
**TEACHING EFFECTIVE WRITING SKILLS TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNERS (ELLs): A STUDY IN ELT**

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Abstract

Language is a medium of communication and people use a language to convey their views, opinions, thoughts, ideas, reactions, emotions and passions. People carry out their communication in order to fulfill their everyday needs. Language plays a vital role in sharing our ideas and feelings with others. Human beings are different from animals because of their oral and written communication skills. So, language has become an important tool of communication for human beings to convey their messages to others. Therefore, there is a need for the human beings to learn the language skills. In learning English also, the learners have to acquire all the four basic skills of it. Moreover, the English language learners (ELLs) have to concentrate more on these four skills, viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is considered the most difficult skill among these for the learners because of the complexity of the English language. In English language learning (ELL) environment, the learners find it difficult to produce well when they are given certain tasks in writing. There are several reasons why students have lack of written communication skills and some among them are the use of old-fashioned methods by the teachers, lack of proper motivation, large crowded classrooms,

lack of facilities and learners' attitude towards learning. The teachers of English have to study the problems of their ELLs and try to change their methods of teaching so that the learners can improve their writing skills. Moreover, the teachers have to focus on the innovative techniques of teaching writing so that the learners will follow them in order to develop their writing skills in English. Hence, the teachers should involve the ELLs in pair work or group work to develop their writing skills by embracing the latest techniques such as cooperative learning, collaborative learning and so on.

This paper sheds a light on the significance of effective writing skills and their characteristics in ELL environment. First of all, this paper explains the importance of language skills, especially, the skills involved in learning English. Then, it mainly focuses on writing skills which are the most difficult skills for the ELLs to acquire. Later, it mainly discusses effective writing skills and their characteristics in ELL environment

Keywords: activities; classrooms; ELL environment; ELLs; English classrooms; innovative; methods; teachers; writing skills.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed greater changes in communication and language plays a prominent role in human communication. Without language, people cannot communicate their ideas, thoughts, feelings, views, opinions, reactions, passions and emotions to the people living around them. There is no society that can exist without having a language. So, there is a need for the people to learn a language in order to communicate their ideas and feelings with their fellow human beings. Consequently, people have to learn a language and its skills to convey their messages clearly and effectively to the others. The real success of communication depends mainly on the way of expression. Language skills help human beings to get perfection in their communication. Furthermore, perfect learning of the skills of a language is the right key to open the lock of success in all fields in this modern world. As there is more is more importance to the language skills, many people try to acquire these skills by putting into practice. There is an old proverb which was derived from the culled wisdom of centuries saying, "Practice maketh a man perfect". There is no doubt that practice makes a person not only perfect but also skillful, adept, expert, proficient and even superior in a certain field. Therefore, the learners of any language have to put more emphasis on practice to get good knowledge of the language.

While learning a new language, learners face difficulties at the initial stages. It is due to the complexity of

structure, vocabulary, semantics, grammar and some other aspects. Some learners find it easy to learn a new language, whereas, the other find it more difficult. Hence, learning a new language involves a mixed experience and the learners have to put more efforts in learning the skills of the language in order to get a very good command over the language. It is a known fact that communication is possible only and when there is a language. If there is no language to communicate, it leads to the dearth of communication. Therefore, a language should exist in order to communicate our views, opinions, ideas, thoughts and feelings to the other people who live in this global world. When people have perfection in a language, they can communicate well with others and convince them in accomplishing their works. This perfection is achieved with a lot of practice and people have to spend more time on the basic skills of the language. The language skills are needed for people to communicate their messages effectively to the others. Effective communication is possible by acquiring all the language skills. Therefore, the learners of a language have to concentrate more on the language skills as they are the most important ones in developing both oral as well as written communication.

Due to globalization, the whole world has become a global village and people can communicate with other people who live in different states, regions and even countries. As different people of the world speak different languages, it is very difficult for people to learn all the languages spoken throughout the world. Hence, there should be a common

language for people to communicate with the people all around the globe. Since English is spoken all over the world and it has been an official language for some countries and also acting as lingua franca, people have to learn it and get mastery over it in order to fulfill their ambitions and desires and achieve their aims and goals. In order to learn the English language well, the learners have to learn the basic skills involved in it.

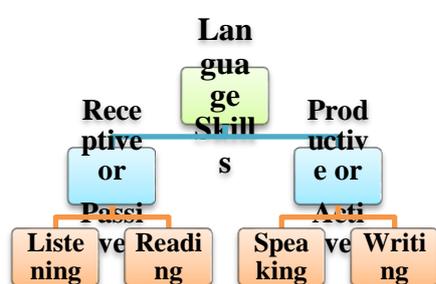


Fig: The Four Language Skills of English

To learn the English language, the learners need to learn all the four skills of it, i.e., LSRW (listening, speaking, reading and writing) skills. Among these four skills, each and every skill is very important for foreign or second language learners and they should not ignore any of these skills. The above figure discloses that these four skills are divided into two categories, viz., receptive or passive skills and productive or active skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills where the learners just receive and understand these skills and there is no need for the learners to produce language to do these. On contrast, speaking and writing are productive skills where learners have to produce language using these skills.

Moreover, speaking and writing are more visible to the others and are also controlled guided activities and the main focus of these skills is on accuracy. It is a fact that the speakers feel more comfortable when they speak in their first language, whereas their communication becomes apparent when they speak the second or foreign language. The same scenario reflects in learning English also. The learners when they want to learn English, they find many problems in acquiring the necessary skills of the language. Hence, the teachers have to put more efforts to attract the learners towards learning English in the English language learning (ELL) environment. Moreover, the learners have the possibility of improving, polishing and getting mastery over their English language skills using the internet.

To get mastery over the English language, the learners have to learn all the four language skills. The learners of English should not neglect any of these skills as each skill has its own importance. Among these four skills, listening is the first skill that the learners acquire initially. According to Hornby (2005) the act of listening means, “to pay attention to somebody/something that you can hear”. While acquiring the listening skills, most of the ELLs feel under unnecessary pressure to understand each and every word of the sentence and they find it difficult to understand what is spoken. So they should be more attentive and try to grasp only the important content of it and ignore the unnecessary one. In listening, the ELLs have to foster the skill of anticipation. In most of the everyday situations, the ELLs can get the help of the

speaker, the visual clues and the situation to decode the oral messages. In listening, the learners have to concentrate mainly on understanding the message thoroughly. To develop the listening skills of the students, the teachers have to encourage the learners to listen to the sounds of English so that the learners can learn the correct pronunciation of the words of English. Then the teachers have to adopt various strategies to make the learners to learn the listening skills. Listening is the skill that is used more often by the learners and they enjoy listening to dialogues, conversations and speeches. ELLs spend more time on listening than on the other skills because they just listen to them and there is no need to demonstrate them. Once he learners are good at listening, they will develop the remaining skills gradually. Therefore, the English teachers should adopt various strategies and techniques to develop the learners' listening skills in the ELL environment.

Speaking is considered to be one of the difficult skills of English where the learners have to speak in real time. Since the learners have to spontaneously respond to the speaker(s), they should have good knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structure of the language. Without oral communication, language may simply remain as a script. Language is a tool for communication and people use language to communicate their thoughts and ideas and at the same time to know the others' ideas also. The ELLs have to practice speaking in and outside the classrooms. Moreover, they have to work in groups in the classrooms to enhance their speaking skills. As regular practice improves the

speaking skills of the ELLs, the teachers have to engage them in group or pair activities. Moreover, the learners should be given more opportunities for the learners to speak in the classrooms. As Rivers asserts, "Speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication". It is true that people spend a lot of time on speaking than reading and writing. Therefore, the English teachers have to select different strategies to concentrate more on developing the speaking skills of ELLs.

Reading is considered to be a receptive skill and most of the ELLs read their subjects in English. Reading helps the learners improve their spelling, vocabulary, grammar and even writing. When learners read a lot, the sentence structure fixes in their minds and the brain immediately imitates the same structure. As a result, the learners produce similar sentence structures to convey their messages. While reading, the learners use the technique of skimming and scanning which foster them to read the desired text effectively and quickly. Learners grasp the gist of the text and draw conclusions about it. The learners also familiarize with different types of texts and jargons and also learn new vocabulary. Learners who read very fast can also perform well in speaking and writing. As most of the learners get information from newspapers, magazines and journals, the teachers should encourage them to read them in the classrooms to enhance their reading skills. Moreover, the learners should read their textbooks in order to perform well in their exams. Teachers should encourage the ELLs to read moral stories, short stories

and other interesting topics to improve the learners' reading skills. As reading continues throughout the life of any individual, the English teachers have to apply different strategies to improve their ELLs' reading skills.

Writing is a productive skill and it is the most complex skill of the four language skills. The ELLs have put their thoughts and ideas in the form of writing as they cannot miss the information. Writing in English is considered the most difficult skill because of its complexity of structure and vocabulary. Moreover, the spelling system of words in the English language is entirely different from its pronunciation. As there is no one to one correspondence between the spelling and pronunciation, most of the ELLs find it difficult to write in English. Furthermore, the coherence and organization also important in writing paragraphs. The teachers should take up group activities in the classroom to develop the ELLs' writing skills so that the learners participate very actively in these activities and perform the given assignments well. As writing involves many essential things, the teachers have to train their learners to write small paragraphs in English. While the learners do their assignments, the teachers should assist them wherever they find any difficulty. It is the duty of the teachers to train the ELLs to prepare them to write better in English.

Review of Literature

Writing is considered the most important skills of English language. When compared to the other skills, writing seems to be the most difficult skill for the

ELLs as it involves many things in it. The ELLs find listening and reading are the easiest skills whereas they find speaking and writing are more difficult ones as they are productive skills. The learners have to work hard in acquiring these two skills as they need more practice. Hence the teachers have to think of alternative methods to teach these skills. Writing skill has undergone many developments and changes in the recent years. In this regard, Harmer (2007: 1) says, "Human activity of writing is a fairly recent development in the evolution of men and women ... some of the earliest writing found so far dates from about 5,500 years ago". In the early ages, people mostly depended on drawing several paintings and methods to represent different things which are directly connected to their daily lives, but they did not write anything. Subsequently it was only in the form of images, figures and pictures. Yule (2010: 212) asserts, "Human beings started to write some 20,000 to 25,000 years ago". Crystal says that ancient people used pictograms to represent different symbols. For instance, the symbol of ☀ represents the sun. Later on these pictograms have changed to be ideograms that play a vital role to become a part of writing system. In the development process of writing, it developed from picture-writing (pictograms) to idea-writing (ideograms) to word-writing (ideograms). Word-based writing system was chastely followed by the Sumerians. Pictographs were replaced by the alphabet in the Sinaitic word between 1700 and 1500 B.C. Then, Tien-Lcheu, the Chinese philosopher, invented the ink in 2697 B.C. and it became

common by 1200 B.C. And in the same year, paper was also invented in China.

essays and paragraphs or other assignments for exams”.

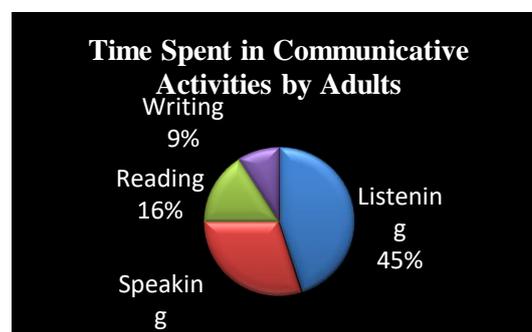
The Definition of Writing

According to Crystal (2006: 257), “Writing is a way of communicating which uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression”. And for Bloomfield (Cited in Crystal, 1994: 178), “Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks”. Moreover, Olshtain (1991: 235) says, “Writing as a communicative activity needs to be encouraged and nurtured during the language learner’s course of study”. Richards and Schmidt (2002) say, “Writing is viewed as a result of complex processes of planning, drafting, reviewing and revising”.

This means writing happens through various operations and finally it becomes the final draft. For that, the graphic symbols must be arranged according to some conventions in order to form words, and words to form sentences, and sentences to form paragraphs and essays. Accordingly, writing is not producing or making list of words, as inventories of items of a shopping list. "Although this shopping list may not seem to provide an example of sophisticated writing, it tells us something about the writing process”. The final achievement of writing should be linked with the unity of words or sentences that are arranged in a logical order and joined together to give appropriate meaning. In this regard, Bailey (2003: 1) states, “Learners at schools (and universities) must master the academic writing which was needed in writing

Writing: The Most Complex Skill for ELLs Learners

Writing is the most difficult and complex skill for the ELLs to get mastery over it. In this regard, Rivers and Temperley (1979: 263, Cited in Azzioui, 2009) assert, “To write so that one is really communicating a message isolated in place and time, is an art that requires consciously directed effort and deliberate change in language”. Besides the complexity and difficulty of writing, a perfect and regular training should be given to the ELLs.



This issue was thoroughly examined by Hedge (2000) and his results uncover, “All the time spent in communicative activities, adults devote 45% of their energies to listening, 30% to speaking, 16% to reading and 9% to writing”. The above diagram discloses that only 9% of adults spend their time on writing and the majority (91%) of them feels more stressed and cannot convey the message what they exactly want to express. It also shows that most of the ELLs have this stress in writing activities as writing involves more concentration

and a lot of practice. It is true that writing is more difficult than any other language skill and the learners have to get more command on both vocabulary and grammatical structures. In this regard, the ELLs have to put more efforts to acquire much vocabulary as well as more grammatical structures of English. Hence, the ELLs have to devote more time on writing skills and practice these skills with more devotion and dedication.

The Nature of Writing

According to Crystal (2006: 257), "Writing is a way of communicating which uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression". Writing is a very complex process and one must have the mastery over several levels of language including morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and discourse levels. When we compare writing with speaking, writing comprises different vocabulary and syntactic structures, many linguistic systems and also complex clauses. That is the reason many language experts consider writing the barometer of one's proficiency on a particular language. Furthermore, writing is a productive skill that needs to carry out the messages and the contextual meanings in the form of writing. Since writing is purely message-oriented, the writer's main goal is to convey the information appropriately, effectively and accurately to the readers. Also, the writer has to clearly express the ideas in his writing and the language that the writer uses must be very effective and there should not be any ambiguity in his writing. Moreover, the readers should feel comfortable while reading the text. At the

same time, the writer should convey his/her message to the readers in a simple language so that they can read the message and understand it thoroughly.

Effective Writing and its Characteristics

Writing is a complex process where it involves various components that are to be followed by the ELLs in order to prove themselves as good writers. The first and foremost thing is that the learners should concentrate mainly on their vocabulary and grammar. Once they know the fundamental grammatical structures and adequate vocabulary, the ELLs will certainly get some moral encouragement to start writing something in English. In this regard, the teachers should demonstrate the learners with some sample writings and train them how to write good sentences in English and how to organize these sentences to make good paragraphs. Then, the teachers have to encourage the learners to begin their writing with some simple topics of their interest. In the process of developing the ELLs' writing skills, first of all, the teachers have to demonstrate the characteristics of effective writing. Unless the ELLs are taught these characteristics of effective writing at their initial stages, later it will be highly impossible for the teachers to incorporate these characteristics in their writing. Hence, it is the duty of the teachers to inculcate the characteristics to their ELLs while they start writing at initial stages. The characteristics of effective writing are illustrated below.



Characteristics of Effective Writing Skills in English for ELLs

The above diagram unveils that there are certain characteristics of effective writing in English for ELLs. First of all, the teachers should pay more attention on the topic that they are going to give the learners. The teachers have to take the learners' need and interests into consideration while choosing the topics. Moreover, the teachers should suggest the current topics that the learners are more familiar with. For this purpose, the teachers have to read the newspapers and magazines where they get more information about the current topics. At the same time, the teachers have to frequently tell them about the recent developments in the contemporary society so that the learners can understand well about them and try to read them at their leisure time. So, it is very important for the teachers have to chat with the learners before choosing the topics. Once the learners agree with certain topics, then the teacher should give it to the learners to start writing on the topic.

Then the teachers should also teach how to write in English using certain vocabulary. The teachers have to demonstrate the

learners what type of vocabulary they have to choose when they start writing. As there are different terms used for different purposes, the learners are taught how to use the appropriate vocabulary that suits the situation. Once the learners know which vocabulary is suitable for a certain context, they will use them accurately in their writing. The vocabulary should be very catchy to the readers and it should be as simple as possible. The writers should concentrate more on the relevant synonyms instead of using the same word many a times. Therefore, the vocabulary used by the ELLs should be very rich and it should be appropriate to the context.

The next important point that makes the learners' writing more effective is the choice of grammatical structures. As there are a variety of structures that are used by the writers of English, the ELLs' main concentration should be on the use of different grammatical structures instead of using the monotonous structures in their writing. For this purpose, the teachers should teach various grammatical structures involved in writing English and train their ELLs in getting mastery over them. Once the learners are taught these structures, they have to put them into practice to use them relevantly according to the context. The teachers have to prepare their learners in practising the grammatical structures taught in their classrooms so that the learners will understand the structures well and use them according to the context.

Another important factor that influences the ELLs' writing skills is the right use of punctuation marks. It is a well-known fact that punctuation plays an

important role in writing English for ELLs as the wrong usage of punctuation not only leads the readers to misunderstanding the meaning of the sentence but also confuses them to grasp the right meaning of it according to the writers' view. As there is a lot of change in the meaning when punctuation marks change their place, the teachers should teach the learners how to use the punctuation marks well when they start writing in English. Since punctuation marks are very important in writing English, the ELLs have to be thorough with the usage of them in their writing assignments. Moreover, the teachers are also supposed to demonstrate the change of meaning when the punctuation marks are misplaced.

While writing on the given topic, another important aspect is the ideas of the learners should be with continuous flow and there should not be any diversion from the topic in between. Therefore, the learners should know the technique of writing down the important points related to the topic and they have to discuss these in the same paragraph. Furthermore, there should not be any gap in expressing these thoughts and they should be like the incessant drift that makes the readers to understand the concept well. Therefore, the teachers should train the learners to continue their writing with a good flow of thoughts in order to make their writing a well readable one.

The most important factor that makes the learners good writers is to link their ideas coherently in their writing. Just getting the ideas is not the complete idea of writing a text in English, but it also

involves organization of those ideas properly in the relevant context. As writing needs a lot of reading as well as more practice, the ELLs have to read as many texts as possible. In addition to their reading, they should also try to devote more time on writing. In this context, the teachers have to teach them how to organize their ideas properly and how to use the linking words to connect sentences and paragraphs in a systematic way. If the sentences are not well organized, the purpose of writing will not be fulfilled. Therefore, the teachers of English should pay more attention on linking their ideas logically according to the points discussed in the ELLs' writing. Moreover, the teachers should teach the ELLs how the linking devices are used in writing English texts so that they perform well in writing assignments in English.

Another important feature of effective writing that involves the ELL learners is the use of simple and easy language that the readers can understand. When the language used in writing is simple and easy, the readers will read the text very fast with a lot of motivation and interest. On the other hand, the readers feel uninterested when the text is with full of difficult and bombastic vocabulary. Hence, while writing a text, the learners have to concentrate on the readability of the text. The main aim of the writer should be on making more readers to read it. Moreover, when the text is written with simpler and easier language, it attracts and motivates a wider range of readers. Thus, while writing a text, the ELLs should keep in mind that it should attract, motivate and create more interest among the readers and

this is possible when the text is in a simple and easy language. Therefore, the duty of the teachers is to habituate the ELLs to write good English with simple and easy language so that the text will be available for a wider range of readers.

Another significant issue that makes the ELLs' writing effective is that the learners should adapt their writing suitable to the readers. It is a fact that unless the text makes any sense to the readers, there is no use to continue their writing in that way. So, the teachers should teach the learners the various techniques of attracting the attention of the learners and also teach them how to hold the grip of the readers. Then the learners pay more attention to the readers' needs and interests and try to write accordingly. As the influence of the readers play a major role in getting success of a writer's writing, the ELLs are advised to adapt the necessary steps that are suitable to their readers. As a result, the number of readers increases so that the writing also becomes more famous and the writer gets a good name and fame. Hence, the teachers have to train their learners in a way that their writings are more suitable for their readers.

Another important factor that influences effective writing in English is to engage the readers. In order to engage the readers in their writing, the ELLs have to think of various techniques of writing. The first and foremost thing that the ELLs keep in their mind is the interests of the readers about the written text. Furthermore, the readers also think whether the content is easy to understand or not. Moreover, they also take into consideration whether the

language used in the text is simple and easy to read or not and also check the grammatical structure of it. Byrne (2000) says, "Conscious effort must be made to equip language learners with writing skills which will enable them to organize their ideas so that a reader who is not present and even known to them can understand". Therefore, the ELLs should understand all these points and prepare their writing tasks in view of the needs and interests of the readers.

According to Rivers (1968, p.243), "Writing refers to the expression of ideas in a systematic way to organize the graphic conventions of the language; the ultimate aim of a writer at this stage is to be able to express him in a polished literary form which requires the utilization of a special vocabulary and certain refinement structure". According to Elite Olshtain in Celce (2001:207), writing as a communicative activity needs to be encouraged and nurtured during the language learner's course of study. This opinion is strengthened by Raimes who gave the reasons for teaching writing: "We frequently have to communicate with each other in writing" and "Writing reinforces grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary." Teaching writing is "a unique way to reinforce learning" (1983:3).

Conclusion

This paper has shed a light on the significance of effective writing skills and their characteristics in ELL environment. First of all, this paper has explained the

importance of language skills, especially, the skills involved in learning English. Then, it focused on writing skills which are the most difficult skills for the ELLs to acquire. Later, it mainly discusses the effective writing skills and their characteristics in ELL environment. Finally, the teachers as well as the ELLs have been suggested some important points to develop their writing skills.

There is no doubt that writing plays a vital role in the development of the ELLs' learning skills, but they have to practice a lot to get more command on the English language. The teachers of English should always introduce the interesting topics for the ELLs so that they can involve more on learning the language. Moreover, the English teachers have to adopt some more new techniques to improve the EFL/ESL learners' writing skills. When the teachers give a certain writing task to the learners, they have to suggest the learners how to express ideas and organize the given task. The teachers have to guide the learners with the process of writing that needs to divide the writing activity into several stages where each activity involves sub-skills in doing this process. Therefore, the teachers have to guide the learners properly in order to involve them in the activities with a lot of motivation and encouragement.

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