



## THE EFFECTS OF UTILIZING SMART PHONES IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING SKILLS IN PAKISTAN



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### ABSTRACT

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The objective of this study was to investigate the role of smart phone & PowerPoint in motivating and enhancing students' English Essay writing skills in Pakistan. Being quasi-experimental in nature, the study adopted mixed method design blending quantitative as well as qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis. The 90 registered intermediate students of the Government M.A.O. College, Lahore and two lecturers participated in the study. All of them were having homogeneous characteristics concerning their age as well as their scores in the first-year English exam. Both experimental and control groups had 45 students each. Three instruments including pre-test/ post-test, questionnaire on motivation and semi-structured interviews were employed in the study. To measure the students' performance in essay writing skills pre-test and post-test were employed. The quantitative data was analyzed using the SPSS Windows program Version 22 for which independent samples t-test was applied for the inferential statistics. However, for the descriptive part, the qualitative data was analyzed and interpreted based on the emerging themes. The findings from the quantitative data analysis indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group both in their motivation score as well as the score in writing skills. In addition, the findings from the qualitative data revealed that mobile phones had not only motivated the students but also helped to enhance their writing skills. Findings from the qualitative data support the findings from quantitative data. These findings have strong theoretical, pedagogical and practical implications.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study is one of the few studies which have investigated the effects of utilizing smart phones in enhancing students' English writing skills in Pakistan. Findings from this quasi-experimental research have pertinent pedagogical implications because the utilization of smart phones significantly enhanced students' writing skills and their motivation towards writing.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English language, has been considered as the most widely spread and used language of the globe for the last many decades (Kitao, 1996; Crystal, 1997). Also, being "lingua franca" in the global village (Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2012; Jenkins, 2013) it has become synonymous to development both at individual and international levels. In addition, The importance of English language has already been established and recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) by declaring it one of the official languages of

this august institution along with Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, French and Russian (UNESCO, 2015). This step taken by UNESCO has recognized the status of English in the world where peoples are facing many divisions such as race, beliefs, cultures and above all the digital divide (Shamim and Qureshi, 2007).

In Pakistan, although English is used by comparatively a small but influential chunk among the government officials working in administrative posts, military, mass media, higher education and commerce (Baumgardner and Kennedy, 1993) yet it was considered as the official language (Baumgardner and Kennedy, 1993; Haim *et al.*, 2014) but after the verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on September the 8<sup>th</sup> 2015: "In the governance of the federation and the provinces there is hardly any necessity for the use of the colonial language which cannot be understood by the public at large." [Supremecourt.gov.pk](http://Supremecourt.gov.pk) (2015) English has ceased to be the official language in Pakistan. Nevertheless, it is still being taught as a compulsory subject throughout the country from primary to degree level.

To acquire and employ English language efficiently and effectively, it is necessary to master its four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). However, among these four skills, writing per se is considered to be laboriously demanding which challenges even the native speakers who also encounter problems in acquiring this skill due to its intricacies (Johnstone *et al.*, 2002). Likewise, research by Amiran and Mann (1982) also shows that American students too face difficulties in the writing skills.

Additionally, it may be a complex skill due mainly to the reason propounded by Brown (1994) that in the writing process a writer puts his abstract ideas on paper by transfiguring them into concrete form of words. Therefore, being a complicated phenomenon, "Writing is a two-step process. First, you figure out your meaning, and then you put it into language" (Brown, 1994). Thus, writing requires explicit instructions to learn as it is not a natural phenomenon, Aronoff and Rees-Miller (2007) and for the implementation of these instructions, it is also equally important to equip the pedagogues with the modern teaching tools and pedagogy.

Likewise, the intermediate results of the previous three years of the Gujranwala board, Punjab, Pakistan, explicitly show that writing is a serious challenge faced by the students. However, this deficiency of the writing skills continues to haunt and pose plentiful problems for them throughout their lives as is evident also in results of the CSS (Central Superior Service) exams conducted (after graduation) by the government of Pakistan to select suitable high ranking administrative or bureaucratic machinery for the country. In this connection, Babakhel (2015) claims: "Only two per cent of successful candidates obtained more than 60 per cent marks in the English essay part of the exam in the last few years" because candidates do not know "even the basics of essay writing".

Similarly, Bryant (2009) too shows concerns over the low scores of Pakistan's students: "If we look at the ratio of failure in all these subjects, the percentage of failures in English appears to be higher than any other subject. And especially at intermediate (12th grade) and graduation level (14th grade), there are very few students who get through the English language exam."

Moreover, the conventional pedagogies have failed to handle the components of intermediate English course in general and the writing skills in particular whereas the demand for mastering the language has tremendously increased due to the proliferation of ICTs and globalization (Akram and Malik, 2010). In addition, the digital technology has transformed the present day students into "Digital Natives" (Prensky, 2001;2003) who are growing up using digital technology (Tapscott and Williams, 2010). Moreover, the amazing 21<sup>st</sup> century discoveries related to the learning of students have guided the practitioners to explore new approaches to teach writing skills. And one such approach is Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as the internet generation is thriving on Twitter, Facebook, Mobile phones, Google and YouTube and their use in an internet minute is breaking previous records related to the transmission of information.

Many researchers from Pakistan, comprehensively address, examine, highlight and explore the certain specific issues related to the poor English writing skills of Pakistani students (Sultana and Zaki, 2015). Likewise, Shahzadie

*et al.* (2014) examine problems related to essay writing at territory level. Haider (2014a) discusses attribution theory and the writing process of students. Haider (2012b) deliberates writing difficulties of graduate students and debates perception of graduate level students with learning composition writing difficulties through activities.

Likewise, in the same context, Kiran (2010); Ahmed (2004); Abbas (1998) and Haider (2012c) also blame flawed pedagogy of lecturers as the sole reason for students' poor writing skills. In addition, one finds a wide gap between the modern teaching methods and the practices of instructors in Pakistan (Warsi, 2004). So much so, the teaching methods force the students to reproduce word for word to pass the exams. And thus, students' creative capabilities and critical thinking are not focused because lecturers stick to grammar translation method (GTM) (Akhtar, 1997) which is followed blindly by the pedagogues (Khan *et al.*, 2012). However, Sultana and Zaki (2015) in this regard suggest that there is a pressing need to introduce new methods and techniques for ELT learning that must be in line with the contemporary and updated language pedagogies.

A lot of research (Cavus and Ibrahim, 2009; Baleghizadeh and Oladrostam, 2010; Cheng *et al.*, 2010; Power and Shrestha, 2010; Sife *et al.*, 2010; Dansieh, 2011; Aziz *et al.*, 2013; Hayati *et al.*, 2013; Yousaf and Ahmed, 2013; Waqar, 2014) around the globe and Pakistan has been conducted on the use of mobile phones to teach listening, speaking and reading skills leaving a gap for the current study for the writing skills. Also, according to Viberg and Grönlund (2012) studies regarding grammar and writing skills of the L2 students have been underrepresented parts of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) domain and "to date, no MALL study has exclusively examined writing development for L2 learners" (Mancilla, 2014).

With a view to filling these research gaps, the researchers conducted a study on teaching descriptive essays by employing smart phones to enhance intermediate students' English essay writing skills because the researchers believe what Dewey (1944) says "if we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow" (p.167).

### 1.1. Research Questions

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to explore and investigate the effectiveness of utilizing smart phones in teaching descriptive essay writing. The following research questions directed the current research:

1. Is there significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and control group for their overall performance in writing skills?
2. Is there significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and control group for their motivation towards writing?
3. What are the views of the lecturers about the use of mobile phone and PowerPoint in teaching of descriptive essay writing?

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is a fact that teachers always find writing skills more difficult to teach than listening, speaking and reading skills (Akinwamide, 2012). But despite this reality, practices and instruction of instructors do deeply affect students' writing skills (Sahin *et al.*, 2002). The teaching of writing skills demands that while teaching writing the instructors must provide students with clear instructions (Nunan, 1991). To be successful teachers, they must be well versed in the teaching of writing and must be trained how to impart guidance to students and how to motivate them to be skilled writers. One such way is that instructors must know how to apply variety of approaches to improve the writing skills (Kong, 2005). During 1960s, 1970s and 1980s a lot of research was conducted on mother tongue instruction (Hashemnezhad and Hashemnezhad, 2012) which resulted in the emergence of many teaching approaches for the teaching of second language writing.

Product approach which is also termed as Model Approach (Akinwamide, 2012) is generally considered as one of the classical approaches for learning language. The product approach lays stress on imitation of model text and

organization of ideas is deemed more important than the ideas themselves. There is only one draft and it highlights linguistic features with their controlled practice as it values the end-product not the creative process itself. However, past research has shown that product approach focuses on content and the score obtained (Hasan and Akhand, 2010). The feedback provided by the instructor in this case is based upon grammar and lexical errors. And at the end, the tasks related to writing become decontextualized and also neglect the contexts and the target audience.

When the product approach was started to be criticized for its rigid rules and scarce utility for learning purposes, the language researchers and language teachers started using process approach to teach language paying attention to content before form (Raimes, 1991). Anyway, the process approach gives importance to text as a resource for comparison, encourages to brain storm new ideas, many drafts are written till a reasonable piece of writing is produced. It focuses on theme, purpose and the text type. In short, process approach involves a collaborative and creative process which also supports the collaborative or cooperative learning theory being employed in the current study. Further, it is also supported by the mobile learning theory which also helps students share their writing with their peers to construct together new ideas on a given topic which are ultimately transferred into their writing from mobile on to their papers. Moreover, process approach is more global and its focus is on text type, theme and purpose. It is collaborative and its emphasis is on the reader. Unlike the product approach where emphasis is on the end-product, creative process is at the core of this approach. Furthermore, according to Hyland (2003) process approach is another theory to teach writing which focuses on how a text is produced instead of the final product.

Tribble (1996) illustrates clearly that the process-based approach which is used in teaching academic writing involves brainstorming the intended writing topic in small groups to write what is meant to be written. This is what helps the learners generate ideas even before starting to write which is followed by generating an outline of the planned essay. Followed by this process, the learners individually write their first drafts and revise them. After that the learners hand over the same to other class fellows for peer-reviewing and for comments. Then there is the final stage which involves editing the essay by the writer to eliminate all language errors and mistakes. Anyway, since the product approach has failed in Pakistan's context (Khan, 2012; Haider, 2012b) therefore, process approach needs to be utilized for the teaching of writing skills due to its following features: Process approach involves prewriting, writing, revising and editing to be followed in a recursive manner. The process starts with the generation of ideas, the organization of ideas followed by editing in grammar, spellings, diction and finally, sharing the finished draft. The process approach focuses on the process of writing instead of the product and the current study also employed the process approach due mainly to its features mentioned above.

### *2.1. Constructivist Approach*

Likewise, cognitive constructivism by Piaget (1970) gives importance to the mental processes which construct knowledge after a life-long constructive process involving organization, structuring and restructuring experiences based on the existing schemes of thought and there is constant continuation of expansion of these schemes in a learner. In this connection, Vygotsky (1978) has also propounded "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) according to which "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.". Scaffolding is the assistance that is given to students (by adults/ teachers and peers) to complete tasks which they cannot accomplish by themselves. When students are provided with the reasonable assistance (scaffolding) which gives students enough of a "boost" and thus the set task is accomplished successfully and attained ZPD.

Slavin (1996) propounds that team work or team goals are the crucial elements in cooperative learning. Cooperative learning also known as social constructivist approach being one of the most fertile and remarkable

areas of practice in education operates when students work cooperatively together to accomplish the tasks related to shared learning goals (Johnson and Johnson, 1999). Students can then individually achieve their learning goals if other group members also accomplish theirs (Deutsch, 1962). Therefore, according to research (Allport, 1954; Slavin, 1986; Johnson and Johnson, 1989) cooperative approach encourages students to participate actively in the learning process which transforms the teacher-centered classroom to the students-centered classroom.

## 2.2. Mobile Learning

Mobile learning (m-learning), according to Peters (2007) is related to the transfer of educational material to students by means of mobile phones. And students can best learn language through the “mediated learning by mobile technologies” (Winters, 2007). Besides, the use of mobile technologies exclusively promotes collective as well as individual learning of students (Koole, 2009). For example, students can search the internet with the help of mobile phones for the purpose of learning material related to writing skills by exploring various contexts individually and collaboratively. This is how mobile phone plays the role of mediator of learning between students and different contexts. Thus, mobile-learning, according to Naismith *et al.* (2004) has proved effective in enhancing the standard of conventional lessons. The recent advances of m-learning having the potential of fulfilling personal educational needs can also make learning fun (Attewell and Savil-Smith, 2005). Besides, they have also enabled students to undertake specific tasks which were not possible previously (Pea and Maldonado, 2006). Also, according to Akour (2009) hand phones can "embed learners in realistic contexts" where it is easy to construct knowledge. In addition, Khaddage and Knezek (2012) deliberate as to how the use of educational apps is necessary which can empower even informal learners besides having many other benefits.

Sandberg *et al.* (2011) investigated the fruitfulness and added values of mobile assisted language learning with the help of three groups of primary class students learning English as a second language. However, the findings showed that the group of students which used mobile phone improved the most as they were more motivated and they had “a lot of fun learning English using the mobile phone”.

Additionally, so far as the fun element is concerned, yet another study by Perifanou (2009) has almost the same findings: “Successful learning involves a mixture of work and fun”. Besides, Sharples *et al.* (2009) also posited that mobile learning provides learning materials and tools for scaffolding in addition to the enjoyment. Similarly, Kim *et al.* (2008) reviewed the literature concerning educational inequality issues prevalent in Latin America and suggested mobile learning technology to counter the impact of education inequality. As such, current study gives emphasis on collaborative process writing using smart phones.

## 2.3. Multimedia Learning

Mayer (2001;2005) as well as Mayer and Sims (1994) claim that verbal messages have been used as the primary method to convey ideas to learners for many decades. But the extension beyond the mere use of words with the incorporation of pictures into instructional messages promises more benefits. This method of learning with words along with pictures is termed as multimedia learning by Mayer and Moreno (2003) and hence a theory that he founded which was actually an extension of Paivio’s advocated theory known as dual code theory. Mayer suggests that the basic postulation concerning the multimedia theory is the conviction that learning takes place “more deeply when ideas are expressed in words and pictures rather than in words alone” (Mayer, 2001).

Furthermore, Mayer (2005) demonstrates, “Research on learning shows that meaningful learning depends on the learner’s cognitive activity during the learning rather than on the learner’s behavioral activity during the learning” (p. 14). Mayer describes that “well-designed multimedia instructional messages can promote active cognitive processing in learners, even when learners seem to be behaviorally inactive” (p. 19).

Therefore, the current study encourage students ( experimental group) to used smart phones for downloading the material from the internet which contains both written as well as pictorial material and in some cases the videos

as well to enhance their writing skills. Since pictures speak and paint meanings more than the words do, the researcher shares the belief with Mayer (2005) that multimedia can be helpful for the intermediate students' tasks of writing descriptive essays with the help of mobile phones. Anyway, the following researchers (Chen and Li, 2010; Chang and Hsu, 2011; Sandberg *et al.*, 2011) have employed multimedia theory in their studies.

#### 2.4. ARCS Theory of Motivation

According to Gardner (2010) "Motivation is a complex concept" and to Ellis (1994) motivation is one of the basic determinants of success in language learning and for Maslow (1970) motivation is the inner force that guides a learner towards a goal. However, according to ARCS model by Keller (2006a) "Motivation consists of the amount of effort a person is willing to exert in pursuit of a goal," whereas in the context of learning, "motivational tactics support instructional goals" (Keller, 2006b). And for this purpose, instructional activities can be designed to boost four learner motivation categories which include attention, (A) relevance (R), confidence (C) and satisfaction (S). Hence the acronym "ARCS".

In short, the principles mentioned above elucidate the elements required to strengthen the learners' intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation (Keller and Suzuki, 2004). In the current study, according to Keller's first element i.e. attention, mobile phone was used to attract the intermediate students' attention. According to the second principle, i.e. relevance the instructional material taken from certain websites was selected by keeping in mind the level of the intermediate students with regard to the steps of descriptive essay. The third element confidence applies to this research in this way that the students felt confident that not only they could understand the tasks assigned rather they would have the conviction that they could succeed as well. For instance, they felt at ease while writing the descriptive essay with confidence that the writing skills thus learnt would also help in performing other writing tasks related to their syllabus. And these tasks may be letter writing, story writing and short answers writing which are included in the intermediate syllabus of Punjab as well. Likewise, the last element relates to the students' satisfaction or pleasant experience related to the learning process. In case of the current study, the students enjoyed the pleasant experience to learn with the mobile phone which was never used for this purpose for the tasks like the descriptive essay writing. Therefore, it was expected that if the afore mentioned conditions of ARCS were met successfully, the intermediate students would most probably be highly motivated to perform the most difficult writing task happily and satisfactorily and this was what they did as up to the expectations of the researcher.

Lee (2015) examined the effect of hand phone based discussion vis-a-vis computer-based discussion with regard to academic motivation, flow state, self-directed learning readiness and learner-interface interaction. The study by using the randomized controlled trial showed in addition to the improvement made in the areas just mentioned, that academic motivation increased by the use of mobile phone as compared to the computer-based learning.

Likewise, another study related to motivation and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) by Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) was conducted to actualize an experiment in employing SMS to teach new English vocabulary to 45 intermediate students. In this case the learners are self-motivated while undergoing the learning process. In addition, the study reveals that the literature review proves that palmtops are successful in education. Finally, the findings indicated that all the students were motivated as it involved element of enjoyment and fun in learning even after the routine classroom via their cell phone.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed the quasi-experimental, design "QUAN-Qual- mix-method" (Gay *et al.*, 2011; Creswell, 2014). This study employed Pre-and Posttest Design by Creswell (2014).

The population of the current study consisted of 500 second year intermediate students enrolled in the Government M.A.O. College, Lahore. All the students were registered to take English as a compulsory subject and they were the regular students of the said college. However, the sample of the study were only 90 pre-medical

intermediate second year students of the Government M.A.O. College, Lahore. The study used the non-random sampling technique i.e. intact group sampling which is a quantitative sampling procedure. However, random sampling was not used as it could cause interference with the college time table and the routine official work of the college which was also not allowed by the college administration. The sample were divided into two groups, the experimental group and the control group. Both the groups were homogeneous, they varied very little concerning their personal characteristics such as academic grade point average, gender composition, age and the subjects which they were studying.

In the first week students from the control group and experimental group were given the pre-test to examine their performance in the descriptive essay writing prior to the intervention. Right after that students from both groups were given a set of questionnaires adapted from Keller (2010) to gauge their level of motivation towards learning English writing skills before intervention. Briefing related to the descriptive essay writing skills was given to the students of both groups (experimental and control) as well as the 2 lecturers during the same first week before the actual experiment initiated in the second week.

From the second week to the seventh week (6 weeks), the experimental group was taught writing skills using mobile phones whereas the control group was taught using PowerPoint. The researcher also observed the experimental group and the control group to ensure the lecturers was following the lesson plans and other instructions properly during the lesson. However, in the 8th week the post-tests were given to both groups to measure students' performance in descriptive essay writing after the intervention. Besides, both these groups were also administered a set of questionnaires on motivation separately in the same 8<sup>th</sup> week right after the post-test to ascertain their level of motivation towards writing after the intervention.

Following that both the lecturers teaching the control as well as the experimental group were interviewed by researchers to elicit their reflections, views and opinions about the respective method they employed while teaching.

### *3.1. Lesson Plan*

The lesson plan for both the groups were provided by the researchers. According to the framework of the lesson plan, in the start of the lesson, the lecturer sent the pictures related to the essay title via SMS to students to arouse their interest and asked them to brain storm and give comments. In step one, the lecturer established the objectives of the lesson of the day. The lecturer clarified the significance of effective communication via descriptive essay writing with hand phone. In step two, students were sent the topic and web address of the descriptive essay writing via SMS. Students started downloading the material by using their cell phones regarding the title given to them. Students explored together by having discussion within their groups and drafted the outline (main points) of the descriptive essay. The students were reminded of the construction of knowledge in their respective groups by undergoing the learning experience collaboratively and cooperatively. In step three, each group deliberated and wrote the "Introduction" component of the essay in 5 to 6 sentences. The lecturer moved from group to group to facilitate. The lecturer ensured that each participant was engaged in the discussion, editing and the writing introduction of the descriptive essay. In step four, group leaders presented their collectively written "Introduction" of the descriptive essay by reading from their mobiles. The lecturer and the students together evaluated and assessed the presented portion. The lecturer made corrections and gave suggestions on how to improve the introduction component of the descriptive essay. In the closure part, the lecturer asked the group leaders to give their reflections regarding the writing of the introduction component of the descriptive essay with the help of mobile phones. Finally, the lecturer also gave comments and shared his views with the students.

Thus, the descriptive essay consisting of five paragraphs was completed in 5 days and on the 6<sup>th</sup> day the whole essay was written completely, edited and presented randomly by the group leaders. The same scheme was followed during the teaching of all the 6 essays.

As according to the lesson plan for the control group, in the set induction, the lecturer showed the pictures related to the essay title with PowerPoint and asked students to brain storm and give comments. The lecturer aroused students' interest by relating the set induction to the objectives of that day's lesson. Students were told what they were supposed to write that day. In step one, students were introduced to the topic of the descriptive essay writing with the help of PowerPoint slides. In step two, students started consulting the material shown to them on the PowerPoint. Students individually explored the topic and drafted the outline (main points) of the descriptive essay. In step three, each student wrote the "Introduction" component of the essay comprising of 5 to 6 sentences. The lecturer moved from student to student to facilitate. The lecturer ensured that each student was engaged individually in writing introduction of the descriptive essay. In step four, a few students randomly presented their individually written "Introduction" of the descriptive essay. The lecturer evaluated and assessed the introduction component of the essay and made corrections if necessary. However, in the closure part, the lecturer asked one of the students to conclude what they had learnt on that day. The lecturer also asked the students if they encountered any problem regarding the learning of the introduction component of the descriptive essay with the help of PowerPoint.

However, the descriptive essay consisting of five paragraphs was supposed to be completed in 6 days and on the 6<sup>th</sup> day the whole essay was written completely, edited and presented randomly by the students individually to the lecturer. The same scheme was followed during the teaching of all the 6 essays.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. Research Question (RQ) 1

*RQ1. Is there significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and control group in their overall performance for writing skills?*

**Table-1.** Comparison of overall mean scores for descriptive essay writing skills in the pre-test.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t-value	df	p value
Experimental	45	62.69	8.15	.42	.270	88	.788
Control group	45	62.27	6.59				

Note: Level of significance is at  $p < 0.5$ .

Table 1 indicates the overall mean scores for descriptive essay writing skills prior to intervention. The overall mean score of the experimental group was 62.6889. Whereas the overall mean scores of the control group was 62.2667. The results from the independent-samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the overall mean scores of students of the experimental as well as control groups for their performance in descriptive essay writing skills prior to intervention ( $t = -.270$ ,  $df = 88$ ,  $p = .788$ ).

**Table-2.** Comparison of overall mean scores for essay descriptive writing skills in the post-test.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t-Value	df	p-value
Experimental	45	79.16	9.24	12.40	7.66	88	.000
Control	45	66.76	5.71				

Note: Level of significance is at  $p < 0.5$ .

Table 2 indicates the overall mean scores for descriptive essay writing skills after the intervention. The overall mean score for the experimental group was 79.1556. Whereas the overall mean scores for the control group was 66.7556. The results from the independent-samples t-test revealed that there was significant difference between the overall mean scores of students of the experimental as well as control groups for their performance in descriptive essay writing skills after the intervention ( $t = 7.659$ ,  $df = 88$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore, the results answered, the research question 1. The findings in Table 2 showed that the usage of mobile phone in teaching writing descriptive essay significantly enhanced the experimental group's overall performance scores as compared to the control group

who were taught with PowerPoint. These findings are parallel with findings by Viberg and Grönlund (2012) which showed that L2 learners grammar and writing skills were improved using Mobile Assisted Language Learning. Similarly results of this study also support findings by Sharples *et al.* (2009) which showed that mobile learning provides learning materials and tools for scaffolding in addition to the enjoyment in learning.

### Research Question 2

RQ 2. Is there significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and control group for their motivation towards writing?

**Table-3.** Comparison of overall mean scores for motivation towards writing skills in the pre-test.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t-Value	Df	P-value
Experimental	45	87.1003	4.85420	-1.52791	-1.714	88	.90
Control	45	88.6282	3.49250				

Note: Level of significance is at  $P < 0.5$ .

Table 3 indicates the overall mean scores for motivation towards descriptive essay writing skills prior to intervention. The overall mean score of the experimental group was 87.1003. Whereas the overall mean scores of the control group was 88.6282. The results from the independent t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the overall mean scores of students of the experimental as well as control groups for their motivation towards descriptive essay writing skills prior to intervention ( $t = -1.714$ ,  $df = 88$ ,  $p = .90$ ).

**Table-4.** Comparison of overall mean scores for motivation towards descriptive essay writing skills in the post-test.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t-Value	df	P-value
Experimental	45	124.5853	3.83883	36.71861	37.311	88	.000
Control group	45	87.8667	5.37080				

Note: Level of significance is at  $P < 0.5$ .

Table 4 indicates the overall mean scores for motivation towards descriptive essay writing skills after intervention. The overall mean score of the experimental group was 124.5853. Whereas the overall mean scores for the control group was 87.8667.

The results from the independent t-test indicated that there was significant difference between the overall mean scores of students of the experimental as well as control groups for their motivation towards descriptive essay writing skills after intervention ( $t = 37.311$ ,  $df = 88$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore, the results answered research question 2. The findings mentioned in Table 4 showed that the usage of mobile phone in teaching writing descriptive essay significantly enhanced the experimental group's overall motivation scores as compared to the control group who were taught with PowerPoint. The students in the experimental group were taught by employing the principles embodied in the ARCS model by Keller (2010) whereas their counterparts in the control group were taught in the conventional fashion which failed to motivate them and hence they could not perform like the students in the experimental group did.

These findings support the findings by Lee (2015) and Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) which indicated that students' academic motivation was enhanced by the use of mobile phone in learning as it involved element of enjoyment and fun learning. In addition results of the current study are also parallel with study by Keller and Suzuki (2004) which revealed that the utilization of mobile phone as an instructional material had strengthened the intermediate students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning.

### Research Question 3

RQ 3. What are the views of the lecturers about the use of mobile phone and PowerPoint in teaching of descriptive essay writing?

Following are the responses which were received from the lecturer of the experimental group regarding students' performance in essay writing

- *"Without any speck of doubt that students improved a lot."*
- *"They (pause) improved (pause) rapidly and significantly."*
- *"Each presentation through the group leaders was better than the previous one."*
- *"They learnt how to frame (pause) outline of the essay, introduction, focus on topic, supporting details, personal opinions, coherence and cohesion (pause) and above all how to conclude the essay."*
- *"They also learnt how to construct knowledge while engaging in a discussion in a group and while constructing sentences of varied kinds or (pause) various structures."*
- *"...they improved a lot in the field of grammar and mechanics."*
- *"I think all this could be possible only with the help of mobile phones."*
- *"...it proved to be a wonderful gadget."*

In a very enthusiastic tone, the lecturer very emphatically said that *"without any speck of doubt students improved a lot"*. Since what was practiced with the students of the experimental group was what is known as process writing as was described in chapter I, and what was said by lecturer is very much supportive to that claim in general and in particular about its effectiveness as he said: *"each presentation through the group leaders was better than the previous one"*. In this connection, he further buttressed this claim when he said: *"...they learnt how to frame (pause) outline of the essay, introduction, focus on topic, supporting details, personal opinions, coherence and cohesion ... and above all how to conclude the essay"*.

In addition to this the lecturer also supported the very ideas of construction of knowledge while being in a group sitting face to face: *"they also learnt how to construct knowledge while engaging in a discussion in a group and while constructing sentences of varied kinds or .... various structures."* Above all, it has become clear that the students improved in all areas of the essay writing.

For example, to learn English grammar and mechanics is not so easy a task but according to the lecturer *"they improved a lot in the field of grammar and mechanics."* Finally the lecturer concluded by saying that smart phones proved to be a wonderful tool in enhancing students' writing skills. These findings are similar to findings by Naismith *et al.* (2004) which showed that the use of mobile phone is effective in enhancing students' learning. Peters (2007) also stressed mobile phones help to the transfer educational materials to students in the learning process.

Following are the examples of the lecturer's responses which were received in relation to benefits of using smart phones in writing descriptive essays:

- *"For sure learning writing with mobile phones (pause) involved element of fun for students also. They enjoyed it a lot."*
- *"This was a new kind of experience for them because before this mobile phone was just a source for texting and having contact with their friends."*
- *"...like enjoyable game."*
- *"I also found them really enjoying this experience of (pause) learning essay writing with mobile phones."*
- *"motivated me a lot as a lecturer."*
- *"In fact, it enhanced my belief in technology and particularly using of mobile phone in educational settings."*
- *"they were seen well focused, engaged and the class room was really students centered classroom"*
- *"that all this was not possible with the conventional method used in our government institutions now-a-days"*
- *"I begin to realize that it can be a very useful device to improve writing skills of the students since it motivated me a lot."*
- *"Motivated the students in writing because they are writing collaboratively using smart phones."*
- *"students are also motivated to write by their peers"*
- *"students learn new vocabularies, new ideas, spelling and grammar using smart phones"*

- *“...it was only due to smart phones, that the students were able to engage in discussions with their fellow group members in their respective groups. The learning took place inside and outside the classroom.”*

The views of the lecturer were very much encouraging which supported teaching writing skills with the help of smart phones. The use of smart phones had motivated the lecturer himself in teaching writing skills.

The lecturer stressed that students were engaged in fun learning and they enjoyed a lot learning in groups using smart phones. As the use of mobile phone was being introduced for the first time for teaching essay writing skills in a public-sector college of the Punjab, Pakistan and it was very much confirmed by the lecturer when he said *This was a new kind of experience for them because before this mobile phone was just a source for texting and having contact with their friends.*”

Now it turned into *“a kind of fun for them”* helpful in learning new ideas, check spelling and grammar in writing skills. But the element to be kept in mind here is students were not just enjoying only rather they were very much enthusiastic while undergoing this new experience of downloading a very relevant and authentic material related to their essay. In addition, they use of smart phone to check their spelling, grammar and in editing their essay. Besides, the use of smart phone keep the students focused in their collaborative writing. According to him (lecturer) the students were also motivated in writing because they enjoy writing collaboratively with the assistance of their peers. Students were undergoing this new experience, the use of smart phone had transformed the essay writing task into an *“enjoyable game.”*

Moreover, the smart phone get students actively engaged in writing not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. In short, the lecturer and the students benefited a lot by using smart phones in essay writing. These findings clearly support the quantitative findings of this study that students’ writing skills and motivation were enhanced after using the smart phones.

The results also supports findings by [Lee \(2015\)](#); [Sandberg et al. \(2011\)](#) who investigated the fruitfulness and added values of mobile assisted language learning. These results is also parallel with findings by [Attewell and Savil-Smith \(2005\)](#); [Pea and Maldonado \(2006\)](#) and [Akour \(2009\)](#) who stressed that utilization of mobile phones provide fun learning environment to students.

Following are the examples of the responses which were received from the lecturer from the Control Group using PowerPoint regarding students’ performance in essay writing:

- *“...it has been quite a stagnant, class, a teacher-centered class.”*
- *“There were limited images or information about it and students have limited resource to reproduce their work.”*
- *“...it is a conventional method.”*
- *“There is no collaboration among students.”*
- *“They have no liberty to share their views, their opinions to each other and it makes it less creative.”*
- *“they learnt to a very limited extent”*
- *“They produced crammed work and they produced individual work and that is most probably self-knowledge; no sharing, no exchange of views and definitely it produced a very limited type of work which I don’t think is up to the mark in term of new ideas, vocabulary and grammar”*
- *“The weak students struggle in writing, they are stagnant and no much improvement”*

The teacher stressed that the class was teacher-centered and the method employed was Conventional Method using PowerPoint to teach writing skills. According to him PowerPoint is commonly used to teach students at the public-sector colleges of the Punjab, Pakistan. Students are just supposed to do their own work instead of consulting, discussing and sharing with their peers in the classroom. As such, there is not much improvement in their work.

They are supposed to refer to only what is presented to them in terms of PowerPoint slides related to their essay topics. Students do not get the opportunity to share and discuss their views with their class-fellows. This very thing brought out a product which was not a creative piece of writing produced by students of control group rather

the material was similar to the one presented to them in the PowerPoint slides. Whatever was written by them was only the product of their own views. As such, the essays produced by the students are not up to the mark in term of new ideas, organization, use of vocabulary and grammar. In addition, the weak students struggle to write alone, their progress is stagnant and not much improvement.

Following are the examples of the lecturer's responses which were received in relation to benefits of using PowerPoint in writing descriptive essays:

- *"It was helpful for me."*
- *"...it is a teacher-centered class."*
- *"I can control my class very well. I can have a hold on them. It is well managed."*
- *"Less noise"*
- *"No disturbance because students didn't discuss to each other."*
- *"They hardly asked questions."*
- *"Student to student collaboration does not exist, and sometimes they are not focused in their work."*
- *"It hardly had any element of fun"*
- *"...we don't have extra discussion we remain (pause) we stick to the limited slides and pictures."*
- *"There is no research work (pause) no internet"*
- *"...there is nothing to be enjoyed in this kind of environment."*

According to the lecturer from the Control Group the teaching was teacher-centered and she was able to control the class well.

Since there is no discussion there is less noise in the classroom. The lecturer also stressed that there was no either fun learning environment or collaborative learning. She also stressed that sometimes the students were not focused in their work. Students also don't get to download extra materials related to the essay because they do not have internet facilities. The views of the lecturer were not very much encouraging which did not support teaching writing skills with the help of PowerPoint.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Findings from the quantitative data revealed that the utilization of smart phone ( Experimental Group) significantly enhanced students' descriptive writing skills compared to the control Group using PowerPoint. In addition, the use of smart phones in writing also significantly enhance students' motivation in learning compared with the Control Group using PowerPoint.

Findings from the qualitative data also indicated that the Experimental Group which uses smart phones in collaborative essay writings really had fun and enjoyed their writing activity compared to the Control Group which employed conventional method of teaching using PowerPoint. The experimental group was able to produce quality essays because they were able to download materials related to the essay, engaged in active discussion, and able to edit their work collaboratively.

Their learning took place not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

These findings has pertinent pedagogical implications in writing skills, as it suggest lecturers and teachers to utilize smart phones as an alternative tool in teaching writing skills. Guideline employed by the researchers can also be used as a guide by lecturers and teachers as a creative way of teaching writing skills.

In term of practical implications, Ministry of Education and the Teacher Training Division should train teachers and lecturers on how to utilize smart phones to enhance students' writing skills. In-service courses for English teachers and lecturer also should be conducted by Teacher Training Division to expose them to innovative method of teaching writing skills using smart phones.

In addition, these findings also has strong theoretical implications as it supports (Mayer, 2001;2005). Similarly the findings also support social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1978) and collaborative learning approach by

Slavin (1996) and Johnson and Johnson (1999) which stressed that students learn better through collaborative learning as they get scaffolding from peers.

However, this quasi experimental study has several limitations. Firstly, this study only focused on the utilization of smart phones in teaching descriptive writing skills.

As such, further research should be conducted on the effectiveness of utilizing smart phones in teaching listening, speaking and reading skills. Secondly, in this study the researchers did not interview the students on their views on learning writing skills using smart phones and PowerPoints, as such future researchers should interview the students to get insight on the benefits and constrains of using smart phones in learning writing skills. Lastly, this study was carried out in a college among pre-university students and cannot be generalized to students at other levels.

As such, in future more similar research should be conducted among students at primary and secondary levels on the effectiveness of utilizing smart phones in teaching writing skills.

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