

DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS AT UPPER PRIMARY
LEVEL: AN EXPERIMENT

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Abstract

There is a dire need to develop expressional skills in English right from the primary section in India. There are mainly four language skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Listening and Reading are known as receptive skills where as Writing and Speaking are known as productive or expressional skills. Speaking and Writing are easily noticeable. Talking about writing in compare to speaking is more official and serious. It is rightly said, the more practice you do the better result you get. Keeping this in mind, the researcher tried to carry out a research on developing writing skills among the upper primary students. Second language learners of two schools affiliated to Gujarat State Education Board were selected randomly for the study. The study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The research was true experiment. Out of these two, one school was kept as control and the other school was kept as experimental. The students of control group were not given any treatment as they studied such contents from their regular school teacher. The pre test was administered to equal the groups. The students were made to study through activity based sessions. The finding of the study was the activity package was useful in developing writing skills among the students of experimental group. Students developed the understanding of basic format and terminologies of developing writing skills. The students also developed various styles of writing. The programme was equally effective on both male and female students of experimental group. The students became responsible and systematic while preparing any type of draft.

Keywords: *Writing skills, activity package*

The importance of English as a means of international communication is recognized by all. The language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing are required to learn a language. Writing a business letter or a report in a foreign language is not easy. Writing follows thinking and people usually think in their first language. Careful preparation is needed to write well. First one should ask a number of important questions which help one to plan what one is going to write and will help one to write more effectively. Writing skill is a specific ability which helps writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message. Writing skill helps the learner gaining independence, comprehensibility, fluency and creatively in writing. Writing is neither an easy nor a spontaneous mental effort. Writing involves encoding of a message of some kind. This is how people translate thoughts into language. Comprehensibility skills for writing include understanding that writing is communicating messages or information. Writers express their ideas and communicate to readers who are not physically present.

This makes writing more challenging. Characteristics of effective writing are: Correctness, Organization of idea, Comprehensibility

According to White, (1986; 10) “Writing is a process of expressing the ideas, information, knowledge, experience and understand the writing to acquire the knowledge or some information to share and learn”.

“Writing” is a process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and space) to communicate thought and ideas in a readable form.

Among these four skills writing or written expression is an important skill in English.

When people write, they use graphic symbols i.e., letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds people make when they speak. Writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols. These are to be arranged according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form meaningful sentences. However people do not write just one sentence arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways. The sequence may be short perhaps only two or three sentences but because of the way the sentences have been put in order and linked together, they form a coherent whole.

Rationale of the Study

The importance of English language in India was realized by many intellectuals before and after independence. All education commission and committees and the policy makers of education emphasized importance of the teaching of English in India. The report of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) stated that a working knowledge of English will be a valuable asset for all students and reasonable proficiency in the language will be necessary for those who proceed to university. English language enjoys its status as an international language of trade and commerce, science and technology, literature and library. English is seen as a world language, as a source language, as a language for higher learning. The researcher himself belongs to English background as he has done B.Ed. in English. Being a teacher of English for some years he has come across problems of students in writing. Many students can read and speak but one not able to arrange their ideas in systematic way and express them correctly. That is why the researcher has selected the topic so that a programme can be developed to improve the writing skills of the students. The researcher has also observed that students though able to read and speak are not able to write correctly. Often they use wrong punctuation mark, write incorrect spellings make incorrect sentence construction. They are not able to express their thoughts systematically in an organized manner. Writing is a language skill which requires perfection, so much hard work and practice is required. Teachers should use some techniques to develop writing skill.

The written language is a kind of notation of sounds, pauses, inflection, stress, tones, gesture and facial expression which ‘transmit’ meaning, in speech. The

skill of writing is known as comprehensive skill. Writing is believed as a core of all subjects and a powerful medium of expression. Writing is a very powerful discipline. The demand for writing is growing in the workplace and a lot of universities say that “people, who write well, think well.” The skills of writing help students to develop their critical thinking and critical reading too.

In our society, being able to write is also considered a major part of communicative competences as reading. We expect students to learn to write letter and reports, write up science experiments, records observations and perhaps write poetry and stories. Thus they become able to contribute to transmission of culture by written words. The written words have a great deal of power in a literate society. Writing gives us pleasure and information and serve as host of other functions. Writing may serve the child’s emerging individually as no other kind at study can, in no other medium can be examine so carefully his development ideas and values, recognize so clearly his kinship with joys and pains of the human condition or gain so much insight into his own mind and heart and those of his fellows. One traditional way has been through the teaching of grammar.

The ultimate aim of teaching writing is to enable the child to express his thought and ideas correctly in logical sequences. He should be able to present his emotional feeling accurately and judiciously, either orally or in writing. At the same time, the presentation may be effective and precise. What we expect our children to do is that they should not find a least difficulty in communication their ideas in the society in which they live. The logical arrangement of the ideas regarding a particular topics, the vivid description of a certain object and prompt conversation, conveying a message, specifically, ventilation one’s personal opinion about a particular things, are some of the aspects of composition. It means the art of putting thoughts into words. In this way teaching of writing skills is very important at Upper Primary Level so that the students can express their ideas and thoughts in written language.

The present study focuses on the development of writing skill in English, and the investigator is of the opinion that it is going to be helpful to the learners individually where he/she can try to write in English. The teachers of English, too can get a clear idea regarding – what is writing? And how can a teacher play an important role? So, it will be directly helpful to the teachers, too. The investigator himself has seen the condition of writing among the students of different schools. The way the teachers teach writing skill to the students and want the same in their answers, creates a problem for writing. In fact, they are not given even opportunities to write their own, moreover, they have to behave as trained parrot. It is for these reasons the investigator selected this topic.

The investigator himself has found that the students are facing problems while writing in English. The students used to translate their mother tongue into

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English. Even they don't have enough vocabulary in English language which stops them to write in English. For developing their writing skills they need more practice of writing. And it is teachers' duty to provide them enough opportunity and interesting task which leads them to write English. The investigator has found that compared to English Medium students, the students of Gujarati Medium are poor in speaking as well as writing English. The reason of it may be that the students of English Medium are getting opportunity to write in English in almost all the subjects while the students of Gujarati Medium are getting chance only in English subject.

Objectives

To prepare a programme to develop writing skills of the students; To study the effectiveness of task based learning programme among the students of experimental group and control group of upper primary level; To study gender differences with references to their enhancement of writing skill; To study the students' expressions for the enhancement of the writing skill; To records the students' performance for effective suggestion through control group discussion and observation; To construct and validate the test on writing skills

Variables of the Study

Independent variable: Writing skills, Secondary Independent variable: Gender (Boys and Girls), Dependent variable: Activity Package

Control variable: 8th standard students, Second Language learners and selected items on Writing Skills Test.

Hypotheses: Ho1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the post test of Experimental group and control group in Writing Skills.

Ho2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of boys and girls of Experimental group in writing skills.

Research Methodology

Type and Method of Research: It was a qualitative and quantitative type of study and an experimental research study.

Population and Sample: The population of the study comprised of 8th Standard Upper primary level students of Anand district, Gujarat in the year 2019-2020.

The researcher used random sampling technique to select the sample of the study. The students of standard 8th of Santram Vidya Mandir, Karamsad and Sardar Vallabhbbhai Patel School, Karamsad of academic year 2019-20 comprised the sample of 80 students.

Table 1 : Sample of the study

| School | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|-------|-------|
| Santram Vidya Mandir, Karamsad | 19 | 21 | 40 |
| Sardar Vallabhbbhai Patel School, Karamsad | 22 | 18 | 40 |
| Total | 41 | 39 | 80 |

Research Design

Best J.W. and Kahn J.V. (2004) The researcher took two group pre test programme post test design for the study. In which a pre- test was

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administered to both experimental and control group. The researcher designed Activity based Programme keeping in mind the pre test score. The course was implemented to the experimental group only. After a week time of the administration of the programme again, the researcher administered the post test to both control and experimental group.

Procedure of the Research

The researcher prepared the strips of various Gujarati medium schools of Anand and randomly two strips are taken up for the selection of the sample. The researcher visited the schools and implemented the pre test keeping in mind the selected components of writing skills of second language to the students of both the schools. Out of these two schools one was kept as experimental and the other was kept control. The students of experimental school was given the treatment of Activity based Programme on writing skills whereas the control group was not given this treatment. The post test was administered to both the groups. There were 10 activities kept in the programme. The design of the test was as under.

The English Competency Test includes various types of objective and comprehensive type of test items. The design of the test can be explained through the following table.

Table 2 : Design of the Test

| Types of Test Items | Writing Points | Marks |
|-----------------------------|---|-------|
| Objective and Comprehensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dialogue writing• Story Writing• Jumbled Sentences• Correct the Paragraph• Letter Writing• Picture Description• Report Writing• Story Description• Process description• Famous Personality Description | 50 |

Tools of Data Collection

Writing Skills Test was constructed to evaluate the English writing skill of the students; Activity Package on Writing Skills: It was constructed to develop English Writing Skill of the students; Feedback Form: It was conducted to know students' expressions and opinions on the research activities and researcher's classroom intervention.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The researcher analysed data quantitatively and qualitatively using percentage analysis, t test and content analysis techniques. The following are the details of quantitative data analysis and interpretation.

H₀₁. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the post test of Experimental group and control group in Writing Skills.

Table 3 : Writing Skills of Experimental and Control Group

| Group | No. of students | Mean | SD | SEm | df | t value | t value and significance level |
|--------------|-----------------|------|------|------|----|---------|--------------------------------|
| Experimental | 40 | 38.5 | 5.77 | 1.26 | 78 | 17.14 | 1.99 significant at 0.05 level |
| Control | 40 | 16.9 | 5.60 | | | | 2.64 significant at 0.01 level |

***Significant at 0.01 level**

The computed t-value i.e. 17.14 is greater than the table t-value 2.64 at 0.01 level of significance for 78 degree of freedom.

So, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the post test of Experimental group and control group in English writing skills through Activity package is rejected.

It means, there is significant difference in the mean achievement score of post test writing skills learning through activity package and conventional mode.

Ho2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of boys and girls of Experimental group in writing skills.

Table 4 Writing Skills of Boys and Girls of Experimental Group

| Group | No. of students | Mean | SD | SEm | Df | R | t value | t value and significance level |
|-------|-----------------|-------|------|------|----|------|---------|--------------------------------|
| Girls | 21 | 26.33 | 6.21 | | | | | 2.02 significant at 0.05 level |
| Boys | 19 | 27.27 | 6.84 | 5.30 | 38 | 0.22 | 0.177 | 2.71 significant at 0.01 level |

***Significant at 0.05 level**

The computed t-value i.e. 0.177 is less than the table t-value 2.71 at 0.05 level of significance for 38 degree of freedom

So, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of boys and girls of Experimental group in English writing competency through Writing Skills Test is not rejected. It means, there is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of girls and boys learning through Writing Skills Test.

It can be observed from the result that mean achievement score of girls learning through Writing Skills Test is equal to the mean achievement score of the boys which indicates that the Package is equally effective in developing English Writing Competency among the boys and girls.

Findings of the study

A Writing Skills Test was effective in developing English Language Competency among the students than the conventional mode of teaching English Language; A Writing Skills Test was effective in developing English Language Competency among the boys than the conventional mode of teaching English language among the boys; A Writing Skills Test was effective in developing English Language Competency among the girls than the conventional mode of teaching English language among the girls; A Writing Skills Test made an equal effect in developing writing skills Competency among the boys and girls of experimental group; Students reflected that the intervention of researchers’ classroom teaching was effective, innovative and fruitful in developing English writing competency; On the basis of the general observation, the students participated enthusiastically in the activities and developed their English writing competency; Students could communicate in

brief effectively through the use of relevant forms, words and sentences; Students developed their confidence, fluency, knowledge of functional vocabulary and sentence patterns; Students could develop their understanding to various writing points and its practical usage in writing; Students could reflect over their doubts, weaknesses and solved them through drilling, practice and repetition.

Implications for the Study

The Writing Skills Test could be implemented at all the levels of levels depending upon learning styles and interest of the learners in learning English Writing; Various activities included in the Writing Skills Test such as performing roles of different personalities in simulation and role play have really helped the students to develop their confidence and language as well; The cue cards, passing the parcel, authentic materials, animation, word treasure and simulation kind of writing games were effective in developing English writing skills; The effective planning and execution of various writing activities definitely leads to the positive learning among the students; Use of authentic materials and objects enable the learners to develop their language and make the practical use of language; The literary activities like letters, stories, report writing helps the learners to be serious at the use of global language in the day to day writing; The standards English at the spoken language must be used by the teachers and students in their routine language. As a result, the students of the English language learners will enhance accuracy and fluency at the global language; The constrictive feedbacks on the students' learning and participation help the students to be sensitive at the English language; Trial and error theory works so effectively for the ESL learners learning the writing skills.

Conclusion

Thus this study demonstrated that interesting, joyful tasks can boost up the confidence level of the students and make them write effectively, correctly and systematically. Through activity based participatory programme, learners learn to use correct words, punctuation, and spelling and express their ideas in simple and lucid manner. The students enjoyed the implementation of the writing skills test. In short, it was observed at the end of the year students enhanced English writing skills. To conclude, the effective application of any activity for the learners brings deliberate impact among the learners' behaviour.

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