

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

A concern for learners' inability to adequately and effectively write or communicate even after long years of schooling led to taking up of this study. The primary intention of the study was to investigate into and analyze ways of teaching writing skills in the, secondary level of the selected vernacular medium schools and devise strategies of improving writing skills among the learners. Perception on what writing process is, what are the difficulties involved in the process and what leads to ineffective teaching and learning conditions were concerns taken up for investigation in the study. The reflections of the researcher have been arranged in eight chapters in the study.

The importance of teaching writing skills and sub skills of writing to the students of secondary level have been dealt with at length. The teaming needs of the learners have been discussed and the interrelationship of the four skills is talked about. Reasons for the researcher's choice of the topic and level of learners selected for the study have been given. Plan of the thesis has also been provided.

Review of related literature is an important prerequisite to actual planning and execution of any research work. The survey of the related literature helps in acquiring information about the studies done in the field. It further facilitates in avoiding unnecessary duplication and renders it possible to make a comparative study.

Key words: *awareness, teaching tools, qr code, use of internet.*

INTRODUCTION:

An overview of the syllabi prescribed by SEBT (Secondary Education Board of Tamilnadu) is given. The aim is to analyze and subject the syllabi prescribed by SEBT to a critical scrutiny. Syllabus design has been a core issue in framing and designing of a course. To design a syllabus it is essential to have a proper understanding of different approaches, methods, syllabus designs and have an insight into the core issues related to the learner's needs and objectives as well as the pedagogical purposes. The aims and objectives of teaching/learning set by the curriculum framers and the type of content and exercises of the prescribed texts impact upon the teaching/teaming process in practice. Analysis of two sets of question papers set in the board examination is carried out in this chapter. Evaluation is integrated with the entire learning process forming a close association with the objectives of teaching, the methods and materials employed in instruction. Therefore, an analysis of the question paper set in the examination was thought to be important. The essential components/elements of an ideal syllabus have been discussed in the chapter and a comment on the syllabi prescribed by SEBA and its effect on the teaching/learning scenario of the vernacular medium schools has been made. This is done believing that analysis and critical scrutiny of syllabi/curriculum would contribute towards developing a critical attitude towards its framing, which would probably result in restructuring or initiating teaching programmes and also help in identifying ways by which the existing syllabus/curriculum might be modified, adapted, or improved upon.

Discussion:

Claims made in the syllabi prescribed, in the form of the aims and objectives to facilitate the learners' writing have been discussed. The researcher's hypothesis is that the discussed curriculum/syllabi do not aid in developing the writing skills of the learners and the teachers teaching in the schools taken up for the investigations are not well equipped for teaching writing skills to the students. To validate these suppositions, analysis of the syllabi prescribed by SEBT has been carried out. Analysis of exercises or tasks from the lessons of the texts prescribed by both the syllabi (introduced with the adoption of NPE in 1986 and introduced in accordance to the direction from NCERT in 2006) have been carried out. The exercises include sections on Grammar, Vocabulary, Composition and Comprehension. Two individual chapters were taken as representations from the two syllabi analysis to learn and know about the type and pattern of the exercises prescribed in the texts. An analysis of writing skill exercises from 'Language in Use', a standard ELT text has been carried out in two sections of the chapter. Along with the analysis a comparison of the exercises from the texts prescribed by SEBT has been drawn with the good practices followed in the tasks/exercises of 'Language in Use', a standard ELT text. The chapter ends with suggestions for fulfillment of the objectives set in the syllabi and a conclusion, where comments on the failed teaching/learning condition have been made.

The findings of the classroom processes applied in the teaching of writing have been discussed. The classroom processes include Classroom Observation and Evaluation of assignments. In Classroom Observation which has been further divided into teaching of composition and teaching of grammar, the researcher discusses her observation of classroom teaching at the secondary level in the six schools of the locality. Classes were observed to learn about the teaching mechanism practiced in these schools.

On Evaluation of the assignments, the researcher has looked at the examined scripts of the students to understand the feedback giving mechanism in existence. An attempt is being made to study the existing process of giving of feedback by the teachers on the assignments submitted by the students. Evaluation and feedback play a decisive role in the improvement of students' writing skill and the role played by feedback is discussed with a target of advocating its incorporation in the teaching/learning process. The concluding section ends with a discussion and suggestions on the effectiveness of the teaching/learning scenario.

Language learning and teaching occur in 'varied contexts so it is difficult to generalize percepts or advocate definite practices. Ultimately it is the individual teacher in the immediate situation of his/her classroom, who can best decide upon the methodology to be adopted. A questionnaire for informal interview was administered to teachers teaching the course and to the students studying at the secondary level to obtain feedback about their assumptions, values and goals. The feedback received would also supplement the information that was obtained by analyzing the different aspects of the curriculum i.e. materials, methodology, testing, teacher training etc. The transcript of the discussions held with the teachers and students along with the researcher's views have been provided. The analysis of the findings has been discussed and in the concluding section suggestions for the improvement of the present system is given.

The teaching/learning of second language in a classroom is an extremely complex process. Various learner characteristics such as age, aptitude, motivation, attitude and personality play important roles in the learning process. Similarly, various teacher characteristics such as age, sex, education, experience and professional training have significant bearings on the teaching process. Moreover, a set of environmental factors, which include linguistic, socio-cultural, socio-economic and geographical factors exercise a powerful influence on language teaching/learning. Thus, a multiplicity of factors and their interaction make the whole teaching/learning activity a multidimensional phenomenon.

The researcher aims at investigating the teaching/learning environment in existence and the impact of this environment on the learners' learning and acquisition of language skills. In this project undertaken by the researcher, a group of learners was taught for a period of six months. The role played by the feedback given on their written scripts, the need and benefit brought about after taking them through a process of teaching, leading to the acquisition of language skills has been discussed and debated upon.

An overview of the aim of the study, the subjects of the project, the teaching/learning environment of the schools and the writing assessment scale which has been used to assess the written scripts of the students have been given. Learners' performance in terms of their capability in expressing thoughts in writing is discussed. The entry level language performance of the learners was documented. After methodically taking the learners through a process of teaching of the language skills by providing them with learning tasks for a period of six months, another write up of the learners is documented. A comparison is drawn between the two write ups of

each learner to find out if there has been any improvement, after taking them through the process of teaching writing. The methodology of teaching of the skills have been discussed, which is followed by a comparison to the type of language teaching tasks the learners are exposed to with the language teaching tasks of some standard ELT texts. And finally the revelations of the investigation have been discussed.

Conclusion:

conclusion derived out of the study is that the role played and initiative taken by SEBA in formulating the educational policies and specifically in framing the English syllabi needs to be analysed. All efforts should be made for improving teacher education in the state. It is expected that the implementation of the suggestions will possibly bring about some positive changes in the curriculum, which would definitely lead to the improvement of the teaching/learning scenario in the state.

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