

REVIEW ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

IS IT LSRW OR LSRC?

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to bring into focus the changing scenario of the concept of (functional) writing which is considered to be one of the prominent skills of communication and also to emphasize on the need for the revision of syllabus and the testing aspects of this particular skill especially for the engineering students. In this modern era where every youngster is addicted to technology, writing something on his or her own becomes questionable because for all the above mentioned tasks there is a wide range of templates, free samples, approved examples, downloadable examples, etc., available on the internet. So it becomes natural to them to download the existing templates of varied formats and mix and match plus edit the text according to the needs of the doer and the expectations of the authority. So the long years of learning writing skills in the school actually help to compile the various materials available on the internet coherently so as to cater to the needs of the authority. This paper suggests that keeping in mind the practical need of the hour; it becomes essential for the academicians to understand the need to upgrade the syllabus. In addition to this, the paper suggests that the classes for sharpening the compiling skills and exams for testing the compiling skills should take place in the computer labs supplied with internet connectivity. Following the tradition, let the soft copies be corrected online by the teachers and let the results be delivered through emails. Let the departmental library be filled with e- resources and i- resources. Let's do away with the role of traditional teachers and be the modern facilitators as Rivers expresses, "... the real skill of teachers is in being able to enthuse and involve students so that they will learn. It is the student himself or herself who is going to do the learning. All you can do as a teacher is to attend to the conditions of learning and try to channel the inner motivation of the students. (Rivers, Wilga M. 1991)"

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Since time immemorial we have been focusing on developing the four major skills namely Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing when it comes to language education. With the changing era and updated technical advancements, we have the following questions in our minds:

- ✓ Are our students really original in their writing?
- ✓ Are our students creative in their writing?
- ✓ Are they writing or compiling?
- ✓ How many of our students will be writing reports, letters, proposals etc. in their workplaces in future on their own?
- ✓ Is there any concept of handwritten letters in the business scenario?
- ✓ How many of our students possess good diction?

Having the aforesaid objectives in focus, this paper would try to search the answers for the above mentioned questions critically. In the school level, every child is expected to learn all the four skills in the language syllabus which, in fact, is recommended as it inculcates the thorough knowledge of the letters, sounds, vocabulary, sentence structure, basic grammar rules, pronunciation, intonation and stress pattern. The prescribed syllabus be it by the CBSE Board or the State Board gives the insight into the various genres of the language namely Grammar including Composition, Literature comprising of Poetry, Prose, Drama, Fiction, Non-fiction, LSRW skills related exercises, Phonetics etc., which suffice the need to learn a language completely.

Now coming to college level language teaching, there is a need to sense the pulse of the students' needs and recruiters' demands to make our students employable. When it comes to professional courses, we are doing away with Literature part which is understandable and justified. Moreover no IT company recruiters will ask a student, "Have you read Shakespeare?" The students interested in reading literary pieces can always use the library or the other e- resources to quench their thirst for literature.

Now a days, teachers who are merely facilitators have to use learner centered rather than teacher led methods and activities like TBLL (Task Based Language Learning): project or case study based learning so that the learners get the space, opportunities, scope and motivation to talk to each other as, when, and how they feel it is appropriate. With reference to speaking skills, Brown observes, "for developing speaking skills, it is

very important to give training in producing the sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic structures, intonations of the language, in using grammar structures accurately and in using gestures or body language" (Brown, 1994). To achieve oral fluency, students should speak in an effective and efficient way, within the context of the given situation in which they might find themselves. Students should have the basic knowledge of stress, accent, intonation patterns and rules in order to be a successful speaker. Pronunciation, grammar, fluency and vocabulary are the chief characteristics of effective speeches. Pronunciation is an important part of communication and, like all other language skills, it should be taught in contexts.

Gilbert has stated emphatically that, "Pronunciation is inherently linked to listening comprehension and [they] should be taught together" (Gilbert, 1993). Along similar lines, Brown observed that listening and pronunciation go "hand-in-hand" as "perceptive and productive processes" (Brown, 1994). This acknowledges the need and importance of Language Lab in language teaching and the significance of the contribution of the Language Lab towards honing LSR skills. This supports the mandatory notion of AICTE that every Technical Institute in India should have a dedicated language lab. In addition to this, we have a series of debates, group discussions, role play activities, presentations, seminars etc., to groom the LSR skills of the students.

The last skill is the writing skill which is of two major types namely Creative Writing & Functional Writing. The college level syllabus does not have anything to do with Creative Writing which according to Edwin Schlossberg is "is to create a context in which other people can think." We neither focus on this nor discourage students from doing so as our focus is to sharpen the LSRW skills and make our students market ready. Creative Writing as mentioned by William Wordsworth is to "Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart," whereas Functional Writing is writing for a purpose governed by formal rules and regulations.

The list of modules that comes under Functional Writing is as follows:

- Letters

- Emails
- Memos
- Circulars
- Notices
- Proposals
- Letters
- Manuals
- Paragraphs/Essays
- Research papers/Dissertations/Theses
- Referencing
- Summary/Precis Writing

In this modern era where every youngster is addicted to technology, writing something on his or her own becomes questionable because for all the above mentioned tasks there is a wide range of templates, free samples, approved examples, downloadable examples, etc., available on the internet. As no company encourages hand written paper work for documentation, the tech-savvy professionals are bound to use the technology for preparing the above mentioned write ups for various purposes. So it becomes natural to them to download the existing templates of varied formats and mix and match plus edit the text according to the needs of the doer and the expectations of the authority. So the long years of learning writing skills in the school actually help to compile the various materials available on the internet coherently so as to cater to the needs of the authority. Thanks to Cybernation and IT industry which have become indispensable in the 21st century as they not only provide online dictionary service but also render editing suggestions to enrich the text.

Hence, this strongly supports that the basic knowledge about writing which a student acquires in schooling is more than enough to manage his professional demands in an effective way. Now the question is, "What is the role of the syllabus of English in the college level when it comes to teaching writing skill?" When the students are going to compile, why should we still be teaching how to write rather than how to compile? At the end of the semester, the students are asked to take up a written test and they are judged according to the conceptual presentation where it is undeniable that every examiner tends to get influenced by the hand writing.

Instead, this paper suggests that keeping in mind the practical need of the hour, it becomes essential for the academicians to understand the need to upgrade the syllabus. In addition to this, the paper suggests that the classes for sharpening the compiling skills and exams for testing the compiling skills should take place in the computer labs supplied with internet connectivity. Following the tradition, let the soft copies be corrected online by the teachers and let the results be delivered through emails. Let the departmental library be filled with e-resources and i- resources.

Let's do away with the role of traditional teachers and be the modern facilitators as Rivers expresses, "... the real skill of teachers is in being able to enthuse and involve students so that they will learn. It is the student himself or herself who is going to do the learning. All you can do as a teacher is to attend to the conditions of learning and try to channel the inner motivation of the students. (Rivers, Wilga M. 1991)"

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