



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue 1.,2016 (Jan-Mar. )

ISSN INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

WRITING PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS :  
A STUDY OF THE KENDRAPADA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at explore the academic writing problems of the odisha at the secondary level in kendrapada district and to provide solutions to these problems. For this purpose, researcher posed three research questions and the answers to these questions were discussed. The data for the study were collected via questionnaire and interviews. The informants of this study were collected from secondary level students of kendrapara district of Odisha for the academic year 2014-2015. The findings of the study revealed that the students faced problems in relation to content , organization of ideas,, and language in use .

**Key word:** writing problem ,Secondary level ,L2, Teacher

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is used as a second language in India. The phrase second language has means the language which was acquired later than first language .A second language may not be native of any social group because it is used for purposes such as commerce, industry ,law, administration, politics, and education etc. It is a global medium of communication. In India English was considered integral to the globalization process (Annamalai, 2005). So English is used as a compulsory subject in the every state of India. The nature of English teaching in India is an outcome of English within the formal learning situation as well as its presence in the real world outside.

The existing conditions of teaching and learning of English as a second language in secondary schools are very poor. There is no scope for students beyond the class room for these young learners to learn English. The learners do not have encourage or supporting environment to learn English. Various issues such as illiterate parents, poor economic background, overcrowded classes and lack of fund, lack of awareness, teachers' attitude and poor proficiency to teach English contribute to the poor achievement in English. English mostly taught as a content subject. To make learning easier teacher always use mother tongue in explaining lesson. Many teacher think that teaching English means explain the contents of the text book to the students and provide them readymade model answers for the examination. As a result learners focus on memorising the selected answer from the text and reproduce it in the examination.

The students appeared to have many problems when writing in English, like not knowing how to get ideas, how to organize ideas, and use proper language because it is a second and new experience for them. In the case of these ESL learners they have little opportunities to use the English language in their surroundings. In this connection Gokak (1964) points out that "The foundational years for the teaching of English in schools are in the hands of teachers who neither know enough English nor are familiar with the latest and far-reaching developments in the pedagogy of English" (p.65). A language teacher is well aware that their students bring to the language classroom a variety of attitude, experiences and strategies as well as variety of beliefs & he/she has to handle them. But he/she feels him/her self helpless without teaching aids. He ultimately has to adopt translation method to handle this unwilling crowd. As a result, many problems occur when they study at the higher education. Thus, the researchers have paid attention to various issues involved with ways that L2 learners can improve writing ability. By identifying the errors committed by the learners, the researcher can easily point out such areas which need to be focused more.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Writing –Definition**

Raimes (1991) focusing on form. She writes, "The view that speech was primary meant that writing served a subservient role: to reinforce oral patterns of the language"

Pak-TaoNg (2003) suggested that writing consists of a lot of activities which result in understanding. Such an understanding includes a process of thinking about the topic, notes gathering, data collection, etc. which makes a reflective thought for you at the end.

Zamel (1983), a pioneer in ESL writing research, considered writing process as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (p.165)

#### **Factors involved in Second Language writing**

Writing is a productive skill. It is one of the most difficult and therefore frustrating „*subjects*’ to teach particularly in an ESL/EFL programme. This dissertation is an outcome of teachers’ concerns and efforts to identify areas of difficulty in the writing skill among ESL students and improve their writing through feedback.

Hinkel (2004) argues that there is often too much emphasis on teaching the process of writing in ESL courses instead of teaching the practical skills that students need. The writer presents findings which show that ESL students’ academic papers are often perceived as vague and confusing (p. 4). She argues that this is a result of the process-writing curriculum, which emphasizes content and structure while only sparsely and inconsistently addressing grammar and lexis. Cazden (1988) believes that talk among peers at school gives students opportunities to engage in academic discourse. Likewise, important is "the potential value of such interactions for social development in a pluralistic society" (p. 134).

#### **Teacher factor**

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "True teacher is one who can immediately come down to the level of students and transfer his soul to the student’s soul and see through and understands through his mind."

According to Nunan (1988), techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design are referred to as a needs analysis (p.13). The teacher is thus able to find out the potential knowledge and abilities that the learners possess at entry level and what they do not know and cannot do in English. Nunan also argues that the teachers should find out what their students think and feel about what and how they want to learn.

Oakes (1985) found teachers and students to be much more positive in their appraisal of relationships in high- than in low-track classes. These positive relationships were shown to be part of a formula that results in high student achievement. A relationship with a single teacher is unlikely to determine a student's entire academic trajectory; however, a series of negative relationships cannot help but diminish a student's academic self-concept.

### **Learners' factors**

There is universal agreement that teaching in the L1 is beneficial and that transfer of literacy skills almost always occurs to the L2. However, the following studies looked at the question of how to deal with students whose who have limited skills in their L1 and were attempting to acquire writing skills in English. Richards (1974:67) characterizes learners' limitations as "inability to learn language, low intelligence and poor cultural background". They do not get much exposure to the language due to economical scarcity and their familial background and thus face a lot of problem in using it correctly and appropriately.

Leki (1992), ESL students are also disappointed with difficulties in understanding word implication and meaning. It is obvious that there is a disparity between writing in the first and the second language. They are also tackling with difficulties in writing assignments, meeting deadlines as well as getting the best quality of their final writing. As a result, the present study not only concerns about some of the common writing problems among ESL students, and suggests some solutions based on teachers and the researchers' experiences which can be helpful in developing writing skills.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the current study are:

1. To identify the problems in writing skills of the learners at the secondary level.
2. To identify and obtain information from learners regarding their writing process, methods and materials in academic and non-academic settings.
3. Provide suggestions for effective and appropriate strategies for ESL writing progress in relation to the secondary level.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do learners in rural area at secondary level face any problem in writing ? If so, what are these?
2. To what extent do teachers in secondary schools encounter obstacles that prevent them from improvement writing skill of their students?
3. What is the impact of writing process through teacher feedback useful for development of secondary level ESL students writing?

The answers to these seven research questions will contribute to an understanding of the current picture of teaching writing practices for learning English as a second language and will suggest best possible ways of support learners with their writing development and school success.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Subjects**

The participants for the study were voluntarily selected from one school. Sample included students from one BSE board school of kendrapada district. The researcher administrated the questionnaire to twenty students and conduct interview with one teacher.

#### **Research Instrument**

##### **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was administrated for participants to collect data on challenges they faced in writing, the areas of academic writing that were most difficult areas of and their study habits and the number of hours each week the participant uses English writing, and how practice through teacher feedback could help them improve their writing . The questionnaire was reviewed and referred by a number of school instructors. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) categorize questionnaires among highly explicit and structured data collection instruments, although, we know that for qualitative research purposes open-ended questionnaires are more appropriate. Open-ended questions are best for a qualitative study as they afford the researcher the privilege of further probing the participant for information that may not otherwise be discovered, and they provide the flexibility of change within the questions when needed (Creswell 1998).

##### **Interview**

The researcher interviewed one teachers in the subject areas of English. The purpose of the interviews was to make clear writing practices and, more significantly, look at teachers' attitude about the

teaching and learning of writing as well as their own writing instructional practices. The qualitative data collected in these interviews will provide an opportunity for researchers to understand the current picture of writing practices ESL learner receive in classrooms, for suggesting improved or more suitable ways of helping ESL learner with their L2 writing development. The interview was designed for research question: I used semi-structured interviews because I had certain topics and issues in mind, rather than pre-determined sets of questions. Interview sessions were planned during free time of the teachers in between office hour.

#### **Research design**

This study employed the following procedures: Collect the qualitative data about the teaching and learning writing, analyze the data qualitatively, and Describe the findings evaluate the findings on the basis of the study.

#### **Findings and Discussion**

##### **Findings of the questionnaires**

The majority students responded the questionnaire in English. All of them age group between 13-16 years .All most all 65% learner's are from socially dis-advanced and economically poor background ,25% learners are middle back ground ,and rest 10% are from sound back ground. The educational qualification of majority parents is below tenth grade .The mother tongue of all learners is odia, except nine students. All most every school the medium of instruction is odia.

All most all learners mentioned that they wanted to develop their writing skill in English. They suggest that written feedback on students' writings do lead to revisions on the final drafts and pointed out the students' errors in a more straightforward manner. (i.e: "You are still weak in your grammar", "wrong use of preposition", and "there is no such word" etc). So, , it is easier for students to revise as the teachers specified what errors the students made. Some students said that by doing group or pair activity writing can improved . The students also proposed that lecturers should increase the number of writing tasks. They believe that by doing so, they would strengthen their abilities in academic writing.

Practice time for writing and response that shows that they do not get sufficient scope practice writing in the classroom. Moreover the reasons mentioned above, another major hurdle that students face is the lack of time to practise writing in the classroom, with the teacher available for clarifying their doubts and coping with the pressure to complete a set syllabus. Per week they hardly get time practice English writing in the classroom and there is no scope for students to learn English beyond the class room exposure. It is added that writing is rarely taught by the English teacher .some time teachers ask them to write short essay on a topic but never bothers whether give them an ideas and feedback about the topic and lastly put their signature. Similarly teaching vocabulary never happens in the classroom . During the writing session the teachers writes on the board and ask students to copy it and discussion never take place in the classroom and most of the students hesitate and fear to ask anything to the teachers.

Writing in English is a skill that is often neglected in these classes, partly because the current textbooks do not have any writing activities and also because teachers find writing quite a discouraging prospect in their classes. In these school context, where exposure to English is typically limited to three periods each week, students receive little practice in writing in English. When they do write, they find themselves confused with word choice, grammatical use, organization and generation of ideas. They tend to translate ideas from mother tongue into English, express ideas in long sentences, and are not aware of different kinds of writing, thus making them unable to write. All most all participants were of the agreed that the ESL syllabus was interesting because the lessons were about Indian national leaders like contemporary Indian heroes , and poems are interesting but explaining in odia kept back eagerness of the students interested.

##### **Analysis of teacher's interview**

An semi- structured interview was conducted with one English teacher's of these six schools. In April 2013, a follow up interview was conducted. The interview was conducted in a high school with a single English

teacher. The teachers mother tongue is odia. All the items were grouped and put into four categories to meet the structural requirements to answer the research questions.

The teachers in ESL writing and responses are: The teachers felt grammatically correct sentences was top priorities so they emphasis on final product of writing and also tell learners to follow his writing model to produce an error free writing. However, all six teachers adopt the product-oriented approaches in the writing class because the writing tasks in the textbook are presented on the base of controlled composition and no handouts are provided in the textbook for writing. These product-oriented approaches, therefore, have been the dominant mode of instruction in secondary school writing classes, emphasizing students' final pieces of work rather than the way how they are produced. Furthermore, due to this product focus, students have no idea on process of writing and they know very little about writing strategies. And to make the matter worse, the interaction between a teacher and students or between students themselves does not exist.

Due to the fact that students are passive in the classroom, they naturally feel uncomfortable with cooperative interaction that requires them to take an active role. As the teachers are not acquainted with process approach method so they emphasis only reading before writing and does not follow any steps of writing. Furthermore the teacher in writing class asked their students' to imitate their writing models what s/he is writing in the blackboard and grammar rules are explained to the students in details, but they are not expected to use them in real situations i.e., the usage is the focus of the attention, but the use of the rules is not emphasized. Consequently, the teacher-led makes writing meaningless and unproductive; student creativity and activeness are hindered, and thus motivation and proficiency in writing remain low.

Therefore, second language learning in this school need to keen on the research. Poor teaching environment in these school, little English language environment, lack of teacher enthusiasm, teaching methods, and lack of motivation, English classroom learning environment; family background influence the students learning the English language writing. From the teachers response it was proved that the product-oriented approaches, have been the dominant mode of instruction in secondary school writing classes, emphasizing students' final pieces of work rather than the way how they are produced. As a result, students' quality of ESL writing is evaluated on the basis of the final product and grammatical and linguistic accuracy and make the matter worse.

#### **Discussion on finding**

From the above analysis, there is a great need, 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. This study made an effort to seek pedagogical methods which could help deal with the problems of English writing. By adapting the process-oriented approach could be a more effective strategy maintaining a positive, encouraging and collaborative learning.

#### **Suggestions to overcome Academic Writing Problems through process approach**

After conducting a finding the researcher realized that learners had difficulties in writing. However it is not possible to help them overcome all their writing problems in a short teaching programme. She decided to teach three components through process approach method. It was evidence that the learners are not competent enough in content and the content was incomplete. The learner's failed to specify what was required in the writing. In organization Individual thoughts govern the whole writing of the learners without any logical connection to the following or previous ideas. Further, the process approach to writing has been proved to be a better method to teaching writing. The programme expected to helped the students to improve their writing performance and to learn how to use the strategies at each stage of the process of writing. The cyclical teaching method employed, which included modelled teaching, cooperative practice and individual practice, and the order in which the strategies were taught, were helpful to the students because they were led through the writing process step by step with clear input, enough practice and teacher's active reviews within a short period of time. After teaching programme it was found that there is a clear improvement in the writing of the student.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the researcher's submission that the teaching and learning of English as a second language both teachers and student face many challenges especially in writing at the secondary school level in BSE board school in kendrapada district. The need of the process approach is an option that is worthy of consideration, not only in kendrapada district, but also in other settings with similar backgrounds or problems in writing instruction. Thus, I can say without doubt that thorough proper guidance and effective approach in the classroom led to improved academic writing skills the students.

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