

Received: 11 September 2023 Accepted: 15 October, 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33182/rr.v9i1.009>

## The Relative Affordance of Flipped Method in the Pakistani ESL Context

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### Abstract

*Critically low academic achievement of ESL learners at Intermediate level in Pakistan has been reported (Gul, 2016; BISER, 2017; BISER, 2018; BISER, 2019), and it has been associated with adherence to traditional pedagogic approach in ELT classroom (Navab, 2012; Najmonnisa, Haq, & Saad, 2015; Umar, 2016; Raja & Najmonnisa, 2018). Therefore, we conducted this quasi-experimental research to examine the relative affordance of a globally popular Flipped Method in the Pakistani ESL context. The goal was to improve students' writing proficiency. Employing randomization technique, EG (50) and CG (54) were made. EG was taught by Flipped Method and Traditional Method was employed to teach the CG. A common Pre-Test was taken. Twelve 40-minute classes were run. EG watched our own created video lectures uploaded to a purpose-made YouTube channel. EG received materials for in-and-out class activities also. EG and CG sat a common Post-test. Post-test scores were triangulated by two interviews from EG. Quantitative analysis was performed by ANCOVA and Paired-Samples t-test, and it revealed that EG performed significantly better. Qualitative analysis, carried out by Inductive approach thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), informed that Flipped Method has attracted learners strongly. The study unambiguously demonstrates that a transition from traditional method to Flipped Method can prove revolutionary to achieve encouraging results.*

**Keywords:** Pakistani ESL Context, Flipped Method, Writing.

### Introduction

Academic success of learners largely depends on the quality of the text produced in the assessments (Bhowmik, 2022; Samiullah & Haidar, 2022). Learners' capacity to produce accurate and appropriate written discourse is significantly important for any satisfactory performance in exams and its centrality cannot be overlooked (Din & Ghani, 2018). English language writing of Pakistani ESL learners is critically low (Asghar, 2015; Sultan, 2015; Umar, Ajmal & Ajmal, 2023; Shah, Hussain, & Rashid, 2023). Furthermore, it is established that the traditional methodology of English language teaching has failed in providing necessary facilitation to the learners in the development of their writing (Ali, Ali, & Hussain, 2021; Fareed, Khan, & Akhtar, 2021). Both grammatical accuracary and functional appropriacy are equally important for learners to attain

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advanced writing proficiency; otherwise, flawless grammatical structures cannot succeed performing the desired social impact on the readers because the prose in which the writers violate consciously or unconsciously the socio-cultural linguistic norms necessary for a particular context remains unacceptable for the audience and shows serious gaps in learners' advanced literacy. Furthermore, when we accept complementary relationship between reading and writing, it becomes inevitable for ELT instructors to introduce such innovative and student-centred pedagogic pathways as allow more interactive teaching-learning atmosphere so that ESL learners enjoy more freedom to simultaneously enhance their proficiency in both the skills. Since, the dominant lecture delivery method in traditional classrooms in Pakistan has in-built constraints in mutual incorporation of both the essential skills (Ito, 2011; Boudersa, 2013), it seems more advisable to implement Flipped Method in ELT classrooms in Pakistan and examine its impact on student's writing proficiency.

After ELT instructors earnestly set their goal of descriptive and persuasive power of their ESL learners, they clearly define the course objective in which they declare that they aim to increase awareness of learners about communicative function hidden in grammatical choices. Both the integration of the formalistic and mentalist view with the functional view of language and the combination of the constructivist paradigm proposed in Piaget (1970) and socio-cultural learning model introduced by Vygotsky demand that instead of sticking to teacher-centered traditional pedagogy, researchers interested in ESL writing development design experimental studies where they closely study the impact of Flipped Method with its wider scope of individualized learning. Since it provides learners with more opportunities for active peer collaboration and more meaningful social interaction with the instructor, the examination of its revolutionary transformative power for bringing greater autonomy and independence to learners for absorbing themselves in the teaching materials and experiment with linguistic choices available to them for creating the desired meaning; thus we conducted this experimental study to measure its usefulness in the enhancement of writing of the Pakistani ESL learners as a multitude of researchers have widely corroborated its effectiveness in their findings collected from a large variety of different disciplines and sub domains of several fields (Basal, 2015; Unal & Unal, 2017; Akayoğlu, 2019; Kiang & Yunus, 2021).

### **Rationale of the Study**

Despite the wide popularity of Flipped Method for allowing a large-scale exploitation of latest advances of Information Computer Technology (ICT) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and offering greater freedom to both learners and instructors to actively engage in meaning construction and knowledge representation at secondary and tertiary levels in English L1 settings, the field has been scantily researched in ESL setting, such as Pakistan. Since an in-depth investigation in its potential effectiveness in the ESL classrooms remains understudied, the current study examined and analyzed its influence on the Pakistani ESL learners' writing proficiency.

## **Problem Statement**

Even the introduction of English as a compulsory subject from Grade 1 has not succeeded in producing satisfactory results for ESL learners in Pakistan; especially at Intermediate level, the results are least promising (Gul, 2016; BISER, 2017; BISER, 2018; BISER, 2019). One of the significant factors for such results is ELT instructors' insistently teaching ESL learners through a single dominant traditional method (Najmonnisa, Haq, & Saad, 2015; Umar, 2016; Raja & Najmonnisa, 2018). Since the traditional grammar translation teacher-centered ELT method lacks affordability for integration of language skills, learners are offered limited opportunities for practicing and refining their writing. So, the introduction of internationally well-recognized Flipped Method is mandated.

## **Research Questions**

Q.1 Considering teaching writing to the Pakistani ESL learners, which of the two methods, Flipped Method and Traditional Method, proves more effective?

Q.2 Considering students' feedback, why does Flipped Method or Traditional Method work better in enhancing writing of the Pakistani ESL learners?

## **Review of Literature**

The first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the introduction of Computer Assisted Instruction which culminated in the popularity of Flipped Method in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century when learners' autonomy and collaborative learning gained greater support from the theory and research based pedagogy. The success of the proposed models brought strikingly distinct changes in the relationship between computers and learners. New awareness among learners across the globe about the dominant role of Web 2.0 in the creation of unimagined opportunities for them to immediately access a large variety of a wide range of learning resources increased the pace of benefiting educators from technology (Healey, 2016). One of the most prominent trends visible in Flipped Method research was to examine its impact on learners' learning outcomes and on their views about the changes inherent in it. There has been observed convergence among a wide majority of scholars on its offering greater freedom to learners that consequently increases learning efficiency (Ahmed, 2016; Alsowat, 2016; AlJaser, 2017; Basal, 2015; Fahmi, Friatin, & Irianti, 2020; Farah, 2014; Frydenburg, 2013; Mubarak, Cahyono, & Astuti, 2019; Uzun & Senturk, 2010; Zainuddin & Halili, 2016; Zhaoli, He, & Su, 2021).

During our review of current literature on Flipped Method in Pakistan, we immediately noticed paucity of research on the potential benefits and challenges in its implementation, especially in an ESL writing classroom. Majority of research conducted in Pakistan on Flipped Method was rather confined to investigate its effectiveness in professional disciplines of applied sciences and in them, medicine was most favourite discipline. Although the canvass of the research was rather narrow, yet we cannot ignore the corroborative nature of their findings about the positive utility of the

Method (Memon, Goswami, Iqbal, Baloch, 2016; Zafar, 2016; Alam, Khurshid, & Alam, 2017; Fatima, Arain, Enam, 2017; Minaz, Tabassum, & Idris, 2017; Alam, Khurshid & Alam, 2020; Ali, Yasmin, & Khizar, 2021; Saira, Ajmal, & Hafeez, 2021; Semab & Naureen, 2022; Zaman, et al., 2022; Sultan, et al., 2023).

Despite that our primary observations stressed on the scantiness of research on Flipped Method in the Pakistani ESL context, the study by Arif and Omar (2019) was an important step in which they aimed to investigate the proposed benefits of the Method in ELT classroom. However, it is hard to accept their conclusion without reservation because they did not administer a pretest. The studies conducted by Bhatti and Warsi (2022) and Pervaiz and Rehman (2022) were exploratory in its primary purpose. Pakistani researchers have shown little tendency to introduce latest innovations in ELT pedagogies and we attempted to fill the gap by examining its affordance in developing writing proficiency of the Pakistani ESL learners.

**Research Methodology**

Since Flipped Method enhances interactive language learning by multiplying opportunities for students’ collaboration and autonomy, constructivist paradigm offers the study a coherent theoretical framework with its claim that learners’ active interaction with the environment leads to more productive learning (Müller, Carpendale, & Smith, 2009). Using intact class as the sample, the study employed quasi-experimental research design. The study made use of Mixed-Methods approach. Pre-Test and Post-Test provided quantitative data whereas students’ interviews served as an instrument of qualitative data collection. The study is delimited to public sector Rawalpindi Board affiliated Boys’ intermediate colleges in the city of Rawalpindi. The students and teachers at intermediate level in these colleges are the population of the study. Using Microsoft Excel’s RANDBETWEEN function random sampling has been done in the selection of the college and sample population.

A panel of faculty from the department of English lent validity to Pre-Test. Alpha for Pre-Test was 0.853. Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of Pre-Test.

**Table:1** Reliability of Pre-Test

Reliability Statistics Writing		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.853	.856	44

Interview guide was checked by an expert and it was found suitable. Interviews were video-recorded carefully. There were two coders. The issue of reflexivity in validity of qualitative data was addressed by acquiring the services of externals with high level of expertise who transcribed, translated and subsequently coded the interviews. The transcribed and coded qualitative data in the form of interviews was presented to the respondents for validation. Qualitative data was also subjected to constant comparison during coding for identification of similar themes. It was also

found that there were no deviant cases.

For maximizing control on pre-existing disparities between the control and the experimental groups, two mechanisms have been employed; one is methodological in its nature (Gravetter & Farzano, 2011) and the other is statistical (Loewen & Plonsky, 2016).

On methodological level, priority was given to maximum randomization. Sampling of college, selection of one discipline out of four and assignment to experimental and control group were randomly done. Moreover, both the groups were taught by the same teacher. The statistical tool of ANCOVA was also run to dispel the pre-existing differences further.

***Operationalization***

For the session 2019-21, a total of 115 students were enrolled in a randomly selected discipline of Pre-Medical and 104 participated in the study and the number was distributed into 2 intact sections. One section was randomly selected by flipping a coin to be taught by Flipped Method and it made Intervention Group (50 students). The other section was taught by Traditional Method and it made Control Group (54 students).

Population was surveyed to collect data on demographics. A common Pre-Test was administered to quantify the writing proficiency of the sample population. A channel was created on YouTube. Video lectures were uploaded to the channel a day before face to face class. A 40-minute class, three days a week, was run for four weeks. Writing Activities given in Moore (2001), Saddler & Preschern (2007), Benjamin & Berger, (2013), Burrows (2014) and Orr (2017) were used for teaching writing. A common Post-Test was taken.

Two students from experimental group were randomly selected for interview.

***Data Analysis***

Two diagnostics were run on quantitative data; One-way ANCOVA and Paired-Samples t-test. Qualitative data was subjected to inductive approach thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke (2021).

The students’ scores on posttest were compared by running of ANCOVA.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics

<b>Dependent Variable: Post Test Scores</b>			
<b>Teaching Method</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Traditional Method	34.11	2.212	54
Flipped Method	52.06	3.782	50
Total	42.74	9.514	104

The score on pretest acted as covariate. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics, and it clearly exposes a difference in the means of Control Group (taught by Traditional Method) and Intervention Group (taught by Flipped Method).

Traditional Method scored a mean of 34.11 and it rose above 52 for Flipped Method. The difference in the means of two groups is 17.95 and data was further analyzed to find out whether it was statistically significant.

SPSS produces another very useful output. It is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Posttest Scores								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	8379.230 <sup>a</sup>	2	4189.615	447.893	.001	.899	895.785	1.000
Intercept	2770.804	1	2770.804	296.214	.001	.746	296.214	1.000
Pretest	15.393	1	15.393	1.646	.202	.016	1.646	.246
Method	7712.239	1	7712.239	824.480	.001	.891	824.480	1.000
Error	944.760	101	9.354					
Total	199305.000	104						
Corrected Total	9323.990	103						

a. R Squared = .899 (Adjusted R Squared = .897)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

Common denotation ‘r’ known as Pearson’s correlation coefficient shows how strongly two variables are interrelated. Square of Pearson’s correlation coefficient, r, is conventionally written with R. R Squared for the present study is 0.899. It means that there is a strong positive relationship between Method of teaching and post-test scores.

The Corrected Model shows the total variance in the dependent variable explained by independent variable(Hinton, McMurray, & Brownlow, 2014). The total variance is 8379.230. 7712.239 are explained by teaching Method. The larger F value i.e. 824.480 shows that the variance associated with the independent variable is real and cannot be explained by chance. Only a small fraction i.e., 15.393 is explained by the covariate. Covariate is the pre-existing differences here. 944.760 is unexplained variance. It is error.

Partial Eta Squared explains the proportion of variance that a variable explains. Partial eta squared for Method is the proportion of variance in post-test that Method shares and it cannot be attributed to the covariate or error. The value of Partial  $\eta^2$  for Method is 0.891, it approaches 1 and it means that maximum variance in the dependent variable i.e. post-test score is caused by teaching Method. p-value associated with Method is significant and it means that the two teaching methods are significantly from each other in terms of their scores in post-test.

Adjusted Means and pairwise comparisons guided us further to find out method which worked relatively better. The covariate, pre-test score, representing pre-existing differences had comparatively less effect size. It is 0.016. Observed power is sufficiently high.

**Table 4.** Adjusted Means

Dependent Variable: Post Test Scores				
Teaching Method	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Traditional Method	34.203 <sup>a</sup>	.422	33.365	35.041
Flipped Method	51.961 <sup>a</sup>	.439	51.089	52.832

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre Test Scores = 22.55.

SPSS produces Output of Adjusted Means with title Estimated Marginal Means. Adjusted Means are calculated after controlling covariate(s) or any other imbalance in the data and values of Adjusted Means may be depended on for predicting results (Table 4).

A considerable difference can be seen in Means and it predicts that Flipped Method worked better in teaching writing. Bonferroni Post hoc test was run for pairwise comparison. It gave us conclusive evidence in favour of Flipped Method. It can be seen in Table 5. The test says that mean difference is significant.

**Table 5.** Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Post Test Scores							
(I) Method	Teaching(J) Method	Teaching	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>	95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>b</sup>	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Traditional Method	Flipped Method		-17.758*	.618	.001	-18.985	-16.531
Flipped Method	Traditional Method		17.758*	.618	.001	16.531	18.985

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

***Within-Subjects Comparison (Paired-Samples T test)***

Paired-Samples t-test was run to see within-subjects differences. The Pre-Test of both sections was compared with its Post-Test. The Means of pre-test and post-test in both sections (pair) exhibit a statistically significant difference. The Pair 2 is the

***Illustration 1: T-test (Paired-Samples Statistics)***



**Paired Samples Statistics**

Pair	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Traditional Method Post Test Score	34.11	54	2.212
	Traditional Method Pre Test Score	23.15	54	2.811
Pair 2	Flipped Method Post Test Score	52.06	50	3.782
	Flipped Method Pre Test Score	21.90	50	2.206

  

**Paired Samples Correlations**

Pair	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	54	-.048	.729
Pair 2	50	-.195	.175

section taught by Flipped Method and it shows a marked difference in means i.e. 30.160. The difference in the means of Pair 1 is less noticeable in comparison. It is 10.963. The low values of the Std. Error Mean for both the pairs inform us that a comparable mean is expected if test is conducted again.

Illustration 2 tables the difference in means of pre-test and post-test for both

**Illustration 2 : Paired Samples Test**

**Paired Samples Test**

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	10.963	3.660	.498	9.964	11.962	22.012	53	.000
Pair 2	30.160	4.735	.670	28.814	31.506	45.037	49	.000

pairs. The values for difference of means for both the pairs are much higher than standard error mean and we can confidently reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between pre-test and post-test scores. We further find ample evidence that intervention (Flipped Method) had a statistically significant effect. It has a t-value of 45.037, and it is greater than the double of t-value produced by Traditional Method.

**Report of Paired-Samples t-test (Within-Subjects Comparison)**

Pair 1: On average, post-test scores are higher (M = 34.11, SE = 0.301) than pre-test (M = 23.15,



SE = 0.383). This difference, 10.963, CI [11.962, 9.964], is significant,  $t(53) = 22.012$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $r = -.048$ .

Pair 2: On average, post-test scores are higher ( $M = 52.06$ ,  $SE = 0.535$ ) than pre-test ( $M = 21.90$ ,  $SE = 0.312$ ). This difference, 30.160, CI [31.506, 28.814], is significant,  $t(49) = 45.037$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and  $r = -.195$ .

### Qualitative Data Analysis

The analysis of two semi-structured interviews by inductive thematic analysis produced the following themes;

- The students agree to the view that Flipped Method is more effective in language teaching.
- The students confirm that Flipped Method made students more responsible towards their learning.
- It is accepted that the weak students can also greatly benefit from Flipped Method.
- It is alluded that the tasks before the class were highly relevant to the target items to be taught in the class.
- The student views the activities as motivating and engaging.
- To the student, mathematical activities are more effective.
- The students accept that their learning improved with videos as there was nothing difficult.
- The students advocate the incorporation of technology in teaching.
- It is admitted that instructor in Flipped Method class is also indispensable.
- It is suggested that the Flipped Method can prove fruitful in every educational setting.

It was found that Flipped Method allowing dynamic innovations in ELT classroom led to the creation of a learning atmosphere not only within the class but also without. Learners' prior to and after the class greater mutual and content interaction enhanced learning. Sharp rise in independent interactions of learners with one another and with the instructor requiring productive exchange of ideas on the topic strengthened their skill to create their own expressions. The analysis demonstrates unambiguously that the implementation of Flipped Method in ESL writing classroom brought significant improvement in learners' writing through providing easy access to networks that fostered learners' active participation in the writing task. The proposal for effective pedagogy based on Piaget's constructivist learning theory emphasizing learners' active engagement with the learning materials chosen to develop cognitive skills and Vygotsky's insistence on social nature of learning have found solid empirical support in the findings of Flipped Method

implementation for teaching writing because the Piagetian and Vygotskian principles were offered a highly conducive site in the writing tasks that brought more opportunities to students for collaboration involving not only active participation of peers but also greater freedom to negotiate with the language instructor. Such constructive and engaging collaboration at every stage of task completion led to distinct improvement in students' scores. Indeed, the pre-class videos containing both a comprehensive discussion on the topic and detailed instructions for task completion made the Method more motivating for students and their self-regulated learning found a major boost.

For offering greater freedom to ELT instructors to introduce, modify and integrate a wide range of pedagogic innovations, Flipped Method usually proves more effective in the development of ESL learners' writing ability by encouraging students to be actively engaged in the entire learning process. Additionally, its emphasis on individualized learning makes the Method equally effective for even those learners who may be either underprivileged in socio-economic terms or lack natural cognitive skills to acquire writing proficiency.

The analysis of students' interviews also shows that teaching through Flipped Method is considered a highly positive phenomenon. Their tendency to value more their autonomy clearly signals that they are ready to welcome student-centered self-motivated learning where they have greater freedom to work at their own pace. Since the Method introduces a total reversal of a traditional classroom, they are highly inclined to benefit from it, for the on campus classroom became a wider interactive practicing site where every individual learner was actively engaged in the learning process. As a result of increased interaction that supported learning, their language skill showed a remarkable improvement.

Flipped Method offered plenty of opportunity to learners to work at their pace and it resulted in self-regulation of their time and space. When they had the freedom to choose the time and space, their involvement in the learning process greatly increased because they were fully motivated to be absorbed in the learning materials and the class task. The freedom to choose when and where was a great attraction for them, for it provided them with a chance to show that they were mature and responsible enough to be actively engaged in the target task that demanded they interact keenly with the learning material and completely follow the instructions that can increase their understanding of not only the topic but also the task requirements.

Contrary to the common observation of traditional teachers who often complain of learners' irresponsible attitude towards the learning materials, we observed that for students in Flipped Method, more freedom meant greater responsibility, and their high willingness to accept their new assigned responsibility boosted their self-confidence to such an extent that their self-paced learning became a revolutionary step in language learning. In addition to the boost in students' self-confidence, their heightened awareness about the relationship between freedom and responsibility was an indirect means of advancing their writing for higher sense of freedom for the time and manner of task completion ultimately lowered ESL learners' cognitive load.

The students' interviews revealed that Flipped Method directly increased confidence while they worked independently at home; consequently, whatever obstructions appeared during their interaction with the learning materials, they overcame them because a stress-free and pleasant learning environment at home prepared them to actively engage in the learning resources and brought them ultimate success. Offering them more time and greater responsibility, the Method encouraged them to confront immediate difficulties in the tasks by longer and more focused reflection on the available resources to find solution for the primary problems to understand the topic thoroughly. The new gains in conceptual clarity of both the task and the instructions to complete it led to learners' greater confidence in their unknown abilities. Notably, during the reflection stage when they felt that the topic or the task was beyond their level of understanding, it was the best time to focus on what were the primary impediments in their understanding. This brought them freedom to construct such questions as were necessary for them if they were serious in seeking clarification of the confusing and challenging areas that often surround daunting tasks. As a result of their ability to craft relevant questions to disambiguate the challenging concepts, in fact, they were mastering the skills necessary to understanding concepts through greater reliance on their independent thinking. Subsequently, their writing proficiency showed visible improvement when the teacher in the classroom was well prepared to answer the well-crafted and relevant questions.

### Summary of Findings

The data demonstrates the higher effectiveness of Flipped Method when ESL learners are taught writing through the task based student-centered blended learning environment. The Method by its inherent nature allows constructive and meaningful interaction with content, peers and instructors and everyone is on a steep learning curve. Since students' entry into on campus classroom with the increased awareness about their confusions allows the instructors immediately to answer their questions, it takes little time to change partial understanding to the deeper knowledge of the target topic.

### Conclusion

Findings show close convergence with the results reported in several recently conducted studies in a wide range of native and ELL, ESL and EFL settings across the world. The quantitative and qualitative data confirmed its effectiveness in advancing learners in their writing competence.

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