

Importance of Writing Skill to Develop Students' Communication Skill

Pulak Bora (pulakbora04@gmail.com)

Research Scholar, Department of English, Tezpur University, Assam, India



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee [JRSP-ELT \(2456-8104\)](http://www.jrspelt.com). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the **Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License**. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>). **Crossref/DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.54850/jrspelt.7.35.009>

Abstract: *Communication skills play a very important role in today's professional world. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most sought after skills in all the fields of work. To communicate effectively, one must have effective language skill, as language is the key to communication. Though we can communicate with non-verbal language like signs and gestures, but without language, communication will be ineffective. Language enables interaction which as a result, facilitates the process of communication. Therefore, one's ability to communicate is directly linked with one's ability to use the language. Language is a skill; therefore, to learn a language, one must learn the skills of language. Language has four sub skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these four sub skills, English language learners (ELL) find writing as a difficult skill. There is a growing concern in today's academic and professional world that today's students or professional are focusing less on the writing skill. Due to the lack of practice or perceived lack of importance, writing as a skill is often overlooked. The present paper will attempt to find out the importance of writing skill and navigate various strategies and techniques to enhance the writing skill.*

Keywords: Communication Skills, English Language Learners, ESL, Writing Skills

Introduction

Communication skills play a very important role in today's professional world. Communication connects us to the outer world as well as with our inner self. The ability to communicate our ideas effectively is one element that governs almost everything in our life both personal life and our professional life. In the present day world of rapid globalization and technological advancement, communication skill has emerged to play a dominant role. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most sought after skills in all the fields of work. Be it a student or a professional, everybody needs to develop their communication skills so that they can effectively express their ideas. Be it spoken or written, communication skills enable one to represent them fairly to achieve excellence. To communicate effectively, one must have effective language skill, as language is the key to effective communication. Though we can communicate with non-verbal language like signs and gestures, but without language, communication skill will be ineffective because language enables one to give a definitive shape to one's thoughts, ideas, knowledge, emotions, and desires. Language enables interaction among the receiver and sender which as a result, facilitates the process of communication. Therefore, one's ability to communicate is directly linked with one's ability to use the language.

Language as a Tool of Communication

Language arose out of human need to communicate. Language makes effective communication possible. As observed by Raman and Sharma, (2011), one does not need to be a linguist in order to acquire good language skills, but having the basic knowledge of the language will certainly help to understand the intricacies of writing and speaking clearly. Language is considered to be a skill therefore, to learn a language one must learn the skills of language. For example, to learn a foreign or a second language (L2) such as English, one must learn the skills of it to become effective communicators. Language has four sub skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these four sub skills: listening and reading are considered to be receptive skills whereas, speaking and writing are considered to be productive skills. Developing a language will require developing all the four sub skills.

Importance of English Language

There are approximately 6500 spoken languages in the world today. Among all these languages, English is the second most spoken language in the world (Rao, 2019). English is the only language which is widely spoken all over the world and it is the most commonly studied foreign language in the world. Apart from being an international language, English is the language of business, trade and commerce, international relationships, higher education, employment, internet, travel and tourism, scientific research, engineering and technology and so on. Learning English today not only helps us to move along with the changing time, but also helps us in reaching out to people from across the world. Having a good English skill is the need of the hour and learning it will help one to achieve growth and success in all spheres of life.

Sub Skills of Language

English is studied as a second language (L2) in India, and is used as a medium of instruction in school, colleges, and universities. Learning the L2 unlike the first language (L1) is not easy. The route to L2 learning is not predetermined and nor can we predict the factors that might singlehandedly help in the L2 acquisition. Therefore, English language learners (ELL) need more practice and hard work in acquiring the language. In order to communicate well in English, the ELLs have to acquire all the four skills of the English language, viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among these four skills, listening and reading are called receptive or passive skills since the ELLs simply receive and understand these skills and manifest it via speaking and writing, the productive or active skills. Since the ELLs ought to produce the language using these two skills therefore, learning them is central to achieving effective communicative competence. English as a second language learners feel more comfortable while speaking and writing in their mother tongue, but their communication becomes apparent while they are speaking or writing in English. While learning English, ELLs face various problems in learning the basic skills of the English language. Out of these four basic skills, an ELL learner faces more challenges in developing the writing skill. Writing as skill requires more time and practice to master. Due to the complexity of its phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic structure (Rao, 2019), ELLs often face challenges in developing it. There is a growing concern in today's academic and professional world that, today's students or professionals are focusing less on the writing skill. Due to the lack of practice or importance given to building it, writing as a skill has taken a back seat. The present paper will attempt to find out the importance of writing skill and navigate various strategies and techniques to enhance the writing skill

Advantages of Writing Skill

As mentioned by Richards & Renandya (2002), Writing includes numerous considerations and choices to be made regarding "higher lever skills", such as content, structure and organization, and "lower level skills", such as punctuation, choice of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures. Writing enables a learner to develop their thinking and imaginative abilities and allows them to record their ideas. Writings enables record keeping which ensures documentation. This as a result, helps the learner to recover or revisit their ideas by bringing back their old and almost forgotten memories for use in the present. Writing as skill unlike speaking, allows the learner to ideate and create words and sentences after due diligence. It provides an order to one's thoughts and enables it to be presented in a structure way. While writing, a learner can choose the right vocabulary, form the right sentence construction, apply cohesion and present the ideas in a correct full way.

Writing not only helps a student in their academic pursuit, but also helps an employee to express their ideas effectively. If a student has good writing skill, it will not only help them in working on their grades, but will also prepare them for the professional world. Writing will help learners to learn how to draft personal and official letters. Learners will be able to prepare their resumes or CVs attractively. Writing helps learners in building their analytical, rational and critical thinking skills. Writing will help in

building report writing skills and help in improving learner's presentation skills. Practicing writing will help the learners to answer the questions accurately in the routine and competitive exams. It will help learners to perform well in their competitive exams and interviews. Writing enables the learners to be more eloquent, concise and elegant than their actual speech, which as a result will eventually help in building effective oral communication skill.

Common Errors in Writing

Class room teaching and learning provides the necessary learning ground for a learner to identify, assess, and work on their writing errors. But, a workplace expects its employees to be effective writers so that it does not hinder the regular day to day affairs of the organization by causing unwanted communication error. Errors place an important role in the L2 acquisition process. According to researchers, errors are crucial in identifying the learner's ability in achieving their goals and determining how far the learners have advanced and what remains to be learned and taught, Coder, (1967). Identifying the errors will help the English language teacher to be better equipped, more sensitive and aware of the difficulties faced by students while writing. This as a result, will enable the English language teacher to apply corrective measures and help in minimizing the occurrence of error.

Let Us Look At Some of the Common Errors in Writing

Composition error: Most learners have issues in the process of organizing their piece of writing. It is commonly observed that, learners find it difficult to compose on their own. And even if they do, there are many run-on sentences. From choosing the words to framing sentences and eventually forming paragraphs to build text, learners often struggle to create it by maintain coherence.

Grammatical error: In order to be correct, it important that a sentence has less grammatical errors. Understanding the language grammar is essential for a learner to write correctly. Some of the common grammatical errors are: sentence structure, verb tense form, voice; active and passive voice, subject-verb agreement, word order, preposition, articles, plurality, possessive case, person; first, second, and third person.

Punctuation: Punctuation plays a crucial role in business English writing. Following the rules of punctuation is instrumental in bringing clarity to writing. While careful use of punctuation enhances the meaning of what we write, where else, careless usage or no usage of it can confuse our writing. It is commonly observed that, students lacks proper knowledge of using the commas, colon, semi colon, ellipsis, parenthesis, hyphens, dashes, exclamatory marks, full stop, etc. which as a result affects the meaning of a text and hampers the overall tonality.

Spelling: It is the act of correctly assembling the letters in a word which is an essential feature in successful writing. Spelling is not only important for achieving clarity in our writing but also helps in determining the merit of communication. Correctly spelt words not only indicate strong literacy development but also enhance one's employment opportunities. A misspelled word, terminology, phrase, address, etc. in business writing communication can have serious implications on the sender's competence and can tarnish the reputation of both the employee and the organization. Due to the lack of practice in writing, spelling errors have become a common place in writing.

Diction: Diction refers to the choice of words one use while speaking or writing. In order to achieve accuracy in business English writing, it is important that the right word is used. Words are ambiguous in nature, that is, a word that has almost the same denotation (dictionary definition) can have very different connotations (implied meanings). This is particularly true in business writing because words and terminology can evolve a nuanced meaning that describes a particular idea, concept, or phenomenon derived from the particular organizational setup.

Tone: The overall tone refers to the attitude conveyed in a piece of writing. Due to the asynchronous nature of writing, it is important that the writer keeps in mind the tonality of the writing. Tone in writing can be formal, informal and semi-formal, which largely indicate the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Tone is not only implied through the right choice of words, but also through the length of a text, and the use of acronyms etc. It is commonly observed that, a student often uses colloquial or regional words in formal writing thus by, misplacing the tone of the writing.

Effective Teaching of Writing to ELL

Writing as a skill requires continuous practice on the part of the learner to develop. It is well known to all that teaching writing skills is one of the complex tasks for any English language teachers. Learners too find it challenging to get good command over writing skills because of its complexity in spelling, grammatical structure, usage, coherence, organization and so on. As (Rao, 2019) says, “The teachers should understand the level of the students and try to adopt relevant teaching strategies of improving their writing skills that are more suitable for them. Some of the techniques, methods or approaches that can be used in the classroom to develop and practice writing skill are as follows.

Comprehension activities: English syllabus should be designed in such a way that it incorporates many comprehension activities within the lessons. A communicative English syllabus enables the learners to focus on all the four sub skills of language. The English language teacher should look in to all the comprehension exercises and if possible, adapt and create more activities focusing on writing to build up the comprehension skills of the learners. Exercises on grammar and sentence construction should be methodically taught, whereas, spelling and punctuation rules should be continuously assessed.

Note taking: It is the act of recording information from different sources from the purpose of writing. Actively taking notes in the class will help the learners to work on their writing. It will not only enable them to prepare answers for exam or help in their academic success, but also to build the habit of writing. Actively taking notes in the class can help in better understanding of the concepts. Good note-taking will improve learner’s focus and build active listening skills. It will also help in the comprehension of material, and retention.

Story writing: ELLs should be encouraged to write small stories. These stories can be either familiar or creative. Allowing the learners to create their own stories will help in strengthening their imagination and creative powers. Story writing exercises can be conducted in various forms. It can be individual, pair, or a group activity. Stories can be written after orally presenting the outlines, showing pictures or providing content words for navigational support. Either of the ways, story writing will help the learners to build the composition skill and allow them to write more freely.

Translation: It is the process of rendering written content from one language to another. In a multilingual classroom where learners struggle with writing in English, translation activity can empower a learner to learn English from their already available languages. Modern translation activity from L1 to L2 is seen as an effective tool of language learning. If done in groups, translation activities can help in building communicative competence by focusing on accuracy and clarity.

Dictogloss activities: This is also known as running dictation activity. Dictogloss is a classroom dictation activity where learners listen to a passage, note down key words and then work together to create a reconstructed version of the text. The aim of a dictogloss activity is to build learner’s listening and writing skills. It enables a learner to recreate a heard text in their own way. This activity can be done in groups or individual. Apart from it, adding language games focusing on writing and creating on activity based learning will help the learners to focus more on writing and build their competence in it.

Conclusion

The biggest challenge faced by students at their workplace is when they are asked to communicate through writing. Most employers in business organizations stress the importance of written communication as they feel that, most of their employees face difficulty in writing due to their lack of training in the target situation. (Dilley 265-270) believes students entering business today are seriously deficient in their ability to express themselves effectively in writing. This in a nutshell summarizes the need for developing the writing skill. Writing as a skill is crucial to both students and professionals. Hence, it is only imperative that English classrooms shift their focus on the need to develop the writing skill. There is an unknown apprehension of learners towards writing; therefore, English language teachers will have to create avenues in the class for practicing writing. A serious rethinking is required to bring back old and new practices for developing writing skill; practices and activities not only conducive for a communicative classroom but also for enhanced skill development.

References

- Boozer, D. W. (1984). An Experimental Study of Written Communication Apprehension & Language Choice in a Business Setting. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, Vol 5, 115-130.
- Brimi, H. (2012). Teaching Writing in the Shadow of Standardized Writing Assessment: An Exploratory Study. *American Secondary Education*, Vol 41(No 1), 52-77.
- Chemcharatsri, P. B. (2010). On Teaching Writing in Thailand. *Writing on the Edge*, Vol 21(No 1), 18-26.
- Corder, S. P. (1967). The Significance of Learner's Error. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 161-170.
- Dilley, D. R. (1961). A Business Managers Look at Business Writing. *The English Journal*, Vol 50(No 4), 265-270.
- Effective Teaching of Writing Skills to the English to the English Language Learners. (2019). *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*, 6(4), 196-204.
- Gere, A. R. (1977). Writing & Writing. *The English Journal*, Vol 66(No 8), 60-64.
- Hennelly, J. (1977). Business Writing where it Counts. *National Council of Teachers of English*, Vol 73(No 2), 60-64.
- Hinds, S. J. (1987). Business Letter Writing: English, French & Japanese. *Teaching of English to Students of Other Language Quarterly*, Vol 21(No 2), 327-349.
- Keene, M. (1986). Style in Readability in Business Writing. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, Vol 6, 197-200.
- Kogen, M. (1990). Writing in the Business Profession. *Technical Communication*, Vol 37(No 2), 164-170.
- Mckay, S. (1979). Communicative Writing. *Teaching of English to Students of Other Languages Quarterly*, Vol 13(No 1), 73-80.
- Michaud, S. R. (2015). Writing about Writing and the Multimajor Professional Writing Course. *College Composition & Communication Volume*, Vol 66(No 3), 427-457.
- Murphy, K. M. (1962). Business Writing in the English Department. *College English*, Vol 23(No 6), 486-489.
- Odell, L. (1980). Business Writing: Observation & Implications for Teaching Composition. *Taylor & Francis, Ltd*, Vol 19(No 3), 225-323.
- Olson, G. A. (1986). Teaching Business Writing. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, Vol 6(No 1), 205-207.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2017). Most Common Formal Grammatical Errors Committed by Authors. *Journal of Educational Issues*, Vol 3(No 1), 109-140.

-
- Rainey, K. T. (1999). Doctoral Research in Technical, Scientific, and Business Communication. *Technical Communication*, Vol 46 (No 4), 501-531.
- Rao, P. S. (2019). Effective Teaching of Writing Skills to English Language Learners. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*, 196-204.
- Renandya, J. C. (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Russell, C. G. (2001). Teaching Business Communication. *A Review of General Semantics*, Vol 58(No 1), 47-51.
- Sharma, M. R. (2011). *Technical Communication*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Shelley, A. B. (1962). Accrediation of Business Writing for English. *College English*, Vol 23(No 6), 489-492.
- Tirabass, M. C.-H. (2009). Teaching Writing for the 'Real World': Community & Workplace Writing. *The English Journal*, Vol 98(No 5), 72-80.
- Warren, W. B. (1999). Warren on Writing, Writing & Teaching Writing. *The Sewanee Review*, Vol 107(No 3), 453-457.
- Zeudema, J. B. (2013). Professional Writing in the English Classroom: Professional Collaborative Writing: Teaching, Writing, Learning together. *National Council of Teachers of English*, Vol 102(No 4), 107-110.