

Writing is a useful mode of organizing thoughts and expressing them with precision and clarity. In fact though all the four linguistic skills are integrated in actual communication, writing and speaking are considered to be the two expressive modalities of language. Writing involves both auditory and visual skills and is usually taught after the learner has developed considerable efficiency in the speaking and reading skills. Writing has to be developed as a skill since it does not come spontaneously and naturally. The skill of writing also demands accuracy in grammar, lexicon and structure. It is a visual representation of human thoughts and speech, but more complex than the speaking skill, since it involves a conscious learning of various lexical and syntactic conventions.

In the 1970s writing in most English second language classes was mostly a lesson in grammar with the pedagogy reflecting elements of the audio-lingual method. In the early 1980s a shift from incremental and controlled writing to guided writing was noticed. Gradually grammatical accuracy was rendered secondary to communication and the second language composition exercises focussed more on the teaching of organization patterns common in English academic prose. During the 1980s writing was perceived as a part of the “expressive approach” and was taught as a mode of self discovery and spontaneous self expression. The beginning of the twenty-first century witnessed the evolution of learner centred strategies and writing was perceived as a communicative social act. The purpose of writing is not only to communicate to a wider audience, even those not present at the moment within the limitations of specific spatial boundaries, but is also an important tool used to fix the structures and vocabulary already taught. Writing has been treated as a Process, Product and Genre.

Components of writing skill:

Some of the important components of the writing skill may be summarized in the following manner:

- i. Ability of writing alphabets at a reasonable speed
- ii. Ability to spell the words correctly
- iii. Ability of recalling appropriate words and using them in sentences
- iv. Ability to use appropriate punctuation marks
- v. Skill of linking sentences with appropriate sentence connectors and sequence signals like definite articles or pronouns
- vi. Organization of thoughts and ideas in logical sequence and in suitable paragraphs around certain topics
- vii. Evaluation of the significance of the words or a sentence in the overall context of the written passage

viii. Skill of using the form and register appropriate for the subject matter and the reader

Process of writing:

The process of writing may be divided into three stages which correspond to recognition, structuring and interpretation in reading. They are

- i. **Manipulation:** It is the most preliminary stage of writing and consists in the psycho-motor ability to form letters of the alphabet. For second language learners manipulation does not pose a serious challenge because by the time the learners attempt writing the English letters, they have developed adequate muscular control through their writing practices in vernacular. Manipulation must be systematic to promote legibility and maintenance of Graphemic Contrasts, or the contrasts between the individual letters. The teacher usually makes the learners aware of the distinguishing features in apparently identical letters and exercise in writing similar letters in distinct groups, proves to be a common and effective practice. Manipulation apparently focuses on – (a) uniformity of the size of the individual letters (b) uniformity of the spaces between the letters and (c) uniformity of the direction and the angle of slant of the letters. Practice in the imitation of models followed by critical appreciation of one's own work for improvement, are crucial for effective manipulation.
- ii. **Structuring:** The learner is taught to organize the letters into words, words into phrases and phrases into sentences. Intensive oral exercise preceding writing, facilitates structuring.
- iii. **Communication:** Ultimately the learner is expected to develop the ability to select appropriate structures and vocabulary suitable for the context of the passage to be written as well as catering to the needs of the prospective reader. Intensive practice, experience, attentive and sustained critical appreciation of model writing and an adequate proficiency in the various conventions used in written language, are necessary prerequisites for developing such communicative efficacy through writing.

Sub-skills of writing:

There are a set of well defined sub-skills that the learners must acquire for enhancing their skill of writing. These are –

- Mechanics – Handwriting, spelling, punctuation
- Word choice – Vocabulary, idiom, tone

- Organization – Paragraphs, topic and support cohesion and unity
- Syntax – Sentence structure, sentence boundaries, stylistic choices
- Grammar – Rules for verb agreement, articles, pronouns etc.
- Content – Relevance, clarity, originality, logic etc.
- The writing process – Getting ideas, getting started, writing drafts, revising
- Purpose – The reason for writing, justification