

**Exploring the Role of Dialogic Teaching in Improving Learners' L2 Writing Skill at
Intermediate Level in District Bannu**

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the role of dialogic teaching, derived from Bakhtin's 'Dialogism, in improving learners' writing skill at intermediate level in District Bannu. An experimental research design was used in the study. Pre and post-tests were used for data collection. A 12th Grade Class of a public sector college was selected for the conduction of the experimental study. In this design, two groups namely, the control group and treatment group were administered pre and post-tests. Only the treatment group was given the treatment. The pre-test was designed to assess the writing skill of the treatment group. A paired sample t-test was used for the analysis of data. After the analyses of the data results were drawn. Data revealed that monologic teaching was prevalent in most of the classrooms, with no or very little space for the students to interact in the English language. Dialogic pedagogy proved very effective in finding out a solution to a real-world problem. Being dialogic, the pedagogy improved the writing skill of the students of the treatment group considerably.

Keywords: Dialogic Teaching, Dialogism, Paired Sample t-test, Pre, and Post-test

INTRODUCTION

According to Dwivedi et al (2015), among the four language learning skills, writing skill is most challenging for students whose native language is different than English language. Writing correctly and impressively in L2 is essential for overall growth of the students, not only at school but in their practical life as well (Neville, 1988, as quoted in Dwivedi et al 2015). Clifford (1991) is of the opinion that teachers should focus on improving students' power of communication and for that purpose students should be guided to concentrate on the message and idea, they wanted to convey, rather than on the mechanics of writing (p.42). Brumfit & Johnson (1991) are of the opinion that students can write about any topic in a natural way if the need of the writing is made clear by the teachers (p.136). Digest (1996), is of the opinion that only those teachers can give good suggestions to their students to improve their writing skill who believe in giving writing practice to their students. According to Smadi, 1986, students should be facilitated to write in L2 by giving them such topics by their teacher, which are related with their curriculum and social background. Runkle (1988) is of the opinion that such topics should be given to the students by their teachers, which give them chances of creativity. They will take great interest in writing by making their personal experiences part of their writing. This process will improve their writing skill. (Mallett & Newsome, 1977), are of the view that writing skill of the students can be improved if the writers are convinced that their attempt is taken seriously taken by the readers (p.166). The piece of writing will be appreciated if the writers are clear about the purpose of writing. The writer should realize the fact that writing is done for the sake of communicating ideas to audience. There will be no writing at all if the writer does not have anything to convey (Oluwadiya, 1992, p. 12). According to Adas et al., (2013), majority of the students avoid the writing practice and the writing of those who write, is related with their classroom activities. The teacher must be clear in his mind regarding improving the writing skill of the students. This clarity of mind will take him/her to select such topics which are related with students' personal lives and in which students take great interest.

Dialogic Writing

Dialogic teaching improves not only students' power of reasoning, but it also helps them to be argumentative in their writing (Asterhan & Schwarz, 2007; Kuhn & Udell, 2001; Murphy, Soter, Wilkinson, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009). According to Trevor et al (2013), a dialogic relationship can be formed

between teachers and students, through the comments written in the margin of assignments. This dialogic relationship greatly helps students in improving their writing skill. Writing, in such a process, is enjoyed by the students and is not taken as a burden by students, a process carried out only for getting grades (p. 102). The researcher also followed the dialogic process for the improvement of writing skill of the students. Writing assignments were given to the students regularly by the researchers which were attempted by them. Certain questions were raised by the researcher in the margins of the assignments, the answers of which were given by the students in the shape of explanation. This process was very much enjoyed by the students as no grades were involved in it. This process greatly improved the students' writing skill of L2

Research Methodology

Research Instrument

Pre and posttests were used for the collection of primary data, required for the study (Appendix E). Pretest for the study was designed in the light of instructions developed by Dr Fernando Fleurquin, Director University of Michigan- Flint, and Teresa Valais in E-Teacher scholarship program spring (2011); Brown, H. Douglas (2004) and Brown, H. Douglas (2001). The test was designed to assess the written communication of 12th grade students (treatment group); at Government Degree College No. 2, District Bannu.

Experimental Study

Two population groups were selected from 12th grade students of GDC No. 2, District Bannu. For this purpose, 62 students, belonging to Arts and Inter-science subjects; were equally divided into two groups, 31 in each class, on the bases of their performance in pre-test. In order to ensure that both the groups consisted of students of equal ability, the pre-tests of control and treatment groups were compared through independent sample t-test (Appendix D). Seaberg (1988, p. 254) and Grinnell and Williams (1990), are of the view that 30 respondents are sufficient to carry out the basic statistical procedure. These groups were termed as treatment group and control group, respectively. The treatment group and control groups were randomly selected. (Keppel & Wickens, 2003), are of the opinion that due to the random selection of the groups; the possibility of systematic differences among characteristics of the participants is eliminated. In many experimental studies, a researcher compares two or more than two groups (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991).

Research Design

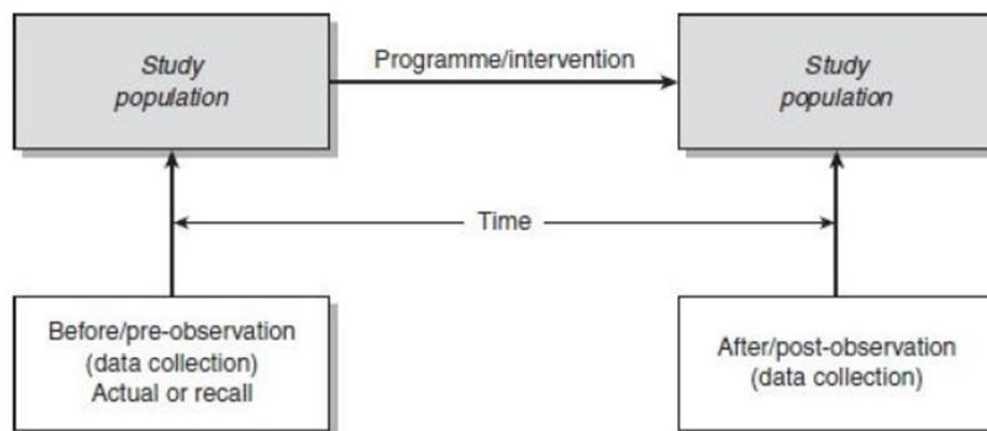
True experimental design was used in the study. For this purpose, pretest-posttest Control Group design was selected. In this design, control group and treatment group are administered pre and posttests, but treatment is provided to treatment group only. The following figure No 3 sums up the research design, made in the light of (Campbell and Stanley (1963, p. 6) notation system:

Figure No 1

Group A R____O____X____O
 Group B R____O____O

In the above figure, group A represents the treatment group while B, represents control group respectively. In the figure, R stands for random assignment, X represents an exposure of a group to an experimental event, and O represents measurement recorded on an instrument.

Figure No 2, adopted from Kumar (2011, p.107), further elaborates the design.



Research Question

To what extent dialogic teaching proves effective in improving students' writing skill of Inter level students in English language?

Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: Dialogic teaching, based on Bakhtin's dialogism, does not improve English Language learners' efficiency to communicate, in written form, effectively in L2 at Intermediate level.

Analysis and Discussion

In order to improve students' skill in L2 writing, the researcher used to give assignments. The students used to attempt those assignments and the researcher used to raise certain questions (in the shape of comments and written in the margins of the assignment) the answer of which were provided by the students in the next step, after they read the comments. In this way the writing process became dialogic, which was greatly enjoyed by the students.

Dialogic Sessions

The researcher gave an assignment to the students to write a paragraph on *Strong and weak aspect of my character*. Asadyar wrote in his assignment that he has been very hard-working since his early classes. He worked hard when the rest of his class fellows were busy in playing games. The stamina and hard work was a matter of great pride for him. Along with the academics, he also showed great talent in co-curricular activities. He loved playing cricket and was the main bowler of his team. His team won matches, several times, because of his bowling performances. Expressing his views about his weaknesses, he wrote that one of his greatest weaknesses was the inferiority complex from which he was suffering. He suffered from inferiority complex as his parents gave more attention to his other brothers and sisters than him. He tried his level best to overcome that weakness but could not succeed. The researcher wrote in the margin that for parents all the children were equal and he should not have thought like that. Responding to my comments, he expressed his personal feelings in more detail the other day. He wrote that he worked very hard with the notion that he would get good grades and would be appreciated by his parents. In the beginning he succeeded in getting good grades, but was not encouraged by his parents. A little success of his elder brother was celebrated by his parents while his greater achievement was considered by his parents as routine work. That kind of attitude of his parents greatly affected his personality and he started suffering from inferiority complex. He knew that he could do wonders but he would not do as he did not have someone to appreciate. The researcher commented on his piece of writing that parents loved their children very much. Sometimes it did happen that a child got less attention as compared to his/her other brothers and sisters, but it did not

mean that the parents hated them. In his case he himself confessed that several times he showed good results than his elder brother. He should work hard and should not be discouraged. That was a very crucial juncture of his academic career. If he got good grades, got admission in a renowned university of the country; he would prove to be a great source of pride for his parents. Secondly, he should also think about his own career. Giving example from their text book, the researcher explained to him that Washington was termed 'crazy' by the world, but through his sheer courage and determination he showed to the world the power of determination by making the Brooklyn Bridge a reality. One day the world, including his parents, would recognize his hard work and his efforts. In response to the comments he wrote that he would never have disclosed his feeling if he had not got the opportunity to expressing feelings through writing. He was extremely thankful for sharing his grief and for changing his mind.

Expressing views about the strong aspect in the personality, Sabir wrote that he was in possession of great vocabulary. When he compares himself with his other class fellows; he feels happy that he has greater store of words. One of his greatest weaknesses, according to him, was lack of confidence to communicate orally as well as in written in L2. Whenever he tried to take start in L2, he was gripped by fear that other would laugh at him. His oral communication was improved due to the encouragement given to him by the researcher, but he faced problems in written communication. The researcher commented on his assignment that one of his problems was already solved and that was the availability of words. Problems and solutions go hand in hand with one another and one of the best solutions was to take first step. First step was always difficult but it led people to their destination. For the solution of improving his written communication, he should start writing. He wrote, in response to the comments, that he was aware of the problem and he wanted the solution of the problem. For that purpose, he used to visit his teacher's offices, but what he got from them was the list of grammar books. Once he gathered courage, wrote on a topic and showed the assignment to his teacher. The teacher encircled almost every second word in a sentence and, in the end, what appeared prominent on the page were red circles. He was very much discouraged and since then never attempted for the second time. He started writing after so many years and was hopeful that his writing skill would be improved.

Dialogic sessions like these were continued for 45 days.

Testing of Hypothesis (Writing skill)

$H_0 = \mu_D = 0$ OR both pre and post thinking have same effect

$H_1 = \mu_D \neq 0$ OR both pre and post thinking have different effect.

In order to check the improvement of the students of Control group in L2 writing, both its pre and post-tests were compared and the result was calculated using paired t-test. The scores of students, belonging to Control group, are shown in the table No 1 below:

Table No. 1 Students' Written test result (Total Marks: 40)

S No	Name	Pre	Post	Change
1	Azlan	21	20	-1
2	Shahab	23	20	-3
3	Ihsan	16	17	1
4	Fahim	21	19	-2
5	Wajahat	6	8	2
6	Yaqub	17	16	-1
7	Idrees	16	16	0
8	Rehan Ullah	25	26	1
9	Muhammad Ilyas	6	3	-3
10	Osama	18	20	2
11	Mishkat Ullah	16	12	-4
12	Qaisar	11	9	-2
13	Huzaifa	10	8	-2
14	Aamir	12	12	0

15	Kamran	17	15	-2
16	Farman Ullah	16	14	-2
17	Jamshed Khan	15	14	-1
18	Dildar	12	14	2
19	Javed Khan	9	10	1
20	Zahir Ali	10	8	-2
21	Safeer	8	10	2
22	Zahoor Khan	9	6	-3
23	Kifayat	13	11	-2
24	Waheed	17	16	-1
25	Zafran	16	18	2
26	Ahsan	9	7	-2
27	Kashif	7	4	-3
28	Abdul Rahim	6	5	-1
29	Aziz Ullah	9	10	1
30	Ajad	11	9	-2
31	Zeeshan	13	12	-1

Figure No 3 Graphical presentation of the result of Written test (Control Group)

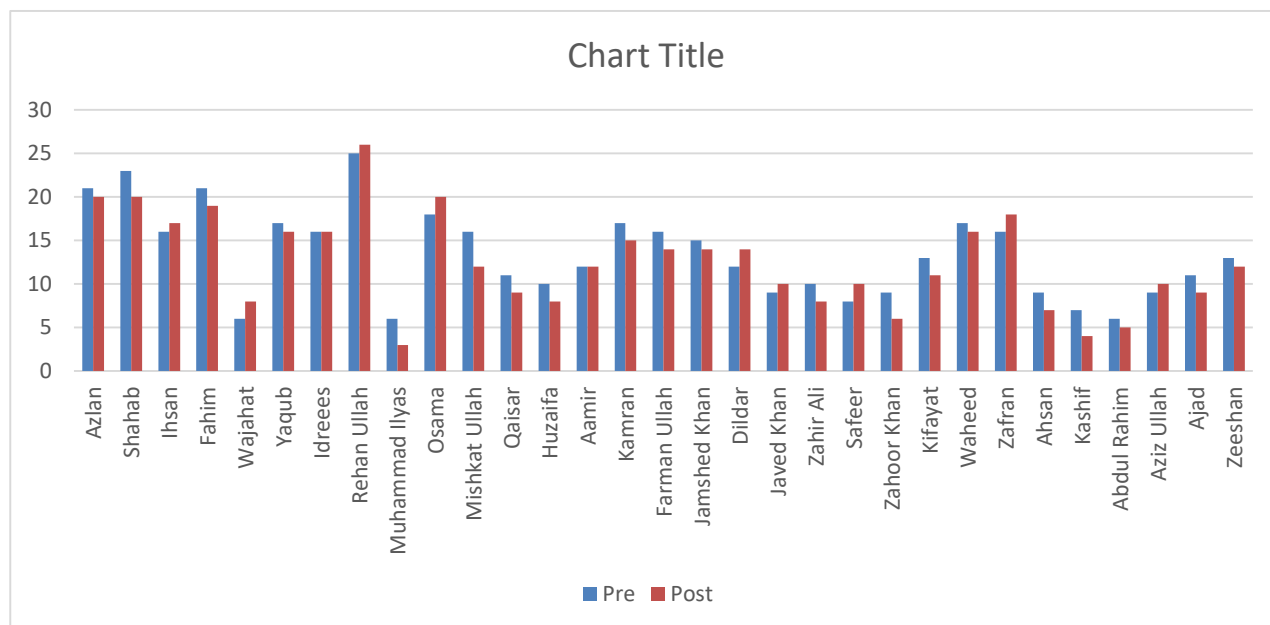


Table No 3

Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 poswrtcon & prewrtcon	31	.945	.000

Table No 4

Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences	t	df
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		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Interval Difference Lower	Confidence of the Upper		Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	poswrtcon							
	-	-.83871	1.79066	.32161	-1.49553	-.18189	-2.608	30
	prewrtcon							.014

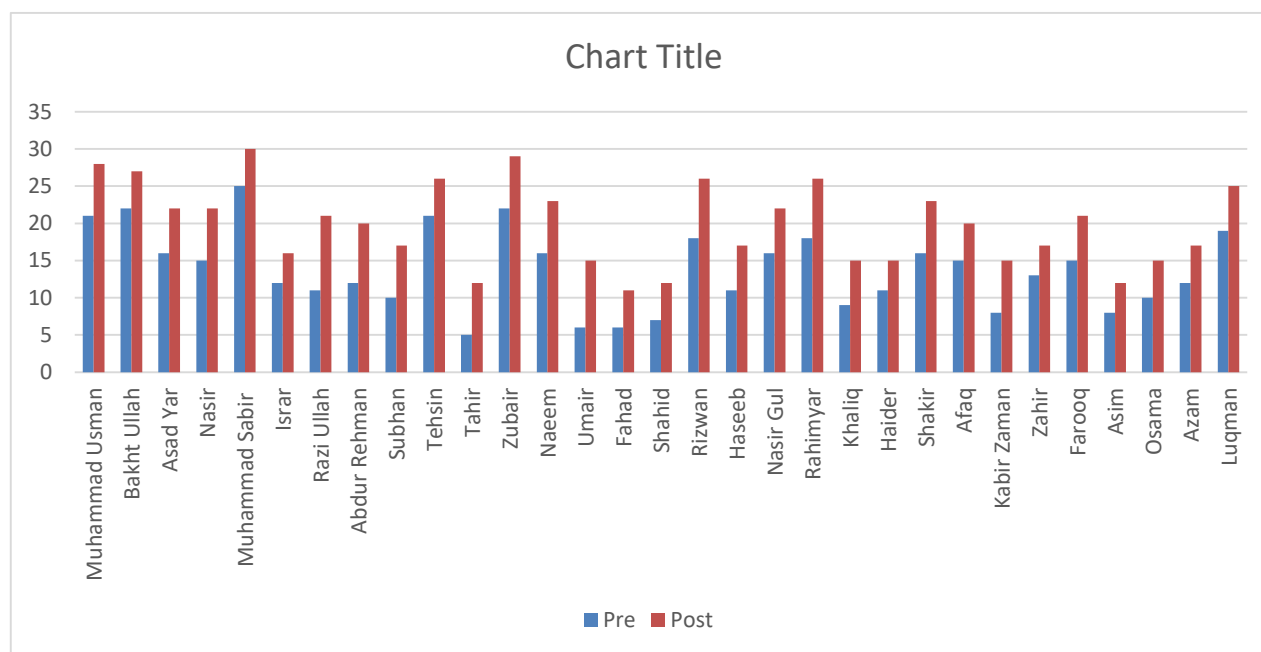
Treatment Group

In order to check the improvement in the writing communication of the Treatment group, both its pre and post-tests were compared and the result was calculated using paired t-test. The scores of students, belonging to Control group, are shown in the table No 5 below:

Table No. 5 Students' Written test result (Total Marks: 40)

S No	Name	Pre	Post	Change
1	Muhammad Usman	21	28	7
2	Bakht Ullah	22	27	5
3	Asad Yar	16	22	6
4	Nasir	15	22	7
5	Muhammad Sabir	25	30	5
6	Israr	12	16	4
7	Razi Ullah	11	21	10
8	Abdur Rehman	12	20	8
9	Subhan	10	17	7
10	Tehsin	21	26	5
11	Tahir	5	12	7
12	Zubair	22	29	7
13	Naeem	16	23	7
14	Umair	6	15	9
15	Fahad	6	11	5
16	Shahid	7	12	5
17	Rizwan	18	26	8
18	Haseeb	11	17	6
19	Nasir Gul	16	22	6
20	Rahimyar	18	26	8
21	Khaliq	9	15	6
22	Haider	11	15	4
23	Shakir	16	23	7
24	Afaq	15	20	5
25	Kabir Zaman	8	15	7
26	Zahir	13	17	4
27	Farooq	15	21	6
28	Asim	8	12	4
29	Osama	10	15	5
30	Azam	12	17	5
31	Luqman	19	25	6

Figure No 4 Graphical presentation of the result of Written test (Treatment Group)



Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 poswrttrt & prewrttrt	31	.962	.000

Table No 8

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Errorthe Difference	Lower	Upper	t	df
									Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	poswrttrt								
	–	6.16129	1.50769	.27079	5.60827	6.71431		22.753	30
	prewrttrt								.000

Discussion

In table No 4.12 'N' represents the numbers of observations i.e. number of participants who took part in the experiment. The average score of the participants of control group, in their pretest, was 13.3871. Similarly, their average score in their posttest was 12.5484. It shows that their average score was decreased. The table No 4.13 shows that the value of correlation was .945. The correlating range is 0-1. The value of correlation shows that there is strong positive correlation between pre and posttest results of control group. It indicates that the weaker students remained weak while the bright students remained bright. In Table No 4.14 the mean value of difference between posttest and pretest is -.83871. As the value is negative, it indicates that the performance of the students, belonging to control group; instead of improving, has become weak.

In the same manner, in order to check the improvement of the students, belonging to treatment group, in L2 writing; value of 't' was calculated. Number of participants 'N' in treatment group was 31. Table No 4.16 shows that the average score of the participants of treatment group, in their pretest, was 13.7. Similarly, their average score in their posttest was recorded as 19.9. It shows that their average score was increased.

The value of correlation, as shown in Table No 4.17 was .962. The correlating range is 0-1. The value of correlation shows that there is strong positive correlation between pre and posttest results of treatment group. Table No 4.18 indicates that the mean value of difference between posttest and pretest is 6.16129. As the value is positive, it indicates that the performance of the students, belonging to treatment group improved a lot. The table shows that the 't' calculated result is significant. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected, which stated that the pre and posttests had same effect. On the contrary it proved that H_1 was accepted which stated that pre and posttests had different effect. As the proficiency of the students, belonging to treatment group, in L2 writing improved; H_0 was rejected; which stated that dialogic teaching, based on Bakhtin's dialogism, did not improve English Language learners' efficiency in L2 writing at Intermediate level.

$H_0 = \mu_D = 0$ OR both pre and posttests have same effect.

$H_1 = \mu_D \neq 0$ OR both pre and posttests have different effect.

In order to know the difference between the performances of control and treatment groups, their posttests were compared using independent sample t-test. The results of the test are shown in the tables below:

Table No 9

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post Writing	Control	31	12.55	5.452	.979
	Treatment	31	19.90	5.504	.988

Table No 10

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Post Writing	Equal variances assumed	.086	.771	-5.286	60	.000	-7.355	1.391	-10.138 -4.572
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.286	59.995	.000	-7.355	1.391	-10.138 -4.572

Table No.10 clearly indicates that a significant difference was there between the performances of control group and treatment group in their posttests.

The results indicate that improvement in the writing skill of students is possible if the problem is taken seriously by the teachers. It is a pity that no teacher in the district took any practical step for the improvement of written skill of the students. That was the reason that most of the students resorted to the painful activity of rote learning. It is a matter of general observation that master degree holders, in the district, cannot write a simple application in L2. Set questions were learnt by students through rote learning; which were also set, for years, in the examinations and students got through the exams. This trend made the teachers lazy and they took no significant step to improve the writing skill of the students. The trend in the classroom continues, though a visible change has occurred in the examination system. Instead of set questions, unseen essays, paragraphs, comprehensions, and translation are set in the examination. It has created another confusion. The standard of students' proficiency is the same, while the demands in the examination have increased manifold. They have found the solution by resorting to unfair means in the examination. The use of unfair means is on the rise ever since they have changed the pattern of the papers. In such a situation, a

huge responsibility lay on the shoulders of the teachers to bring change in their teaching techniques and prepare students for the new challenges. Unfortunately, no practical steps are taken by the college level teachers to equip the students with the ways and means which may help them in overcoming the problems of L2 writing. In this context dialogic writing can prove one of the best solutions.

Dialogic writing can prove one of the best solutions as this method was taken as a fun by the students. They took the process as fun for many reasons. It was fun for them as the topics given to them were not traditional ones. The topics were related to day to day as well as their personal experiences. The topics were interesting that was the reason they took interest in the writing process. Second reason was that the writing was not done for grades. It is the psychology of the students that they abhor every activity which is connected with grades. As no grades were involved in the writing process, they took great interest in them. It does not, however, mean that they did not want improvement in their drafts. Mistakes were pointed out by the researcher, which were taken by them seriously and they tried not to repeat the mistakes again. Some students, like Sabir, were very much eager to improve their writing skill and they took that opportunity as a blessing. For the improvement of writing skill, reading plays a vital role. The researcher used to give them, twice a week, short stories for reading. In addition, the researcher in every class wrote five to six new words on the white board. These words, phrases, and idioms were apart from the text under study. The most prominent reason, of their interest in the writing process, was the dialogic activity. The remarks, in the margins of the assignments, were such that they were compelled to give answers. The remarks in the margins were very carefully planned by the researcher, which needed full explanation. Most of the time, they also shared their personal experiences through the process. Some of them commented that they would not have disclosed those personal feelings, if they had not been provided the opportunity to express them in the shape of written statements. A sense of mutual trust was developed by the dialogic activity, so they expressed each and everything.

CONCLUSION

Academic writing is a very painful activity, especially for students who are unable to write a single sentence. Much patience is required both for students as well as teachers. It is better to take few steps than taking none. Improvement in the writing skill does not come overnight. Teachers must take practical steps in order to help their students come out of the troubled situation. Students do not have any opportunity, other than the English Language class to improve their writing skill. Teachers must keep in mind this fact and plan such activities which are beneficial for students' L2 writing. Dialogic writing process, in this context, is one of the best options.

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