

INVESTIGATING THE WAYS TO IMPROVE ESSAY WRITING BY IELTS STUDENTS

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Abstract

English is being learned and used all over the world. It has become a Lingua Franca and a language of more significant opportunities. It also exercises a great influence on the elite class of the country. Its knowledge is a successful passport for employment. Both oral and written skills are essential for learning a language. Learning a second language is never easy. Students must wrestle with new vocabulary, rules for grammar and sentence structure, idioms, pronunciation, and more. Some people seem to catch on much more quickly than others. Writing is a productive skill, and its primary concern is to give an insight into grammatical rules and composition writing. So the current paper evaluates the ways to improve students' efficiency while attempting argumentative essays in the IELTS Test conducted by the British Council of Pakistan. The researcher has studied the reasons behind these deficiencies and has paved the ways that may help English language teachers and students as they work with developing language skills for academic and social success. The sample of the study was taken from a local academy of Bahawalpur. The data was collected by using a pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire. The participants included ten teachers and 100 students of IELTS. The findings of the study proved the hypothesis correct. The conclusion with suggestions and recommendations was summed up at the end of the study.

Key Words: *Investigate, Influence, Essay, IELTS, Findings, Improve.*

Abstrak

Bahasa Inggris sedang dipelajari dan digunakan di seluruh dunia. Ini telah menjadi Lingua Franca dan bahasa dengan peluang yang lebih besar. Itu juga memberikan pengaruh besar pada kelas elit negara. Pengetahuannya adalah paspor yang berhasil untuk bekerja. Keterampilan lisan dan tulisan sangat penting untuk mempelajari bahasa. Mempelajari bahasa kedua tidak pernah mudah. Siswa harus bergulat dengan kosakata baru, aturan tata bahasa dan struktur kalimat, idiom, pengucapan dan banyak lagi. Beberapa orang tampaknya lebih cepat mengerti daripada yang lain. Karena menulis merupakan keterampilan yang produktif dan perhatian utamanya adalah memberikan wawasan tentang kaidah tata bahasa dan penulisan komposisi. Jadi makalah ini mengevaluasi cara untuk meningkatkan efisiensi siswa saat mencoba esai argumentatif dalam Tes IELTS yang dilakukan oleh British Council of Pakistan. Peneliti telah mempelajari alasan di balik kekurangan ini dan telah membuka jalan yang mungkin berguna bagi guru dan siswa bahasa Inggris saat mereka bekerja dengan mengembangkan keterampilan

bahasa untuk keberhasilan akademis dan sosial. Sampel penelitian diambil dari akademi lokal Bahawalpur. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan pre-test, post-test dan angket. Pesertanya terdiri dari 10 guru dan 100 siswa IELTS. Temuan penelitian membuktikan hipotesis benar. Kesimpulan dengan saran dan rekomendasi dirangkum di akhir penelitian.

Kata Kunci: *Kajian, Pengaruh, Esai, IELTS, Temuan, Tingkatkan.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become a dire need of this age. No doubt English is a power today and also the window of the world. The researcher thinks good English is someone's "personal passport," and a good knowledge of it puts him at a great advantage. Language is the communication source, and communication is the tool for interacting with people in everyday life. English language may be a foreign language, but it is international also because of its significance. Our official language is also English. In 1985, it was only used in private schools. However, now more efforts are being made for the progress of this language in our country. With its 66 years history and a colonial past in Pakistan, English has been a controversial one. Today English remains the second language in Pakistan as a business and commerce language, science and

technology, court and law, computer and internet.

Writing has never been associated with a single attribute in literature. It may be associated with orthography, written discourse, the act of writing, or literature (Silva & Matsuda, 2002: 251). However, whichever meaning and understanding we adopt, we need to know about writing, as well as writing itself. In the mother tongue and a foreign language, writing has always been a difficult skill to master. Its development involves much more than proper grammar and a good range of vocabulary or joining together the written down words (Richards, 2002: 303).

Writing is a purely human action. It means conveying the message through the symbols written on a piece of paper. According to Bell, "Writing is a tool used to express what is in our mind." It is an

integral part of the language. We need writing in every sphere of life. It is used to transfer and get knowledge. Education is continued through writing. According to Bacon, "Writing makes an exact man." All the books are in written form. That is why it is said that men die but not the books. Our examination system is based on writing. Due to writing, we have the know-how of our ancestors' thoughts, experiences, cultural and social values. Human beings express their ideas through symbols in writing. It is a basic necessity for E-mail and Internet services. Although we have telephone and cell phones, we still send letters and telegrams to our loved ones residing in far-flung areas. "Write correct and write beautifully" should be the main aim of teaching writing skills.

It is incredibly more comfortable to read something in a foreign language than to write. To read, all we need is a decent vocabulary and a basic sense of grammar. Writing has a different story. We need to choose the words and phrases ourselves and then

somehow put them all in good order. Since writing is much more difficult, most learners do not practice as much as they should. When students write something, they realize that their writing is somewhat childlike. This awkward feeling of realizing that their English writing is at a much lower level than they would like prevents them from continuing to practice. Instead, they just try to forget about this weakness and just hope it will go away sometime. Unfortunately, it never does, and the students are frustrated for years about being such a poor writer.

The same is the case with IELTS students; when asked to write an argumentative essay, they feel perplexed. So the researcher aims to focus on this problem of IELTS students while writing an argumentative essay in their test conducted by the British Council of Pakistan. The secret of becoming a good writer is to write, write and keep on writing.

Writing is an essential marker of any language. It is not optional; instead, it is the only means of judging from primary to a higher

level. So its importance cannot be denied both inside and outside the classroom. Despite the significance of writing skills in multidimensional aspects of life, this skill is taught most disappointingly, and in this way, fundamental writing skills are diminished. The teacher's role in writing is supposed to monitor and diagnose the students' grammatical errors and mistakes properly. Mostly people said that they would practice writing more but they need a native speaker to correct their writing or it is a waste of time. It is noticed from the past Most teaching writing skills is a challenging and time taking job. The Students and the teachers feel difficulty whing argumentative essays. In Pakistan, this problem has remained unsolved for years say that it is an issue that needs to be solved. But from last few years, some interesting ways have been introduced to teach the skill of essay writing. So we need some more logical teaching methods, which can, nevertheless, in the students' motivation in their IELTS classes.

Findings from the presenting drastic changes in various ways, this

study helps the students because they will learn the essay's relevant structure. It is helpful for the teachers to get familiarity with teaching writing skills. It also offers guidelines to the IELTS students in general and the teachers about writing argumentative essays. Through this study, students learned the art of self-correction.

The present research work is initiated to promote the significance of essay writing, which is an essential aspect of the IELTS test. Along with it, this research work would also check ways to improve the essay writing skill of the ITELS students.

This study has the following hypotheses:

1. Argumentative essays are more valuable than other essays for teaching writing skills to the IELTS students.
2. Effective teaching of argumentative essays can improve and boost the ratio of productivity in students' learning of writing skills.

This research is based on the following objectives:

1. To identify the students' problems in writing English.
2. To understand the purpose of writing argumentative essays.
3. To assess the practices made by teachers for improving the students' writing skills.
4. To persuade the teachers to use new techniques of teaching.
5. To analyze the new teaching techniques used by teachers to teach argumentative essays.
6. To furnish the recommendation for motivating students to acquire the skills to write an excellent argumentative essay.

Due to the shortage of time and finance, the study was delimited to a private educational institute in Bahawalpur.

1. The study will be delimited to Bahawalpur.
2. Only IELTS students will be included in the study.
3. Only Sibling Academy is part of this study.
4. The researcher will consider only the effectiveness of argumentative essay writing for teaching writing skills.

Language learning is a complex phenomenon having multidimensional aspects as mastery over writing skills is the key to success in various aspects of life. The observation of O'Brain (1989:22) about writing in EFL/ESL classrooms is that writing is often "writing to learn" the language rather than "learning to write," i.e., writing as a channel rather than a goal. Due to this factor, IELTS students hardly get familiar with the nature of the writing process. To have a complete grasp of essay writing, the IELTS students must learn how to use and manipulate the words and encode meaning both structurally and functionally. Edward Albee points out: "Writing has got to be an act of discovery.....I write to find out what I'm thinking about." Whereas Donald Graves says, "Writing is the interaction of mind and world." Bhatti (2013) says that essay writing is an art. It is an essential part of the educational process. Essay as a branch of literature has come to occupy a very prominent place in our literary life. An essay means an attempt to express ideas on a given

topic. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines an essay as "A literary composition on any subject, usually prose and short."

Etymologically essay means: "to weigh, to balance." No doubt, the essay is the product of our reading, observation, thinking, and practice. An essay is a short piece of writing. It is often written from an author's personal point of view. The definition of an essay is vague, overlapping with those of an article and a short story.

In recent times, essays have become a significant part of formal education. IELTS students are taught argumentative essays to improve their writing skills, and such essays often try to convince the readers of the writer's point of view. Such essays are used to judge the mastery and comprehension level of the IELTS students. They are asked to explain, comment on or argue a topic of study in the form of an essay.

Teaching Writing Skills

Teaching writing is often about teaching grammar. If grammar comes up anywhere in the teaching of English essay writing, it is in the writing classroom. Most IELTS students have some writing skills when we get them. However, they will often have an idea that their writing is quite good, and generally, it will be relatively low.

Structure of Essay

The argumentative essay is a writing genre that requires the student to investigate a topic, collect, generate, and evaluate evidence, and establish a position on the topic concisely. Regardless of the amount or type of research involved, argumentative essays must establish a clear thesis and follow sound reasoning.

The structure of the argumentative essay is held together by the following:

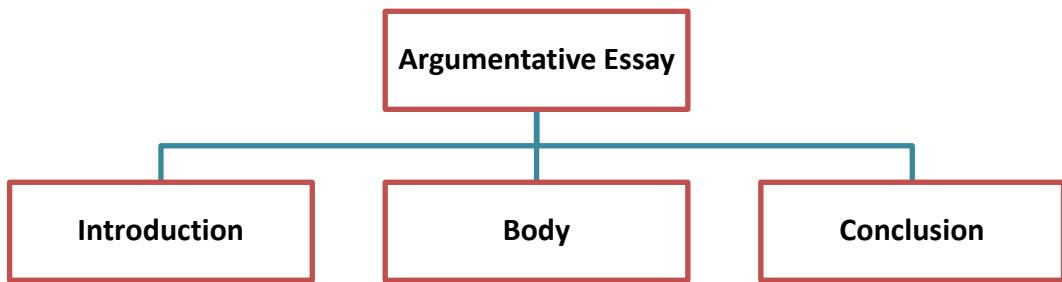


Figure 1. The structure of the argumentative essay

a. Introduction

The introduction of the essay is a meaningful paragraph. It is the first thing the reader sees. Every essay needs an introduction, which is the face of the essay. Therefore it should be striking, fascinating, bright, and attractive to get the reader's attention. It is usually one paragraph. In the first paragraph of an argument essay, students should set the context by reviewing the topic in a general way. Next, the author should explain why the topic is important or why readers should care about the issue. Lastly, students should present the thesis statement. This thesis statement must be appropriately narrowed to follow the guidelines outlined in the task. If the student does not master this portion of the essay, it will be quite

challenging to compose an effective or persuasive essay.

b. Body

It is the most critical part of the essay. It is the heart of the essay. Therefore it should contain the main discussion on the subject matter in the form of paragraphs. Each paragraph should be limited to the discussion of one general idea. This will allow for clarity and direction throughout the essay. Besides, such conciseness creates an ease of readability for one's audience. It is important to note that each paragraph in the essay's body must have some logical connection to the thesis statement in the opening paragraph. Some paragraphs will directly support the thesis statement with evidence collected during research. It

is also essential to explain how and why the evidence supports the thesis. However, argumentative essays should also consider and explain differing points of view regarding the topic. Depending on the task's length, students should dedicate one or two paragraphs of an argumentative essay to discuss conflicting opinions on the topic. Rather than explaining how these differing opinions are wrong outright, students should note how opinions that do not align with their thesis might not be well informed or how they might be out of date.

The argumentative essay requires well-researched, accurate, detailed, and current information to support the thesis statement and consider other points of view. Some factual, logical, statistical or anecdotal evidence should support the thesis. However, students must consider multiple points of view when collecting evidence. As noted in the paragraph above, a successful and well-rounded argumentative essay will also discuss opinions not aligning with the thesis. It is unethical to exclude evidence that

may not support the thesis. It is not the student's job to point out how other positions are wrong outright, but rather to explain how other positions may not be well informed or up to date on the topic.

c. Conclusion

It is the “air of finality” which flows naturally out of the essay. It is also the last impression on the reader. Therefore, it should lead the reader to an understanding of our final point of view.

In short, the essay is an organic whole. So, the beginning, the middle, and the end should be well knitted together.

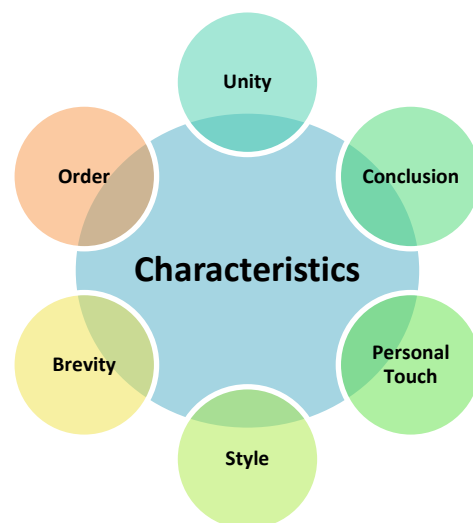


Figure 2. Characteristics of Argumentative Essays

METHOD

Developing accuracy in the writing skills of the IELTS students is a vital component of the current study. The teachers need to adopt as many ways as possible to let IELTS students sample argumentative essay writing. This teaching strategy's success is mainly since the learners can choose what they want to read, write, watch, and talk about in class. The researcher tried to get the results through a quantitative experimental research design because it gives a statistical view. One hundred students were divided into two groups: controlled and experimental groups. A questionnaire was also used for 10 IELTS teachers to get their viewpoints. In the end, the data of the students was analyzed with the help of SPSS.

The sample of the students has consisted of mixed ability IELTS students. The population consisted of 100 students. So, all the students were taken as sample and divided into controlled and experimental groups. Controlled and experimental groups were taught argumentative essay. Different new techniques were

used while teaching argumentative essays to the experimental group, while the controlled group was taught simply without using these techniques. The researcher taught them. The duration of the experiment was 12 days.

Tools for this research and data collection were Pre-test, Post-test, and questionnaire.

The researcher got the opinions of 10 teachers by giving them a questionnaire separately. They were asked to tick mark what was correct in the questionnaire. Each questionnaire had ten questions.

A pre-test was prepared to check the argumentative essay writing skills of the students. A topic for an argumentative essay was chosen and given to the students. An outline was also prepared and distributed. The time was 30 minutes for solving that test. Data of the pre-test was collected from the students.

A post-test of the same level of difficulty was prepared after the experiment. The same test was given to controlled and experimental groups to see the difference in

results. An argumentative essay topic was selected with an outline. Then data was collected, and the test was marked accordingly.

The present study is experimental research style. To determine the answer to the first

question, a paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of different techniques to teach argumentative essays to IELTS students using the pre-test and post-test scores.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 of paired sample t-test of pre-test and post-test, shows that there was a significant increase in the scores from the pre-test (M= 8.33, SD= 2.425) to post-test (M= 11.52, SD=2.181) $t(99) = -11.951$, $p < .0005$ (2-tailed). The mean increase in the scores was -3.19 with

a 95% confidence interval ranging from -3.720 to -2.660. The eta squared statistics (0.59) indicated a large effect. From the above findings, it is clear that different techniques of teaching argumentative essays develop IELTS students' writing skills.

Table 1. Paired Sample t-test of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	8.33	100	2.425			
Post-test	11.52	100	2.181	-11.951	99	.000

Data Collected From Teachers through Questionnaire

A questionnaire was also prepared to check the teachers' views about ways to improve essay writing by IELTS Students. Teachers told that when they provided their students proper guideline their

students took more interest in learning essay writing. They considered themselves part of that activity and took part fully. At the same time 80% teachers told that they found their students more confident. 89% of teachers agreed that the use of different ways of

essay writing had a post-student act guideline of IELTS students. 100% teachers were strongly agreed that IELTS students' written skill was improved with the help different entirely of writing.

From the above analysis as an interpretation of the information received through the sts, the researcher found that:

1. There is a dire need to change the traditional methods of teaching English.
2. A practical outlook of studies is required.
3. Students need not good bands in the IELTS test; instead, they must utilize their knowledge in the hour of need.
4. Students are poor at writing essays as they find it boring and lack interest. Planning for essay writing is required.
5. Starting and ending of the essay should be planned, and the starting paragraph should present the whole essay's rough sketch.

CONCLUSIONS

The result shows that the present study provided an excellent opportunity to fulfill exciting and useful teaching and learning experience. Students had a better learning environment that was positively reflected in their results. Essays developed collaborative writing among the participants. This was clear because students learned through the idea of exchange and learned from their own mistakes and the mistakes of their partners. Such essays also provided great opportunities for low and intermediate achievers to get involved with high achievers and learn from them. So it can rightly be claimed that language learning is not parrot learning, which depends on imitation. It needs ample practice daily. In this way, IELTS students can attempt their argumentative essays more confidently.

To initiate collaborative and coordinative teaching and learning environment in the context under study, this study's recommendations can help develop new mechanisms for IELTS students. Having

discussed the results generated from the current study, the present study's implications can bring about the following recommendations that some workshops must be conducted to create awareness among IELTS students. The teacher should then emphasize English as a medium of instruction in the IELTS class, promote interactive techniques while conducting IELTS Classes, and present their lessons in an enjoyable, relaxed and comprehensive way. Finally, refresher courses for a better teacher training about composition writing should be arranged.

So the teachers need to develop their English proficiency so that they can pass on a good English model to their students. While teaching essay writing, they can improve the IELTS students' performance to attempt their argumentative essays more effectively.

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