabularies. Their sources of vocabulary are their English books and teachers only.

### **Strategies and Tactics**

Numerous strategies are being used in teaching to improve writing skills across the world in ESL/EFL classrooms. Based on our experience, keeping in view the resources, facilities, and the needs of public high school students in Pakistan, we propose the following strategies to mitigate the writing skill challenges.

### **Focus on Building Vocabulary**

Insufficient vocabulary is a big problem that often occurs during classroom activities and students remain unable to write what they want to. ESL teachers focus on limited textbook syllabus only and students do not get any opportunity to learn vocabulary to become independent writers. I (Shah) do not recall our teacher making any extra effort in class to teach us vocabulary. When I became a teacher, I preferred to focus on improving vocabulary items. I decided to provide my students with vocabulary lists related to practical life skills. The purpose was that they must have some vocabulary to start speaking and then writing. The following were some of the topics which we covered to relate writing activity with their life events: Around-the- House Vocabulary, Grocery Store Vocabulary, Shopping Vocabulary, Directions Vocabulary, Common English Greetings and Expressions, Sympathy and Grief Vocabulary, Medical and Hospital Vocabulary, Cloths and Colors Vocabulary, Fruits and Vegetables Vocabulary, Birds, Flowers, and Animals Vocabulary.

I (Shah) believe to overcome this challenge teachers should try to find out the ways to help the students in improving vocabulary for better writing assignments and tasks. Michael Graves (2006) offers a framework for successful vocabulary programs that helps effective teaching and students' development of word knowledge. The basics of his instructional program is about a four-part approach to develop robust vocabularies: (1) Provide rich and varied language experiences, (2) teach individual words, (3) teach word-learning strategies, and (4) foster word consciousness. I would also suggest using the semantic web (Gibbons, p. 59). It helps to learn new vocabulary with comparisons, to make strong connections with words in sentences, and to encourage students to share information about what they already know and develop an interest in reading text and comprehending contextual meanings. It will also help develop students' abilities to use their vocabulary in different contexts and to predict and transform accurate knowledge by using semantic webs or concept maps. Concept maps and the semantic web are also considered facilitators of learning languages, improving high order thinking, and comprehending text.

### **Teaching Grammar**

As a second language learner of the English language, students often have difficulty understanding grammatical rules (Ellis, 1998). When I (Saddaf Rashid) was a student at school, I also found it difficult to remember all grammatical rules. My teachers only tried to teach us grammar rules and gave us little common sentences for practice in the class. This limited practice of target structures never helped us learn the actual thing. So, I used to memorize all the stuff to pass my exam, but honestly, it was not easy to cram. Ellis (1998) states "teaching learners to produce a target structure that they are not ready to produce may not work" (p. 88). My (Rashid) teaching experiences guide me to believe that many students do not even know the basics of grammar and its various constructions. The reason is because they are afraid of grammar and tired of those repeated drills of targeted structures. They have assumed it is something they cannot have command on. It is because they did not get the chance to learn/practice grammar in a way they feel any attraction to it. There are many ways to create a grammar learning environment in the classrooms. For instance, as a teacher in my classrooms, I preferred to teach grammar with the question transformation technique. In question transformation, I used to assign them some statements to change them into different questions. The purpose of this activity was to enhance their speaking skills and develop their ability to start conversations by asking different questions. Another activity I liked to do was controlled composition. Through this activity, I used to give them some short text to read and ensure comprehension. After



reading, they have to rewrite the text by changing the subject from the first-person pronoun to the third-person pronoun. The purpose of this activity was to enhance grammar and reading skills. By the time we began practicing some basic conversational phrases about daily life, they were able to focus on what they were saying rather than if it sounded correct or not. From the authentic experiences shared, there were visible results of our lessons. Hence, teachers should create an environment where grammatical rules can be practiced to have actual learning take place.

### **Teaching Writing as a Process**

Students are not taught the process and mechanics of writing skills but grammar only. They can make sentences but fail in understanding the other necessary writing devices including cohesion, coherence, transition, etc. Research states students should be taught writing process (Clark, 2003). Al Badi (2015) found lack of knowledge of academic writing conventions was the most common factor behind students' writing difficulties. I (Sajida Hussain) believe that we need to change our approach to language teaching. We need to teach the process and mechanics of writing skills to our students. I can testify that teaching of grammar helped me and my students in learning writing skills, but to a limited proficiency. Therefore, I think we should handle writing lessons carefully. We should plan our lessons based on the mechanics of writing skills so that our students can get command over their writing issues.

### **Focus on Differences of the Students**

It is true nobody is the same in this world when it comes to learning. We all are different and have different capabilities of getting things. When we discuss learning writing in classrooms, it is also noticed that there are some students who are fast learners and can give outstanding performance in all activities. Whereas there are some students who took time in learning and remained slow in getting things. As a second language learner of English, majority of the students take time in learning writing skills because it is not their first language. It is fact that learning writing skills in second language only can be learned in a better way when students are provided with meaningful context. Teaching writing skill in English to non-natives is still a daunting task. It takes time. Research indicates that the second language acquisition process takes time (Collier, 1992; Cummins, 1996; Fillmore, 1991). When I (Shah) was student, I also took time in leaning writing skills in English. I faced many difficulties while learning writing skill in English. As a teacher we know it is difficult too, to teach writing skill in English as a subject in a society where students interact in either ethnic languages or national language. So, we guess teachers should work on the learning of language in real ways. I (Shah) read the book "The Dream keepers" by Gloria Ladson Billings (2009), in which she discussed eight wonderful teachers, and I liked philosophy of one of the teachers named Miss Peggy Valentine. Valentine said, "I'm not a textbook teacher. I use the texts as resources, but I have to teach what the children need, not what the district wants. The students' needs come first." So, I believe any language skills should be dealt with in a broader way, a way in which students can get a chance to understand the language skills and its rules according to their learning ability. I believe as a language teacher it is important to understand that every child is different as an individual and their learning process must be different. So, for better results, teachers should use different approaches and strategies according to student's need and caliber.

### **Use of Technology**

As compared to traditional teaching methods, with the advent of internet and modern technology, it is not easy to avoid the effects of technological development. Therefore, language teachers, for effective learning and teaching writing skills, should use the modern technology inside their classrooms. We should guide our students how to use technology effectively. As we know, students have interest in technology, and this can easily attract them to develop interests in the different classroom activities. For instance, by using the internet as technology, we can give them background information for better understanding about any topic through displaying a video or showing them different images as realia. Now a days, instead of dictation, we teachers can show our students different videos on different types of writing techniques. For any written work they can easily use the internet for better understanding about the given task and in this way, they can get rid of consulting long bulky volume books. In the era of technology, there are various ways that technology can tap into learner needs and assist with literacy training, regardless of the educational paradigm, in educating students for the twenty-first century and potentially reaching larger numbers of learners. New technological applications are very beneficial in the teaching of reading and writing. Computer-assisted language learning in the classroom can benefit even low-level students (Kucia, 2007). When I (Hussain) was school going, I remember my teachers did not have any access to advanced technology and we were bound to follow their instructions by using textbooks. However, in today's Pakistan, most of the schools have internet access and teachers just need to know how to utilize opportunities to teach and suggest to students that, by using advanced technology, they can develop better writing skills.

### **Learning Environment**

Learning to write well is a difficult, lengthy process, one that induces anxiety and frustration in many learners (Richards, 1990). Learning to write well can be a difficult and lengthy process due to the need to learn a range of skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, as well as cognitive processes such as planning, organizing, and revising. Additionally, writing can be a personal and emotional process, and the expectations for good writing can vary depending on the context. This can make it challenging for students to learn how to write well in different contexts and add to the difficulty and length of the learning process. So, teachers should keep in mind how to make the classroom environment friendly for learning. They should not just focus on the correction. For beginners, teachers should ignore mistakes and errors. In Pakistan, according to Warsi (2004), the Pakistani English Syllabus highly values correct linguistic forms instead of students' development of creative thought. That is why despite studying English in schools and colleges for about 6-8 years, students, especially coming from rural backgrounds, are not able to communicate in English with relative ease and success. Teachers should create a student-centered learning environment. Teachers should set an example and offer scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1987). Scaffolding entails giving students the opportunity to practice using academic language in context, giving clear directions, and breaking down difficult language into smaller, more understandable portions.

### **Conclusion**

Teaching writing is more challenging than other language skills, especially for high school learners. In teaching writing, teachers should consider the problems faced by students and should try to provide solutions for better understanding. Problems faced by the teachers like hard to motivate the students, differences of learning ability/level of the students, lack of vocabulary, grammatical error, lack of motivation and learning environment can be overcome while applying the suggestions.

To improve high school learners' writing skills, reading is suggested to develop better writing and to enhance vocabulary. Teachers should teach vocabulary consciously for quick improvement and for this purpose students should do some good reading to get good vocabulary to improve writing. Moreover, teachers should teach words consciously or intentionally for the improvement of vocabulary for writing. It is also important to provide sufficient opportunities for writing practice. Teachers should give importance to writing skills by assigning students to write daily for half an hour for the improvement of writing skills. Examination systems are usually not designed according to the need of the students because it only promotes memorization or rote learning. During my (Rashid) teaching career at high school, I realized the importance of teaching writing skills and learned how it can impact the learning of the students. In our country, English is taught as a second language but mostly in schools' textbooks, the focus is on micro-language skills and macro-language skills are ignored. There is not enough writing, listening, and speaking opportunities for the students in their curriculum. There are also not enough resources even for practice. We have to rely on limited resources but need to devise different learning ways to give learners actual understanding of the language. In the future, we're planning to work with high school students and want to focus on the selection of appropriate material and methods along with suggested strategies and tactics for teaching writing skills.

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