



TEACHING OF WRITING SKILLS TO STUDENTS – THE ROLE OF ENGLISH TEACHER

English

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ABSTRACT

Writing requires thought, discipline and concentration. Writing involves committing something to a relatively permanent form. It is a record by which one is judged by whoever reads what one has written; the reader will judge one by one's style and the content and logic of what one has written. So, writing demands care and thought. Writing is a motor mechanical skill. It is similar to the skill of learning to hold a pencil, but requires a conscious effort. In other words writing is a thinking process and is much more than just copying. Writing aims at compactness and precision in expression as well as grammatical, idiomatic and orthographic accuracy. Therefore, learning to write involves learning to use grammar with ease and present facts in a sequential order.

KEYWORDS

Writing skills, Approaches of Writing skills, Punctuation, Spelling, Translation

INTRODUCTION

This world consists of human beings. Human beings are the only species in this earth that has the ability to speak and has a brain that can do multiple things. Though the three major functions of human behavior include food, sex and group existence, human being cannot be complete without expressing themselves. One needs to speak or express our feelings and ideas. These ideas from the base of one's existence. Communication is essential for the existence of the society and it plays a prominent role in the functioning of different professional organizations. One keeps on expressing oneself at all situations and at all times. In doing these activities one involves in various discussions, meetings, conversations, phone calls, presentations, video chatting, conferencing or mere gossiping. In other words they are communicating in order to interact. It is one of the important conditions for social interaction. Social interaction cannot take place without communication because human interaction is essentially communicative interaction. It pervades the entire range of social and professional relationships, and plays a key role in our life. It is the reciprocal stimulation and response between individuals, and makes social as well as professional interaction possible. Most of the times it has been found that all conflicts, tensions, wars are a result of miscommunication. If absence of proper communication can lead to such dangerous situations, then it is definitely important to understand the term. Now let's try to understand the term 'Communication.'

WHY WRITING IS IMPORTANT

According to Graves (1985) speaks of how writing makes sense of things for oneself... then for others. Most contexts of life (school, the workplace, and the community) call for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical, demands. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it takes place. In the school setting, writing plays two distinct but complementary roles. First, it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Keys, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Because these roles are closely linked, reading next recommended that language arts teachers use content-area texts to teach reading and writing skills and those content-area teachers provide instruction and practice in discipline-specific reading and writing.

Flower and Hayes (1981) formulated a generalized cognitive process model consisting of many sub- processes, expanding and detailing the linear process model of pre- writing, and writing, whereas flower and Hayes cognitive process model differs from Kellogg's in organizational detail and the level of recursion represented, both recognize writing as the result of multiple cognitive sub – process working is dynamic conjunction. The different sub-processes according to flower and Hayes model are:

- Planning (generating; organizing; goal setting)
- Translating
- Reviewing (evaluation; revising)

According to Kellogg's model the cognitive components of writing skill are:

- Collecting (searching; listening; experiencing)
- Planning (generalizing, organizing, goal setting)
- Translating (in terms of semantics, syntactic)
- Reviewing (reading, editing)

Studies have indicated that when students write on topics for which their knowledge is "well- integrated" (Langer, 1984) organization of their writing is likely to be superior to essays produced on topics for which their knowledge and experience is less secure. Bridgeman and Carlson (1984) showed that when students write about topics they are "highly involved with", their texts are more coherent. Asserting that ESL students should be treated as mentioned "intelligent human beings and unique individuals with their own views and agendas, and their own stories to tell".

Writing is a highly valued skill in the literate world. It is an integral part of all academic endeavors. It is identified with higher intellectual pursuits in all spheres of activity, be it in industry, academics or art. Learning to write is one of the aims of literacy education. But it is beyond the literacy- learning stage when writing acts as a tool for learning and thinking that it acquires greater significance, since learning, and learning to think are accepted to be activities central to instruction. Writing therefore necessarily occupies a prominent place in the sphere of education.

1. The proposed writing tasks promote students writing skills.
2. These writing skills encourage students to write in a process-genre approach to writing.
3. The writing tasks motivate in brainstorming, organizing, drafting, revising and editing.
4. The writing tasks are of considerable importance in the academic writing.
5. Many micro-skill of writing are integrated into the tasks.
6. Teaching university students accurate writing for identifying, illustrating, listing, defining, comparing, contrasting, analyzing, describing and stating their points and this is the kind of writing that should be encouraged.

The components of writing:

- Vocabulary
- Grammar rules
- Different sentence structures
- Punctuation
- Organization of information
- Paragraph writing
- Using cohesive devices
- The purpose of writing
- Audience
- Spelling

The main objective of writing skill is to develop among the students the ability to write a grammatically correct and organized form of a written text.

Different elements in writing perspectives

1. Grammar (grammatical rules and vocabulary)
2. Context (the reader you write to and the reason for writing)
3. Processes (planning - organizing - composing - revision - drafting)

Many EFL teachers teach their students writing skills through providing them with a good model through which they practice.

- Layout (L)
- Planning (PL)
- Style (ST)
- Grammar (G)
- Vocabulary (V)
- Spelling (SP)
- Punctuation (P)

TECHNIQUES OF WRITING IN ESL CLASSES

Like speaking, writing is a productive skill. It involves producing language rather than receiving it. Writing involves communicating a message. In order to write, we need to form letters and words, join these together to make words, sentences or a series of sentences that link together to communicate a message. Learning to write in a second language is not merely learning to put down on paper the conventional symbols of the writing system that represents the utterances one has in mind, but it is also purposeful selection and organization of ideas, facts and experiences. In other words writing is a thinking process and is much more than just copying. Writing aims at compactness and precision in expression as well as grammatical, idiomatic and orthographic accuracy. Therefore, learning to write involves learning to use grammar with ease and present facts in a sequential order.

Writing is required to communicate with other people, to understand them, talk to them, read what others have written and to write to them. The sub skills of writing are planning, forming letters, punctuating correctly, linking, and using the appropriate language, paragraphing and so on.

Writing involves going through a number of stages, some of which are given below:

- Brainstorming (thinking of everything we can about the topic).
- Note making.
- Planning (organizing our ideas).
- Writing a draft (a piece of writing that is not yet finished, and may be changed).
- Editing (correcting and improving the text)
- Producing another draft.
- Proof reading (checking for mistakes).

It is important to have a message and the ability to communicate it successfully to other people, in writing. In order to do this, one should have enough ideas, ability to organize them well and express them in an appropriate style. Although the writing process has been analyzed in many different ways, most teachers would probably agree in recognizing at least the following five general components:

- Content: the substance of the writing; the ideas expressed.
- Form: the organization of the content.
- Grammar: the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns.
- Style: the choice of structures and lexical items to give a particular tone or flavor to the writing.
- Mechanics: the use of the graphic conventions of the language.

Writing skills help the learner gain independence, comprehensibility, fluency, and creativity in writing as stated by Crick (2003) saw writing as communication with its roots in experience, thus reconciling expressivity and constructivist views. If learners have mastered these skills, they will be able to write so that not only they can read what they have written, but other speakers of that language can read and understand it. Writing skills are specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message.

Here are some writing goals as defined by Hampton (1989):

- a) Writers are independent when they are able to write without much assistance.
- b) Writers gain comprehensibility when they can write so that it can be read and understood by themselves and others.

- c) Writers are fluent when they are able to write smoothly and easily as well as understandably.
- d) Writers gain creativity when they can write their own ideas, not copying what has already been written, so that they can be read and understood.

Language teaching is a task in which intelligence, training, imagination and command of language experience or body of knowledge are essential contributors. Several theoreticians have formulated different approaches, conventions, stages, forms and kinds in writing in the form of theories for the efficacy of ELT.

APPROACHES IN TEACHING WRITING

Writing is a motor mechanical skill. It is similar to the skill of learning to hold a pencil, but requires a conscious effort. In the mid of 1970's various approaches to teaching writing were developed. They are the control-to-free approach, the free writing approach, the paragraph pattern approach, the genre approach, the communicative approach, the grammar-syntax-organization approach, the product approach, the process approach. They are discussed in detail below.

The Control-to-Free Approach

This approach is based on audio lingual method of teaching where grammar is emphasized in writing and speaking. In this approach teachers ask learners to copy sentences or short paragraphs and also use manipulated sentences to make learners to correct them. This controlled method ensures that no errors are made on learner's part. Later, the teacher asks learners to write their own sentences using a model already given in the controlled phase.

The Free Writing Approach

This approach focuses on the quantity of writing than the quality. Content and fluency are emphasized over grammar and form. Emphasis on content makes it easy for learners to express their thought and ideas fluently. Learners are given the freedom to make errors unlike in the controlled approach. Extensive practice is the idea behind this approach. It is believed that extensive practice helps learners to overcome their grammatical errors even without teacher feedback.

The Paragraph Pattern Approach

In this approach, organization of the paragraphs is given importance rather than grammar and fluency. In this approach first the paragraphs are analyzed and then they are imitated. The main task used in this approach is the jumbled sentences. The same technique of analyzing and imitating is used to teach essay writing. Topic sentence and organization are important in this approach to teaching writing.

The Genre Approach

This approach had emerged from systematic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978). In this approach a set of genres or text types are explicitly taught. This teaching follows a four phase structure. The first phase deals with the introduction of the topic which is intended at gaining content knowledge about the topic. Apart from that grammar and vocabulary are also focused. The second phase is the most important phase, where a particular genre of writing is analyzed with emphasis on purpose of the text, structure, language features and tenor. The third and the fourth phases are the practicing stages. Where as in the third stage learners are given practice with the teachers support, in the final stage learners are allowed to write without any support from teacher.

The Communicative Approach

This approach focuses on the functions/ purpose of writing and its audience. Learners are asked to write a paragraph or an essay keeping in mind the reason of writing a text and the reader of the text. Here writing is considered as a communicative tool, and is used as a means of communication between the student and the reader. So the audience for a learner's text is not limited to the teacher alone. Peer feedback is part of this approach where peer's focus is on the correction of errors.

The Grammar-Syntax-Organization Approach

This approach stresses the need to work simultaneously on more than one of the features. This approach believes that writing is not composed of separate skills which are learned one by one. So this approach focuses on devising writing tasks that lead students to pay attention to organization, while they also work on the necessary grammar and syntax. Hence, in this approach the purpose of a piece of writing is linked to the forms that are needed to convey the message.

The Product approach

This approach gives importance to writing as a finished product. According to this approach, the ends have to be laid out with great care because this approach believes that ends have a great bearing on the means. Objectives are realized in the form of content in this approach. The end product is given more importance rather than the number of stages involved in the thinking process of producing the text.

The Process approach

This approach gives emphasis to the process of writing. According to this approach, learners explore a topic through writing, showing the teacher and each other their drafts and using what they write to read over, think about and move them on to new ideas. This approach believes that good education should be open ended and experimental as each classroom is a laboratory. It encourages teachers to try out different approaches and find what works best. The cognitive act involved in the process of writing is emphasized in this approach.

CONCLUSION

The first and foremost important thing that the teacher of English has to do is to help the students in overcoming their fears about communication and motivate them to develop more positive perceptions of communication activities. One is expected to play the roles such as – counselor, motivator, communication skills trainer etc. The English language teachers must also be aware of the latest technologies, methods and approaches of language teaching explore new ideas and must have a certain amount of specialization in the concerned subject. Francis Bacon rightly opined that “Writing makes a man exact”. So to make a man exact the teacher should not forget to teach the students the skill of writing. But writing is rather a difficult task which requires the conscious efforts. Language laboratory is a good resource for the English teachers to develop the writing skills of the students.

This Paper emphasizes the impact of language labs on English Language learning. It states that language labs are adequate places where one can undergo self learning experience at one's own pace, by practicing a host of exercises through technology. These exercises can be done in all the four modalities of language learning. The investigator has found this study interesting where the investigator deems it useful to share among further research scholars.