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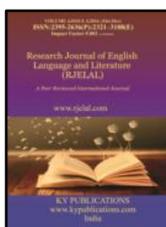
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POSITION OF ENGLISH AND ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS IN HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

English, in India, is mainly taught as a second language. Hence, the aim of this unit is to familiarize the students with the importance of learning English as a second language. Also, this Unit focuses on establishing English as a world, official, link and library language. Psychology and linguistics play a major role in language acquisition. As this is so, this unit enables the learners to realize the contribution of Psychology and Linguistics in language learning and exposes the interference of Mother Tongue in learning English as a second language. This paper explored the development of a short module to demystify the skill of writing. It allows the students to practice writing alongside the teacher's assistance and guidance. It involves students who, although are not native users of the English language, yet have learned and used it in speech through their school years. The aim of this paper is to develop a training course to improve the English writing skills of higher secondary students.

Key words: English Writing, second language, School, Linguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

English came to India with the British rulers. It was hoped that English also would leave Indian shores with the British leaving India after giving India its independence. But, it didn't happen. It continues to enjoy a language of more importance now than never before. There are many reasons for this coveted place for English in India. English is one of the richest languages of the world and reached far and wide. It is the language of science and technology, commerce, trade and more importantly it is used for international negotiations. Around 60% of the world's advanced research is done in English and the rest is immediately translated into English. India, being a land of many languages, requires a common language for communication between people of different states. India, a democratic country, should have a congenial relationship between the center and the states for the

development of the country. Though Hindi is our national language, we are not able to declare Hindi as the only official language of the country for inter-state or center-state relationship. It is mainly because, there are many states in India where Hindi is neither spoken nor understood. There is no other Indian Language that can solve this problem. So, we need English to fill this gap. Even some states have made their efforts to introduce their languages as official language but they could not succeed in their attempt. And we have been following English as Official Language in our country for more than 150 years.

2. POSITION OF ENGLISH IN SCHOOL IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The objectives of teaching English has two main aspects, namely, language aspects like words, sentences, pronunciation, spelling and grammar and the other aspect being literature aspect which

include words, sentences, expressing ideas, feelings and experiences. In India, English is taught as a second language. There is a slight difference between English as a foreign language and English as a second language. A foreign language is learnt, mainly to know the culture and the living style of people of another nation, whereas, a second language is learnt, mainly to use the target language in the society. That way, English has to be taught in India, as a second language. To put it simply, the teachers of English should prepare their students to use English globally. It means, they have to provide a proper platform for their students to use English language in any day- to- day situation. English has become inevitable in the school curriculum. It enjoys all positions like I language, II language and III language. English is the medium of instruction in all the English medium schools. Thus, English is the first language in these schools. In other schools English is taught as a second language. In non-Hindi north Indian states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, Odiya, their regional language is the first language, Hindi is the second language and English is the third language. As English enjoys all the three positions in the academic field, there will not be anybody who completes his studies in India not acquainted with English. According to **Prof. Gatenby** there are two general aims: (1) learning the language, (2) doing something with the language when it is learnt which means understanding the language when spoken or written, and expressing one's thoughts, feelings and ideas in speech as well as in writing. The aims of teaching English is to make a student

1. Understand English when spoken
2. Speak comprehensible English
3. Read English and comprehend the content
4. Write English with logical cohesion
5. Can translate from English to vernacular language and vice versa

3 PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENTS USING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

However, the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practice in formal instructional settings or other environments. Further, the students' skill in writing in a second

language is faced with several challenges. There can be many social as well as cognitive reasons for this, such as a negative attitude towards the target language, cultural distance between them and the target language, and lack of motivation. Students are even ignorant of the basic rules and structural patterns which they are supposed to have learnt at the school level. Some EFL teachers may be perplexed by such problems in their writing classes and are unable to find an efficient way to awaken students' imagination and set their minds working. As a result, students feel that using the English language amidst all their doubts and uncertainties is a cumbersome affair. Besides the reasons mentioned above, another major hurdle that students face is the dearth of time to practice writing in the classroom, with the teacher available for clarifying their doubts. Coping with the pressure to complete a set syllabus, teachers hardly have the time to allow students to practice writing. Writing is a skill and like any other skill, being fluent in it requires plenty of practice

Need for a New Paradigm in teaching English writing skills Teaching English as a second language, especially writing skills, can vary according to the cultural and academic environment. The situation in North East India can be quite different from other parts of India due to the high literacy rates as well as a predominantly Christian population, with its innovative practices of ritual and rites. Thus, a new paradigm will be needed to explain the process of developing writing skills in this area, which is the major focus of the research. Studies of second language writing are sadly lacking, and little research done on the L2 writing process among indigenous populations. Students who have learnt to converse and write in vernacular in their school education, and rather minimally or not at all in English, would then find communication at the University level rather difficult and frustrating, unless necessary help is provided to prepare them properly.. While there are many courses to enhance the spoken English and oral communication, very little work is reported on how to improve the writing skills. There is a great need, therefore, to study the problems faced by the students and then develop suitable strategies to improve their writing skills in

English, keeping in mind the dearth of time in the academic year.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The ability to achieve communicative competence in writing is a major facet of language development and academic success among students at all levels of the education system. Writing is considered the most important skill that students require in order to enhance their personal development and academic success (**Mukulu et al. 2006**). In addition, (**Adams and Keene, 2000**) note that learning to master writing skills can help students to deal successfully with their academic demands and to perform effectively in their disciplines and professional contexts. In the academic context, students are required to produce specific writing genres such as essays, summaries and reports (**Dudley-Evans, 2001; Tangpermpoon, 2008**) points out that when compared with other language skills of listening, speaking and reading, writing is the most difficult skill to learn because it requires writers to have a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as principles of organization in L2 to produce a good written text. On the other hand, Myles (2002) observes that the ability to write well is not naturally acquired from the environment through exposure to the language. He argues that writing is learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional setting. Similarly, (**Byrne, 2000**) notes that writing is learned through a process of instruction in which the student is expected to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures that are not common in speech but which are vital for effective written communication. He further observes that conscious effort must be made to equip language learners with writing skills which will enable them to organize their ideas so that a reader who is not present and even known to them can understand. In addition, (**Hyland, 2002**) asserts that writing is an activity which must be mastered in order for students to express their ideas effectively in writing. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to help students to learn writing skills that will enable them express themselves appropriately and effectively in L2 writing.

A study by (**Ogalo, 2011**) examined teaching techniques that enhance integration in the development of English language skills in secondary schools in Gatundu district, Kenya. The findings of the study showed that teachers did not integrate the four language skills. Respondents attributed the absence of integration of the four language skills to the large class size and time. Listening and speaking were rarely given attention. English language teachers used very few activities in their teaching and lecture technique was the most commonly used in teaching. It was recommended that for the integration in the development of English language skills to be realized, teachers should use techniques such as: group work, discussion, dialogue, debate, questions and answer techniques. Teachers need also to use a variety of activities which involve the students to participate such as games, role-play, debate, and discussions. It is with this perspective that the study sought to find out whether teachers adopted the integrated approach to the teaching and learning of essay writing skill

5 AIMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT THE HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL.

1. To understand English with ease when spoken at normal conversational speed.
2. To read Standard English newspapers regularly.
3. To gain ability to understand English from the native speakers and to respond reciprocally.
4. To have the ability to note-making and note-taking.
5. To be able to convey one's thought and feeling to be understood by others.
6. To acquire the vocabulary to tune of all the situations that one encounters.
7. To be able to use reference materials like dictionary and thesaurus.
8. To develop and enjoy the literary items.
9. To develop aesthetic sense through poems in English
10. To understand advertisement and apply for higher studies and for job.
11. To learn the functional aspects of grammar.
12. To be familiarized in the stress and intonation patterns of English

14. To be able to answer any open-ended questions in examinations and express all the thoughts and feeling in English.

5.1 **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine methods teachers use in teaching essay writing skills.
2. Investigate challenges students face in learning essay writing skills.
3. Establish strategies students employ in learning essay writing skills.

6. EFFECTIVELY TEACH ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS

Keep students writing by offering a variety of assignments on interesting topics, and a mix of pre-assigned topics and student-created topics. Teach them that written expression is important both by writing alongside them and offering opportunities to publish the work they want to share. If you're consistent in requiring writing from them, and come alongside them to help your students improve their writing, they will learn to embrace writing as a tool of effective communication. Improving students' writing skills helps them succeed inside and outside the classroom. Effective writing is a vital component of students' literacy achievement, and writing is a critical communication tool for students to convey thoughts and opinions, describe ideas and events, and analyze information. Indeed, writing is a life-long skill that plays a key role in postsecondary success across academic and vocational disciplines. The nature of writing and writing instruction is changing. Technology, such as word processing and other forms of electronic communication, plays an increasingly important role in how students learn and practice writing in and out of the classroom. In addition, best practices in writing instruction have shifted to include integrated interventions that involve many complementary instructional practices. Writing encourages critical thinking. Constructing, articulating, and analyzing their own thoughts in writing requires students to think critically about their ideas and how to convey them based on their goals and the intended audience. Writing challenges students to understand, evaluate, and synthesize text, ideas, and concepts.

Furthermore, approaching writing tasks strategically (that is, with a series of structured actions for achieving their writing goals) facilitates the development of sound arguments supported by valid reasoning. Writing occurs in every discipline. Writing spans classrooms and discipline areas. Writing is a key component of English language arts classrooms, and secondary students on average write more for their English classes than they do for any other class. However, students write more for other disciplines combined than they do for English language arts.

6.1 EFFECTIVE WRITING:

1. Achieves the writer's goals. These goals can be set by the writer or teacher, or through collaboration between the writer, teacher, and/or peers.
2. Is appropriate for the intended audience and context. For example, a persuasive text written for a school newspaper may look different than one written for an online forum.
3. Presents ideas in a way that clearly communicates the writer's intended meaning and content. The writer's ideas are well-organized and clear to the reader, and expressed effectively.
4. Elicits the intended response from the reader. For example, a persuasive text compels the reader to take action, whereas a mystery novel elicits feelings of suspense or surprise from the reader.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice Reflect instructional cycle.
2. Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies and teach strategies for planning and goal setting, drafting, evaluating, revising, and editing.
3. Instruct students on how to choose and apply strategies appropriate for the audience and purpose.
4. Use a Model Practice-Reflect instructional cycle to teach writing strategies
5. Provide students with opportunities to apply and practice modeled strategies.

6. Engage students in evaluating and reflecting upon their own and peers' writing and use of modeled strategies
 7. Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.
 8. Teach students to understand that both writers and readers use similar strategies, knowledge, and skills to create meaning.
 9. Use a variety of written exemplars to highlight the key features of texts.
 10. Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.
 11. Assess students' strengths and areas for improvement before teaching a new strategy or skill.
 12. Analyze student writing to tailor instruction and target feedback.
 13. Regularly monitor students' progress while teaching writing strategies and skills.
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CONCLUSIONS

The students expressed satisfaction over the benefits of the training programme, and found it convenient and useful in the long run. Some students mentioned that the course did not help to the extent expected, as they had difficulties in doing the required homework, additional reading and other exercises. Conclusions were made that it is possible to teach English writing skills for secondary school level students based on proper pedagogical principles within 3 weeks. The course should include both class-room teaching and home assignments and the emphasis should be on interactive teaching and active learning by the students' participation. The practice sessions should be logically arranged from simple to complex, from letter-writing to free compositions. Ample opportunities should be provided for informal feed-back, corrections and revisions.

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