

Chapter 12

An Exploration on Issues and Challenges in Teaching Writing Skills to Tertiary–Level Learners

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ABSTRACT

Writing is considered a very important skill in language learning yet a very challenging task for students to master it. It is also a required skill for students to score good grades in their academics. Inappropriate use of words, incorrect, and illogical sentence structures and grammatical mistakes while writing, reflect poorly on the language proficiency of learners. This also creates issues later in their professional life. Addressing these challenges at the tertiary level has been an area of concern to English language teachers. The prime aim of this study is to explore the challenges and problems encountered by teachers in teaching writing skills to learners in the ESL classroom. This chapter also proposes a process-product based effective pedagogic practice which was experimented in the ESL classroom while teaching writing. The approach employed facilitated learners to overcome issues by making learners use the language in context rather than merely based on grammar structure.

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INTRODUCTION

Attaining proficiency in a language has become the need of the hour and is believed to be an important element in the language learning process. Especially, students of tertiary level are expected to possess good language proficiency that is to have some expertise in using receptive and productive skills of the language to be used in a formal occasion. Hajiannejad (2013) has cited Chastain (1988) that the basic build block of communication skill is writing and it is a unique skill in the process of language learning. Klimova (2015) argues that writing skill receives only very little attention although knowledge of formal writing is very essential for students to have academic and professional success in their life. In the Indian context, teaching writing to the tertiary level learners is enfolded with lots of issues like understanding a language, using it in an appropriate context, lack of knowledge and vocabulary, and certain other problems such as anxiety, laziness and lack of interest. Achieving knowledge in writing skill has always been a big task for the learners since they find difficulty in mastering over it. Understanding this issue in writing a wide range of research is taking place to identify the strategies, methods, and techniques to improve the writing skills of the students. “Good English Communication Skills are a vital element of an engineer’s profession and the lack of such skills only undermines the image of an engineer.” (Shikha, 2012) and students with less competency in using the language fail in academic and professional life. In any profession communicating in the English language has become an indispensable part where writing is a division of it. So, the responsibility lies on teachers to overcome the challenges in the classroom to enhance the written communication. It is always believed that one approach does not fit all the students in the classroom. Some students could easily understand what is being taught in the class while the other set of students who have low proficiency may require additional inputs so employing one approach to teach writing skills may not be effective. To achieve the desired outcome and the teacher should employ different approaches to match the proficiency level of students. Amalgamating the process approach and product approach and employing it in the classroom will provide the learners to overcome the challenges and write a good piece of text. This study focuses on the challenges faced by ESL students in the language classroom. Especially while teaching and learning writing. This paper also recommends a useful and effective method for language teachers to improve the writing skills of the learners.

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