

TEACHING WRITING

MOHINI BACHANI

Lecturer, Waymade College of Education, Vallabh Vidyanagar

Introduction

Like speech, writing has been considered a powerful mode of communication. After all, one writes with the purpose of being understood. Unlike speech, writing is not always for the audience present and hence it demands clear and comprehensive message. While we speak, we use a variety of prosodic features such as pitch, loudness, speed, rhythm, pauses and so on that help us to get the feedback from listeners but this does not happen in case of writing where the context is created through the words alone and without the direct interaction between the writer and the reader.

Nowadays, most people do not write much in day-to-day life and in a way, a great deal of what we write includes brief notes, answers for the questions, diary-entries, letters etc. Now, let's try to understand what writing is or what we mean by writing.

What is Writing ?

“When we write we use graphic symbols that is letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds we make when we speak.” (Byrne, 1979)

Do we just use graphic symbols for the sake of using them? I think – “No”. Of course, the symbols which are used need to be arranged properly to form words and then to form the sentences with a view to communicating our ideas in an organised way. In fact, when we communicate through writing, we have so many ideas to express for which we consider different ways of combining and arranging them which lead us to our drafting, revising or redrafting and so on.

In other words, it can be said that writing is encoding of a message of some kind that is, we translate our thoughts and ideas into language. So, in a way, writing represents our thoughts and ideas. What one thinks leads to one's writing in the form of sentences and by organizing the sentences into a cohesive text where we are able to communicate with our readers successfully.

So far as the teaching of writing is concerned, the teacher should keep this nature of writing in mind. Writing always has become difficult to teach or to learn because it involves a different kind of mental process which includes the sub-skills like – drafting, editing, revising, organising etc.

That's why, it is the duty of a teacher to make the learners acquire the sub-skills for acquiring the main skill.

Let's see something more for the nature of writing.

There are three main aspects of writing, which are called **PAF**.

1. Purpose/Objective
2. Audience/Readers
3. Function

1. Purpose / Objective:

A text is always written with a purpose or objective. As a writer, one should be clear about the purpose or the objective of that writing.

Am I writing with any special purpose?

Or

Why am I writing?

The answers to these questions will make the idea clear and can bring out a good piece of writing.

2. Audience / Readers:

Any communication is meant for expressing ideas from one to one. In case of writing, the audience is not present but at least if the writer wants, S/he can write keeping the target group in mind. So,

"Who, is going to read?"

Or

"For whom am I writing?" has to be made clear.

As a student also, one should be clear for the audience or the readers either they are teachers or students or any other because after all this decides the nature of writing.

3. Function :

The function decides the nature of writing. Am I going to write a report, a letter, or just a write-up etc.? - which can lead us to a good and coherent, piece of writing.

I think if one is clear about these three, one can write in a better way. In fact, this may be covered under one word i.e. "to plan" - to prepare oneself for writing.

It is rightly said: "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail." - which again shows the importance of preparation or planning. For planning writing, one can think on following lines:

- 1) What is my objective of writing?
- 2) What are the main idea and the supporting ideas?
- 3) Who is going to read my written text?
- 4) For which specific function am I writing?
- 5) Which idea should come first?
- 6) How should I organize all ideas?

Again as a teacher, one should make the learners clear about all these, which actually focus on teaching of writing through acquiring different skills.

When we talk about Teaching of Writing, Let's consider some **thumb rules of teaching writing:**

- 1) Consider the needs of the Learners.
- 2) Make the teaching of writing functional and communicative.
- 3) Expose them to how to write first and then to different types of texts.
- 4) Expose them to functioning of writing as a system of communication.
- 5) Try to plan the tasks which are realistic, functional and communicative.
- 6) Expose them to the process of writing by actually going through it, including the sub skills of writing.
- 7) Motivate them to think and express their ideas.
 - a) Teach them grammar and vocabulary inclusively in the writing tasks.
- 9) Try to accept their ideas and also compositions.

After considering these thumb rules of writing, let's see various approaches to writing.

Approaches to Writing:

There are various approaches to teaching writing that are presented by Raimes (1983) as follows:

1) The Controlled to Free Approach:

In 1950s and early 1960, the audio- lingual method dominated second language learning which emphasized on speech and writing through mastering grammatical and syntactic forms.

Here, the students are given sentence exercises, then paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically, These controlled compositions then followed by correction of errors, so that it can lead to the free composition. Overall, this approach focuses on accuracy rather than fluency.

2) The Free Writing Approach:

This approach stresses writing quantity rather than quality. This focuses on fluency rather than accuracy. It is based on the principle that if once ideas are there, the organisation follows.

3) The Paragraph Pattern Approach:

This approach focuses on organisation by copying the paragraphs or model passages. It is based on the principle that in different culture or situations, people construct and organise communication with each other in different ways.

4) The Grammar-Syntax Organization Approach:

This approach stresses on simultaneous work on more than one composition feature. In a way, it is inclusive here that writing cannot be seen as composed of separate skills which are learned sequentially. So, students must be trained to pay attention to organization while they also work on the necessary grammar and syntax.

5) The Communicative Approach:

This approach focuses on the purpose of writing and the audience for it. They are given some tasks where they have to behave as writers so that they can learn by doing it.

- Why am I writing this?

- Who will read it?

Thus, this approach is quite functional in nature, which can provide the actual experience to the learners.

6) The Process Approach:

This approach shows the shift from product to process which shows:

- How do I write this?

- How do I get started?

Here, the students are trained to generate ideas for writing, to think of purpose, audience, ways of communication and so on.

In fact, it's a developmental process from generating ideas to expressing them, drafting, redrafting, organizing and so on. This process of writing can have three stages like: Pre-writing, Writing and Post-writing (Revising or Redrafting).

Now, Let's consider some examples of Tasks on Written Composition.

These tasks are just the examples for the Intermediate Level .but one can always use according to his/her purpose and requirement.

Task - I

Arrange the following words to make a meaningful sentence.

- a) I judgement the read now and give notes the have I will.
- b) The jumped man saved child the and.
- c) teacher boys The caught copying examination the in the.

Task - II

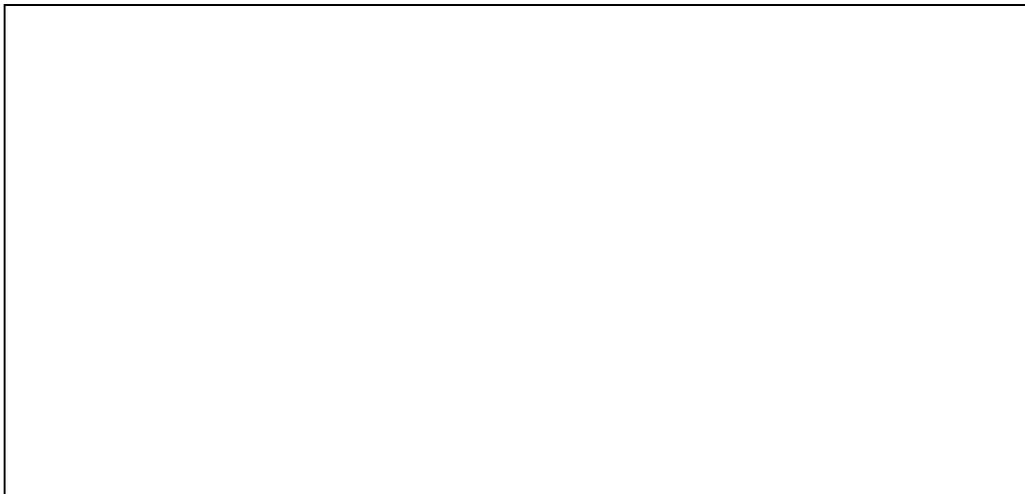
Work in pairs and arrange the sentences in a proper order to make a paragraph.

- a) The man tried his best to make the parrot teach but he failed.
- b) The parrot could speak everything except 'Catero' the name of the town.
- c) The man had a smart parrot.
- d) The next day he found two chickens dead and heard" Say Catero or I will kill you."
- e) He left the parrot with the chickens.
- f) At last he said, "Say Catero, or I'll kill you", continuously to the parrot.

Task - III

Draw a picture of a BIRD you like the most and write 5-6 sentences on it

My Favourite Bird



Task -IV

Show the picture of a group of people sitting somewhere and talking.

Ask the following questions and ask them to form a conversation based on it.

- a) Who do you think are talking?
- b) Where are they sitting?
- c) What are they talking about?

Make a conversation for the situation.

Task - V

Show them a series of pictures and ask them to form a story with a title.

Try to make it personalized writing by asking, " If you were there....."

Task- VI

A list of words (characters) is given below. Make a story by using those words with a suitable title.

A sparrow, the principal of your school, an ant, a lion and you.

Conclusion

So far, we have seen what writing is, the nature of writing, types of writing and so on. In fact, written mode is important for communicating our ideas, thoughts and even for recording the same. One can always read his/her writing and reflect on the ideas.

Writing is considered the secondary skill because it comes after the Speech which again makes writing more sophisticated as a skill. By sophisticated, I mean that writing needs proper planning and organization. One has to master the sub-skills of writing for a good and more expressive writer.

Since, the duty of the teacher is to teach writing effectively and enable the students acquire the writing skill with a view to making them expressive. Writing is a powerful mode of communication so one needs to acquire the skill. The teacher can always teach keeping the learners in mind, by making teaching functional and also by giving the proper purpose to the learners for writing.

References :

- Bassano, S. & Christison M. A., 1992. **Drawing Out : Creative, Personalized, Whole Language Activities**, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey.
- Byrne, D. 1982. **Teaching Writing Skills**, Longman Group Ltd.
- Freeman, S. 1977. **Written Communication in English**, Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta.
- Morrissey, F.A., **Write on ! Creative Writing as Language Practice**, An Article, English Dept., University of Berne.
- Rusenko, L.A. **Ways To Develop Writing Skills in ESP**, An Article, English Dept., University of Camaguey.
- **www.google.com** : key-words : writing, teaching writing