

Developing Writing Skill of B.Ed. Students through Class Test: An Action Research

Ram Nath Yadav*, Ph.D.
yadavramnath2025@gmail.com
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Abstract

Writing is an art and integral part of language teaching and learning. The present research study explores the development of writing skills especially "writing essay" through teacher correction technique and self analysis. As action research in nature aims to test the progress of English language learners while writing an essay, this study relates to the action research. It was seen development in students writing in post test than in pre-test after analysis of the data. The students (Ss1-Ss10) were found using the words in an increased order, proper use of mechanics, and grammatically correct sentences in their writing in each test made and committed less grammatical errors in post test than in pre-test. Regarding mechanics of writing, their writing was found systematic in case of punctuation, coherence, cohesion and organization as well. The teacher correction technique and self analysis were found productive in teaching writing through action research as a whole.

Keywords: *Writing, Class Test, Mechanics, Action Research, Student's Development*

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the four skills of language. It is a permanent record form of expression and as a means of communication. It is nothing more than the correct association of conventional graphic form of graphic symbols with sounds which have no significant importance for the writers. The symbols have to be arranged to form sentences so that it is highly developed form. It is

an act of creation of thinking process. It is output of mental effort. It refers to the expression of ideas in a consecutive way according to the message. We share our ideas and arouse our feelings to persuade and convince the audiences. For Rivers(1968,p.243),'' Writing refers to the expression of ideas in a consecutive way, according to the graphic convention of the language ; the ultimate aim of the writer at this stage is to be able to

* Dr. Yadav is a lecturer of English department at JSMMC, Lahan.

express him a literary which requires the utilization of a special vocabulary and certain refinements structures”.

Similarly, in the context of complexity Nunan says, ” Writing is extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate a control of a number of a variables simultaneously” (1992, p.36). A, Harmer (2006: 79-80) opines, ” Writing is a basic language skill, as important as speaking, listening and reading.” civilization once flourished. There is incomplete agreement about the meaning of the symbols that were discovered. Writing skill includes all the knowledge and abilities which are related to express the ideas through the written words. It is needed for students as it improves communication skills such as grammar, punctuation, gestures, paralinguistic, and so on , which are major parts of communication. Communication skill develops through writing as means of expressing our ideas and messages clearly and directly to our listeners. Teachers teach content knowledge, or semantic knowledge which is most important part of writing act because it controls the process of writing.

Class Test

Class Test is a teacher designed test which is used to examine the extent to which the

students have learnt from the instructions presented in the classroom. It is used to see how students are progressing towards achieving the objectives of the course which take a form of unit test or can be broken into well defined short objectives. It is also an examination of the fitting of the objectives and the contents to be presented in the classroom. Its result enables the teachers to understand the pace of learning of the students, effectiveness of his/her teaching, the progress that the students are making towards achieving the set objectives

Action research is a major source of teacher learning or teacher professional development. It refers to teacher conducted classroom research that seeks to clarify and resolve practical teaching issues. Halliday (2010), ”Action Research is the basic problem solving tool.”

Research Questions

Among all four skills of language teaching, writing skill covers the more weight age in compulsory English of B.Ed. First Year. The researcher found several problems in writing of the learners. In preliminary investigation, it was understood that they were very poor in writing skill. In that situation, the researcher thought to find out their problems on the basis of class test. This action research was done for finding the problems regarding “ essay writing”.

The research was conducted to find out the answers of the following questions:

1. Are the learners really weak in their writing ability?
2. Are there any alternative ways of teaching to improve their writing skills?
3. Will really they improve after taking class test?
4. What could be their final result of writing in word, and sentence level and the errors found in their writing?
5. Will they learn cohesive writing?

These above questions were raised to investigate the issues regarding essay writing as writing skill. These questions are addressed in analysis and finding section as well.

Statement of the Problem in the Context of Nepal

The learners take the English language as an academic subject rather than a language, they will be concerned only with passing the exam for getting an academic writing. Among different language skills, the students feel writing skill to be the most difficult in real practice and in the examination. It is mostly assigned as homework in teaching learning activities and the answer made by the teacher is supposed to be final and correct. The students depend mostly on teacher's notes, guess papers, general books where

very few consulted reference resources. In this context, the only solution lies in the continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills. If the learners have the skills and habit of learning independently, they will be able to face the challenges. Lack of independent learning habit in the students is a major problem for total education system in Nepal. Therefore, the English language teaching needs to be rethought from the eyes of teachers and students as well.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were to find out whether the students develop their writing skill through the strategies of class test, and to forward some pedagogical suggestions as well as techniques regarding class test based on the findings of the research.

Methodology/Methods

“Action Research” helps to develop the performance of students. It is an appropriate tool that is used for educational sectors in 21st century to find out ability of the learners. Its main objective is to solve classroom problems and do better in future. Richard and Farrell (2000, p.171) say, “Action research refers to a systematic approach to carrying out investigations and collecting information that is designed to illuminate an issue or problem and to expand and improve classroom practice.” The process allows

them to experience problem solving and to model it for their students. The carefully collect data to diagnose problems, search for solutions, take action on promising possibilities, and monitor whether and how well the action worked.

Basic Steps of Action Research

Step 1- selecting a focus

Step 2- clarifying theories

Step 3- identifying research questions

Step 4- collecting data

Step 5- analyzing data

Step 6 - reporting results

Step7- taking informed action [www.ascd.org>publications>books>chapters](http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/chapters)

Five Phases of Action Research

Phase 1- Problem Identification

Phase 2 - Plan of Action

Phase 3- Data Collection

Phase 4- Analysis of Data

Phase 5- Plan for Future Action
[pd.madison.k12.wi.us>node 100](http://pd.madison.k12.wi.us/node/100)

Test is regarded as an attempt to see whether the things taught have been learnt. It is directly concerned with teaching learning activities. Its main function is to evaluate the performance of learners. Harrison, A. (1991),” A test is seen as a natural extension of classroom work, providing teacher and student with useful information that can serve each as a basis for improvement.” Similarly,

Nunan (1989) asserts a Test is as much a part of language teaching as are the materials, syllabus and approach. Thus, Test is a measuring instrument which is used to compare an individual with other individuals of the same group. It can have some formal procedures for measuring ability, knowledge or measuring ability, knowledge, or performance of testees. It is used as a means to:

1. give the teacher information about whether the learners are at the moment , to decide what to teach ;
2. give the learners information about what they know so that they also have an awareness of what they need to learn or review;
3. motivate learners to learn or review specific material
4. get learners to make an effort in doing the test itself, which themselves may actually provide useful review or practice
5. Provide learners with a sense of achievement and progress in their learning.

Essay as Writing Skill

“An essay should be written in a flowing manner with each sentence following on a logically from the previous one and with appropriate signposts to guide the readers. It is written composition giving expression to one’s own personal ideas or opinions on same topics”.

www.slideshare.net/befriends/essay-writing-32971816

A short piece of writing that tells a person's thoughts or opinions about a subject. It is a form of prose writing that aims to say something. "The essay is often the most important part of your application. It gives the scholarship committee a sense of who you are and your dedication to your goals. You'll want to make sure that your scholarship essay is the best it can possibly be.

Tips to keep in mind while writing essay:

1. Read the instructions thoroughly and make sure you completely understand them before you start writing.
2. Think about what you are going to write and organize your thoughts into an outline.
3. Write your essay by elaborating on each point you include in your outline.
4. Use clear, concise, and simple language throughout your essay.
5. When you have finished, read the question again and then read your essay to make sure that the essay addresses your point. Reading is one of the best ways to start working out those writing muscles. It becomes a skill when we have read a lot of different things that give us new

perspectives or challenge our thoughts. An essay is not a tweet or a text, and your word choices matter.

Result and Discussion

Writing Process

A Process in process writing, graphic symbols are re-arranged in the large units as words and sentences are arranged in sequential order. Byrne (1988) says, "Produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways." A good writer always keeps the audience in mind who he/she is writing for and why he is writing are two important components. Audience and purpose keep the writer in right track. The process of writing is highly individualistic. The teacher re-invents any teaching procedures in which teacher and students are appropriate for development of writing skill. The teacher should be a linguistic judge in process writing when the students develop their writing proficiency. She/he will provide proper linguistic forms, experiences, ideas, attitudes and feelings. The process writing demands conscious intellectual effort. The process writing gives an insight into what it is involved in the writing which displays language proficiency.

The writer always follows the essentials of writing which are spellings and mechanics of writing or graphological

resources. Addition or omission of one letter to another can change the entire meaning. It requires the ability to spell in English. Punctuation helps to clarify the meaning and understand the text. We cannot understand the text without punctuation. The writer should write grammatically correct sentences for comprehensible writing, suitable words and proper use of grammar. Harris (1993) asserts, "Writing is the process, which occurs over a period of time, particularly if we take into account." If we write any essays, we need the process of writing. The writer provides a shape by using raw materials onto coherent message. Writing is a process of matching of matter with manner. White and Arndt (1993) state, "The processes of writing are: Generating Ideas, Focusing, Structuring, Drafting, Evaluating and Re-Viewing".

Context of the Study

The study is related to the measures of frequency and analysis of errors frequency at word and sentence level in relation to the mechanics of writing for those students who are studying in B.Ed. First Year at J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus, Lahan, Siraha as an action research. As a branch of applied linguistics, error analysis sets out to demonstrate that errors of many learners were not due to their mother tongue but are reflected as universal learning strategies. However, error is something specific that results

from incomplete knowledge and lack of main task in this research was to look the progressive change of writing skill of English.

Data Collection, Tools and Procedures

The population for the study consists of ten students from B. Ed. First year of J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan, Siraha. Test items were the main tools used for data collection as primary sources. The tool was used to elicit the data involved in pre- test and post.

The students were selected purposively as well as by using simple random sampling procedure. The study was limited to a bachelor level of community campus, J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan, Siraha. The study was limited in the word level, sentence level, and grammatical level, number of paragraphs, punctuation marks, cohesion and coherence. Only two techniques: peer and teacher correction techniques were employed.

Table No.1: Analysis of the Students' Development on Writing Skills (Writing Essay) through Class Test

Ss	Mechanics of writing									
	Total No. of essay topic		Use of punctuation Coherence in writing		Sentential Arrangements					
	Pre-Test	Post test	Pre-test	Post test	Cohesion in writing		Organization in writing		Pre-test	Post-test
					Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test		
Ss1	1	1	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	Systematic
Ss2	1	1	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic
Ss3	1	1	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic	systematic
Ss4	1	1	Haphazard	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic	unsystematic
Ss5	1	1	systematic	unsystematic	Haphazard	unsystematic	Haphazard	unsystematic	Haphazard	unsystematic
Ss6	1	1	Haphazard	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic
Ss7	1	1	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic
Ss8	1	1	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic
Ss9	1	1	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic
Ss10	1	1	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic	unsystematic	systematic

This section deals with the data analysis which was collected from pre-test and post-test from the selected sample. In this section, data are analyzed using descriptive approach and statistical tool like measures of frequency count is used to show it more vividly. So, this section includes the analysis and interpretation of data to fulfill the objectives. In Table 1, there were 10 students (Ss1-Ss10) involved in this action research. They were asked only one essay to be written in pre-test and post-test as well. The writing proficiency was tested on the basis of "mechanics of writing" such as use of punctuation marks, coherence in writing, cohesion in writing, organization in writing, total number of words, total number of ungrammatical words, total number of sentences and total number of ungrammatical sentences.

Table No.2**Analysis of the Students Development on Writing Skills on Grammatical Units through Teacher Correction Strategies**

S.N.	No. of Essay Topics	Use of Grammatical Items							
		Total No. of Words		Total No. of Ungrammatical Words		Total No. of Sentences		Total No. of Ungrammatical Sentences	
		PRT	POT	PRT	POT	PRT	POT	PRT	POT
Ss1	1/1	250	275	4	3	65	75	25	15
Ss2	1/1	255	280	5	3	85	90	30	27
Ss3	1/1	240	250	6	5	57	60	15	12
Ss4	1/1	135	140	7	4	45	40	13	11
Ss5	1/1	225	230	9	6	77	79	14	10
Ss6	1/1	235	240	10	7	70	73	12	11
Ss7	1/1	260	263	12	9	70	73	15	13
Ss8	1/1	305	297	5	3	70	79	9	8
Ss9	1/1	299	300	9	6	75	70	9	7
Ss10	1/1	300	299	5	3	65	64	7	5

QS = Questions, PRT = Pre-Test, POT = Post Test

After completion of the analysis and interpretation of the data, Following are the major findings of the study:

1. The overall performance of the learners acquiring and developing writing skill was found satisfactory in almost all the tests in an increasing order.
 2. All the learners (Ss 1- Ss 10) who earlier level on using the words in their writing in each test and made less grammatical errors in post test comparison to pre test.
 3. Regarding coherence and mechanics, they increased the level of progress in their writing in case of punctuation as well as cohesion.
 4. Most of the students were found using grammatically appropriate vocabulary in their writing in the final post test analysis than they used in pre-test.
 5. The students were found meaningful.
 6. Regarding the use of paragraph. A class test is defined as any credit-bearing examination that is organized within a school or department. It is expected that as far as is practicable, class test will be conducted under the same rigorous conditions as for university examinations. “
- A test or examination is an educational assessment intended to measure a test taker’s knowledge, skill, aptitude, physical fitness, or classification in many other topics. A test may be administered verbally, on

paper, on computer, or in a student taking a scholarship examination in a classroom”.

(www.prepscholar.com>gre>blog>graduateschool...),”

The Table No. 2 provides a holistic picture of frequency count of total number of words , total number of ungrammatical words, total number of sentences and total number of ungrammatical sentences in writing skills made by the students in each test. It has been found that the students increased in the use of number of words in their writing in post- test than in pre-test as shown in Table No. 2. Similarly, students made less error in the post-test than in pre-test. Likewise, using total number of sentences too, all the students wrote more sentences in post-test to explain the given question than in pre-test. Regarding the case of committing ungrammatical sentences, less error were found in each pre-test and in post test as well.

Analysis

Teacher plays a vital role in colleges/ campuses. He or she takes class test while he or she is teaching in the classroom. According to the data mentioned in this research, the students develop their proficiency level through class test. As the objective of this research is to find out whether the students improve their teaching -learning activities through class test, it has been proved that class test is very fruitful in B.Ed. Level to develop their ability.

Conclusion

Many learners feel that they are weak in speaking skill but really, they are weaker in writing skill than they think as they should follow different kinds of features of writing such as coherence, cohesion and mechanics as well. Teacher assigns writing as homework giving it less preference and mostly focusing on the transformations which are performed in the class but the examination is highly based on testing proficiency. Thus, writing is an art which is developed in the classroom through class test. It is a very complex process which requires many composite skills like mental, psychological, rhetorical and critical as well. A test or written examination is a technique to assess students' knowledge, skills, or abilities ... It is generally recognized that these commonly used tests focus on deficits and can provide a teacher with only a limited view of students' achieved knowledge during a semester course or class (Slater, 1997) (www.scienceeducation.com/topics/social-sciences/written...) No doubt, writing skill especially composition/essay writing needs to be developed several literary terms as well as figure of speech. In Richards (1986, p.36) words writing refers to the, " Expression of ideas in a consecutive way, according to the graphic convention of the language; ultimate goal of the writer at this stage is to be able to express him in a polished literary form which requires the utilization of special vocabulary and certain refinement structures."

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APPENDICES

Appendix - i

Test-Items

This test item has been prepared for the authentic data to achieve the objectives of the study titled'' Developing Writing Skill through Class Test: An Action Research''. I hope your co-operation will be a great contribution in the accomplishment of my research.

Researcher Personal Information

Name:

Gender: Male Female

1. Compare two novelists and their works. Explore the authors' characters and their styles. What makes each novelist memorable?
- OR
- What are the health effects of exercising? How does exercise benefit people? Are there people who exercise too much? Explain.

Appendix - ii

Sample Lesson Plan

Campus : J.S.Murarka Multiple Campus Lahan, Siraha

Level : B.Ed. FirstYear

Date : .../.../.....

Subject : English

Time : 1 hour

Specific Objectives

On the completion of this topic, students will be able to -define an essay and tell characteristics of an essay

- use of Mechanics

Materials

- Daily used materials
- sentence cards including the definition of an essay

Activities

- The teacher gives a topic of an essay to write.
- Then he will give the idea that it is an essay and introduce the the present topic i.e. introduction of an essay.
- He will show the definition of an essay in the sentence cards and writes on the white board.
- He will discuss about the topic with the students.
- Then he will ask the students about the characteristics and body paragraphs. He will interact about writing body paragraphs in detail.

Evaluation

The teacher will ask the students to write an essay about in 350 words.

Appendix - iii

1. **Systematic:** The students can produce clear, well- structured sentences as well as proper use of organization, coherence and cohesion. They use proper use of vocabulary. They have their own voice in writing.
2. **Unsystematic:** Their writing does not contain variety of sentence structures. Range of vocabulary is rather low. There are grammatical errors.
3. **Haphazard:** Students may write single word combination. The level of language is too low. It is very difficult to understand intended meaning of the essay. Answer is irrelevant so, it is very difficult to understand actual meaning to the audiences.