

Problems and Practical Needs of Writing Skill in EFL Context: An Analysis of Iranian Students of Aligarh Muslim University

Umme Salma

Ph.D. Scholar (ELT) Department of English Aligarh Muslim University (A.M.U) Aligarh, U.P. India

Abstract: *The study attempts to examine the problems of writing skill in EFL (English as Foreign Language) context with reference to Iranian students of Aligarh Muslim University (A.M.U.) and also identify the practical needs of it. In Iran where English is treated as foreign language, it seems difficult for the learners. In this EFL context, as there is no use of English language in real-life situation the learner are facing plenty of problems while writing. To meet the objectives of this study a questionnaire is provided to the Iranian learners of A.M.U. to find out the difficulties and practical needs of the learners.*

Keywords: *EFL context, Iranian students, Problems and Practical needs, Writing skill.*

I. Introduction

Writing skill is an important part of communication. "Writing is the expression of feelings, thoughts, desires and plans in black and white" (Akkaya & Kirmiz cited in Gholaminejad et al. 2013, 1138). In the process of teaching and learning, writing plays a significant role through which learners can be assessed. It is considered as the most difficult among four major skills of English language i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As every writer should have a balance among several aspects in his/her writing like purpose, content, audience, organization, vocabulary, mechanics etc., writing seems difficult for both native and non-native learners (Jahin & Idrees, 2012). In EFL context as English is foreign language and there is no practical use of it, writing skill becomes most challenging task to the learners. In a language learning setting of Iran where English is treated as foreign language writing skill gets a very low amount of importance. In Iran the English syllabus which is following in the institutions is basically traditional in nature. The government of Iran has prescribed the syllabus and textbooks and it mainly focuses on grammar, vocabulary, reading skill; and listening, speaking and mainly writing skill do not get much importance. So in this EFL setting learners need to practice writing skill more to improve it and to get an effective result.

II. Objectives

1. To find out the difficulties regarding writing skill faced by EFL learners with special reference to Iranian students of A.M.U.
2. To identify the practical needs of writing skill in this particular context.

III. Literature Review

Various studies have revealed the position of writing skill in EFL context. Writing is considered very difficult, complex and challenging skill to master (Graham, Harris & Mason, 2005). Azizifar, Koosha and Lotfi (2010) did an analysis of Iranian English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks and it showed that the materials which are prescribed very limited to mechanical drills and fail to motivate the learners to develop communicative skills.

On one hand, Dastjerdi and Samian (2011: 65-76) said, "Iranian EFL learners has frequent cohesion anomalies which they attributed to the learners poor linguistic (specially syntactic and semantic) awareness as well as inaccurate knowledge of English cohesion rules". On the other hand, it is found that the EFL learners of Iran are facing various problems like, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, organization etc. (Shokrpour & Fallahzadeh, 2007).

Another scholars identified that the EFL learners' inability to communicate in English and "their weakness in English proficiency which influences their academic success, specially in writing skill is necessary to convey their knowledge" (Hosseini et al. 2013: 02). To realize the importance of writing Suleiman (cited in Hosseini et al. 2013: 2) states that "writing is a central element of language... and language arts program must consider the multidimensional nature of writing in instructional practices, assessment and language development".

IV. Methodology

A questionnaire has been used to fulfill the objectives of this study and it was distributed among the twenty Iranian students of A.M.U. The questionnaire carries both open-ended and close-ended questions in it and also two subjective type questions are there.

V. Result And Discussion

A questionnaire which helps to analyze the challenges and as it is divided into four sections the analysis is also given below in four parts:-

V.I Section-A

On the basis of the responses of 20 respondents it is found that the highest i.e. 40% of responses say reading skill gets the most emphasis in EFL context of Iran and 30% is gone for writing. And the purpose of their writing skill in English is only for passing the examination; learners use it only in classroom setting. So, it is very obvious to say writing skill does not get the prior position or national importance which it should get.

V.II Section-B

According to 20 responses the result which comes out in this section is that their first priority of writing goes for writing messages and emails and least preference goes to writing letters of complaint. Moreover, while writing they mostly face difficulty in grammar portion. Therefore, it can be said that they do not use writing skill as a means of communication for writing letter, notice, report etc.; only they are comfortable to write mail and short messages.

V.III Section-C

The percentages (%) of responses from question number 5-12 of the questionnaire (which is given in appendix) are given below:-

Table

| Scale → Questions ↓ | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Q. 5 | 20% | 45% | 10% | 15% | 10% |
| Q. 6 | 05% | 30% | 10% | 35% | 20% |
| Q. 7 | 05% | 40% | 15% | 30% | 10% |
| Q. 8 | 10% | 50% | 15% | 25% | 00% |
| Q. 9 | 20% | 30% | 20% | 25% | 05% |
| Q. 10 | 00% | 35% | 50% | 15% | 00% |
| Q. 11 | 05% | 20% | 40% | 30% | 05% |
| Q. 12 | 35% | 25% | 10% | 25% | 05% |

Note: Scale- 5= strongly agree; 4= agree; 3= no opinion; 2= disagree; 1= strongly disagree.

Hence, it is found that though writing is difficult most of them have interest in it; but it seems hard to them to start writing. 35% of responses show that they are able to put down their ideas and can complete any piece of writing but 30% of responses also show they fail to do that. So, in this regard it is very easy to prove that the ability and inability of the respondents is very close. Next we can see 50% of responses i.e. most of the respondents agreed with this fact that it is challenging for them to organize all the information to write anything. And then 30% of responses are agreed they can improve their writing by editing words, spelling, vocabulary etc. but besides a very close percentage i.e. 25% is also disagreeing with this fact. In the next two, the respondents are not sure about it whether they are following a sequence in writing and whether they are satisfied with their own writing performances. And lastly, most of the responses are strongly agreeing with this statement that through writing they can improve their communication skills.

V.IV Section-D

In this section two questions are asked and in the first one all the respondents mostly want to improve their writing skill by reading. They think as much they can read books, magazines, newspaper, journals etc. they can make their writing better. They have also said that by improving grammar and vocabulary skill and practicing writing more and more also very helpful to enhance the writing performance.

They have also few comments on writing skill in EFL context and they said English is only a part of syllabus in Iran. It has lack of exposure in real context and therefore this language does not get a place in national setting. To make this English language familiar they have suggested that the focus should be given on writing skill and also speaking and listening skill. They have also pointed out that in EFL context students just write to pass out the exam; therefore to improve the writing skill the learners have to use it out of the classroom environment also.

VI. Conclusion

On the basis of the collected data from twenty Iranian students of A.M.U. and its findings, it is very clear that writing skill is an effortful task to them. Although the result based on only twenty samples it can be said that writing skill should get more emphasis and practice in EFL context. The curriculum designers of EFL setting should feel the immediate need of writing skill because of its international demands and they have to focus on it by stepwise plan so that learners make them able to write effectively.

References

- [1] N. Akkaya and F. S. Kirmiz, Relationship between Attitudes to Reading and Time Allotted to Writing in Primary Education, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 4742-4746, 2010. Cited in R. Gholaminejad, A. Moinszadeh, M. Youhanaee, H. Ghobadirad, Writing Attitudes of Iranian EFL Students: A Qualitative Study, *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 4(5), 2013, 1138.
- [2] J. H. Jahin and M. W. Idrees, EFL Major Student Teachers' Writing Proficiency and Attitudes Towards Learning English, *Journal of Taibah University* 4 (1), 2012.
- [3] S. Graham, K. R. Harris and L. Mason, Improving the Writing Performance, Knowledge, and Self-efficacy of Struggling Young Writers: The Effects of Self-regulated Strategy Development, *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 30 (2), 2005.
- [4] A. Azizifar, M. Koosha, and A. R. Lotfi, An Analytical Evaluation of Iranian High School ELT Textbooks from 1970 to the Present, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 3, 2010 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.010>.
- [5] H. Dastjerdi and H.S. Samian, Quality of Iranian EFL learners' Argumentative Essays: Cohesive Devices in Focus, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 2 (2), 2011, 65-76.
- [6] N. Shokrpour and M. H. Fallahzadeh, A Survey of the Students and Interns' EFL Writing Problems in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly* 9 (1), 2007.
- [7] M. Hosseini, M. E. Taghizadeh, M. J. Z. Abedin and E. Naseri, In the Importance of EFL Learners' Writing Skill: Is There Any Relation between Writing Skill and Content Score of English Essay Test?, *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences* 6 (1), 2013, 2. <http://doi:10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.6.1>.
- [8] M. F. Suleiman, The Process and Product of Writing: Implications for Elementary School Teachers (ERIC Digest, ERIC, 2000) cited in M. Hosseini, M. E. Taghizadeh, M. J. Z. Abedin and E. Naseri, In the Importance of EFL Learners' Writing Skill: Is There Any Relation between Writing Skill and Content Score of English Essay Test?, *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences* 6 (1), 2013, 2. <http://doi:10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.6.1>.