MOVIE REVIEW AS A TOOL IN TEACHING EXPRESSIVE WRITING: A STUDY

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Abstract:

The study strives to teach Expressive writing to enhance Creative writing among undergraduate students. Expressive writing describes what the writer thinks in mind and heart. This form of writing is different from other forms of writing styles because it focuses on the writer's honest opinions, thoughts, and emotions rooted in their experiences which are interlinked with their memories. It also allows the readers to relate while reading. The students selected for the Study comprised 40 First-Year Undergraduate students namely, 20 B.A.B.Ed. English students and 20 B. Com students of SASTRA Deemed University, Thanjavur. The researcher gave the students a questionnaire (Diagnostic Test), and a movie review, as it allows them to convey their honest opinions, thereby testing Expressive writing ability, and evaluation. The students were taught the importance of Expressive Writing, its Characteristics, and the types of writing that involve Expressiveness. The same questionnaire (DT) was given and collected. This time the evaluation was based on the characteristics of Expressive writing. The collected data proved that the students have improved in Expressing themselves. The paper discusses the significance, objectives, methodology, and findings of this study.

Keywords: Expressive Writing; Creative Writing; Questionnaire; Expressiveness; Diagnostic Test

Introduction:

Expressive Writing describes what the writer thinks in mind and heart, thereby expressing their thoughts, opinions, feelings, and expressions. As we all are digital natives, we are mostly restrained to express ourselves precisely to convey our thoughts effectively. For example, Twitter limits its post content to 140 characters. An avid writer should be able to convey their thoughts effectively. There are many types of Expressive Writing such as Movie Reviews, Book Reviews, Journal Writing, Diary Writing, Memoir, and Autobiography, etc. Writing movie reviews will help the writer to express themselves by giving their honest opinions right from their heart. It also allows the readers to relate their thoughts on the movie. Expressive Writing was used as a Writing Therapy during the 1980s by James Pennebaker, as a tool for Psychiatric patients to vent out their traumatic experiences, and most of the research papers and Dissertations concentrated on the therapeutic quality that Expressive Writing had. The significance of this study is to equip the writer to express themselves precisely and to convey their thoughts in words and emotion.

The significance of this study is to test the writing skills of First-Year Undergraduate Students to make them avid writers who can write effectively with proper precision, and to understand, learn and to implement the Expressive Writing in their writing. The research questions focused on in this study are:1. What is the level of Student's Writing Skills? 2. How far do the students Write effectively? 3. Do the students have the ability to express their thoughts in Writing?

The newness in this study is that so far, the researchers focused on Expressive Writing as a therapeutic tool that helped the writers to come out of Traumatic experiences or helped in the improvement of health, and Expressive Writing as a skill, but this study strives to highlight the Characteristics of Expressive writing to make the students to write effectively and to equip the students with Expressive Writing which is different from Academic Writing.

Theories Concerning Expressive Writing and Expressivism:

Expressive Writing was used initially by James Pennebakerand Beall(in late1986) as a form of writing therapy for traumatic patients to help them come out of the trauma. The participants were divided into an Experimental group and a Controlled group. The participants of the Experimental group were given a writing task to write about past traumatic events in their lives to vent out their bottled-up emotions. The Control group was asked to write objectively and formally, and the participants from both groups were asked to write for 15 minutes on four consecutive days, to evaluate their health improvement.

Expressive pedagogy emerged during the 1960s & 1970s as a reactionary movement to the traditional methods of teaching writing. Early non-traditional thinkers like Donald Murray, Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, and William Coles developed this pedagogy called Expressivism. It was developed as a personal approach to teaching writing. Expressivist writers tend to have a conversation between their thoughts in heart and mind. It also allowed the writers to express their opinions subjectively to emphasize their personal experiences. The writings of expressivists tend to express personal meaning to that shared meaning. Expressivism, a style of expressing personal experiences that gained popularity in the 1970s, has often been criticized for its perceived self-centeredness and lack of attention to detail. Nevertheless, it continues to be a part of writing instruction, albeit acknowledged as "seriously undertheorized" (Hyland, 2016, p. 13).

Creative Expressivism is a school of Writing that helps writers to implicit their creative imagination and personal expressions through Expressive Writing. Creative Expressivism helps writers by teaching them to lay a good foundation for Expressive Writing and to involve in writing to express their identities of self and to have a point of view in their writing.

Background work for the study:

The researcher did a thorough study on Expressive writing, the searches were made between August 2022 and May 2023, using the ProQuest databases and Google. The searches were done using different combinations of words like Expressive Writing, Expressivism, Expressive Writing versus Creative Writing, Expressive Pedagogy, Teaching Expressive Writing, and Therapeutic Writing. Finally, after analysing all the research articles, thesis, and survey papers,the researcher decided to concentrate on the characteristics and types of Expressive Writing in teaching Expressive Writing among the students.

Expressive Writing:

Expressive writing is a form of writing which helps the writers to express their thoughts and opinions in heart and mind. Expressive Writing helps the writer to use his imagination as well as his own opinion from his heart. Hence through this writing, the writer can use his creative self and can deliver his thoughts. There are types of Expressive Writing Movie Reviews, Book Review, Autobiography, Memoir, Journal Writing, Diary Writing, Poems, and Personal Songs. These writings help the writer to express their creativity as well as their raw and real thoughts in the paper. Whenever the students are asked to give a review or feedback in class, they tend to manage by conveying their thoughts in hand gestures, eye movement, or in their mother tongue, but when it comes to writing the students find themselves ill-equipped to express their thoughts as they lag

in Expressive Writing skills, also to be blamed is the Curriculum of our Education system which only concentrates on Academic Writing and evaluates the students' remembering capacity and memory, and it fails to make them well equipped in Creative and Expressive Writing.

Teaching Movie Reviews to inculcate Expressive Writing will help the writers to explore themselves apart from academic writing. Writing Movie Reviews helps both the writer and the reader to relate to their opinions and also helps the writer to get connected with the reader.

The general characteristics of Expressive Writing are using First Person narrative to highlight the subjective and informal writing, and use of figurative language such as Metaphor and Simile which will help the writer to emphasize their emotions and also helps the reader to get connected with the reader easily, use of Emphatic language such as "I had a terrible night" the meaning of this statement states that the night was terrible and the person mentioned in this sentence experienced a terrible night. Use of Adjectives and Phrasal verbs, Use of clear and, crisp sentences and avoidance of rambling sentences which conveys two different meaning in the same sentence. The role of Punctuation plays an important role in Expressive Writing, which helps to indicate the writer, thinking process or the words that he describes come from his heart and mind. The choice of words also is one of the important characteristics of EW (Expressive Writing), because the words that arechosen should outpour one's emotions and thoughts. There should be the use of proper tone from the beginning, middle, and end. The remaining characteristics that include are found in general writing skills such as spelling, capitalization, sentence construction, and grammar.

Literature Review:

Exploring Student's Experiences with Expressive Writing- University of Tennessee, Thesis

Thesis by James Russell aims to examine how students make meaning of their experience with the expressive writing process.

The definition of Expressive Writing discussed in the paper is "Expressive writing is defined as therapeutic writing that individuals can use to engage in the process of experiencing one's emotions through writing about a past traumatic experience"

"Expressive writing was originally designed as an intervention to reduce stress and anxiety and to improve physiological and psychological health" (Pennebaker&Beall, 1986)

This paper strives to explore the students'experiences with Expressive Writing. The methodology employed involved an exploratory, qualitative approach, where seven participants from a community college engaged in two expressive writing exercises focused on obstacles encountered during their college experience. Following this, interviews were conducted with the seven participants, and these interviews were transcribed and analysed. The analysis of the interview data revealed six themes: "Recognition of Achievements," "Alleviation of Stress," "Consideration of Future," "Writing Challenges," "Organization and Sequence of Writing," and "Contemplation." These themes offered diverse perspectives on the experience, providing a comprehensive view of the mechanisms involved in expressive writing and a deeper understanding of its significance. It also helped the students to process their emotions and to reduce anxiety.

The Study showed that expressive writing is a transformative experience because the participants reflected on the obstacles, learn from them, and as a result, recognize their accomplishments and goals for future

Expressive Writing: A Language of Self-Care-A Dissertation

Brenda Pittman from Indiana University of Pennsylvania August 2005,analysed the interrelationship of Expressive Writing and the impact that it leaves on the writer. The purpose of

this study is to focus on Expressive Writing as a discourse that offers Self-Care. This study investigated 24 students, this qualitative research study analysed the students EW in the college freshman class setup to identify the impact of EW, the students were also individually evaluated based on the personal interview and also using written tasks based on Expressive Writing to find the goals, values, desires, and aspirations that the students were able to realize the qualities of EW (Expressive Writing) after the writing tasks. The results showed that Expressive Writing fostered Self- Care as an impact after finishing the writing tasks.

Expressive Writing to Relieve Academic Stress at University Level- Issues in Teaching Professional Development.

Klein and Boals analysed University Students to find out whether the students feel less stressed after using Expressive Writing. This study aims to describe the impact expressive writing has on EFL university students' and preservice EFL teachers' perceptions of how it helps to relieve stress.In the mentioned paper, Expressive Writing is described as "a personal and emotional handwritten narrative addressing stressful academic encounters in participants' native language, without focusing on punctuation, grammar precision, or other mechanical aspects of writing." The study involved 157 undergraduate students from a university in Ecuador.

The methodology used in this survey is a mixed-method descriptive study. The students were given two questionnaires first to collect their general profile details and the next to collect the student's perception of the use of Expressive Writing.

The findings of this study are Students perceived expressive writing as a positive strategy that eased their stress.

Incorporating Expressive Writing into the Classroom- Technical Report Series.

This paper investigates the effectiveness of "active learning" strategies, particularly short writing activities, which help students to make their thought processes visible. Emily Hoover and Doug Foulk label these active learning strategy activities "expressive writing" and provide many useful examples of the ways writing can be used in large, lecture-based classrooms

The paper delves into the definitions of Expressive Writing, describing it as the manifestation of the thought process in written form rather than creative writing. It emphasizes that Expressive Writing enhances the learning process by making thoughts visible. Additionally, it distinguishes Expressive Writing from creative writing, which lacks a specific purpose or structure. Expressive Writing is characterized as the act of articulating thoughts on paper, a practice commonly utilized in research, composition, and planning activities. The strategies evolved are writing task setting, small group interaction, class discussion, question box, and evaluation.

The findings indicate students who engaged in the writing tasks asked more numerous and thoughtful questions in class and performed better on complex exam questions.

Teaching Expressive Writing to Students with Learn Disabilities, Research-based applications and examples. Journal of Learning Disabilities

The Problem statement of the study is Students with Learning Disabilities fail to plan and organize their writing. This study aims to teach how to organize writing tasks, generate ideas about the writing topics, and produce final written products that were coherent and organized.

The findings observed in the study are effective writing instruction has identified several practices and strategies to improve writing outcomes for students, but research efforts have not addressed how these effective strategies should be linked together over time.

Teaching Expressive Writing to Students with Learn Disabilities- A Meta-Analysis, The Elementary School Journal

This research has explored ways to teach students how to analyse material learned in the classroom and to write personal narratives based on students' interpretations of life experiences. The definition of Expressive Writing given in this paper is "Expressive writing was defined as writing to display knowledge or support self-expression"

The methodology used among the students to collect the data are Teaching critical steps in the writing process including planning, writing, and revision and the provision of feedback has reliably led to improved outcomes in teaching expressive writing to students with learning disabilities, using SRSD (Self-Regulated strategy development).

Results indicated interventions used in research studies consistently produced strong effects on the quality of students writing as well as students' sense of efficacy and understanding of the writing process

Using Expressive Writing Program to Improve the Writing Skills of High School Students with Learning Disabilities- Journal of Direct Instruction

The study aimed to assess the impact of a direct instruction writing program on high school students with learning disabilities. The research methodology employed was the Single Subject Design methodology. This approach involved several steps: first, modelling the correct response; then, leading students to verbalize the correct answer; and finally, testing their understanding through immediate and delayed probes related to the initial task attempted. The outcomes revealed that the implementation of the Expressive Writing program led to notable enhancements in the writing skills of the participating students.

A Study of Expressive Writing Skills and Use of Writing Strategies in English among High School Students -International Journal of Research, Granthaalyah

The aim of this research was to assess the proficiency of high school students in English writing skills. The methodology employed in this study utilized a descriptive survey method, employing a questionnaire developed specifically for this purpose. The study targeted high school students attending government schools in Panchkula. This study also revealed some writing strategies used by students for mastering the language. The study used stages of learning strategies like General strategies like the use of an English dictionary, or grammar book, reading native English writings, and the use of English Vocabularies, the second stage includes Before writing brainstorming ideas with peers and teachers, planning rough drafts are some basic strategies, the third stage includes during writing involves environmental factors, background knowledge and correct use of grammar. The final stage includes self-appraisal, feedback recording, and Analysis of feedback to improve learning pronunciation.

The study reflected those students processed good expressive writing skills in English.

Conspicuous Strategies in Teaching Expressive Writing: A Quantitative Study Comparing Two Approaches to Process Writing-Journal of Instructional Research

Jennifer Fontenot, Karen J. Carney, and Kay Hansen all three of them developed a Process Writing approach (BW-Blueprint Writing) to teach Expressive Writing to elementary school students, but later they realized that this approach will be found beneficial to students with special needs. The students were divided into two groups and taught the BW approach to one of the groups and the PW (Process Writing approach) to the other groups. This investigative study experimented with a total of 133 students of sixth grade from one mid-western school district, three classes from School-A and three classes from School-B were selected and for the next four months School-A

implemented the BW approach and School-B implemented Process Writing Approach. After four months a sub-test was conducted to evaluate the student's improvement. The final results after the standardization of the scores was the students who used Blueprint Writing Approach showed good improvement than the students who followedthePW approach.

The identified research gap is that the previous research were based on the Writing therapy, its therapeutic nature to cure diseases and psychological trauma, and Expressive Writing Skills but the limitations observed by the researcher are that Expressive Writing, its Characteristics, the Writers personal narrative of self, their opinions, thoughts, and emotions and imagination was not concentrated, hence this study aims at teaching Expressive Writing for its unique features and to equip the students in this unnoticed writing skill.

Research design, approach, and data collection methods:

The researcher conducted a selective review using a self-made questionnaire on movie reviews. The movie chosen for review was "Ponniyin Selvan-1&2". The questionnaire aims to kindle the personal opinions of the students and to express them in their writing. The students selected for the study comprised 40 First-year Undergraduate Students namely 20Integratedcourse inBachelorofArts&Bachelor of Education in English students and 20 Bachelor of Commerce students from SASTRA Deemed University Thanjavur. The students were tested based on subjective and open-ended questions using movie- reviews. Firstly, the students were tested on the characteristics of Expressive Writing to evaluate on account for Diagnostic Test. Later the students were taught the Characteristics of Expressive Writing and they were tested again with the same questionnaire and evaluated for Achievement Test. The selection of students for the study was done randomly. The data was collected with the aid of a self-prepared questionnaire in Google Forms. The collected data was calculated for basic mean, median, and mode.

Discussions:

This exploratory, qualitative study was done among the students to test their writing skills in a self-prepared questionnaire using movie reviews. The data collected was evaluated firstly for the Diagnostic Test and it was marked on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the performance of the students. (Very Poor-0, Poor-1, Average- 2, Good- 3, Very Good-3, Excellent-5) the scoring was calculated based on the characteristics of Expressive Writing. After calculating the data from the Diagnostic Test, the researcher taught the students about the Expressive Writing Origin, Writing Therapy, Characteristics of Expressive Writing, and Types of Expressive Writing and also gave them some examples of each characteristic of Expressive Writing.

The results collected from the Diagnostic study showed that the students do not know about Expressive Writing. Out of 40 students, only 10 students were able to satisfy at least four characteristics of Expressive Writing. The mean, median and mode were calculated based on the collected data. After analysing the scores of the Diagnostic Test, the researcher gave a brief introduction to Expressive Writing, and again gave the students the same questionnaire and evaluated them for Achievement Test. The results collected were evaluated and later both the results from the Diagnostic Test and Achievement Test were compared and triangulated to get the final results.

Findings:

The characteristics of Expressive Writing that were evaluated are Word choice, Punctuation, Spelling, Using First Person narrative (Subjective), Adjectives, Vocabulary, Tone in their Writing, Use of Phrasal Verbs, Writing Clear sentences, Capitalization, Figurative Languages

like use of Simile and Metaphor, Informal writing, Use of Emphatic Language to Emphasize ones Expressions, Sentence Construction, Expressivism and Grammar. The observed finding from the study is that the students showed improvement in their Expressive Writing. The evaluated data are converted into pie charts and bar charts, some of the important data alone are included in this paper.

The choice of words in student's writing was evaluated both in DT and AT and the results in DT showed that most of the students were not able to convey their thoughts through suitable words. After the exposure to the researcher's lecture on Expressive Writing and its characteristics with examples, they were able to show improvement in their choice of words.

Figure 1, illustrates the performance of the students in using a suitable choice of words in their writing on a scale of 0 to 5 and the frequencies of marks obtained by them. The performance of the Diagnostic Test showed that out of 40, 27 students' performance was good, and 13 students' performance was very low, and in the Achievement Test, about 30 students had improved their choice of words and only 10 students' performance was low. Thereby the results showed the students' improvement.
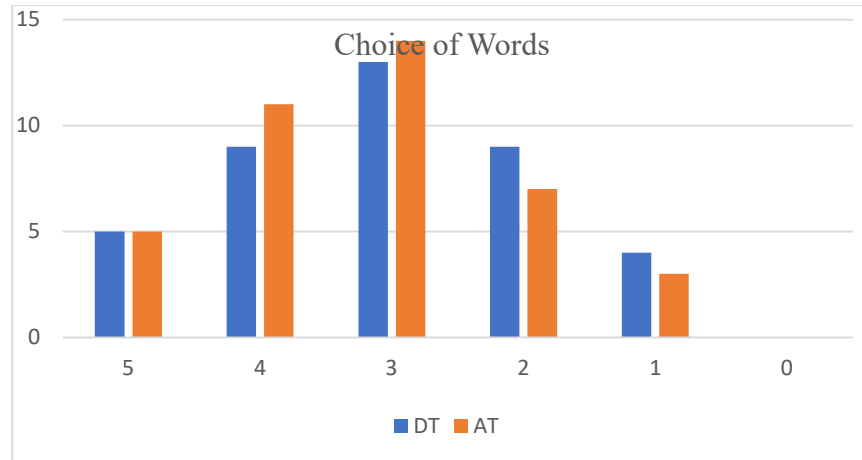

Figure1: Choice of Words

One of the important characteristics of Expressive Writing is Punctuation and the student's test results in the Diagnostic Test showed that students forgot to use punctuation in their writing because of their high usage of mobile phones, thereby after the exposure to Expressive Writing by the researcher the students showed good results during the Achievement Test.

Figure 2 demonstrates the performance of the students in using punctuationon a scale of 0 to 5. In the DT 25 students had good punctuation skills and 15 students had bad punctuation skills, in the AT 32 students had good punctuation skills and thereby showed improvement in using punctuation in writing.
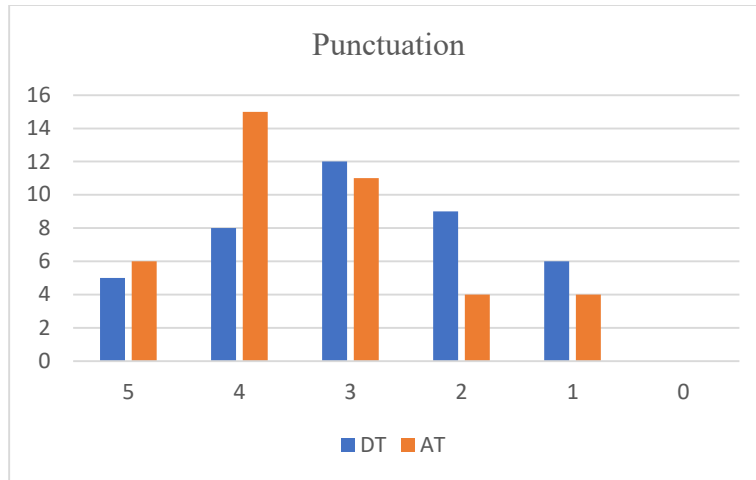
Figure2: Punctuation

The student's performance based on sentence construction and grammar was very poor due to the usage of autocorrect language on Mobile Phones and iPad. The evaluated data are illustrated in the below-attached graph.But the students showed improvement in Achievement Test.

Figure3 describes the performance of the students in their sentence construction. Out of 40 students, 30 students were able to write error-free short and crisp sentences in DT, and almost 38 students scored good marks in AT.10 students had poor writing whereas in AT only 2 students scored very low marks.
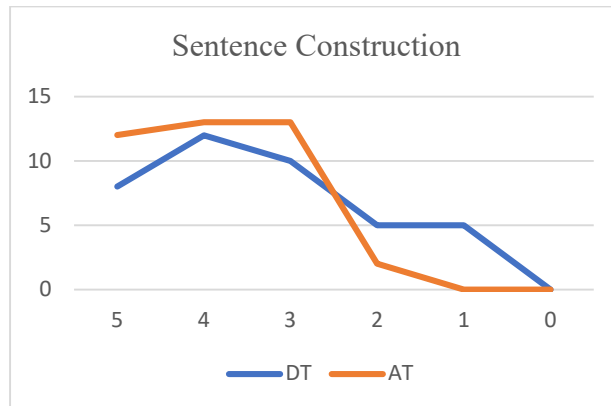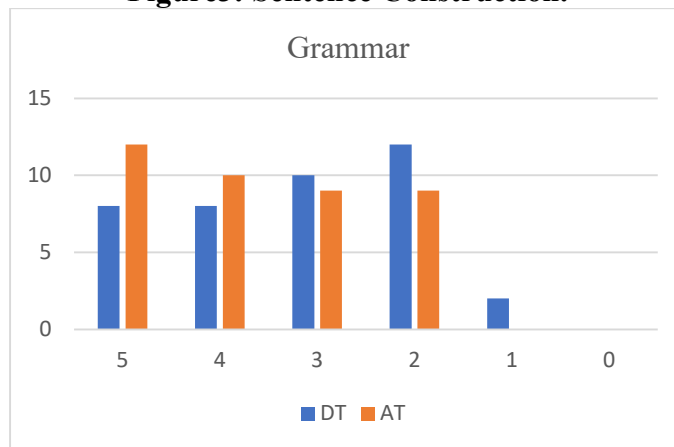

Figure3: Sentence Construction.

Figure 4: Grammar

Figure 4 illustrates the performance of the students based on their grammar. In DT 26 students did well, 14 students scored low marks and 31 students scored high in AT, and only 9 students scored very low scores.

Students were advised to write informally to give their honest opinions and thoughts for the movie review, but most of the students followed the formal style of writing as they are highly used to academic writing in their schools and Colleges and thereby lost touch with Creative and Expressive Writing.

Figure 5 illustrates students' score based on informal writing. Only 17 % of students wrote informally in the Diagnostic Test, and in the Achievement Test after a brief exposure to the pros and cons of Expressive Writing about 42% of students were able to write informally.
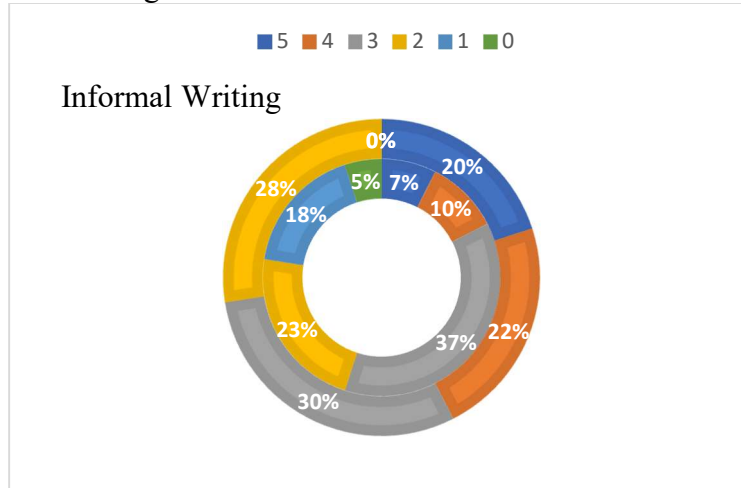

Figure 5: Informal Writing

The use of Figurative language and Emphatic Language are used to emphasize their expressions. Figurative language in Expressive Writing such as Metaphor and Simile are used to exaggerate one's ideas, and the use of Emphatic Language is used to vent our hearts and mind. The results showed that the students have only a little bit of personal connection in their writing as they are used to our education curriculum which focuses on the aspect of memory rather than creative ideas and personal thoughts.

Figure 6 illustrate students' use of figurative language in their writing.In DT about 37% of students used figurative language in writing movie reviews and almost 62% of students improved in AT.
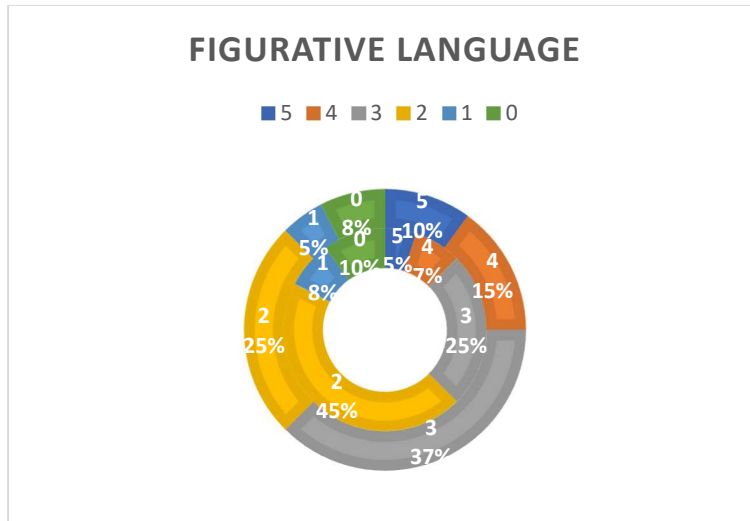
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

■5 ■4 ■3 ■2 ■1 ■0

Figure 6: Figurative Language

Figure 7 illustrates the students' use of emphatic language, the data showed out of 40 students 16 students scored well in DT, 24 students scored very low marks, and in AT 23 students scored good, and 17 students scored low, thereby it is clear that there is improvement in students in the use of emphatic language.
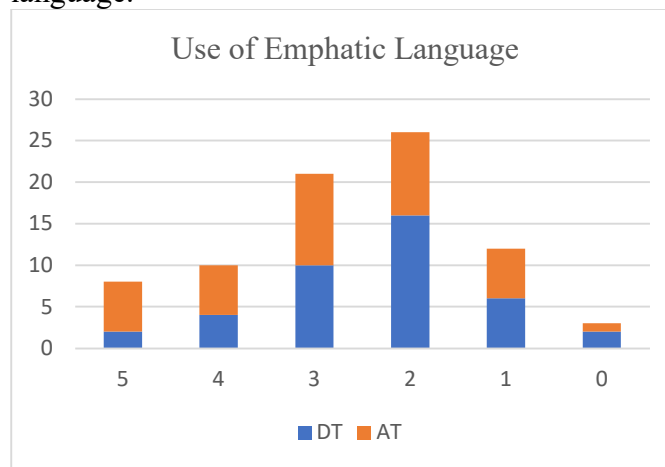
Use of Emphatic Language

Figure7: Use of Emphatic Language

The main element of Expressive Writing, is students'expressionsin their writing, and the results showed that almost half of the students are hesitant to express their reviews with

confidence and thereby gives only a general comment to avoid subjectivity in their writing.
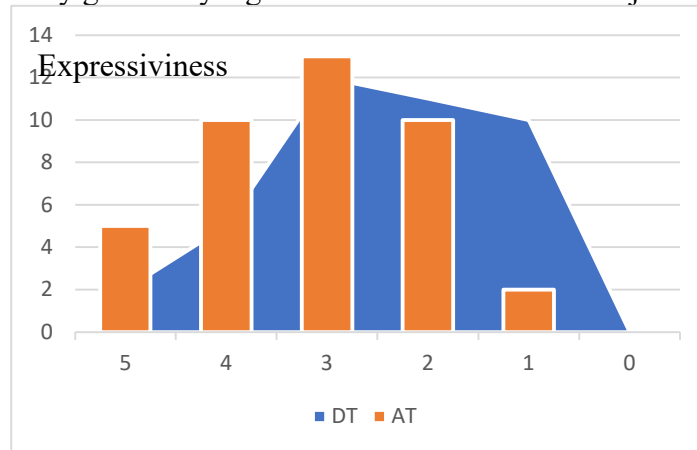

Figure 8: Expressiveness

Figure8 illustrates the student's expressiveness in their writing. About 17% of students scored good marks in DT, and about 37% of students showed improvement in AT, which shows that the students showed improvement.

The collected data in the Achievement Test showed improvement among the students to that of the Diagnostic Test. Both the data were calculated and later found out the mean, median, and mode.

The mean, median, and mode of the Diagnostic Test showed the students need improvement in Capitalization, Informal Writing, Subjective, and Expressivism, thereby the researcher gave extra importance to these characteristics while teaching Expressive Writing with examples for each characteristic.

The mean, median, and mode of the Achievement Test showed drastic improvement in some of the characteristics like Subjective Writing, Vocabulary, Tone, Capitalization, Informal Writing, Sentence Construction, Expressivism and Grammar.

The table1 illustrates the mean, median, and mode of the important characteristics of Expressive Writing and the scores in which the students showed drastic improvement in comparison to DT and AT. The students showed improvement in Grammar, Expressivism, Sentence Construction, Use of Emphatic language, Informal Writing, Vocabulary, Subjective Writing, and Punctuation.

Table1: Comparison of Various Characteristics of EW in DT and AT

Characteristics of Expressive Writing	Tests	Mean	Median	Mode
Grammar	Diagnostic Test	3.2	3	2
	Achievement Test	3.65	4	5
Expressivism	Diagnostic Test	2.45	2	3
	Achievement Test	3.15	3	3
Sentence Construction	Diagnostic Test	3.25	3.5	4
	Achievement Test	3.81	4	4

Use of Emphatic Language	Diagnostic Test	2.35	2	2
	Achievement Test	2.825	3	3
Informal Writing	Diagnostic Test	2.52	3	3
	Achievement Test	3.35	3	3
Vocabulary	Diagnostic Test	3.15	3	3
	Achievement Test	3.55	4	3,4
Subjective Writing	Diagnostic Test	2.7	3	3
	Achievement Test	3.05	3	3
Punctuation	Diagnostic Test	2.95	3	3
	Achievement Test	3.3	4	4

The data collected in this qualitative study among the students in the Diagnostic Test and the Achievement Test were evaluated based on an analytic scoring rubric for each characteristic of Expressive Writing. The final results of the Achievement Test showed that First-Year Undergraduate Students were able to enhance Expressive Writing in a short period of time.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study showed that Teaching Expressive Writing using Movie Reviews helped the students to kindle their general writing skills and also to be expressive in their writing. The final results demonstrate that the students were ready to inculcate Expressivism in their writing to enhance their Expressive Writing and they were able to show improvement in the short period of the study. The level of the students' writing improved, and they were able to write effectively by expressing themselves. The significance of the study was achieved by equipping the students with Expressivism in writing and making them differentiate between Academic Writing, Creative Writing, and Expressive Writing. They also understood that having a personal touch of heart and mind will enhance their writing as well as gives satisfaction for venting out their ideas in writing.

The Findings of the students in the percentage of the below-mentioned characteristics of EW, demonstrate that the students showed improvement in their performance in Punctuation the students' score in DT was 42%, and in AT 52%, Subjective Writing the score in DT was 30%, AT 37%, Vocabulary scores in DT 37%, AT 52%, Use of Emphatic Language scores in DT 15%, AT 30%, Sentence Construction scores in DT 50%, AT 62%, Expressivism scores in DT 17%, AT 37%, and the Grammar scores in DT 40%, AT 55%. Thereby this study of Teaching Expressive Writing using Movie Review showed improvement among the First -Year Undergraduate students.

Implications and Future Research:

This exploratory qualitative study provides practical implications and guides future research endeavours. Based on the results obtained in this study, Expressive Writing can be used to help First-Year Undergraduate students to realize and understand the results and to learn from the mistakes that they did in Diagnostic Tests. Expressive Writing can be inculcated among the students to recognize the importance of EW, to understand the characteristics of EW, and the goals for writing for future employment. Teaching Expressive Writing using Movie Reviews will be

found beneficiary to the students to equip themselves and enhance both Creative and Expressive Writing.

Future research opportunities include more qualitative studies among college students based on the other types of Expressive Writing. The next possibility would be to test both the school students and college students and to arrive at a comparative study to analyse whether Expressive Writing is inculcated at a young age among teenagers. These recommendations for future research may help the expansion of accomplishments in Expressive Writing.

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