
SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITING & IMPLICATIONS TO ENHANCE THE WRITING SKILLS

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Abstract: Writing is one of the basic tools of civilization. It teaches us to link words and thoughts in order to express ourselves. It was developed to allow man to communication across the miles and through the year. It is writing that allows human knowledge to transcend time and space. It has been accepted as an important skill by language users and composition researches for writing represents an unique mode of learning. It was found that the teachers preferred to teach speaking, listening and reading most of the time. Writing was completely neglected and not even one class was taken weekly. The teachers rarely taught writing and they never gave and took feedback from the students .This type of attitude of the teachers should be changed and writing must be given preference in the regular time slot. Teachers should realize that most of the students examinations and campus selections are based on written examinations. Therefore, writing must be taught regularly by following the some appropriate directions.

Key words: hand writing, vocabulary, lexical item, coherent, conventions

Introduction: Writing is one of the basic tools of civilization. It teaches us to link words and thoughts in order to express ourselves. It was developed to allow man to communication across the miles and through the year. It is writing that allows human knowledge to transcend time and space. It has been accepted as an important skill by language users and composition researches for writing represents an unique mode of learning.

Writing is a thinking process. Different aspects of thinking has been emphasized, since the time of Plato and Aristotle to present day academic reformers like Taba and Schwab. Also, time and again, different ways of teaching these various aspects of thinking has been recommended. The scientific enquiry method in school education was brought in by Dewey (1916, 1956). Bruner(1960) spoke about 'discovery' or 'insightful' learning. Teaching of thinking was the core component of every activity in these educationists 'scheme of education'. Further it was felt that in order to stimulate thinking and bring about intellectual growth, one must learn the process of hypothesizing analyzing problems, investigation and inquiry and also to master information through reflection. Reading and writing are integral to the process of developing thinking. while reading is a passive, writing is active. It has a stringer access to the realm of cognition and conceptualization. In "Thought and Language" (1962) Vygotsky notes that "written speech is a separate linguistic functioning". A.R.Luria, Jerome Bruner and vygotsky also say that higher cognitive functions such as analysis and synthesis, develop most fully only with the support of verbal language – particularly of written language. Thus writing is originating and creating an unique verbal construct that is graphically recorded.

Vygotsky (1962) further says that language contributes as much to the development of thinking

as thinking contributes to the development of language. He says that, "The relation of thought to word is a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process thought is not merely expressed in word; it comes into existence through them." (P.125). Studies in child language acquisition tells us that while mastering speech, a child starts from one word. This is because his thought is unclear and undifferentiated. As his thoughts become clearer, differentiated and more focused, he advances to sentences and then to coherent speech made up of a series of sentences. In the same way, writing evolves from the " first draft to the final copy reflecting our mental process." (P.144) This act of composing a text involves retrieving information from memory, generating new ideas based on partial information in memory, organizing ideational and linguistic structures, reading source material and the evolving text, and several other operations.

Inspired by the vygotsian perspective, writing is now viewed as a means of promoting thinking and thus enhancing learning besides being a means of communication. The process learning to write is a process of learning to think more clearly. Writing is moreover a very complex highly individualized process. In Emig's (1971) formulation it is a "mode of knowing." Widdowson says (1983). "Writing is a provoked activity. It is located in the ongoing social life." Shaughnessy (1977) adds that, "Writing is a social act" and learning to write therefore, is a process of socialization. The nature of writing varies across the social and cultural contexts. The collaborative writing in a business setting, differs in process and product from the creative writing of a cloistered poet. Though their task vary widely, each of these individuals confront the challenge of creating coherent ideas in the private realm of thought and

mapping those ideas into the public world of linguistic symbols. In composing a written text, these individuals create meaning for themselves and their readers. They engage in a special form of thinking – the making of meaning – that defines one of the most unique characteristics, of our species. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) “writing becomes for many people the organizing force in their mental development.” When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged and changed.

Suggestions To Improve Writing Skills:

Implications for Teachers:

The implications for teachers are as follows:

Realizing the importance of writing: It was found that the teachers preferred to teach speaking, listening and reading most of the time. Writing was completely neglected and not even one class was taken weekly. The teachers rarely taught writing and they never gave and took feedback from the students. This type of attitude of the teachers should be changed and writing must be given preference in the regular time slot. Teachers should realize that most of the students examinations and campus selections are based on written examinations. Therefore, writing must be taught regularly.

Developing confidence of the students: In spite of twelve years of General English in the case of English medium students and seven years of English in the case of regional medium students, the students were not good at writing, such anomalies in learning should be corrected by the teachers by consciously devising a course in academic writing keeping in view the needs and problems of students in writing. Teachers should try to develop their students confidence by making them realize that writing is not a daunting task if it is practiced properly and regularly.

Making writing a regular activity: Generally, students with pre-mediated mindsets consider writing as more difficult than the other language skills like speaking and listening. If teachers motivate their students to make writing a regular activity, their proficiency in writing in English will improve over a period of time.

Following communicative approach: Teachers should use a task-based approach in the classroom. Especially in teaching writing, a communicative approach based on genre analysis provides a better opportunity for teaching writing activities. The teacher’s role should be that of a guide and a facilitator than a lecturer.

Exposing the students to features of formal and informal writing: Teachers should teach explicitly the features of formal and informal writing. Most of the students are unable to distinguish between

formal and informal writing. The coursebook should include these features.

Creating awareness regarding differences between speaking and writing: Teachers should make their students aware of the differences between speaking and writing. This should be done with many examples of spoken and written English.

Raising awareness of different text types: The students should be made aware of the formats and conventions of different types of writing. They should also be exposed to different genre-specific lexical items. This will help the learners write different types of writing such as technical reports, official reports, and lab reports, formal letters effectively.

Including appropriate inputs for writing: The students need to be exposed to various genres of writing through reading exercises before they are asked to write. The content must include:

- *Lab reports*
- *Technical reports*
- *Expository writing*
- *Process description*
- *Official letters*
- *Resume writing*

Language features like the use of passive constructions, conditional clauses, cohesive devices such as connectives and pronouns, modal auxiliary verbs, article/determiner choice should be taught explicitly in the classroom and coursebook writers should include these features in the coursebook.

Activities in genre analysis must be included in the coursebook since engineering students need to construct technical texts. These activities must enable the students to understand the structure and organization of a particular text. They must raise the students awareness of rhetorical structure of the discourse and draw their attention to linguistic cues. This aids in understanding the relationship between the text form, the writer’s purpose, audience and the social context. Teachers must provide models of language to enable the students to do such activities as it gives them practice in scientific discourse. Teachers should give a demonstration of the organization of the subject matter into a coherent text so that the students can independently construct new texts. Later, extended practice must be given in paragraph writing, constructing new text of various genres such as project reports, business reports, business letters, and lab reports. Such activities will help the students construct technical texts. Teachers make their students analyze different types of writing and their formats etc.

Using process approach to teach writing: Teachers should follow the process approach to teaching and they should make their students follow

the principles of process writing. Teachers should not encourage students to rote memorize ready-made essays, letters or answers.

Building knowledge of aspects of writing: Teachers should expose their students to features of good writing such as a good introduction, neat purposeful paragraphing, appropriate conclusion, coherence, cohesion and the use of appropriate punctuation marks. Punctuation is an essential aspect of writing. More often, it is taken for granted and overlooked by many teachers. Teachers need to teach the conventions of punctuation to their students.

Using different types of tasks: Teachers need to use controlled, guided and free types of writing tasks in their classroom. Even though each type of tasks has its own benefits, teachers need to use free types of tasks advanced level.

Helping students gain mastery of spelling: Teachers make their students learn the spelling system of English. Students need to be made aware of the fact there is no one-to-one correspondence between spelling and sound in English as English is a non-phonetic language.

Giving appropriate task instructions: Teachers need to provide appropriate task instructions before giving any writing task. This could be in the form of verbal instructions, pictures or charts. This makes the students understand the task requirements and expectations and prepares them well for the task.

Using group/pair work: Teachers should stress the beneficial effects of students working together to produce written texts. Because of this the students start sharing their ideas and ways of thinking before responding to a task and also helps them in generating ideas for writing very easily.

Providing constructive feedback: Teachers, after the correction of their students writing scripts, should provide constructive feedback to the students. They should acknowledge the positive features in the writing and also draw their attention to the areas where they need to improve their writing. Further they should also be provided guidance in overcoming their problems. post-practice discussion with students was also found to be useful.

Encouraging self -correction: Teachers should make the students aware of the usefulness of dictionaries in writing and in editing their texts. Teachers should encourage students to edit their writing themselves first before handing them over to their teachers.

Making self-reflection a regular habit: Teachers should make their students reflect upon their writing to find out how reader-friendly their writings are. To facilitate this, teachers should provide checklists for the learners to correct their different types of writing.

Helping learners improve their reading skills and grammar: Students need to develop good reading skills and a reasonably good command over vocabulary and grammar if they wish to write well in English. If students want to be good writers, they need to cultivate good reading skills and have good amount of vocabulary. This helps them in getting ideas from different sources and also in presenting them in an appropriate way.

Encouraging good handwriting: Good handwriting is an asset for any student. They need to develop good handwriting skills if they would like to secure good marks. Teachers should suggest some ways to their students to improve their handwriting.

Conclusion: Consequently, most of the students were not aware of the features and conventions of academic writing. They could not write a good paragraph and had problems in all aspects of writing. After careful understanding of the situation and the students needs, the researcher devised an intervention programme and taught the students for a period of three weeks and included the following topics in the intervention programme: the principles of process approach to writing, spelling rules, conventions of punctuation, the use of different transitional markers, aspects and principles of paragraph and essay writing, principles and formats of the chosen types of writing i.e., official report, lab report, resume writing, cover letter writing. In addition, they were also provided guidance in developing their reading skills, vocabulary and grammar skills as these three aspects were highly essential for them to become good writers.

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