



# Skills and Approaches for Developing Writing Skill

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Man is a social animal. Man does majority of social dealings with the help of a language. Different people in the world use different languages. Formal education is given for the overall development of a child. As a part of formal education, languages are taught. Mother tongue is highly effective in quenching the eagerness and curiosity of the children at the initial stage. On the other hand, one cannot avoid the importance of the second language like English.

Now-a-days, English is considered a major global language for effective transference of the ideas in the international periphery. In today's world, English is an effective tool for communication. English is important because it is the only language that truly links the whole world together. In countries like India, where the land is so vast with people of various cultures live, the language of each part of the country also differs. Under the circumstances, English can be the only link as people in each place will not be able to learn all the other languages to communicate with the people. English bridges this gap and connects the people. Moreover, globalization, liberalization, information communication technology, internet, education, studies, business have prompted the usage and acceptability of English language in every part of the world. In fact, English plays a role of second language. That is why, English is taught to the students in our formal education system.

In this system, Reading, Writing, Listening and speaking skills of a language are developed. Out of these four skills, Writing is the chief source of expressing knowledge. Writing is an important factor in contemporary world for the development of any person.

Expression of one's idea is the basic urge of the human being. To express them in writing is necessary to give a habitation and a name to one's feelings, emotions and aspirations. In the case of a foreign language, the skill of writing serves the primary purpose of confirming one's understanding of the structure of the language by putting it to active contextual use. The aural understanding and the oral use of the language are graphically seen in action through writing. This affords the learners opportunities to evaluate their performance in writing, see its deficiencies and remove them and thereby acquire greater control over the language.

This research article on "**Skills and Approaches for Developing Writing Skill**" aims to present the skills and approaches for developing writing skill for the learners of English as a second language (ESL).

## II. DEFINITION OF WRITING SKILL

Writing is perhaps one of the most demanding of skills. It has to be deliberately cultivated. Unlike listening and speaking, it is not something which is natural to humans – it is a skill which has been developed in civilized society to pass on knowledge or messages beyond the constraints of here and now. Writing is an exact activity. It demands precision and correctness. It requires accuracy in language usage. It is the expression of ideas. Writing is a process of *encoding* (putting your message into words) carried out with a reader in mind. Writing means, as suggested by Raimes, a connected text and not just single sentences, that writers write for a purpose and a reader, and that the process of writing is a valuable learning tool. All writing aims at clear and efficient communication.

## III. THE SUB-SKILLS OF WRITING

The sub-skills of writing greatly help in developing writing skill. There are many sub-skills of writing used by different types of learners. The effective sub-skills are discussed and listed as below.

### ➤ **Form:**

Some sub-skills that are part of form are: Handwriting, form of letters, reports, essays etc. Here the focus of handwriting is on muscular – motor skills. Transcription and practice are important to improve handwriting, and it is not necessary to engage the mind of the writer in what is essentially a copying activity. Letters also have a broad format. It is possible to spend time in



learning how to start a letter and end it. It clearly indicates where teaching of writing should focus. However, teachers should not focus on the form of writing alone. Thus, learning form is the first sub skill of learning writing.

➤ **Function:**

Some sub-skills that are part of functions are: inviting, complaining, reporting, giving a message, apologizing etc. Addressing these questions is a must for any writing programme. What is important to note here is that recent approaches to language teaching have accommodated more than the mere grammatical teaching of language. Using functions as we have mentioned earlier, is necessary to do things with language. A learner should know how to function politely and effectively in writing. A learner needs to know how to use the right words, tones, and structures. In other words, what is needed is the sense of appropriacy of use.

➤ **Coherence and Cohesion:**

Other aspects or sub-skills of writing are: sequencing or ordering of ideas. This would mean looking at what ideas come first, second etc. in order. It also means the coherence of ideas, the clarity or logical development of ideas.

One way of ordering and sequencing of showing order is to arrange sentences into what comes first, second etc.. Another way is to add linkers and conjunctions use linguistic devices to show the ways in which there is intrasentential sequencing. This is cohesion of ideas. Generally, cohesion is associated with the linguistic features that show linking e.g. *like and but however etc.* and coherence is seen as the organization of ideas that show ordering and sequencing with or without linkers.

➤ **Understanding what the reader wants to read:**

When a learner does functional writing especially, he should keep the audience in mind so that the purpose of writing is achieved. A learner needs to imagine or internalize what the reader would be expecting to read. What would be the questions that the reader might ask? What would be the links a learner should try to make? How could writing become more learners friendly? Thus, understanding what the reader wants to read is very important in writing.

➤ **Being a critical reader of one's own writing**

Another important sub-skill of writing is the ability to evaluate one's own writing in terms of appropriacy, expression, accuracy, functions, communication etc.. There is always scope for improvement in writing. A good writer is often one who strains to better himself or herself, and is one who is not easily satisfied with one's own writing.

Apart from the above discussed sub-skills of writing, there are some other key writing sub-skills which have been listed below.

- ❖ Getting ideas
- ❖ Paragraphing
- ❖ Writing the title
- ❖ Linking up words and sentences
- ❖ Clarity of ideas
- ❖ Good handwriting
- ❖ Writing letters
- ❖ Report writing
- ❖ Dialogue writing
- ❖ Getting a middle beginning and end in a paragraph
- ❖ Organization
- ❖ Sequencing

#### IV. THE WRITING PROCESS

- The writing process can begin with brainstorming sessions for getting ideas. If a person has no ideas, there will be nothing to communicate.
- Another important aspect of the writing process is finding out through discussions or through criticism sessions whether the ideas are relevant, original, clear, logical and whether a person would *want* to read what is written.
- This leads to the question of *purpose* of writing and the *audience*. It would be silly to ask a learner to write a letter to his/her sister inviting her to a birthday party when both live in the same house.
- If we were writing to an insurance company about the damage to our car in an accident, the manner of writing would be totally different from the way we would write to a friend about the same accident.
- A rough draft is written first and then revised. Draft writing is a good habit as many slips and errors get edited out in this process.

**Thus, the processes of writing are:**

- Getting ideas
- Organizing ideas
- Writing the first draft
- Reformulation and sequencing



- Re-writing/ Re-drafting
- Editing.

## V. THE BASIC APPROCHES OF TEACHING WRITING SKILL

When we teach writing through materials there are several approaches that have evolved over the years. Techniques of teaching writing and the approaches to writing have depended to a large extent on the kind of perception there has been what writing is. The basic approaches of teaching writing are: **Controlled, Guided and Free writing.**

As the terms suggest, the three approaches to the teaching of writing differ according to the help that is given to the student. Help or guidance can range from giving the student very little choice about the **what** (i.e.content) and the **how** (i.e. structures, diction, organization according to the type and form of writing) of writing to more choice and then to complete freedom.

### i. Free Writing:

The most common type of writing activity given to the student is that of essay topics. Usually teachers give topics like 'My Holidays' or 'A Trip to the Sea-side' etc.. This could be alternated with teaching students how to start and end letters. In such exercises, however, there is no attempt to look at the processes of writing, nor is the learner given help in how to improve writing. Instead the focus is on the grammar and punctuation at the most.

In a second language classroom, it is necessary to give students support in language activities. This is especially necessary in writing, because this is one area where very little help is being given by and large.

### ii. Controlled Writing:

Controlled writing is when the student is given practice on one aspect of writing while another aspect remains fixed. That is, the learner is given practice on the 'how' of writing while the 'what' of the content of writing remains fixed. The WHAT of writing is basically the content; whereas the HOW of writing would be the language structures that need practice. Alternatively practice can be given to the 'what' of writing while the 'how' remains fixed. This reduces learner effort to one aspect, or category of writing, not two. Thus, the focus of the controlled writing exercises is on the teaching of the structures of the language and not on the various sub-skills of writing.

### iii. Guided Writing

A second and more commonly used technique in the second language English classroom is **guided writing**. This is commonly seen as hints for writing paragraphs and essays, where the focus has mainly been on what the learner should focus on in terms of content of writing.

This is certainly an important part of the teaching of writing process. It takes care of the fact that the learner does not need to worry about both the WHAT (content) and the HOW (language structures) of writing. Instead the focus could be on one factor. Some ways in which guided writings can be seen are:

- ❖ Hits
- ❖ Grids
- ❖ Columns
- ❖ Tables
- ❖ Filling in of mind maps
- ❖ Answering questions

These factors need to be accompanied in the classroom with clear instructions.

Thus, the three basic approaches of teaching writing skill will greatly helpful in developing writing skill.

Thus, writing means an exact activity, requiring accuracy in language usage. Precision and correctness are the key characteristics of writing. Writing is a process of *encoding* (putting your message into words) carried out with a reader in mind. Writing has been perceived as a hard skill at which to excel for many of our learners. It is a complex activity that involves several stages and processes that act simultaneously to achieve writing. Making learners aware of skills and approaches of writing can make them better ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. If good and effective writing skills and approaches are employed for ESL learners, it will certainly bring about fruitful results in them.

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