CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL ISSUES IN ESL WRITING

This chapter deals with the theoretical background to fundamental issues related to approaching ESL writing class. The first part elaborates the theory in composition instruction introducing writing as an important language skill, writing as a thinking process, sub-skills of writing, the writing theories, the types of written composition, oral composition, activities to be taken up at different levels of teaching, reading-writing relationships, etc. It highlights the graphological, rhetorical resources and organizational skills of the language. Various problems associated with writing instruction are also addressed. In the second part, a detailed description of the major factors influencing the writing skills is given and other important areas as peer group interaction, revision, correction work, remedial work, role of teacher, etc. are also touched upon.

PART - I

DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS

2.1 Writing – an Important Language Skill:

Language is a tool that makes human beings uniquely different from other animals and writing is without doubt an important ability that human beings are endowed with. It is very important because it helps the students to learn. According to Raimes,

How does it help one to learn? Firstly, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that the students may have been taught; Secondly, when the students write they have a chance to use language to explore what they want to say and decide on how best to say what they want to say. Thirdly, when students write, the effort to explain ideas is there. As the writers struggle with what to put down next or how to put it down on paper -they often discover something new to write or new way of expressing their idea (1983:3).
Writing also involves developing an idea and refining it. According to Shaughnessy (1977:234), “writing is the record of an idea developing. It is a process whereby an initial idea gets extended and refined. He thinks, toys with an idea and develops it”. According to Emig (1977:123),

writing allows us to have our ideas immediately available for review, re-evaluation, a process that can lead us to reconsider and refine our ideas, i.e. to learn what we think by writing. Writing is a thinking process at various stages. Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes in which writers orchestrate to organize during the act of composing. Writing is originating and creating a unique verbal constant that is graphically recorded.

According to Flower and Hayes, “Firstly, writing is an act of discovery. Secondly, it is a goal-directed and purposeful activity. Thirdly, it involves a conscious exploration of the subject matter one is to write about and lastly, writing involves synthesis of complex cognitive operations and it is not a straightforward linear process but a recursive one” (1981: 336). Written communication thus involves expressing one’s feelings, ideas, plans, recommendations, values, hopes, dreams, joys, fears and frustrations. Teaching writing is important because

writing is a skill which is important in school and after school; writing for many students is a skill which can unlock the language arts. Students who have never read before often begin to read in the writing program. They have to read their own words to find out what they have said and decide how to say it more effectively; writing is thinking; writing is an ethical act, because the most important quality in writing is honesty; writing is a process of self-discovery; writing satisfies man’s primitive hunger to communicate; writing is an art, and art is profound play … (Abridged from Donald Murray 1973: 1234:1237).

In the words of Rivers, “Writing helps to consolidate learning in the areas of listening comprehension, speaking and reading and gives writer practice in manipulating structural variants, adding the reinforcement of kinesthetic image to the auditory and the visual” (1969:244). Byrne (1979) says that the introduction and practice of some form of writing enables us to provide for different learning styles and needs. Some students feel
more secure if they are allowed to write in the language. For such students it is an aid to retention.

Since the inception of the audio-lingual movement, the oral skills have received major attention and writing has been considered less important of the language skills. However it depends upon students’ needs. Writing is a valuable asset in the classroom as the learner seeks to gain competence and functionalize productive skills. The survival of our democracy is very much in the hands of our students and should be taught how to think, speak, and write coherently. The students should not be strangers to the art of discussion, debate and writing. They will be able to participate effectively only when they have sharp reasoning abilities and efficient communicative skills. At the moment our pattern of teaching in a number of schools and colleges is not designed to promote such skills. There is more of teaching than practical work. When listening improves listening skills, only writing can improve writing skills.

2.2. Theories of Second Language Learning:

In educational process the central idea is learning and there are certain general principles of learning. We have to provide suitable atmosphere for children to learn. The teacher will be successful in producing learning to the extent that he is able to understand the process by which it takes place, to stimulate, control and direct the process. One needs to have a proper knowledge of the process of learning, its nature and various means and ways of learning. Smith (1962:260) says that, “learning is the acquisition of behaviour or the strengthening or weakening of old behaviour as the result of the experience”. Crow and Crow (1973:225) say that, “Learning is the acquisition of habits, knowledge and attitudes. It involves new ways of doing things, and it operates in an individual’s attempts to
overcome obstacles or to adjust to new situations. It represents progressive change in behaviour … It enables him to satisfy interests to attain goals”.

Behaviourist views of learning: In the behaviourist school of psychology which is an empirically based approach to the study of human behaviour, there are two important things to be considered: the nature of learning and the factors that influence learning and the way teachers can make teaching effective. The three crucial elements in learning are: a stimulus which serves to elicit behaviour; a response triggered by a stimulus; and reinforcement, which serves to mark the response as being appropriate (or inappropriate) and encourages the repetition (or suppression) of the response in the future (Skinner 1957, Brown 1980). Language is learnt through use, and it is dependent on meaningful situation. The learner should make an effort with attention.

Cognitivist views of learning: According to the cognitivists there is something which mediates between the stimulus and the response and this is the cognitive function. The cognitive function is the faculty which permits the learner to monitor and evaluate the different stimuli being received, to coordinate and regulate them, to reject some of them, and to develop appropriate responses to those stimuli which are accepted. The learner, at any given time, possesses a cognitive map of his environment, which represents the sum of all the learning that he has so far encountered. When the learner encounters a new learning experience, it is screened through the cognitive map, and absorbed into it. The cognitive map enables the learner to analyse and interpret the new experience and the map itself may be redrawn.

This learning theory named as learning by insight is the contribution of Gestalt psychologists. Gestalt is a configuration or simply an organized whole in contrast to a collection of parts. A thing cannot be understood by the study of its constitutent parts but
only by the study of it as a totality. Learning is a purposive, exploratory and creative enterprise instead of trial and error or simple stimulus-response mechanism. A learner, while learning, always perceives the situation as a whole and after seeing and evaluating the different relationships, takes a proper decision in an intelligent way. Gestalt psychology used the term ‘insight’ to describe the perception of the whole situation by the learner and his intelligence in responding to the proper relationships. Insight depends upon-

a) Experience: Past experience helps in insightful solution of the problems and it serves as a motivation for new learning.

b) Intelligence: Insightful solution depends upon the basic intelligence of the learner. The more intelligent the individual is, the greater will be his insight.

c) Learning situation: How insightfully the organism will react, depends upon the situation in which he has to act. Some situations are more favourable than the others for insightful solution.

d) Initial efforts: Insightful learning has to pass through the process of trial and error.

e) Repetition and generalization: After having an insightful solution of a particular type of problem, the organism tries to repeat in another situation, demanding similar type of situation.

The cognitive approach to language learning helps to make teaching creative and flexible. The focus is mainly on the learner, than on the teacher as learning is more important than teaching.

Under the behaviorist view, the learner has to develop a set of skills which are broken down into sub-skills. The teacher should provide practice in these sub-skills. The skill of writing involves a very large number of skills, ranging from mechanical and muscular skills needed for making proper kinds of hand movements to the highly subtle
and complex skills which enable the person to organize the logical and rhetorical structure in a piece of composition. If he has to be an effective writer, he has to learn a wide variety of skills. Sometimes he may not know what they are. The skills are perhaps taught without anyone being aware of it. Designing a teaching programme includes identification of many elements of the learning task. In cognitivism hypothesis-formation and problem-solving are emphasized; the syllabi and materials in teaching of language are not rigid; the learner is confronted simultaneously by a variety of learning problems; and language teaching is more creative and flexible.

The merits of both the schools of psychology may be considered while teaching a language. Thus writing skill involves both a cognitive and a behavioural aspect.

The cognitive aspect involves the internalization of plans for creating appropriate behaviour. For language use, these plans derive mainly from the language system – they include grammatical rules, procedures for selecting vocabulary, and social conventions governing speech. The behavioural aspect involves the automation of these plans so that they can be converted into fluent performance in real time. This occurs mainly through practice in converting plans into performance (Littlewood 1984:74).

Theories of writing:

The most influential paradigm of writing during the latter half of the 20th century was contrastive rhetoric proposed by Kaplan (1983). This tradition focused on the product of writing and established prescriptive approaches to the teaching of writing. Kaplan claimed that in English, writers tended to develop their thoughts in a linear fashion. The aim of writing pedagogy was to compare and contrast the text organizing pattern in the L₁ and L₂ and thus facilitate acknowledgement of differences. The main technique in the classroom was imitating paragraphs so that the patterns were practised.

Raimes (1991) noted that the product tradition was the dominant approach upto mid-70s, when the focus shifted to the writers and the context of writing, and thus to a more
process-oriented analysis of writing and writing pedagogy. The latter trend coincided with greater emphasis on language as communication, focusing teachers’ attention away from form as prescribed by controlled-traditional rhetoric to collaboration between teacher and the student, and among the students themselves.

The work of Hayes and Flower (1980) and Flower and Hayes (1981), who developed a cognitive theory of writing process, eliciting information directly form writers via think-aloud protocols and observation was influential. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:91) proposed a model that was based on three tenets: (a) process of writing, such as planning, organizing, reviewing, and evaluation, often interact with each other; (b) writing follows the goal the writer is aware of; (c) processes are performed differently by experienced and inexperienced writers. The theory identified a task environment, the three major components of writing process (generating, translating and reviewing), each of which is controlled by a monitor.

An important concept in foreign language and second language writing theory has been the binary nature of process of writing and product of writing. Much of what is known about the ethnography of student writing comes from the theory of L₁ writing. The models proposed by Hamp-Lyons (1986, 1989, 1990), Kaplan (1983), Leki (1995) and Silva (1993) attest that some of the features of writing in the native language may be transferred to FL and SL writing. The process of producing various types of written discourse will be affected by such factors as involvement with the topic, awareness of the writers’ individual rhetorical skills, interaction with a real audience, and how feedback on ideas presented in drafts is provided.
2.3. Writing Process:

In schools and colleges where English is taught as a foreign language, the teacher of English is obliged to encourage the learners to express themselves and think for themselves. This involves training in expression and still more training in written composition. Expression of one’s own ideas on various subjects, especially in writing, is an important aspect of learning a language. The facility for expression must grow out of the earliest mechanical activity of sentence-making and the use of words. Choice of words, forms and constructions for the given audience, then, is itself part of larger concern of language teaching which is often called composition. Through written composition the children are trained in the ability of clear expression.

The word “composition” has been derived from the word ‘compose’. ‘To compose’ means to put together and composition is the act of putting together words. The writer has to make proper choice of words, forms and construction. Any written exercise is, in fact, composition. When the pupil is asked to supply a missing word, he is completing the composition of a new sentence. Composition in the usual sense of the word is therefore only a connected form of written exercise. The goal of the English teacher is to enable the students to produce fluent, accurate and appropriate written work. There are a number of aspects which need to be considered: (i) Skill aspect which consists in good handwriting, correct spelling, punctuation, appropriate beginnings and ends, etc.; (ii) Language aspect which consists in the correct active application of the language material – vocabulary and structure – learnt in a particular class; (iii) Aspect of style of writing to the demands of a particular situation; and (iv) Aspect of expression which implies ease and comfort in expressing what needs to be said.
The teaching of composition is closely bound up with the teaching of texts of both prose and poetry. By teaching composition, the teacher trains the pupils in written expression. Many a time, we need to express our ideas in writing. The basic urge of human beings is being fulfilled by teaching composition. The skill of writing, particularly in English, has a professional utility. Whether in trade or industry, higher or technical education, the ability to express in written form would enable the student to learn to think with accuracy and express himself efficiently. According to Bacon, “writing maketh an exact man”. It is an intellectual activity and without giving training in this activity, the teaching-learning process of language is not complete. Writing is regarded as the visual representation of speech. The process of writing is usually divided into three stages – manipulation, structuring and communication.

Manipulation consists in the psycho-motor ability to form the letters of the alphabet. This is the most rudimentary stage in writing and it should be taught from childhood onwards. Even for the Indian students whose mother tongue does not use the Roman alphabet, the task of learning to write the letters should be comparatively easy. By the time they come to know English, they will have developed sufficient muscle control by writing in their mother tongue. During structuring, the learner is required to organize the letters into words and words into phrases and sentences. This will be comparatively easy if writing is preceded by intensive oral work. In writing, communication is the ultimate goal. At this stage, the writer is able to select the appropriate structures and vocabulary in the overall context of the passage keeping in view the subject matter and the audience. Bernardbaum (1967) says that the conviction that writing can be improved by a knowledge of grammar has prevailed for a long time. The idea persists for a very good reason. We cannot perform the operation unless we understand the system that governs it. And by extension, the better our command of the system the better we operate it (write). A person
who can express himself in written English can: (a) write the letters of the alphabet at a reasonable speed, (b) spell the words correctly, (c) recall appropriate words and put them in sentences, (d) use appropriate punctuation marks, (e) link sentences with appropriate sentence connectors and sequence signals, (f) organize thoughts and ideas in logical sequence and in suitable paragraphs around topic sentences, (g) evaluate the significance of a word or a sentence in the overall context of the written passage, (h) use the form and register appropriate for the subject matter and the audience. Graves (1966) says that the craft of writing good English is based on the single principle of ‘never to lose the reader’s attention’. Since the most obvious ways of losing it are to offend, confuse or bore him, good writing can be reduced simply to the principle of active care for his sensibilities.

The following are the steps of the procedure suggested for effective composition:

1. Preparation: This is the stage when the students get ready to attempt their piece of composition and the teacher helps them with ideas, items of vocabulary to be used, the structures that are likely to occur and so on. The hints of the teachers are suggestive. This is the stage of readiness and student motivation.

2. Oral presentation stage: The topic on which composition is to be attempted is to be gone through orally and this stage will enable the students to express themselves freely before they can write freely. The oral expression will put even the weak students on firm footing and they will gain confidence to write.

Writing derives from speech. Oral composition can be a very valuable exercise … nevertheless, the skill with which this activity is handled depends largely on the control of the language suggested by the teacher and used by the children … Only when the teacher is reasonably certain that learners can speak fairly correctly within the limits of their knowledge of sentence structure and vocabulary may he allow them free choice in sentence patterns and vocabulary (Pittman 1963:188).
3. Writing stage: If the students are confident and the ideas are in their mind, it is easy for them to write with the items of vocabulary, structure, grammar, etc. with them. They should have a goal to achieve and they will be able to express themselves well.

4. Correction stage: The teacher should take keen interest in correction of pupil’s errors.

5. Follow-up stage: The composition work that is once corrected should not be left unattended. The teacher should follow up to make sure that the students have gone through the correction work and learnt to avoid the errors for future writing.

2.4. Sub-skills of Writing:

Venkateswaran (1995) says that the sub-skills of writing are: (i) manipulating the script of a language – forming the shapes of letters, using the spelling system, using punctuation, (ii) expressing information explicitly, (iii) expressing information implicitly through inference and figurative language, (iv) expressing the communicative value of sentences and utterances, (v) expressing relations within a sentence using - elements of sentence structure, modal auxiliaries, intra-sentential connectors, (vi) expressing relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices, (vii) expressing relations between parts of text through grammatical cohesion devices, (viii) using indicators in discourse for – introducing an idea, developing an idea, transition to another idea, concluding an idea, emphasizing point, explanation of point already made, anticipating an objection, (ix) reducing the text through avoiding irrelevant information.

2.5. Types of Written Compositions:

Learners’ composition is usually divided into two types: guided or controlled composition and free composition. Though controlled and guided composition are used interchangeably, it is sensible to distinguish one stage from another.
Controlled writing is the name given to the writing exercise in which the final product is linguistically determined by the teacher. A few sentences with blanks to be filled up can be considered an exercise in controlled composition. This type of writing is a part of early writing programme. In this type of work the students more or less produce exactly the same final product. It is an example for close-ended work. Guided composition is a type of written work in which the teacher provides a situation and helps the class to prepare the written work either through written or oral assistance. The learners are also supplied with all the necessary structures and vocabulary together with the thoughts and ideas to be expressed. In this type of composition the teacher guides the learners as to what to write and how to write.

Free composition is the one in which only the title or the topic is provided and everything else is done by the student. As the pupils develop mastery in the use of language, the guidance is progressively reduced and finally they are required to write entirely on their own. They are free to choose their structures and vocabulary and express their own thoughts and ideas on the given topic. Hence, this type of composition is called free composition.

Place of guided and free composition: Each of these two types of composition work has its own place in a language teaching programme. In guided composition the pupils are to be guided by controlled language material. So, it is best suited for the early stage of teaching and learning of language, particularly a foreign language like English. In free composition, the pupils are to express their ideas using the vocabulary and structures of their choice. So this type of composition is suited for the higher stage. Though free composition or the ability to communicate one’s thoughts and ideas freely is the ultimate goal, this cannot be fully achieved at the school stage, so the composition should be a guided type. In the early
stages of writing, a control is maintained and this is progressively relaxed at the later stages.

Essentials of guided composition: Bhatia (1997) prescribes certain essentials which the teacher must bear in mind if the outcomes are to be found desirable. (i) The choice of exercises should be carefully made keeping in view the principles of simplicity, concreteness and the background of the learner. (ii) The exercises should be interesting and according to the needs and psychology of the learner. (iii) Sufficient oral work on the topic to be written down should precede the written work. (iv) Various details of the topic in question should be given beforehand. (v) The arrangement of material, sequence of different details of the topic, should be made clear to the pupils. (vi) The patterns to be used and important items of vocabulary to be employed should be practiced through oral drill before the pupils are called upon to put the materials in black and white. (vii) The total frame of work should not necessarily be made rigid. A limited amount of freedom should be allowed to know the pupil’s mastery over the known structures. (viii) When the work is in progress, the teacher’s guidance should be readily available where and when desired by the pupils. (ix) The teacher should satisfy himself that there shall be minimum chances of error on the part of the pupils. (x) Oral work in the form of drill is a necessary preliminary to all kinds of controlled work.

Essentials of free composition: There are certain steps to be followed in the teaching of free composition.

a) Oral preparation: Composition should begin with power of speech and should be oral before it is written. Written work is related to oral expression which establishes a rapport with the language and the subject. It is advisable for the teacher to do oral
orientation of pupils before taking up any type of written work as oral exercises are the best means of getting good written results.

b) Familiar topics: The topics for composition should be as far as possible familiar to the pupils and the pupils should know about what they have to write so that their problems will be minimized.

c) Group composition writing: A great deal of early work in composition can be done in groups as group composition provides practice in gathering together of ideas and their arrangement in order. As the sentences are discussed before the group, a number of elementary mistakes are eliminated before they get on to paper.

d) Revision of the attempted composition: The students should be helped to develop the habit of revising their composition and this will enable them to correct mistakes and supply the missing links.

Oral composition: A new language item is to be practised in the order of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Written composition work should be preceded by oral composition and practice and it should be an exercise in putting down on the paper what has been practised orally. Pupils should be made to say the sentences and even write some difficult words and sentences if necessary before they are asked to do the composition. If this work is thoroughly done, there would be very little chance of pupils making mistakes which will be good for them as well as the teacher.

2.5.1. Types of writing tasks:

The life needs of the students demand a high degree of writing skills. Some may become professional writers or some may attend college and all of them need writing for their social intercourse (Hillocks, Bernard J. Mc Cabe, James F Mc Campbell (1971). Nancy Arapaff (1978:200) says, “because the combination of thought and activity are
unique to writing, we must, in planning a writing curriculum, devise exercises which necessitate intense concentration”.

White (1986) classifies types of writing as a two-way distinction between institutional and personal writing each of which he sub-divides further. Institutional writing includes business correspondence, textbooks, regulations, reports. ‘Personal’ for White covers the two main areas of personal letters and creative writing. Hegde (1988) offers a more detailed breakdown under the six headings of personal, public, creative, social, study and institutional. She lists a number of writing activities.

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<tr>
<th>Personal writing</th>
<th>Public writing</th>
<th>Creative writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diaries</td>
<td>letters of enquiry</td>
<td>poems</td>
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<td>journals</td>
<td>complaint</td>
<td>stories</td>
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<td>shopping lists</td>
<td>request</td>
<td>rhymes</td>
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<td>reminders for oneself</td>
<td>form filling</td>
<td>drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>packing lists</td>
<td>application (for memberships)</td>
<td>songs</td>
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<td>addresses</td>
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<td>autobiographies</td>
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<td>recipes</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social writing</th>
<th>Study writing</th>
<th>Institutional writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>letters</td>
<td>making notes while reading</td>
<td>Agendas, minutes,</td>
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<tr>
<td>invitations</td>
<td>taking notes from lectures</td>
<td>memoranda, reports,</td>
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<tr>
<td>notes of condolence</td>
<td>making a card index</td>
<td>reviews, contracts, business</td>
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<tr>
<td>- of thanks</td>
<td>summaries</td>
<td>letters, public notices,</td>
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<tr>
<td>- of congratulations</td>
<td>synopses</td>
<td>advertisements, posters,</td>
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<tr>
<td>cablegrams</td>
<td>reviews</td>
<td>instructions, speeches,</td>
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<tr>
<td>telephone messages</td>
<td>reports of experiments</td>
<td>applications, curriculum</td>
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<td>instructions to friends</td>
<td>workshops</td>
<td>vitae, specifications, note-making (doctors and other professionals)</td>
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<td>- to family</td>
<td>visits</td>
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<td>essays</td>
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<td>bibliographies</td>
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A variety of writing activities can be practised by the students. Deepa Reddy (1986) suggested that the students have to learn the use of reading, observation, note-taking, interviewing, etc. The different stages in writing tasks should be sentence work, paragraph writing, production of story, skeleton composition, picture composition, outline
composition, free composition, etc. Eapen (1979) suggested that there is need for more exercises to develop students’ accuracy in vocabulary use.

2.6. Sequencing Writing Assignments:

“Many teachers are skilled at developing good writing assignments, yet, their assignments stand alone, bearing no discernible relationship to one another. Frequently, this problem is a side effect of isolating composition from other parts of the curriculum” (Judy 1981:197). It is important to sequence the kinds of writings one offers to students by stages from simple to complex.

The handbook approach: The typical composition handbook, widely used in the schools, offers one sequence for writing. The handbook approach begins with the smallest language particle it can find – the word – and teaches the students how to describe it syntactically: through learning the parts of speech. The naming process then continues through larger and larger units – the sentence, the paragraph and the whole essay. It includes parts of speech, the sentence, sentence variety and style, the topic sentence, the paragraph, the outline, the essay.

The experience-centred sequence: Better writing sequences have a basic principle in common: They start with the students’ linguistic skill and psychological maturity and guide them along natural patterns of growth. The sequence follows an “inner world to outer worlds” pattern, assuming that writers first need to explore their personal ideas and thoughts through private writing, before moving on to present ideas to a larger public. It includes (i) personal writing, (ii) public writing, (iii) the creation of the self, (iv) versions of the self, (v) how deep can one go? (vi) encountering the world, (vii) interweaving the world, (viii) exploring / probing / researching, (ix) causes and commitments, (x) writing and the ultimate self (Miller and Judy: 1978).
The perceptual approach: This approach emphasizes perception rather than experiences and produces a useful sequence of assignments. Morgan (1979) argues that bad writing often reflects poor perception. It includes (i) enjoying your senses, (ii) employing your senses, (iii) being aware of your surroundings, (iv) observing a scene, (v) getting the feel of action, (vi) observing a person, (vii) perceiving emotional attitudes, (viii) estimating a person, (ix) identifying with a person, (x) perceiving a relationship, (xi) looking at yourself, (xii) examining a desire, and (xiii) seeing the whole picture (Morgan 1979).

Literary/thematic approach: The Editors of the Scholastic American Literature Series (1977) wanted to create a literature programme that would encourage composition as well. They chose a series of major themes, “Who We Are”, “Where We Live”, “How We Live”, “What We Believe” and so on, then further divided into sub-topics. Each of these sub-topics creates possible composition topics that draw on the students’ personal experiences. The programme shows clearly that one can use literature as a jumping-off point for writing without having to rely exclusively on the academic standby, the essay of literary analysis.

The sequences shown are generalized patterns, chosen by textbook writers in an attempt to reach as many students as possible. While these schema might be useful as models, teachers themselves must make the actual plans for a good sequence of assignments, and like any plan, the one chosen ought to be flexible, reflecting the needs and interests of the students and growing naturally from the course material. The point, after all, is to take the students at their present developmental level and to help them move forward, not to ensure that they have followed a prescribed pattern created by either writer or teacher.
2.6.1. Activities at different levels:

College ESL writers need to develop an explicit awareness of rhetorical and grammatical conventions before they can reproduce academic texts as requests, applications, summaries, essays, reports, and research papers (Carrel 1987, Carson et al. 1990, Connor and Farmer 1990, Eisterhold 1990, Johns 1986, 1993, 1995). In order to achieve this, different activities have to be incorporated into teaching writing at different levels.

Teaching writing in the early stages: The main factor that affects the quantity and the kind of writing in the early stages of writing is that the learners have a small amount of language at their disposal. The actual input of language is likely to be slow. This can be solved by delaying the introduction of writing until the learners have a much greater command of language. Reinforcement of material learnt orally, variety of activity in the classroom, increased contact with the language can improve the quality of writing.

We must avoid manipulative procedures and we should not encourage the learners to think about what they write. Writing activities should satisfy immediate needs. The oral language should be practiced in writing. Dialogue-writing can be an activity at this stage. The devices needed for linking and sequencing sentences should be familiarized. Letter-writing can be introduced at this stage through which the students should learn something new through writing. Role play can be introduced and activities of communicative value can be demonstrated.

The teacher can make use of the blackboard and certain amount of writing can be done. Certain connectives and the layout of the activity can be learnt. We can begin to demonstrate that writing is a thinking process. Oral preparation can be taken up. Individual pair or group work in which students work together to maximize their own and
each other’s learning can be organized. The feeling of isolation can be reduced through group work. Correction can be done by the students by exchanging their works. This trains the students to look at the written work critically. After peer editing, a discussion can be arranged for correction of some common areas.

Copying activity can be given because it helps to teach spelling or to reinforce sentence structure as it is an aid to retention. Copying can be presented to the learners as a meaningful activity. Model dialogues, arranging the jumbled dialogues, completing the dialogues, providing the dialogue form and filling up with their own ideas, etc. are some of the activities. Dictation can be given because it involves listening and the ability to transform what is heard into the written form. Linking and sequencing of sentences should be familiarized. Combining sentences, completing sentences, completing texts with linking words from a given list, completing by using clauses, etc. can be arranged.

Activities at the post-elementary stage to intermediate stage: Dialogue writing activities which are based more directly on the teaching text can be incorporated into the reinforcement activities. We can provide a model dialogue, together with ideas which can be used for writing parallel versions. Another way is by providing the students with incomplete dialogues, along with instructions for completing it which do not specify the actual words to be used. The students can also be asked to write dialogues by expanding the key ideas given. The students can be asked to write a dialogue for which the setting is defined and some suggestions are given for the language to be used.

Another activity that can be introduced at this stage is writing notes and letters. We can see that students are given systematic opportunities to practise writing letters, which have, overall, a specific function such as making an apology, a complaint, an excuse, sending congratulations, giving directions, etc. These tasks require different language on
different occasions depending on the relationship between the writer and the person he is addressing. Model texts can be provided, along with cues which they can use for writing parallel versions. Students can be provided with an incomplete text, with suggestions or instructions about how to complete it. Some exercises can be added to complete a text by expanding notes and also asking the students to write the complete text, guiding them with the content but not with the language to be used. Another activity that can be incorporated is asking the students to write letters which involve a representation of information provided by one of the texts in the course.

Writing short reports can be integrated and guidance should be provided on organization and orderly presentation of ideas. Completing the forms, which is practically useful, can be one of the activities. To provide practice in sentence linking and sequencing, reordering sentences given in a scrambled list can be arranged. Activities on completing a short text by using linking words or phrases, combining sentences to form an acceptable sequence, asking the students to rewrite the texts within the framework of a related outline, and instructing the students to do exercises which specifically direct their attention to the way ideas are organized in a text are some of the activities which can be launched in this stage.

Activities at post-intermediate level: Once the learners have acquired proficiency in written expression, further practice in this skill can be given mainly through tasks in the form of composition or essay. The students are given a theme and are asked to express themselves on it to demonstrate their ability to write and it gives the learners extensive practice in writing. Organizational skills can be equally developed through activities involving some realistic form of expression such as letter and report writing. Composition and essay writing provide opportunities for ‘free expression’. The learners can be provided
with an adequate content. Writing tasks should not be divorced from other classroom activities which involve listening, speaking and reading. The link with reading is easily established and practised at this level.

Needs for individualized writing practice can to a large extent be met through the use of self-instructional materials with students working in pairs or groups. As we allow the learners increasingly more opportunities for self-expression through writing, we must view what they write as attempts to communicate something. We can correct and evaluate to improve their work but we should not destroy their interest and confidence in writing through excessive correction.

At this stage a provision should be made for remedial work by adopting a functional approach to writing skills. Opportunities for free expression should be increased by use of simulations, discussions, projects or reading activities. Writing activities should be in the form of realistic tasks as report-writing, letter-writing, etc. It should be noted that a writing programme must be supported by exposure to appropriate models through the reading programme.

In free writing the first and foremost step to be followed is to list all the possible ideas. First of all, they have to be written down and later they can be reviewed and selected. The next step is to make an outline where they should arrange the ideas into paragraphs and it should be done systematically. The next step is to write the draft which is the key stage in the production of a text. They write the ideas according to the paragraphs and after this they have to correct and improve the draft. The students should check for the mistakes through a careful reading and also review for expression and organization. After necessary changes and modifications, the final draft is written.
The teachers should be careful in teaching the right set of procedures which help the students as it involves a great deal of hard work and organization.

2.7. Reading and Writing:

Reading plays an important part in a writing programme and the main purpose of reading is improvement of general language proficiency. Reading promotes compositional skills and so, reading is given primary importance by teachers and researchers. Bernhardt (1991:6) says that reading is “an intrapersonal problem-solving task that takes place within the brain’s knowledge structures”. Reading transforms the reader’s state of knowledge. Just and Carpenter (1987:4) say that we must take into account “what information in the text starts the process, how long the process takes, what information was used during the process, the likely sources of mistakes, what the reader has learned when the process is finished”. Reading for academic and recreational purposes positively influences L₁ and L₂ development among both children and adults (Krashen 1985, 1993). Writing proficiency develops as a result of reader’s interactions with print (Grabe 1991).

When abundant and meaningful input is made available to students, they acquire more knowledge. Studies have indicated extensive reading correlates highly with improved writing performances in L₁ and L₂ courses also (Belanger 1987, Stotsky 1983, and Krashen 1984, 1993). Assigned reading has a positive influence on developing composing skills. Students must be exposed to different kinds of texts. DeVries (1970) suggested that under some circumstances, assigned reading may serve as an effective and useful subject for conventional writing practice. Heys (1962) conducted an experiment involving high school L₁ writers who were divided into a reading group and a writing group and found that the composition scores of the reading group were significantly higher than those of writing group.
Reading and writing should be developed in close collaboration and the teachers must take up the responsibility of promoting reading habits and skills among their students (Carson and Leki 1993). “The more experience students have writing about specific topics in particular genres and contexts, the more confidence they gain and the more fluent their writing becomes” (Scarcella and Oxford 1993:22). There is a qualitative and quantitative relationship between reading ability and writing performance and “Good writers are often good readers” (Reid 1993:43).

The responsibility of socializing their students to the demands of academic institutions lies on the teacher (Hill 1990). L2 learners also can “draw on their literary skills and knowledge of literacy practice from first language (interlingual transfer) and can also utilize the input from literacy activities – reading and writing (intralingual input) in developing second language” (Carson, Carrel, Siberstein, Kroll and Kuchn 1990: 246).

2.8. Resources of the Written Language:

Though speaking and writing are the skills of expression, we cannot draw any sharp dividing line between the language used in speech and the language used in writing. These are two independent but interrelated forms, embodied at the level of phonology and graphology in two different mediums. Both spoken and written forms can draw on the same linguistic resources of the language, its grammar and lexis. Speech is the language of immediate communication where there is interaction and feedback and writing is the way of making contact with a reader at a distance creating a context.

Graphological resources: Graphological resources include orthography, lexis, structures, handwriting, punctuation, etc. and other devices which the written language makes use of in order to convey patterns of meaning.
Orthography: Mastery of writing skill includes the ability to spell. In English the relationship between sound and symbol is a complex one. Spelling is a problem for many users of the language, native and non-native speakers alike. We have to consult a dictionary from time to time. “While we do not want to encourage the learners to be indifferent to spelling, we should acknowledge that mis-spellings rarely interfere with communication” (Byrne 1979). In our system of education, writing is mostly used in tests and examinations and it is the responsibility of the teacher and the learner to ensure adequate mastery of spelling.

Lexis: English in India is used as a library language and a student of science as well as humanities must have a good grounding in English to have an access to writing skills. If one has to write well, he should also be a good reader. He should be able to read with speed and comprehension and he can do this only if he has a large vocabulary. English is a rich language which has a large number of words. It is not possible to know all the words which are frequently used in writing. Lexical units are central in language use and language learning. Gattegno (1972) sees vocabulary as the central dimension of language learning and choice of vocabulary is crucial.

While teaching vocabulary we should keep in mind the validity, usefulness, frequency, popularity, structural value, universality, range of applicability, productivity, etc. of the words. They should be graded in the order of usefulness, structural value, teachability, simplicity, etc. Active vocabulary is that on which we have full command and which we can use in our speech and writing. The passive or recognition vocabulary consists of those words whose meaning we can understand when they appear in speech or writing, but we cannot use in our speech or writing. The functional vocabulary provides a key to comprehending the spirit of the language.
Greater emphasis should be laid on vocabulary expansion in higher classes. Extensive reading should be encouraged. The grammatical words which primarily operate as means of expressing relations of grammatical structures include prepositions, pronouns, helping verbs, conjunctions, relatives, structural adjectives, structural adverbs, etc. also should be taught. Content words stand for things, actions, qualities, entities, etc. Both grammatical words and content words are required for the purpose of writing effectively.

The two distinct steps in teaching new words are presentation and practice. Presentation of words can be through visual techniques, demonstration techniques, association techniques, verbal contexts, etc. “The forms of new words and sentence patterns are demonstrated with examples and not through grammatical explanation or description. The meaning of new words and sentence patterns is not conveyed through translation. It is made clear visually (with objects, pictures, action and mime). Wherever possible model sentences are related and taken from a single situation” (Davies, Roberts and Rossner 1975:3). In order to enable the learners to make these words as an active part of their vocabulary, they may be made to use in sentences of their own. They should be exposed to listening and reading and practised in speaking and writing. In early stages words are taught by showing objects, performing actions, showing pictures, drawings on the blackboard, framing sentences, association, word building, using mother tongue, etc. These are all to be taught from early stages. Proper spellings in English should be taught. Activities like transcription, dictation, referring to the dictionary, preparing spelling book, spelling games, forming associations, etc. may be incorporated into their teaching.

Structures: In teaching English to our learners, we must aim at making them efficient users of the language for all their needs of communication. This ability depends on one’s knowledge of underlying rules, or the code that governs the language. As one of the aims
of language teaching is to give to learners, knowledge of the code, emphasis is laid on grammar in the Translation Method but the need for formal lessons is eliminated in the Structural Approach, though it is based on grammatical patterns. The learner requires functional grammar as the theoretical grammar is abstract. If writing skills are to be improved, the grammatical items to be taught are tenses, active and passive voice, prepositions, reported speech, modals, clauses, word formation, conjunctions, nonfinites, transformation, punctuation, etc. Structural patterns in English are to be taught through the three stages of presentation, practice and application. The formal grammar can be taught through inductive and deductive methods. Structures can be taught through situational teaching, visual or verbal devices, etc. Practice can be given to establish firmly the structures through oral drills, reading, writing, teaching new words, etc. Language learning is partly a process of habit formation and in early stages, practice can be given through different drills, tables, etc.

Handwriting: In English, language communication through writing is very important in academic field. Mechanics of writing include knowing how to make letters of right size and shape; to have proper spacing between letters, words and lines, to use capital letters and punctuation marks correctly and to have a fluent hand movement in writing. In the beginning itself the learners should be trained in choosing proper script. Strokes and curves must also be taught in the early stages. Good handwriting has the qualities of distinctiveness, proper spacing, proportionate size, capitalization, punctuation, simplicity, speed, etc.

Punctuation: The communicative value of punctuation needs to be demonstrated. The reader expects sentence boundaries to be marked with a full stop or some equivalent device. Similarly at higher levels, the reader expects to have the paragraphs marked for him. The
devices such as commas and semicolons are important though there is a great variation in how they are used and the extent to which they are used.

Other graphological resources: Other graphological resources which form part of the wide range of devices available to us in the writing system include the use of headings, footnotes, tables of contents, indexes, etc.

Rhetorical devices: These are the devices which are needed in writing in order to produce a text in which the sentences are organized into a coherent whole, in such a way that they fulfil the writer’s communicative purpose.

a) Logical devices: Logical devices are words or phrases which indicate meaning relationships between or within sentences. These include addition, comparison, contrast, result, exemplification and so on. For example, furthermore, moreover, besides, in addition to, etc.

b) Grammatical devices: The links established by grammatical devices are also equally important. For example, those which signal relationships between sentences by means of back reference.

c) Lexical devices: Any text displays a great deal of cohesion on the lexical level. To some extent this might be felt to be inevitable but nevertheless this is another significant way in which sentences are linked together.

Problems we face in this area are clearly considerable. The writing programme requires an extensive understanding of these resources and considerable practice in using them in appropriate forms of written expression. This can be done through analysis of texts which can contribute significantly.
2.9. Development and Organization of Written Work:

Paragraph construction and organization of ideas into coherent units of thought require a careful attention.

Paragraph development: Every paragraph should concentrate on one idea and a good paragraph elaborates and explains this idea. The main idea of the paragraph should be stated in one sentence which is called a topic sentence and it usually states the topic or the subject. The topic sentence may be at the beginning, middle or end and sometimes it may be implied. A paragraph can be developed in many ways.

Development by detail is one of the popular ways of developing a paragraph. This can be done by use of the deductive order where the movement is from general statement to particular details. The first sentence will be the topic sentence and the other sentences in the paragraph explain or illustrate the topic sentence. The author deduces his views from the general statement to the particular details. Development by detail can be also done in inductive order where the author moves from particular statements to the general statement. The writer should give details, arguments, and illustrations which lead finally to the conclusion. The topic sentence usually comes at the end of the paragraph, in this case.

Development by comparison and contrast is used when we want to write about two subjects. Comparison shows similarities between the subjects and contrast shows differences between the subjects. Comparison and contrast can take place within a single paragraph where every sentence compares or contrasts one subject with the other. We can use block method where half of the paragraph speaks about one subject and the other half is devoted to the second subject. If there is much to be written, one paragraph for each subject can be allotted where one paragraph speaks about one and the other about the second subject.
Development by process is to be used when we want to narrate a story or tell about a process, etc. Paragraphs should be developed in natural order of narration where one event leads to the other. Development by classification and division can be used when the topic lends itself to being broken down into its component parts. We can use enumeration to bring order and unity into our paragraphs. Enumeration means using visible markers like *firstly, secondly,* etc. to show readers that we have divided our topic.

2.9.1. Coherence and unity in Writing:

Coherence and unity are the basic requisites of good writing. Coherence is achieved with the use of pronouns, synonyms, connectives, judicious repetition of key words, etc. and unity is achieved by adhering to the view expressed in the topic sentences. It is developed by the use of details, comparison and contrast, process, classification and division, etc.

Coherence: The writer of the composition should make his writing coherent. It is not enough if he produces syntactic structures that are grammatically correct but there should be a progress of thought. The sentences together should establish the fact that they are related. If the reader fails to perceive the relationship, he is unclear about the intention of the speaker and the ideas do not flow smoothly. The parts should give an impression that they belong to a whole and the sequencing should not violate the principle of harmony.

Coherence shows the relationship between the elements and the construction and is concerned with how the words, sentences and the paragraphs are connected. Improperly linked words disturb the coherence. It is important at the level of sentence and also paragraph where modifiers should be used as closely as possible. The paragraph should be adequately developed with supportive details in which one word in the sentence leads to the other, one sentence in a paragraph should lead to another and one paragraph in a
composition should lead to another. Markers promote quick comprehension which is important in effective communication. Abrupt stops and starts should be avoided in a composition as they mar the readability and comprehensibility of the composition.

Unity: All successful compositions should have the quality of unity and without unity, any piece of writing cannot be a composition. The composition should be about a single theme which is to be gradually and logically developed. The reader should not be led away from the controlling idea and the ideas should be grouped and logically sequenced. The composition should have a sense of direction. It should be complete – it should have an introduction, the body and the conclusion. The introduction should catch the attention of the reader and announce the subject of the composition and the conclusion should bring the composition to a close by summing up. Between introduction and conclusion is the body of the composition. The paragraphs in the body are developed by using comparison and contrast or by using classification and division. A good unified composition makes the reader feel happy and satisfied.

2.10. Problems in Writing:

As writing requires some conscious mental effort it is not an easy or spontaneous activity but it is commonly a difficult activity for most people, both in the mother tongue and in a foreign language. The problems can be psychological, linguistic, and cognitive in nature.

Psychological problems: Speech is the natural and normal medium of communication for us. There is someone physically present when we speak a language and we can get some kind of feedback. Writing is a solitary activity and we are required to write on our own. There is no chance for interaction or feedback and we have to depend on linguistic resources of the language and this makes the act of writing very difficult.
Linguistic problems: Oral communication is natural and is sustained through a process of interaction. It is spontaneous and we have little time to pay attention to organizing our sentence structure or to connecting our sentences. Ungrammatical sentences are also tolerated in speech. In writing, we have to keep the channel of communication open through our own effort, where we have to pay attention to the choice of sentence structure and also the way our sentences are linked together and sequenced.

Cognitive problems: We generally speak without much conscious effort because we talk about matters which are of interest or relevance to us socially or professionally. Writing is learnt through a process of instruction, where we have to learn to organize our own ideas in such a way that they can be understood by a reader who is not present and perhaps by a reader who is not known to us. As writing is often imposed on us, it has a psychological effect which gives rise to a question in terms of content – what to say.

“The problem is to direct pupil’s oral and written speech used previously for practical social needs, so that, gradually it shall become a conscious tool of conveying knowledge and assisting thought” (Dewey 1933:239). We have a number of handicaps. We have too many students in a class where individual attention is not possible; there is the pressure of the authorities to complete the prescribed syllabus and there is no time to give enough practice; our students have to write in a language that is not their own; they are asked to write on topics that are trivial, irrelevant, or unfamiliar; senior teachers might not be willing to teach composition classes; assessing the students is an ordeal; correction work is burdensome and so on. The art of writing is difficult because as we are required to write without the possibility of interaction or any feedback. We should encourage our students to write about any topic they know best by suggesting to them not to be afraid of making mistakes. We should provide opportunities for the students to express themselves as they
learn writing only by writing. “Teachers of English as a second language who teach composition complain constantly of being on the horns of the dilemma: how to control their students’ writing so that they do not practice making errors and how at the same time to train them to communicate effectively in English” (Marquardt 1966:29-30).

Regarding correction of errors Hendrickson (1981:11) says, “There appears to be a consensus among many language educators that correcting three types of errors can be useful to second language students: errors that impair communication significantly, errors that have highly stigmatic effects on the listener or reader, and errors that occur very frequently in students’ speech and writing”. Errors can be corrected and Brooks (1960:58) advises that “the principal method of avoiding errors in language learning is to observe and practice the right model, a sufficient number of times, and the principal way of correcting is to shorten the time lapse between the incorrect response and the presentation once again of the correct model”.

PART - II

MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING COMPETENCE

This section is devoted to discussing the major factors influencing the writing programme. Objectives, materials, methods and examinations play a vital role in the teaching process of a language. Particularly, in teaching writing, peer group interaction, revision, correction work, remedial work, guidance of teacher are also important. These factors call for proper attention and careful planning of a coherent writing programme.

2.11. Objectives:

The objective of language teaching is to help the children learn a language to perform a variety of functions. The main functions are helping the children to learn to ask questions and to learn to use the language effectively in different social networks. In a
multilingual setting like India the notion of “lingua franca” has an important significance. It encourages mobility, national integration and a sense of tolerance. Teaching language is not a unidirectional process but a bidirectional, interactional process. Learners must take part actively in the teaching-learning process. The main objective is to draw the latent creative potentialities of the child. Every learner has a built-in language learning mechanism. This is activated when he is exposed to the language. Exposure to a rich variety of linguistic material is very important. The emphasis should be changed from memorizing paradigms and rules to helping them to interact with people using different registers of language in a variety of situations.

The objectives have to be formulated in relation to the perception of the needs of learners for learning English. The skills of communication are important and teaching should provide them with competence in these skills. The teaching of English language should help them to acquire ability to listen with understanding, ability to speak grammatical English, ability to read and understand English and ability to express oneself through writing. In most language teaching courses, the language is taught sentence pattern by sentence pattern, with vocabulary being fitted into, according to the situation. It is the responsibility of the writing programme to train the students to produce sequences of sentences which express their meaning most effectively. The ability to put sentences together effectively needs systematic encouragement and explicit teaching. The register or the functional style and expression should be taught. Writing should be coherent and spelling and grammatical errors are not to be neglected.

The instructional activities and syllabi are to be designed according to goals. Brown (1995:71) defined goals as “general statements concerning desirable and attainable programme purposes and aims based on perceived language and situation needs”.
Systematic needs analysis is to be done and goals should reflect those needs (cf. Frodesen 1995, Reid 1995). They should aim at cognitive, linguistic and academic skills. Goals help the teachers in many ways.

Formalised goals articulate the purposes of the courses and / or education programme; Goals focus on what the course or programme intends to accomplish, indicating the skills that students will require on completion of the course; Goals allow for the formulation of more precise and achievable instructional objectives; Goals are dynamic – they evolve as a function of the changing needs of the students as their skills develop (Brown 1995: 72-73).

Instructional objectives are used to describe the purposes of a course as outlined in a syllabus and as tool for devising lessons. Objectives are precise and according to Mager (1975) they specify performance, conditions and criteria. Hillocks (1995), Tumposky (1984), Van Lier (1996) expressed an objection that they relate to negative association and force the teachers to focus only on defined skills and written products.

The explicit presentation of instructional objectives in a course syllabus enables the teachers to transform student needs into teaching points, identify target skills underlying instructional points, decide on the level of specificity for teaching activities, adopt or adapt teaching materials appropriately, framing blue print for assessment, evaluate their own teaching effectiveness (cf. Frodesen 1995).

Halliday (1975: 11-17) has elaborated a powerful theory of the functions of language. He described seven basic functions that language performs:

The instrumental function: using language to get things; The regulatory function: using language to control the behaviour of others; The interactional function: using language to create interaction with others; The personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings; The heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover; The imaginative function: using language to create a world of imagination and; The representational function: using language to communicate information.
Piepho (1981:8) discusses the different levels of objectives in a communicative approach applicable to any teaching situation:

an integrative and content level (language as a means of expression); a linguistic and instrumental level (language as a semiotic system and an object of learning); an affective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct (language as a means of expressing values and judgments about oneself and others); a level of individual learning needs (remedial learning based on error analysis); and a general educational level of extra-linguistic goals (language learning within the school curriculum).

A pedagogically influential analysis of communicative competence is found in Canale and Swain (1980) in which four dimensions of communicative competence are identified, grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to what Chomsky calls linguistic competence, and what Hymes (1972) intends by what is “formally possible”. It is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. Socio-linguistic competence refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. Discourse competence refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their inter-connectedness, and how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. Strategic competence refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication. Verma says

The global objectives of language teaching can be defined as helping children learn a language or languages to perform a variety of functions. These range from a sociable use of language for phatic communion and a network of communicative uses to its use at highest level of ‘cognition’, ‘catharsis’ and ‘self expression’. Underlying these functions there are two fundamental functions: helping the children learn how to ask questions, the most important intellectual ability man has yet developed, and helping children using the language effectively in different social networks (Verma 1984:224).
As Corder says,

The object in teaching a language … is to enable the learner to behave in such away that he can participate to some degree and for certain purposes as a member of a community other than his own. The degree to which any particular learner may wish to participate will vary. He may seek only to read technical literature, or he may wish to preach the gospel in a foreign country. These varying degrees of participation require different levels of skill in language performance (Corder 1973: 27).

There is a close relationship between instructional objectives and learning outcomes. In teaching and learning, objectives help us in taking important decisions regarding course outlines and methods to be adopted. Before going to teach a subject, the teacher should be clear about what he is going to achieve. A good teacher should decide the aims of teaching the target language. With careful thought, puzzling out precisely what he wants to achieve and what the immediate needs of his pupils are, a teacher of language can soon become an expert in noting the objectives that he should strive for and once he is aware of the advantage, he very soon forms the habit of directing his efforts and those of his pupils on to selected objects. The carefully thinking out of detailed and well-defined objectives for lessons will do more than almost anything else to improve a teacher’s work and make it effective.

General objectives of teaching English: “The absence of distinction between aims and objectives leads to an ambiguity in the ‘learner needs’. On the one hand it can refer to what the learner has to do with the language once he has learned it, in this sense, it has to do with aims. On the other hand, it can refer to what the learner has to do in order to learn, in this sense, it relates to pedagogic objectives” (Widdowson 1983:20). In teaching English, we may have the following general aims of teaching language as well as specific objectives of teaching a lesson in the subject. The study of every language has four important aspects, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing and the importance of integrating writing
with other skills is to be stressed. None of these aspects of a language can work in isolation and so they must function in coordination with one another. These aspects should be included in the following general aims.

   I. Reception and
   II. Expression

Mastering the art of writing involves learning to use writing implements, to write legibly, to spell correctly, to use punctuation, to satisfy grammatical rules, take an account of audience, construct and organize texts, select from a range of styles etc. As the skill of writing integrates all the four-fold skills of language, these objectives analysed into specific learning outcomes attempted at all levels help to achieve the goals of effective writing.

   Some of the instructional objectives of English are

1. The student understands simple English when spoken.
2. The student reads simple English with comprehension.
3. The student speaks simple and correct English.
4. The student writes simple and correct English.
5. The student knows the functional use of the elements of the language.
6. The student appreciates simple poems in English.
7. The student translates from mother tongue into English and vice-versa.
8. The student develops interest in English.

   (Safaya and Shaida 1985: 479)

Though these objectives are framed for students at secondary level and they can also be applied for students at undergraduate level to equip them with advanced skills and abilities. To conclude, a practical command of the language skills has been the purpose of instruction in English. The mastery of the language presupposed a good foundation in the fundamental language skills, so that a student: (i) can understand English when spoken; (ii) can speak comprehensible English; (iii) can read English and understand; (iv) can write
English correctly and can translate. There is only one initial purpose in seeking to learn a language thoroughly, namely to understand, speak, read and write.

In the curriculum of Acharya Nagarjuna University, the course objectives in writing are not specifically identified. Only a broad objective ‘to meet the communicative needs in English’ is mentioned in the preface of the I year composition textbook that was introduced in 2002-2003. In the textbook that was introduced in 2003-2004 for II year, the main aim mentioned in the introduction was “to enrich the students’ competence in English enabling the students to perform various tasks”.

In the foreword of the textbook for reading and writing English to be followed by the first year students from 2008-2009 onwards, it is mentioned that the main purpose is teaching of reading and writing. It is also mentioned that the students should be able to read and communicate in their own words the main arguments of a text and the relevant supporting details, identify written meaning from context cues, comprehend arguments and draw inferences, establish workable criteria for evaluating texts, writing several pieces of revised and extended prose. These are specific to some extent compared to the previous ones. In the preface of the textbook to be followed by second year students from 2009-2010, it is just mentioned that the section on writing skills will enable the learners to further their skills in accuracy and appropriateness of expression. The expected effect of the course content on the student’s entry behaviour is to be spelled out in terms of his terminal behaviour. They should describe the learning outcomes, abilities or the qualities of the learner expected during and at the end of the programme.

2.12. Materials:

Materials play an important role in language learning and the field of curriculum is one of the dynamic areas of education. The curriculum significantly sets limits to what the
students will learn and how he will learn. Curriculum according to Garcia (1973:1) refers to the sum total of all organized learnings stated as educational ends, activities, school subjects or topics decided upon and provided within an educational institution for the attainment of the students”. Needs analysis is the basic step for curriculum construction. Needs analysis in language teaching according to Richards et al. (1985:185-189) is the process of determining the needs for which the learner or group of learners require a language and arranging the needs according to priorities. Needs assessment makes use of both subjective and objective information and seeks information on (a) the situation in which the language will be used (b) the objectives and purposes for which the language is needed (c) the types of communication that will be used (written, spoken, formal or informal) (d) the level of proficiency that will be required. In broad terms, needs assessment consists of “procedures for identifying and validating needs, and establishing priorities among them” (Pratt 1980:79).

The curriculum development revolves around three major elements — (a) decisions on what to teach, which are educational ends at different levels of specificity and immediacy to the learner; (b) decisions on how to teach, concerning with strategies in terms of selecting and organizing learning opportunities, and (c) decisions concerning the extent to which educational ends are being attained through the strategies or means provided.

What to teach: In curriculum design what to teach and its complement what learners should learn, are considered primary. At the societal level the needs are to be identified and they are to be stated in broad general terms, incorporated into the educational values and are designed for all students at all levels which are called educational aims. At the institutional level the authorities of education together with specialists and scholars, derive educational
objectives which are more specific statements of learning a student must attain at a given level of instruction.

At the instructional level, the classroom teacher derives instructional objectives which are statements of learning. They are identified in terms of learners’ needs, interests, institution membership and community. Instructional objectives are designed to promote the welfare of the individual student and each objective must have a behavioural or process component and substantive or content component. According to Tyler (1950), a process component indicates what learning is to be effected; and a content component, on the other hand, delineates the circumstances in which the learning takes place.

How to teach: Once the ends are selected and clarified, the next concern in curriculum construction is how to teach these educational ends and how to guide the student in the attainment of these educational ends. For this the learning opportunities must be provided. Tyler (1950) proposed three criteria – continuity, sequence and integration – for organizing learning opportunities, i.e. continuity or the repetition of curricular elements over time; sequence, the repetition of these elements in increasing breadth and depth; and integration, the simultaneous repetition of these elements so that they may reinforce each other.

Achievement of educational ends: Since Tyler (1950) emphasized the need to assess the degree to which educational ends are being attained, research has expanded and sharpened the precision of evaluation instruments. Besides focusing on learning outcomes, evaluation probes the value of goals, the workability and efficiency of teaching procedures and materials, the responsiveness and involvement of the learners, the competence and skills of curriculum planners, the consistency between goals and means, and the benefits to the individual and society (Goodlad 1966, Scriven 1967, Cronbach 1968, Glass 1969, Popham 1969). Gronlund (1968) proposes systematic steps useful for assessing learning and
instruction as (a) identifying the instructional objectives; (b) stating the objectives operationally; (c) selecting and designing instruments for measuring and (d) administering the instruments and analyzing the results to determine the extent to which the desired learning outcomes have been attained.

The materials suggest objectives, content, learning activities and learner and teacher roles. The content defines linguistic content in terms of language elements – structures, topics, notions, functions – or learning tasks. They further specify subject matter, even where no syllabus exists and define intensity of coverage for syllabus item, allocating the amount of time, attention, and detail particular tasks required. Some activities are designed for students’ self-instruction or for peer tutoring. Some of them also dictate interactional patterns in the classroom. The goal of materials is to present content, to practise content, facilitate communication between learners, etc. Materials should be text-based and task-based.

Text-based materials: A textbook and its supplementing materials can rarely meet all of the teacher’s criteria simply because teachers’ and students’ needs vary widely. “There is no such thing as a perfect textbook” (Brown 1995: 166). There are excellent resources for evaluating and selecting textbooks for content and language course, but only a few of them target the needs of L2 teachers (Brown 1995, Dubin and Olshtain 1986, Omaggio Hadley 1993, Sheldon 1988, Skierso 1991, Williams 1983).

A textbook is a very important device of teaching a language and if we teach a language without a textbook, it may result in unnecessary repetitions, sometimes omissions, wastage of time. It helps the teacher and the learner in many ways giving a form to the portion of the language to be covered in a given time. It provides examples for items of vocabulary and structures to be taught. They also help to consolidate learning orally and
serve as a record of the achievement. They provide a basis for reading and comprehension. A textbook for the course should be selected only after a careful evaluation basing on certain criteria.

Vocabulary and structure: A textbook should incorporate carefully selected words and structures. They should be graded and sequenced in an appropriate manner. Selection can be done following the principles of frequency, range, coverage, availability and teachability. Grouping can be done under phonetic grouping, lexical grouping, grammatical grouping and semantic grouping. Sequencing can be lexical, grammatical and semantic. They should be arranged from simple to complex, known to unknown, concrete to abstract, familiar to unfamiliar, easy to difficult, etc.

Subject matter: To teach the structures and vocabulary the subject matter should be given on a variety of topics to create interest in the students. The topics should deal with different forms like pieces of compositions, stories, essays, dialogues, letters, notices, invitations, skits, conversations, autobiographies, jokes, riddles, etc. They should expose the learners to different kinds of writing.

Exercises: A good textbook must not only teach but also test. The consolidation of learning takes place at the time of practice and testing. A wide variety of exercises to teach and test active and passive vocabulary and sentence structures to be used in new situations should be integrated. Illustrations can be incorporated to draw the attention of the readers and relevant illustrations should provide material for composition.

Technical considerations: A textbook must be printed on good quality of paper without mistakes. The size of the book should be handy and should be provided at a reasonable price so that a majority of the learners can afford it. Systematic and ongoing needs assessment should be the primary source of data for course design and material selection.
and they should also accommodate goals and objectives (Dubin and Olshtain 1986, Skierso 1991). The backgrounds and requirements are to be considered. Effective text selection depends on striking a match between the attributes of the textbook on the one hand and the student profile and institutional goals on the other (Shelden 1988, Skierso 1991).

Task-based materials: A variety of games, role plays, simulations and task-based communication activities have been prepared in communicative language teaching activities. Exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials, practice booklets, etc. can be incorporated into teaching. The textbooks may be supplemented with textbooks from outside ESL and composition with related topics, authentic academic texts, literature, journalistic and periodic literature, sample student writing, popular media, recordings of speeches, lectures, debates, discussions, conversations, etc.

Communicative competence can be improved through some activities in the classroom and these activities involve real communication, promote learning and support the learning process. These can be achieved through tasks. The role of tasks has received support from researchers in second language acquisition (Long and Crookes 1993). Feez (1998) says that in task-based instruction, the focus is on process rather than product, and emphasizes tasks producing communication and meaning. Interaction of the students is encouraged and they are sequenced according to difficulty. Skehan (1996:20) explains

tasks … are activities which have meaning as the primary focus. Success in tasks is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use. So task-based instruction takes a fairly strong view of communicative language teaching.

Doyle (1983:161) defined academic tasks as “the products students are asked to produce, the operations they are required to use in order to produce these products, the
cognitive operations required and the resources available and the accountability system involved”. A task also exposes “what the learners are to do in relation to the input” (Nunan 1989:10). A variety of tasks are to be integrated into the teaching of language to accommodate multiple learning styles, strategies, and preferences (Reid 1995, Van Lier 1996). Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) classify tasks according to the type of interaction as jigsaw tasks, information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, opinion exchange tasks, etc.

Supplementary readers may also be prescribed in addition to textbook and supplementing materials. Textbooks are meant for intensive and detailed study whereas supplementary readers are meant for extensive and non-detailed reading. They reinforce the vocabulary items and structures already learnt in textbooks. They develop good reading and comprehension skills and thereby self-study habits can also be inculcated.

Besides these materials, authentic “from-life” materials may be also advocated. Signs, magazines, advertisements, newspapers, graphic and visual sources, pictures, maps, symbols, charts, etc. may be used to support the teaching process.

The evaluation of the textbook and other supporting materials is an important activity in teaching a language. First of all, it should be seen if the material covers the aims and objectives of the course in accordance with the syllabus and addresses the needs of the learner and the teacher. Secondly, an analysis is to be made about the gradation of vocabulary and language structures and also if the examples are provided for different types of written composition we want our students to read, practice and reproduce. We should also have a check on presentation of material along with clear, well-constructed activities, tasks and exercises to help the students to practise good composing skills. Useful and productive activities according to age, content and ability should be incorporated. We
should also examine if they contain explanations, strategies, suggestions and supplemental material. It is also to be tested if the material is skill-based arousing interest and motivation. It is equally important that drills and exercises cover aspects of recognition, identification, discrimination, repetition and production. A preface about the purpose and also guidelines to the classroom teacher are also to be given. Only after a thorough evaluation should textbooks and other supplementing materials be selected.

Syllabus: A syllabus is the most important official document of a course of study. It has to be based on the curriculum it aims to support, it records objectives and methods of teaching them, the input and output requirements. It should provide a basis on which to compare various stages of development of an educational programme. It is also a piece of technical writing that has multiple audiences: first, the faculty that oversees the validity of the approaches and objectives; the students it address; and the administration that files such materials. Designing a syllabus – that is based on solid learning principles, offers reasonable flexibility, sets manageable targets and on top of it even enhances the motivation of the primary audience, the students – is especially crucial in a writing course. It is the first piece of authentic writing the students receive from the teacher – the content, style and even typography of such a document communicates much about what students can, cannot and should not expect.

Syllabus in composition: While framing a syllabus in composition some of the following points may be kept in mind.

i. The problem to be presented to the learners should be specific, concrete, realistic and practical. If the problem is so, it engages the learners’ interest and the need starts the working of the language mechanism. Some stimulus may be applied and the words would be brought out. The problem should be adjusted and presented to
an appropriate level of difficulty and it should be within the language the learners know.

ii. The problem must present the purpose of writing and the reader or class of readers to whom it is addressed. The writer must have a real or imaginary reader and he is his target.

iii. The learners must bring their attention, experience and imagination into focus upon the problem. Only then are they ready to make a draft and the art of composition teaching consists in getting the pupils up to drafting point.

iv. The learners must find out how to do the job. They can see how other people tackle similar jobs – to read a letter, for example, and then write one using the same technique. It can be applied in any kind of writing – advertisements, description, narrative, exposition, argument, dialogue, etc. Problems of technique need to be broken down into simple manageable units.

v. The composition course should cover the widest possible ranges of writing.

vi. More useful teaching can be done after a piece of work has been written. Writing should be a co-operative endeavour. The students should be trained for correction of their own work.

vii. Originality should be given more importance. Being original, the child will be definitely creative.

viii. Grammar teaching should be relevant to the needs of the composition and the composition work should be based on local material so that they know what they are writing about.

ix. The work should draw the students’ own experience.

x. We must explain how the learner should work, give and seek help from others.
The general English syllabus for the first year undergraduate courses of Acharya Nagarjuna University from 2002 onwards included nine selections from prose, eight selections from poetry, six stories from non-detailed text and some items of grammar in language study. The composition syllabus covered only “writing paragraphs” and “letter writing”. In the prescribed book very few exercises are given. The details of the syllabus are included in Appendix E.

The second year degree syllabus that was followed from 2003-2004 onwards included eight selections from prose, nine selections from poetry, six short stories from non-detailed and items of composition in language study. The prescribed composition activities were information transfer, summarizing, note-making, note-taking, essay-writing and dialogue writing. The exercises given in the prescribed textbook are not sufficient to give enough practice. The details of the syllabus are included in Appendix F.

There was a change of syllabus in the first year in 2005-2006. According to this the number of prose lessons was reduced from nine to five, poems from eight to five, short stories from six to three. Language study included the same items as in the previous syllabus. The particulars of syllabus are furnished in Appendix I. Communication curriculum is introduced in the syllabus. Practice in speaking and listening skills is given. Fifty per cent marks are given to writing skills and fifty per cent marks are given for communication aspect. The details of syllabus are furnished in Appendix I.

The syllabus for the Second year degree course was changed in the year 2006-2007. According to this the number of prose lessons is reduced from eight to five, poetry from nine to five, short stories from six to three. Language syllabus is the same as before. The details of syllabus are included in Appendix J. Communication curriculum is also introduced and training in listening and speaking is also given. Fifty per cent marks are
alotted to writing and fifty per cent marks are allotted to communication skills. The details of the syllabus are furnished in Appendix J.

In the year 2008-2009 there was a change of syllabus in the first year course. Six poems in poetry, six selections in prose and a few items in grammar and vocabulary were prescribed. Two short stories and two one-act plays were suggested for non-detailed reading. Only ‘dialogue-writing’ is the activity for composition teaching. The same communication curriculum given in the previous curriculum is followed. The details of syllabus are furnished in Appendix M. The syllabus for the second year degree course was again changed in the year 2009-2010. According to this the number of prescribed poems is six and the number of prose lessons prescribed in six. Two short stories and two one-act plays are prescribed. Under communication and composition eight composition activities are prescribed. The activities are resume-writing, e-correspondence, note-making, report writing, expansion of proverbs and ideas, description of pictures, jumbled passages and paragraph writing. All these items are useful in their real life. More and more exercises should be provided in the material so that the learners may be given a lot of practice. The details of the syllabus are given in Appendix N. The examination of the syllabus shows that it needs modification if writing skills of the learners are to be improved.

2.13. Methods:

A method determines what and how much is taught, the order in which it is taught, how much meaning and form are conveyed and what is done to make the use of language unconsciously.

The Grammar-Translation Method: This method is the simple combination of the activities of grammar and translation. It is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through a detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by the application
of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. “The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language” (Stern 1983:455). In this method of teaching, reading and writing are the major focus. Vocabulary selection is based on the reading of texts used. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice. Accuracy is emphasized: “high priority is attached to meticulous standards of accuracy which, as well as having an intrinsic moral value, was a prerequisite for passing the increasing number of formal written examinations that grew up during the century” (Howatt 1984:132). Grammar is taught deductively – by presentation and study of grammar rules, which are then practiced through translation exercises.

Direct Method: This method is a reaction to the Translation Method and its basic principle is that learners should directly think in the target language. It is taught through conversation, discussion, reading, etc. It establishes a direct bond between expression, experience and language. Champion in Kohili (1986:43) says that “instinctive, unerring language sense which we all possess in varying degree in the mother tongue, and which superseding all rules, grammars and dictionaries, resting in bottom on the direct association between experience and expression, is the only sure guide in the use of language”.

The main principles are – classroom instruction is conducted exclusively in the target language, everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught, oral communication is built up in a graded progression, grammar is taught inductively, speech and listening comprehension are taught, correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasized, concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objects and pictures, and abstract vocabulary is taught by association of ideas. Brown (1973) described his frustration in observing a
teacher performing verbal gymnastics in an attempt to convey meanings when translation would have been a much more effective technique.

Structural Approach: The arrangement of words in English is important. The meaning of an utterance is changed with the change in the word order. The arrangements or patterns of words are called structures. The types of structures are sentence patterns, formulae, phrases, patterns and idioms. In this approach the learners are taught certain selected structures in a certain order. For this the aural-oral method or the audio-lingual method is used. The syllabus should incorporate structural words as prepositions, pronouns, helping verbs, structural adjectives, structural adverbs, etc. The selection of structures and words should be made according to usefulness, productivity, simplicity and teachability. Grading should be done in the order of difficulty.

Bilingual Method: The advocates of the Bilingual Method believe that it is a waste of time to re-create the situation while teaching the child a foreign language. The teaching-learning process is facilitated only if mother tongue equivalents are given to the pupils without duplicating the situations. In the Bilingual Method mother tongue use is restricted. Only the teacher uses mother tongue to teach meanings. Students are given a lot of practice in the drilling of sentence patterns.

The Oral Approach: It stresses the importance of vocabulary as it is an important aspect of foreign language learning. Emphasis is also laid on the grammatical content of the language course. This approach is described in the standard methodology textbooks such as those of French (1948-50), Gurrey (1955), Frisby (1957) and Billows (1961). According to this approach, teaching of language should begin with spoken form before it is presented in the written form. The target language must be used mostly in the classroom and it should be taught situationally. Vocabulary selection procedures must aim at essential
general service vocabulary and grammar items should be graded. Reading and writing should be introduced after sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established.

Situational Language Teaching: In this speech is the basis of language and structure is treated to be most important for speaking ability. “Word order, structural words, the few inflexions of English and content words will form the material of our teaching” (Frisby 1957:134). It is a type of behaviourist habit-learning theory and aims at a practical command of the four basic skills of language. The syllabus is structural syllabus with basic structures and word list. Initially the learner listens and later participates. According to Pittman (1963), teacher’s responsibilities deal with timing, oral practice, revision, adjustment to special needs of individuals, testing and developing activities other than those arising from the textbook. Pittman (1963:176) says that the textbook should be used only as a guide to the learning process. The teacher is expected to be the master of his textbook.

Audiolinguism: This is based on the prominent school of psychology – behavioural psychology. Rivers (1964:19-22) says that language learning is basically a mechanical habit formation; spoken form should be presented before the written form; analogy provides a better foundation for learning and the meanings that the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context.

The Physical Response: This method Asher (1977) is built on the coordination of speech and action and it teaches language through physical activity. It reflects a grammar - based view and the language teaching pedagogy is based on stimulus-response theory. The method aims at teaching oral proficiency at the beginning level and speaking skills at the end. Specific instructional objectives are not elaborated but whatever goals are set must be attained through the use of action-based drills in the imperative form. Imperative drills,
conversational dialogues, role plays, slide presentations, etc. play an important role in teaching.

The Communicative Approach: This approach in language teaching is based on the theory of language as communication and can be adopted in teaching writing. The goal of teaching language is to develop “Communicative Competence” (Hymes 1972). The three important elements underlying the learning theory are communication principle, task principle, and meaningfulness principle. Some of the characteristics of the communicative view of language are: Language is a system for the expression of meaning; the primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication; the structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses and; the primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meanings as exemplified in discourse. The general objectives of teaching a language are at an integrative and content level, a linguistic and instrumental level, an affective level, a level of individual learning needs and a general educational level. Littlewood (1981) mentions “functional communication activities” including tasks like learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discovering missing features in a map or picture, etc. and “social interaction activities” including conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays, simulations, skits, improvisations and debates. The learner is a negotiator and the teacher plays the role of facilitator group participant, researcher needs analyst, counselor and group process manager. A wide variety of materials have the primary role in promoting communicative language use. Cooperative learning, cooperative organization and activities, task-based language teaching are important features of the approach.
Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) prescribe basic principles of communicative language teaching. Some of them are – meaning should be important presentation should be in the form of dialogues, contextualization, drilling, effective communication, judicious use of native language, reading and writing from early stage, teacher’s motivation of the learner, learning within curriculum, etc. Wilkins (1976) proposed Notional Syllabus, which specified the semantic-grammatical categories and the categories of communicative function that learners need to express.

Some of the designers looked to task specification and task organization as the appropriate criteria. “The only form of syllabus which is compatible with and can support communicational teaching seems to be a purely procedural one – which lists, in more or less detail, the types of tasks to be attempted in the classroom and suggests an order of complexity for tasks of the same kind” (Prabhu 1983:4).

The activities compatible with communicative approach are unlimited. These exercises engage learners in communicative process as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction.

These attempts take many forms. Wright (1976) achieves it by showing out-of-focus slides which the students attempt to identify. Byrne (1978) provides incomplete plans and diagrams which students have to complete by asking for information. Allwright (1977) places a screen between students and gets one to place objects in a certain pattern: this pattern is then communicated to students behind the screen. Geddes and Sturtridge (1979) develop “jigsaw” listening in which students listen to different taped materials and then communicate their content to others in the class. Most of these techniques operate by providing information to some and withholding it from others (Johnson 1982:151).

In communicative approach the learner is a negotiator between the self, the learning process and the object of learning. He interacts and negotiates within the group. He acts as group participant, monitor, risk-taker and innovator when he takes part in a task. He learns
in an interdependent way. The teacher is a needs analyst, counselor and group process manager.

The instructional materials influence the quality of classroom interaction and language use. They may be text-based or task-based and they play an important role in promoting language use. The techniques and class management procedures include presentation of brief dialogues, oral practice, question and answers, interpretative activities, giving written home assignments, evaluation of learning, etc. The communicative approach aims at fluent, authentic and meaningful communication and it involves the integration of different language skills. Learning is a process of creative construction. With these principles in mind the approach can adopted into our teaching of writing skills.

Teaching writing in the classroom: If one has to become a good writer, he must master the language, develop good ideas and learn to organize ideas in a logical sequence. To acquire this skill, composition teaching must be done in a systematic manner. This may be taught in three steps.

In the 'pre-writing stage' the problem is posed and the definition of the purpose is to be discussed. We should teach the grammar and vocabulary needed for that particular topic. The attention of the learners should be drawn to the topic by giving situational guidance. The learners should work with imagination. The content of the composition can be discussed with the whole class, or small groups if possible. The structure and organization may also be discussed. There are many types of pre-writing activities that can be integrated into teaching composition. Some of them are free writing, brainstorming and listing.

In the ‘during-writing stage’ informal outlining is the basic step. The learner develops enough raw material with which to lay a plan for a piece of writing. There should
be coherence and unity in the piece of writing. They should be arranged in a way that exhibits some sort of logic and the logic may be chronological, spatial, thematic, categorical, etc. The teacher should go around the class, offer help with words, structures, spellings, etc. He can spot errors and offer immediate correction and the students may be encouraged to give some suggestions. They make their first drafts individually. They can also be instructed to make use of dictionary, grammar, and other reference books. The topic can be divided into manageable units and areas of common difficulty should be discussed. Improvement can be made by themselves by reading again and again.

In the ‘post-writing phase’ the final copy can be read out for slips, by the other members of his group. When the piece of writing is subjected to peer editing, it has many advantages. Students show more interest in their learning. They can “reconceptualize their ideas in light of their peers’ reactions” (Mendonca and Johnson 1994:746). Responding to peers’ writing builds critical skills (Leki 1990, Mittan 1989). Students are given confidence by seeing peers’ strengths and weaknesses in writing. After peer editing the teacher can collect the final drafts and indicate errors. They should be noted to be dealt with later. Remedial teaching can be given on the areas of common difficulty. Some good compositions may be made to be read out by the students. Imposition of spelling may be insisted. After a thorough discussion, similar tasks can be assigned for more practice.

If the teacher’s technique is to be evaluated, there are certain features to be observed. It is very essential that the teacher successfully introduces the topic, matter, vocabulary and structures. The teacher should see that the target language is mostly used. The vocabulary of the teacher should be within the range of the learners so that the attention of the entire section is not lost. Emphasis is to be given to skills rather than the content. The participation of the student in the class is also equally important.
While a method is selected it is wrong to swear by one method. We should be eclectic and pragmatic. The technique may be chosen according to the aims and objectives of teaching, the age, ability and capacity of pupils, ability and training of teacher, size of class, availability of aids to support teaching, etc. In teaching the syllabus of Acharya Nagarjuna University, a specific method is not adopted, particularly in teaching composition, the curriculum at degree level does not prescribe a specific method.

2.14. Examinations:

If teaching and learning are to go on efficiently, the achievements of students need to be constantly measured. A good deal of time and attention should be devoted to the assessment of the progress made by the students. Evaluation may be for different purposes: (a) assessment of attainment, for purposes of awarding a qualification or for selection and placement, (b) prediction of future progress, (c) measurement of the value of teaching methods and procedures, (d) diagnosis of individual or group difficulties and (e) measurement of aptitude. Evaluation is carried out by means of tests and examinations. Characteristics of a good examination: It is very important to design question papers to test adequately and correctly as they deeply influence the methods and contents of teaching. A test lists what has been taught and it should take into consideration the aims and objectives and see if they have been realized or not. Different skills are to be tested and also the examiner should be definite in what he is testing. The test should not be too easy or too difficult and should cater to the weak, average and bright students. The question papers should not be too long or too easy. The instructions and principles of valuation should be clear. The questions should aim at testing the learner’s real mastery of the structures and vocabulary. A good test should be reliable and valid.
Whenever student performance is evaluated for diagnosis, placement or advancement, the teacher’s responsibility is more because decisions made after the test could affect further training and career. The teachers should understand the weight of their responsibilities and develop the knowledge and skills to execute them fairly and confidently (cf. Bailey 1988, Grabe and Kaplan 1997, Silva 1997). If we measure student writing performance or proficiency, which is student-generated text, it is direct assessment (Camp 1993, Grabe and Kaplan 1996). Indirect assessment attempts to evaluate writing ability by testing verbal reasoning, error recognition, or grammatical accuracy – all of which may be related to writing performance in some way but only indirectly because they do not involve the act of composing.

Reliability: Reliability in language testing can be achieved only by making tests as objective as possible. Maintaining reliability is a consistent challenge for the teachers who are concerned with writing. By objectivity, it is meant than an impartial speaker of the target language would agree upon the correct and incorrect responses of the language learners. Reliability refers to the consistency with which a sample of student writing is assigned the same rank or score after multiple ratings by trained evaluators (Carmines and Zeller 1979, Henning 1991). Whether the language test is meant to assess the learner’s communicative competence or his grammatical competence, we should be clear in our minds that the testing of total knowledge of the language learner is impossible.

Language tests may be unreliable for reasons other than wrong sampling and they are concerned with the language data and the test instructions. A syntactic test may contain vocabulary that the examinee does not know. Instructions may be defective in order to avoid such unreliability, instructions must be precise, clear and unambiguous. The vocabulary must be within the range of the students. Studies reveal that even highly

Validity: Validity of any examination or test procedure may be broadly defined as the extent to which it does, and what it is intended to do (Pilliner 1973). It is an important precept to successful writing assessment. It refers to the extent to which an instrument “actually measures what it purports to measure” (Cohen 1994:38). Validity depends directly on reliability because no measure “can be valid without first being reliable” (Hamp-Lyons 1991:252 and Bachman and Palmer 1996).

In order to ensure reliability, validity and suitability of the items, certain criteria are applicable to all the test items. It should be carefully seen if the item measures an important learning outcome and if it is focused to measure important content area. The level of difficulty of the items should be in correspondence with the degree of achievement of the learners. Care should be taken to see that the instructions are clear and understandable. With these precepts in mind the teacher can construct a reliable and valid test.

Assessment is an essential teaching task “we need to know what students do as writers, for both planning and the evaluation of our teaching. Further, we need to track progress over the course of our teaching”. (Hillocks 1995:132). Classroom evaluation is nearly always problematic because “the audience is usually limited to the person (the teacher) who also designs, assigns and assesses that writing” (Kroll and Reid 1995:18).

From the year 2002-2003 onwards the pattern of question paper that was followed in Acharya Nagarjuna University for I year degree course is as follows: A sample question paper of the university is included in Appendix G.
Part A (Analytical Skills)

I.  A. Comprehension (seen)  Prose  5 marks
    B. Comprehension (seen)  Non-detailed  5 marks

II. A. Correction of sentences  Grammar  5 marks
     B. Rewrite as directed  Grammar  5 marks
        i.  Voice
        ii. Degrees of Comparison
        iii. Transformation of sentences
        iv. Articles
        v. Prepositions
     C. Direct and Indirect speech  Grammar  2 marks
     D. Tenses  Grammar  5 marks
     E. Vocabulary  Prose  5 marks
     F. Rewriting jumbled sentences into a coherent paragraph  Grammar  4 marks
     G. Dialogue to be written as a report
        or
        Dialogue on a situation  Grammar  4 marks
     H. Paragraph writing  Composition  5 marks
     I. Short general essay  Composition  5 marks

Part B (Descriptive Skills)

III. Essay  Prose  10 marks
IV. Paragraph answers  Poetry  3 x 5  15 marks
V. Essay  Non-detailed  10 marks
VI. a. Reference to contexts  Prose  2 x 5  10 marks
    b. Reference to contexts  Poetry  5 marks

The pattern of question paper i.e. followed from the year 2003-2004 in Acharya Nagarjuna University for the II year degree course is as follows and a sample question paper is included in Appendix H.

Section A

I.  1. Comprehension (seen)  Prose  5 marks
    2. Comprehension (seen)  Prose  5 marks
II. Short answers  Prose  2 x 5  10 marks
III. Essay  Prose  10 marks
During the period of this research study, some changes were made in the syllabus and question papers of both first and second year of degree courses of Acharya Nagarjuna University. The changes came into effect from the academic year 2005-’06 for the first year and with effect from 2006-’07 for the second year. 50% of the marks are allotted for reading and writing skills in both the years. The distribution of marks is as follows: The syllabus is enclosed in Appendix I and Appendix J and the sample question papers are included in Appendix K and Appendix L.

**I year**

1. a. Comprehension (unseen) - 5 x 1 5 marks  
   b. Comprehension (seen) Prose 5 x 1 5 marks  
2. Short answers Poetry 2 x 5 10 marks  
3. Short essay Non-detailed 5 x 1 5 marks  
4. a. Rearrangement of jumbled sentences into a meaningful sequence Composition 5 marks  
   b. Vocabulary Prose 10 x ½ 5 marks  
   c. Guided composition – Paragraph basing on hints Composition 10 marks  
   d. Error correction Grammar 10 x ½ 5 marks
II year

I. a. Essay                 Prose                      5 marks
   b. Essay                 Prose                      10 marks
II. Short answers          Poetry                     5 x2  10 marks
III. Essay                Non-detailed               5 marks
IV. a. Using phrasal verbs or idioms in own sentences Grammar              5 marks
     b. Reference skills or drawing a bar chart from the given information Composition  5 marks
     c. Essay-writing or dialogue-writing                     Composition       5 marks
     d. Note-making or summarizing                           Composition                     5 marks

In the patterns of the old question papers in degree courses, more activities were accommodated and there was a wider scope for the students to improve writing skills. Inspite of its wider scope it was clear that the students were not able to communicate appropriately through writing. In the present question papers of the degree course, the weightage given to writing is reduced to fifty per cent and the remaining fifty per cent marks are allotted to listening and speaking skills. As writing is the most complex skill of all, it is very difficult for the students to express themselves with the little practice they get during the course. The researcher feels that more activities are to be incorporated into the course and more time is to be allotted to teach them.

There is a change in the syllabus and pattern of question paper for the first year English from the year 2008-2009. 50 marks are allotted for reading and writing. The pattern of the question paper is as follows: The syllabus is enclosed in Appendix M and a sample question paper is included in Appendix O.
I Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prose 5x2 10 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry 5x2 10 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-detailed 5x2 10 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Reading comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar 5x1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Verb forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar 5x1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar 5x1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Correction of sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar 5x1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this pattern composition is not given much importance. It would be better if more items in composition are included both in teaching and testing as writing is an important skill at the first year of undergraduate level.

There is change also in the syllabus and pattern of question paper for the second year English from the year 2009 and 2010 (Appendix N). 50 marks are allotted for reading and writing. The pattern of the question paper is as follows (Appendix P).

II Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prose 5 x 2 10 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry 5 x 2 10 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-detailed &amp; Composition 5 x 2 10 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. a. Resume-writing or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition 5 x 1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Expansion of a proverb/ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Information transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition 5 x 1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Note-making or Mind-mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition 5 x 1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Description of a given picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Report-writing of a dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition 5 x 1 5 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this pattern the number of practically useful composition activities accommodated is more compared to the previous pattern. As there is internal choice among the question items there is scope for neglecting some of these activities. It would be better to make the teaching and learning and testing of these activities compulsory as they are useful.

Apart from objectives, materials, methods and examinations other important process-oriented components which enhance students’ quality of writing are peer group interaction, revision, correction work, and the guidance the teacher can give are important.

2.15. Peer Group Interaction:
Writing is often conceived of as a solitary activity: the author commits to paper thoughts, ideas and opinions that seek expression. But writing should be learnt with an effort by more than one person. Working on a theme by sharing an experience will result in growing consciousness of a reader-based prose: contributing writers, when such partnerships are formed voluntarily, can provide insights that the solitary writer may not possess.

Interaction has been central to theories of second language learning and pedagogy and particularly in writing, it plays a vital role. This view sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals. The theories focus on patterns of moves, acts, negotiation and interaction focused in conversational exchanges. Language content may be specified and organized by patterns of exchange and interaction. This notion has been linked to the teaching of all the skills of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. “Language use is always in a social context and this applies to both oral and written language, to both first and second
language use” (Rigg 1991:523). Constructivist learners create meaning, learn by doing, and work collaboratively in mixed groups on common projects through interaction.

Interaction brings about cooperative learning among pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. This sort of cooperative or collaborative learning is a very important feature of second language learning especially in teaching writing.

Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others (Olsen and Kagan 1992:8).

Learning of this type seeks to raise the achievement of all students, including those who are gifted or academically handicapped; help the teacher build positive relationships among students; give students the experiences they need for healthy social, psychological, and cognitive development, replace the competitive organizational structure of most classrooms and schools with a team-based, high-performance organizational structure (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec 1994:2).

In writing, peer response activities can take place at various stages. They can be arranged in pre-writing, discovery, between draft revision, and editing. They fit well with the composition teaching (Connor and Asenavage 1994, Emig 1971, Zamel 1982, 1985, 1987). It “is the notion of collaborative learning which derives from social constructionist view … that knowledge is essentially a socially justified belief” (Carson and Nelson 1994: 17-18). “Cognitive development results from social interaction” (Mendonca and Johnson 1994, Vygotsky 1986). Second language acquisition theories support group work in general and writing response groups in particular (Long and Porter 1985, Mittan 1989, Pica 1984).
Students can take active roles in their own learning and “reconceptualize their ideas in light of their peers’ reactions” (Mendonca and Johnson 1994:746). Students receive feedback from multiple sources and gain a clearer understanding of reader needs by receiving feedback on what they have done well and what remains unclear (Mittan 1989, Moore 1986, Witbeck 1976). Peer interactions build communication skills and provide opportunities for students to test and revise L2 drafts.

Peer responses take place when students exchange completed drafts and give one another feedback before the writers undertake revision. Students can function within the class for idea-generation or pre-writing activities and then collaborate before beginning a draft. They can list ideas, prepare informal outline, draft an introduction, etc. In the editing stage, they can help each other to look for grammatical or mechanical errors prior to producing final drafts. They can discuss course readings with one another. They can ask questions and lead discussions on assigned reading work together in oral presentations, go to library together to find sources, etc. These cooperative activities allow for integration of language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing, in the L2 writing class as all of them are important not only for writing but also in the second language acquisition.

2.16. Revision:

Frodesen (1991) reflected on the different views process-oriented and product-oriented writing instruction had on the role of grammatical accuracy in ESL composition. Keeping in mind the learner attitudes and contexts, he suggested that for a writing programme to be optimally successful, teachers need to help students develop such accuracy with only minimum terminology, and went on to present four main groups of activities that aim to assist learners in building revision skills for grammatical accuracy. They are text analysis, guiding writing practice, editing and teacher correction and
feedback on errors. Revision is seen as a means that arises from a need to eliminate error: the main goal is to assist the learner and groups of learners to polish text. Frodesen states that in “selecting and developing grammar-oriented activities for the classroom, the teacher should always bear in mind the students’ needs and background as well as the demands of the writing tasks” (1991:275). The task is obviously the end product: the error-free composition.

Lane (1993) aimed to inculcate in his readers the daily experience that they are creating when they are writing, and that they are doing so especially in revising what they are writing. The primary goal the collection of revision techniques communicates is simple and relevant: to share with the reader the discovery that when we revise, we can see better and that this realization is the source of much personal and collective benefit. Lane (1993) suggests different stages in writing: brainstorming, mapping, free writing, drafting, revising, clarifying and editing. At every major theoretical juncture of writing, revising takes place.

2.17. Correction Work:

There is a need for a systematic correction of the pupil’s written work. The aim of correction is to point out the mistakes of the learners with a view to enabling them to acquire the correct forms and it means time and trouble for the teacher but mistakes that are not corrected get themselves established. Once they are established, it becomes difficult to rectify them and so the correction is to be done immediately and carefully. Mistakes are not only of language, but also shortcomings in the subject matter and the way of presentation. Suitable matter and its manner of presentation are also as important as correct language. Correction is done with a view to pointing out the weaknesses as well as the strong points of the composition of pupils. It should be remembered that learners need
encouragement and the teacher should not discourage them by concentrating on their mistakes only. It is the responsibility of the teacher to identify errors and also offer to each learner as to how we can improve his composition.

Learner’s composition work may be full of mistakes. We can think of ways and means to reduce them. Oral practice in construction of sentences may be given in the form of drill work. Every written work should be dealt with orally. Oral work correction has advantages as it can be immediately done in the presence of the learner. The teacher should prepare a list of mistakes which are made by most of the pupils and later the correct forms should be brought to the notice of the pupils. The exercises set should not be above the standard of the pupils. Controlled composition should be attempted at the early stages and then in later stages free composition should be taught.

The mistakes that occur can be corrected first through self-correction. The student should be asked to point out his own mistakes and only then the student exercises his mind and is not likely to commit the mistakes in future. Some mistakes are due to carelessness which can be discovered if attention is drawn to them. Self-help procedures can identify unpleasant repetitions, lack of clarity, flow of ideas, interruptions of thought etc. The teacher can go round the class and encircle incorrect forms and the students should be instructed to correct them. If he is trained he will gradually cultivate the habit of self-correction. Later the mistakes can be corrected by the members of his group. Through peer correction, some more mistakes can be corrected. Finally the teacher can correct them by using certain abbreviations and symbols to point out the mistakes. They may be corrected in the presence of the students so that he can know the correct forms then and there. The teacher need not mark all the mistakes that the students make but he can take a few items at a time and ensure that the pupils learn to correct them. If the composition is
full of red ink, the student is likely to be discouraged. So only essential mistakes are to be corrected.

2.18. Remedial Work:

Remediation becomes necessary due to many reasons. Some of the reasons may be formation of bad language habits, insufficient formation of good language habits, insufficient formation of desired concepts and insights or formation of wrong concepts and insights. Typical common errors should be reserved for correction and teaching for the whole class. There are some mistakes which the pupils cannot correct for themselves. Structural and lexical items of common difficulty can be rectified by re-teaching with suitable situations. Spellings can be corrected by giving dictation and imposition, suggesting to refer to the dictionary, conducting language games, etc. Punctuation mistakes may be rectified by giving exercises in punctuation. Mistakes in paragraphing, form, arranging in a sequence, etc. can be corrected by teaching how to write a paragraph, organize in a form, logical sequencing, etc. Some techniques like selective correction, self-correction, group correction, substitution tables, using descriptive grammar, individual correction, practice through new situation, drills, etc., can be adopted. Language items that can be given remedial treatment should be brought in again and again in composition classes. The teacher can test if pupils can use such items independently.

2.19. Role of Teacher:

In learning to write in a foreign language like English, students face a number of difficulties. Silva (1993: 669) observed that, “L₂ writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L₁ writing”. It is very difficult for ESL teachers to understand fundamental characteristics that distinguish L₂ writers from L₁
writers. The fundamental principle of providing guidance to them in various ways is to help them to master the writing skills.

On the linguistic level, guidance can be provided by using the text as our basic format for practice. Within its framework rhetorical devices – logical, grammatical and lexical – can be taught. We can increase motivation by using activities from the texts. We can make writing activities much more meaningful. The text provides a setting within which they can practice, for example, sentence completion, sentence combination, paragraph construction, etc.

The teacher has to instill confidence and pleasure to work among the learners. Students should be made to ask questions and they should be permitted to interact freely in the classroom with the groups and also the teachers. Interaction has been the central theme of second language learning. “Students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages” (Rivers 1987:4). The notion of interactivity has been linked to the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing. We should not embarrass the students but they should be given time to think before writing or speaking. The teacher should be able to give friendly guidance whenever it is sought for.

Besides classroom teaching, it is essential to organize some other activities specifically designed to promote learners’ learning of English. These have a strong motivational element, and are sometimes more effective than the curricular activities. Activities like acting in plays, debating competitions, extempore speech competitions, recitation, magazine, reading contests, writing contests, etc. can be organized to improve language learning by the students. An individual teacher may draw on different principles at different times depending upon the class. Bailey (1996) suggests some principles:
engaging all learners in the lesson; making learners, and not the teacher, the focus of the lesson; provide maximum opportunities for student participation, developing learner responsibility, be tolerant of learners’ mistakes, develop learners’ confidence, teaching learning strategies, respond to learners’ difficulties and build on them, using more student-to-student activities, promoting cooperation among learners, giving practice in both accuracy and fluency, addressing learners’ needs and interests, etc.

There are schools run by private managements or trusts which are recognized by state governments. The teaching and learning process in these schools gives more exposure to English and students are able to perform better than the students of regional medium. The main objective of this type of schools is to give children fluency and accuracy in English giving due importance to the skills of language. The curriculum followed in these schools is framed by high level committees like CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training), etc. The method of teaching is the Direct Method and the use of mother tongue is minimum. Textbooks published by NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) are being used in some of the schools. Efficient teachers are recruited only after a careful interview by the governing body of the school concerned. Students take part in the activities of school in a disciplined manner. Students visit libraries frequently and this exposes them to various types of texts. Supplementary reading is extensively stressed and students also do independent reading. Good reading habits are inculcated and extensive arrangements for co-curricular activities are made and students take part in debates, discussions, etc. Physical facilities like spacious rooms, good seating, airy and well-lighted rooms are provided. There is scope for use of audio-visual aids and teaching is interesting and motivational. These are the minimum facilities to be provided for the learners for efficient teaching-learning process in English language. Students in such schools are able
to write better. If these features are accommodated into rural schools and colleges run by
government also, the learning of English would be better.

2.20. Summing Up:

Learners must be able to write in different ways for different purposes. Research
shows that students need to be exposed to different forms and skills of writing and need to
have practice in writing. This is very crucial for English L₂ writers. Writing involves the
encoding of a message of some kind: that is, we translate our thoughts into language.
Raimes (1991) suggested the process-oriented analysis of writing and writing pedagogy,
with a greater emphasis on language as communication. The process of writing includes
manipulation, structuring, and communication. Hayes and Flower (1980) developed a
theory of writing – a task environment controlled by a monitor. Theoretical formulations
recommend a planned, task-based, communicative and learner-centred approach to teach
writing skills, which include sub-skills like skill aspect, language, style, expression etc.
Guided or controlled and free compositions are to be incorporated in teaching writing at
different stages through a wide variety of tasks as suggested by White (1986), and Hegde
(1988).

Researchers like Grabe (1991) and Krashen (1985, 1993) say that there is a positive
and dynamic relationship between reading and writing. Resources of language which are
graphological and rhetorical and development of a paragraph with coherence and unity are
prerequisites of teaching writing skills. Teaching writing also draws our attention to
psychological, linguistic and cognitive problems involved in writing.

The objectives of teaching English may be summed up as, developing in the learner
skills and knowledge to understand English, to read English, to speak English and to write
English and language is best learnt if all these skills are integrated. Mager (1975) says that
objectives of different skills are to be precise, and should specify performance, conditions and criteria. As writing involves all the four-fold skills of language, all the objectives of all the skills are to be integrated in the pedagogy. The writing materials of Acharya Nagarjuna University do not specify the objectives of writing.

Studies support a wide variety of materials for use to support communicative approach which views materials as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction. These may be classified as text-based, task-based and realia. The materials for teaching writing skills at Acharya Nagarjuna University are not constructed according to communicative principles and also they are insufficient.

A history of language teaching has seen a succession of methods of teaching a language. Hymes (1972) focuses on communicative competence as an important goal of teaching a language. Communicative approach can be aptly adopted to teaching of writing skills. The teacher can adopt an individual or integrated personal method, reflecting her individual beliefs, values, principles and experiences depending on the type of teaching. Process approach may be implemented at different stages of the writing process – pre-writing, during-writing and after-writing. Process approach of teaching is not accommodated in the teaching of writing skills at Acharya Nagarjuna University.

Assessment involves the means of obtaining information about students’ abilities, knowledge, understanding, attainment or attitudes. An examination should be reliable and valid which can be both formative and summative. Assessment is an ongoing process and different instruments can be used throughout the instructional period integrating all the skills. But the examination conducted in the colleges of Acharya Nagarjuna University is only year-end examination which does not follow an integrative or communicative approach.
Cooperative or collaborative learning is an important feature of second language learning especially in writing and this can be achieved through peer group interaction among pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. Frodesen (1991) reflected on the role of grammatical accuracy and presented groups of activities to assist learners in building revision skills. Studies on self assessment reveal that students are able to analyse and respond to their own writing given the proper training. Through peer response, students are enjoined to share their writings with one another and last to respond to a written work is the teacher. Through remediation, fluency, accuracy, and appropriacy can be achieved. As the learners face a number of difficulties while learning to write, the teachers should recognize their fundamental and pivotal role in facilitating the development of their students’ communicative competence.

Basing on the theoretical insights discussed in this chapter, the teaching of composition should be carefully planned. Learning to write is a complex task and unless there is a systematic approach in teaching composition, the learners will not be effective communicators through writing. It calls for constant writing by the student and direct teaching and evaluation by the teacher. The subsequent chapter reviews the related studies in the teaching and learning of composition.

* * *