

## PROBLEMS IN TEACHING WRITING

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the writing skill difficulties which are one of the most significant problems that affect not only native English speakers, but also hundreds of students that are learning English as a second or foreign language around the world. The fact that the latter do not have interest them to be poor writers, have low scores in their courses, increase the errors in their homework, write run on sentences and create incoherent paragraphs.

**Introduction:** Writing is crucial for every student in and outside of school. Writing helps students to express ideas in a polished manner. It's a vehicle for communication and thus it is very important. Students who are not able to write well will find it harder to excel in their studies and they might miss out on job opportunities in the future because most employers are looking for written communication skills as one of the criteria in their employment selection. As such, since writing is very important, it is necessary for teachers to teach writing to the students. Grammar mastery is an essential skill for any student wanting to produce writing that is above average. Unfortunately, students today lack an understanding and appreciation of correct grammar usage and punctuation. They see it as boring, irrelevant, and difficult, and teachers who try to teach specific grammar often find themselves demoralized by students' attitudes and poor retention of taught content. The result of increasing use of 'text speak' and the absence of red pen on students' work has been a downward spiral of grammar knowledge and a lack of attention to serious editing and proofreading. Despite the importance mentioned above, the real teaching and learning process of writing upgrades has been facing many challenges. Some of them are the fear of making mistakes, lack of knowledge about the topic given, overloading ideas so it is difficult to decide which one should be written first, lack of vocabulary, and even the psychological factor that writing is something difficult so it is better to do another task that is easier. Those conditions are often faced by students, so they tend to avoid writing tasks. The difficulty in conveying the information about the material to be taught, difficulty in implementing the learning process, and the assessment process becomes the next problems. Furthermore, for teachers who are not native speakers of English, they will find some more difficulties. In several different parts of the world, the challenges would be different, but the core problem is still the same: the quality of students' writing itself. Teaching writing to students is not an easy task. It is because

writing is less structured compared to reading, spelling, and grammar. It involves a complex set of cognitive and motor processes where students are required to generate ideas, plan, review, revise, and translate into text. Students then need to check whether the writing communicates effectively to the readers. Sometimes the aims and audience of the students' writing are not clear to the teacher and students might get an undesired teacher comment on their writings. For example, a creative writing about a war, the teacher might think that it's a real experience and the student is traumatized. These entire processes are cognitively demanding and students will need help and guidance from the teachers.

Grammar mastery is an essential skill for any student wanting to produce writing that is above average. Unfortunately, students today lack an understanding and appreciation of correct grammar usage and punctuation. They see it as boring, irrelevant, and difficult, and teachers who try to teach specific grammar often find themselves demoralized by students' attitudes and poor retention of taught content. The result of increasing use of 'text speak' and the absence of red pen on students' work has been a downward spiral of grammar knowledge and a lack of attention to serious editing and proofreading. If we consider that writing is a complex process which involves encoding information into readable, meaningful symbols, and if we consider that a symbol system is only a small but important part of a language, we can quickly disagree with those who consider writing to be the crowning glory of language development. The transformation of spoken language into written language is not an automatic one-step process. It is true that normal children in literate societies often attempt to do some writing before they have had any instruction at all. But the nature of such pre-instructional writing is not well understood and many of the errors which children make at this stage persist into later development. One major problem is that students do not seem to be aware of the various stages, skills, and strategies that are involved in writing. They see the finished product of writing as something polished and free of errors, a result that is all too often achieved by the intervention of the word processor. Ask a student to destroy their first draft, and they will possibly feel quite offended. This is because they are not conscious of the drafting process and the fact that a first draft is only a trial run, a starting point for something better. Students learn better when their teachers are able to effectively communicate content. The demands of the National Curriculum (1989), along with ability-based testing and league tables, have raised awareness and achievement in the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. Writing, as a major part of literacy, has become the focus of very high expectations, which unfortunately do not translate to easy delivery in the classroom. In order to fulfill these expectations and teach writing effectively, teachers are faced with a range of challenges. Cook (1986) has compiled an inventory of the types of errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and grammar made by British children from six to fourteen.

He did this by making a comparative study of hand-written copies of the same stories. These were written in the years from 1800 to 1900 and again in the years from 1960 to 1975. Although this kind of study might be considered ill-defined and cruel, it does provide some clear and quantifiable evidence of the nature of developmental error. Cook found that most of the types of error committed by children at various stages between six and fourteen were already committed by the younger age-groups in the first part of the century. He concluded that there is little evidence of self-teaching or the positive influence of general intellectual development. From this he went on to argue that systematic instruction was needed and that the fact that it was not given was the cause of much educational failure. This evidence might be used to back up a general feeling among teachers and parents that children who go to school learn to read without much difficulty but that they run into more problems when they begin to write. Many argue that focusing solely on grammar and punctuation stifles creativity and discourages students from developing their ideas (e.g., Peter Elbow in "Writing Without Teachers"). Scholars like Nancy Sommers ("Revision Strategies of Student Writers") point out that effective writing requires considering the reader and the goal of the writing. With limited time for individual attention, teachers may struggle to provide detailed feedback that helps students improve their writing process (as Anne Lamott discusses in "Bird by Bird"). While technology offers new avenues for writing, some argue it can be a distraction or a crutch if not used thoughtfully to enhance the writing process (discussed by Cynthia L. Selfe in "Technology and Literacy Learning"). In Indian schools, various surveys have shown that teaching of writing has been neglected and many teachers complained that they had received no systematic training for this. It is also generally acknowledged that the 'backlog' of illiterate school-leavers could be dealt with if only they were taught more effectively, especially if greater use were made of vernacular languages as mediums of education. This last point was confirmed in an experimental teaching program in Turkey (Dyson et al 1983). Here, it was found that primary-school children performed better in comprehension and dictation tasks in their second-language English lessons when English was substituted for a short period as the medium of instruction in other subjects, rather than being taught by the traditional methods of English lessons several years of elementary teaching in Britain has seems to have little effect. Clearly, more research and clearer policies are needed in the area of teaching writing in second languages.

### Conclusion

Problems in teaching writing can stem from a variety of factors, including difficulties with organization, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction. Students may struggle to articulate their thoughts effectively, leading to poorly structured and unclear writing. Additionally, lack of motivation, inspiration, or understanding of the writing process can hinder progress in developing writing skills.



To address these challenges, teachers can implement a variety of strategies, such as providing engaging and relevant writing prompts, offering targeted language support, teaching writing techniques and strategies, encouraging peer feedback and collaboration, incorporating regular writing practice into lessons, and providing constructive feedback and assessment. By addressing these common problems, teachers can help students improve their writing skills, build confidence, and become more proficient writers.

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