CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the previous chapter the theoretical background on various aspects of teaching and learning of writing skills is given. In this chapter a review of available research in writing skills is made. Firstly, a brief outline of research in the learning and the learning process is given. A review of research in reading-writing is made as reading affects writing and teachers can exploit the critical links between the literary skills. Research in L₁ composition paves way to shape the theory of L₂ writing. The role of lexical units has been stressed both in the first and the second language acquisition research. As language begins with the spoken form, material can be taught orally before the presentation of its written form. Research in teacher feedback, peer feedback and error correction is reviewed as they help the students in short and long-term improvements of their writing. A look at the research in related studies in Indian context justifies the need for developing research on writing skills.

3.1. Learning Process:

A good deal of research in learning process is available and some of the important concepts are mentioned here. Teaching of a language includes the plans concerning what to teach and how to teach and successful teaching must be guided by an understanding of how learning takes place. Travers (1963:29) wrote that “learning is said to have occurred when a response undergoes modification on its recurrence as a result of conditions in the environment which have produced relatively permanent changes in the central nervous system”. Conflicting theories on how learning takes place, such as the stimulus - response or conditioning theory of Wundt and Wertheimer, John F. Traver’s theory of learning and
drive reduction, and Robert White’s theory of learning as a competence motive attest to incomplete knowledge of the process of learning. An available collection of concepts can be included in research on various aspects of learning which can provide invaluable help in moving theoretic concerns toward practical enhancement of student learning (Schwab 1970). Some examples of concepts include –

i. Identification: As language learning involves imitation, the student needs good models to imitate and these models may include the parents, teachers, siblings and peers. These provide cues for what is to be learned and the zeal for learning (Kagan 1965).

ii. Resources for learning: Learning is enhanced where the environment is rich with materials that promote exploration, manipulation and experimentation, i.e. opportunities for learning (Bloom 1968).

iii. Culture potential studies clearly state that different cultural milieus cultivate different qualities and capacities. Learning success is increased where learning opportunities capitalize on the cultural capacities of individuals and groups (Benedict 1934).

iv. Sex differences: Most human groups raise males and females along differing patterns of motives and expectations. Each sex is unique in interests, potentialities, and perceptions relevant to promotion of learning (Mead 1949).

v. Knowledge about learners: Individual attention plays an important role and the student learns more where the teacher knows him as an individual (Glaser 1973).

vi. Increasing transfer: Language learned should be immediately utilized in their daily life. The ability to apply a behaviour learned in a given situation to other situations with similar elements is enhanced where the teacher guides the student
in recognizing the similarities and helps him in identifying possibilities for learning transfer (Bruner 1960).

vii. Learning needs: Needs analysis is very essential to decide the objectives, methods, materials and examinations. Learning should not end with the acquisition of new materials. Learning should be designed to meet the need to extend, broaden or deepen acquired learning (Bruner 1960).

viii. Learning involves personality dimensions: Besides the intellect, high self-concept, low anxiety and moderate level of motivation are among the complex of potentialities which influence learning (Kagan 1965).

ix. Rewards and learning: The theories of language learning stress the importance of rewards. The learner must be informed of the outcomes of his efforts. Rewards insure repetition of behaviour; punishment may lead to the recurrence or the extinction of a given behaviour, depending on motives (Kagan 1965).

x. Attitudes and learning: Positive attitude enhances learning and new information which agrees with one’s attitudes is remembered longer than contradicting information (Festinger and Maccoby 1965).

xi. Adaptive education mode: A learning environment which is modified to suit a learner’s background, interests, aptitudes and past performance, i.e. an adaptive education mode, promotes learning more efficiently (Glaser 1973).

xii. Standards of performance on intellectual tasks: The standard of performance on intellectual tasks that the individual sets for himself, i.e. the degree of excellence he demands of himself in his work, divides his commitment to and perseverance in his project (Kagan 1965).

While taking decisions on how to teach, it is always essential to consider principles like continuity, sequence and integration. Continuity is a very important procedure to be
adopted in developing learning. Miel (1966) points out that sequence is imposed by an outsider and therefore tends to be arbitrary. She suggested that conferring with students may be helpful in determining how to organize learning opportunities. A simple-to-complex scheme has traditionally found acceptance among educators. Bloom and his associates’ (Bloom 1956, Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia 1964, Simpson 1966-67), Taxonomy of Objectives, Hanna’s (1966) Expanding Communities of Man; and the Teaching of Structures of the Disciplines (Whitehead 1929, Phenix 1956, Schwab 1970, Bruner 1960) proposed by various authorities are all premised on the recurrence of knowledge elements in graduated complexity.

Integration or unity among different substantive curricular elements should be established as an efficient plan for promoting learning. Bloom (1958) and Bruner (1960) enumerated some advantages of integration. Integration reduces numerous isolated experiences into a smaller group of experiences. Studies in psychology indicate that the individual has a limited capacity for storing information, grouping experiences and thereby reducing the number of items. Disjointed experiences become more meaningful through organization. Organization makes life more predictable and it lessens the number of unknowns in the life of an individual. It makes the individual to examine and think about experiences from different perspectives. This develops an insight into old experience and the new experiences become more meaningful.

3.2. Writing Theory and Practice:

Writing is considered to be the most complex of all the activities. It involves many aspects as the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects.
Ellis (1998) pointed out that much of the effort was either theoretical or pedagogical in reviewing second language acquisition. To arrive at valid conclusions on the acquirer of language, Larson Freeman (1991) pointed out the importance of studying and describing the learner. She critiqued findings related to variables such as learner age, language learning aptitude, attitude and motivation, personality, cognitive issues and learning strategies. She concluded that language education should corroborate findings and test hypothesis as the following: learning is a gradual process; it is not linear; unless the learners are ready to proceed to new phases of learning, no long-term acquisition takes place.

The Input Hypothesis: In Input Hypothesis Krashen (1985) claims that to ensure long-term success in language acquisition, there must be a comprehensible input. This theory comprises the Monitor Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis which are important in the area of writing.

The Monitor Hypothesis is concerned with language production – the ability to use language is a result of competence based on acquisition, while learning acts to enable speakers and writers to “change the output of the acquired system before (they) speak or write” (Krashen 1985:2). For this monitor to operate, Krashen hypothesized that the user needs to be aware of the importance of accuracy, and the rule stating correct forms should be present. The Affective Filter Hypothesis states that for comprehensible input to become intake, a mental block should be lowered: this can occur when the speaker is self-confident, and when a potential failure to produce the necessary language is not seen as a risk. Krashen added that for the filter to be down, the speaker must focus on the message.

In the writing study, Krashen (1984) hypothesized that his generic SLA hypothesis of comprehensible input held for the development of writing skills, suggesting that
extended reading was necessary for organizational and grammatical improvement to occur.

3.3. L₁ and L₂ Research:

Approaches to L₁ rhetoric and composition focus on those aspects that played important role in shaping theories of L₂ writing. A strongly influential trend in L₁ composition research and pedagogy emerged in 1960s and 1970s and popularized in 1980s in US education institutions. This is known as process approach. This approach emphasizes the writer as the creator of original written discourse, focusing particular attention on his or her procedures for producing and revising text. (Applebee 1978, Berlin 1988, Tarvers 1993, Faigley (1986). Proponents can be divided into two distinct categories: the expressivists and cognitivists. For expressivists (Coles 1974, 1980, Elbow 1973, Murray 1985), composing is viewed as “a creative act in which the process – the discovery of the true self – is as important as the product” (Berlin 1988:484). They say writing instruction should be non-directive and largely personal. Expressivism values fluency and “voice” (Elbow 1981) as principal tools for achieving proficiency in writing in tasks like journal writing and personal essays.

Cognitivism sometimes described as problem-solving model, shares with expressivism as composing processes are personal and recursive, however places greater value on thinking and problem-solving skills such as planning, defining rhetorical problems, positioning, problems, proposing solutions, etc. (Flower 1985, 1989, Hayes and Flower 1983). Cognitivism stresses on invention and pre-writing tasks (Lauer 1970), revision, collaborative writing, feedback sessions (cf. Murray 1992) and the postponement of editing until the end of a composing cycle.
There is a close relationship between the composing skills of \( L_1 \) and \( L_2 \). Investigations by Cumming (1989) and Zamel (1976, 1982, 1983) indicated that ESL writers with well-developed \( L_1 \) writing abilities were able to transfer \( L_1 \) skills and strategies to their \( L_2 \) composing process. Speakers of all languages share a common cognitive / academic proficiency that allows for the interlingual transfer of literate skills and behaviours. ESL students exhibited skills that included planning, organizing their ideas and revising texts to reflect their intentions as writers. Cumming also reported that his intermediate and advanced level writers’ ability to practice these strategies as they composed in English functioned independently of their measured \( L_2 \) proficiency. This shows that the needs of ESL students are comparable to those of \( L_1 \) writers with regard to writing. Research shows that ESL students who are also inexperienced \( L_1 \) writers tend to show that, like their NES peers, they lack a sense of direction in composing, experience difficulty in organizing information and often get stuck up in composing and revision processes (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987, Cumming 1989).

Raimes (1991) provided a useful historical account of how ESL writing theory has evolved since the 1960s. He traced the form-focused orientation in \( L_2 \) writing to the audio-lingual tradition in second language teaching. Writing served to reinforce oral patterns of language. Emphasis was on the production of well-formed sentences. Composition tasks may involve the imitation of specific rhetorical patterns based on authentic student-generated models.

In the next phase the focus on the writer in \( L_2 \) composition has drawn researchers’ and teachers’ attention to what writers “actually do as they write” (Raimes 1991:409). Classroom procedures resulting from writer-based orientation include creation and sharing
of multiple drafts, peer collaboration, abundant revision and attention to content before grammatical form.

In the next step the focus was on the content and the disciplines. Shift was in the direction of the knowledge and written genres. Emphasis “was on the instructor’s determination of what academic content is most appropriate, in order to build whole courses or modules of reading and writing tasks around the content” (Raimes 1991:411).

Later the reader-focused model of ESL writing has emerged. “Teachers must gather assignments from across the curriculum, assess the purposes and audience expectations in the assignments, and present them to the class” (Reid 1987:34). L₁ and L₂ research has concluded that “when content and form are familiar, reading and writing are relatively easy. But when one or the other (or both) are unfamiliar, efficiency, effectiveness and success are problematic” (Reid 1993:63).

3.4. Reading and Writing:

There is a close relationship between reading and writing and teachers interested in teaching and learning of writing skills require a fundamental understanding of reading-writing relationships. Empirical studies in the field of literacy show that reading for academic and recreational purposes positively influences L₁ and L₂ development among both children and adults (Krashen 1985, 1993). There is evidence that supports the positive influences of reading on language and literacy skill development. Researchers have attempted to explain how writing proficiency develops as a result of reader’s interactions with print (Grabe 1991).

An important principle of L₂ education is that students acquire more knowledge and learn more efficiently when abundant and meaningful input is made available to them (Krashen 1985). Numerous studies have indicated that extensive reading correlates highly
with improved performance in L₁ (Belanger 1987, Stotsky 1983). Reading proponents argued primacy of reading over explicit writing and grammar instruction in L₂ classrooms (Goodman and Hood 1989, McQuillan 1994, Peregoy and Boyle 1997). Most of the studies assume that book ownership reflects an individual’s level of literacy and claim that book ownership reliably predicts learner’s performance on academic reading tasks (Milner 1951, Ryan 1977, Stevenson 1985). As Smith (1988:20) observed, knowledge about written language and its use “must be found in what other people have written, in existing texts… we learn to write without suspecting that we are learning or what we learn”.

Applebee (1978) discovered that high school students who read an average of 14 books during the summer vacation were also successful writers whose composition scores were superior to those of students who reported reading significantly fewer books. Studies of voluntary reading among L₁ and L₂ learners in various age groups offer empirical confirmation that the ability to produce written text emanates at least partly from long-term, self-initiated reading and that their ability can develop without learners’ conscious awareness. Woodward and Phillips (1967) found that college freshmen judged to be good writers reported frequently reading newspapers and other non-assigned texts outside the classes. Students with lower composition scores reported reading significantly less often, if at all.

Assigned reading has also proved to be a positive influence on developing composing skills. DeVries (1970) suggests that assigned reading may serve as an effective and useful substitute for conventional writing practice. Heys (1962) related that the reading group wrote one third of the essays produced by the writing group but at the end of the term the composition scores of the reading group were significantly higher than those of the writing group.
There are some research studies in the teaching of English composition to native speakers, but there are very few in composition for English as a second language. Braire (1966), as a result of his pilot study in 1966, emphasized the necessity of frequent and plentiful writing. He studied a sample of only fifteen university students and gave sporadic grammar instruction along with the free writing that he was studying; he admitted that there were too many variables for his results of an increase in quantity and a decrease in error to be significant. Another proponent of quantity of free writing is Erazmus (1960:28), who advocated “large quantities of material” and rapid writing with no revision of rewriting. Studies in frequency of writing for English composition generally indicate that one does not learn to write merely by writing and that frequent writing without instruction might even be detrimental (Dressel et al. 1952, Hunting 1967).

Opposed to the “quantity” school is the “quality” school; where students perform grammatical exercises, controlled tasks and manipulations before they are allowed to attempt a paragraph of their own invention. Dykstra and Paulston (1967) in a study of two groups, one with controlled tasks and one with free, found no increased proficiency in the former but found a difference in student behaviour, in that papers were handed in on time, students asked for more work, and they voluntarily attended an extra conference hour. The assumption was made by Paulston (1972: 37-38) that the “most important theoretical justification for using controlled composition in the ESL classroom lies in the realm of motivation” as there was no evidence to show “that controlled composition is a more efficient method for teaching composition”.

According to Dyskstra (1964), Pincas (1962), Moody (1965), Spencer (1965) and Sojas (1968), inspite of the lack of evidence, controlled composition tasks proliferated, all emphasizing models, manipulations, substitution – emphasizing, in short, grammatical
facility. Research in the teaching of English composition leads to the conclusion that “the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing” (Braddock 1963: 37-38). Controlled compositions are not formal grammar instruction; however, the students are making grammatical manipulations, and their work is correct if it has no grammatical errors.

If the ESL composition teacher does not find any answer in the research, he still has to carry on teaching. He might have intermediate or advanced students with different levels of English and composition skills; some need basic syntactic structure instruction, others do not. Some write cohesive paragraphs, others do not. The teacher wonders what to do when he gets pages of free associations as a result of a free assignment, filled with grammatical and syntactic errors. On the other hand, he wonders what kind of motivation is revealed by the handing in of a lot of controlled compositions with relatively error-free sentences manipulated, not invented, by the student: the motivation to communicate, to write imaginatively, or to perform the habit and earn the reward? He wonders what controlled composition really teaches. One of its most avid proponents partially answers that for him by saying that “no amount of mechanical writing is going to teach a productive generating of sentences” (Paulston 1972: 41). Although the concept of controlled composition is controversial the teacher has a choice. He can plan activities progressing through controlled exercises to free composition with steadily diminishing control. The sense of progress builds confidence in the learners ability and motivates them to further improve their writing ability.

The sparse research in ESL and English composition indicates that composing is an extremely complex process. Backed up by the studies of sentence combining (Mellon
1969 and O’Hare 1973), teachers feel that syntax and rhetoric are important features in the composition-learning process. They feel intuitively what Zamel concludes after her survey of research in ESL, and English composition, that “syntax and rhetoric are complementary yet separate aspects of the writing process, neither one being responsible for improvement in the other” (Zamel 1976:73). Syntax and rhetoric do not, however, form a neat pedagogical sequence. Students will not master syntax and the mature sentence before they move on to master rhetoric.

3.5. Role of Vocabulary:

The teaching and learning of vocabulary which is an important area of writing skill, has not aroused the same degree of interest within language teaching. Issues like grammatical competence, contrastive analysis, reading or writing have received attention from scholars and teachers. The neglect of vocabulary has been identified by linguists. In the 1920s and 1930s several large-scale investigations of foreign language vocabulary were undertaken. The impetus for research came from two quarters. First, there was a general consensus among language teaching specialists that vocabulary was one of the most important aspects of language learning. A second influence was the emphasis on reading skills as the goal of foreign language study (Coleman Report, 1929). Good reading builds good vocabulary, an essential component of writing proficiency. This led to the development of vocabulary control. Frequency counts showed that a core of two thousand or so words occurred frequently in written texts. The Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection (Faucett, West, Palmer and Thorndike 1936) based on frequency is a guide to the English vocabulary. This was later revised by West (1953) as A General Service List of English Words, which became a standard reference in developing teaching materials. Theorizing and model building have been done by Leech (1974) and Anthony (1975). The role of lexical units has been stressed in both first and second language
acquisition research. These have been referred to by many different labels, including ‘holophrases’ (Corder 1973), ‘prefabricated patterns’ (Hakuta 1974), ‘gambits’ (Keller 1979), ‘speech formulae’ (Peters 1983), and ‘lexicalised stems’ (Pawley and Syder 1983). Several approaches to language learning have been proposed that view vocabulary and lexical units as central in learning and teaching. These include, the Lexical Syllabus (Willis 1990), Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992), and the Lexical Approach (Lewis 1993). Advances in computer-based studies of language have also provided a huge, classroom accessible database for lexically-based inquiry and instruction. These studies have focused on collocations of lexical items and multiple word units. There are some assumptions and findings of theoretical and applied linguistics which stated the role of vocabulary.

Richards (1974) suggests some assumptions about vocabulary. The native speaker of a language continues to expand his vocabulary in adulthood, whereas there is comparatively little development of syntax in adult life. A great deal of research has been carried out in recent years in the area of syntactic development in child language. Less attention has been given to vocabulary development. The maximum period of development appears to be from about age two to twelve. Only minor changes take place in adulthood according to social role and mode of discourse. Vocabulary develops beyond childhood. Adults constantly add new words through reading, occupation and other activities. In the case of the native speaker “Watts (1944) suggests that the average L1 child enters elementary school with a recognition vocabulary of 2000 words, at seven this reached some 7000 words and by 14 he has to recognize 14,000 words. The vocabulary of adults has been estimated between 10,000 for a non-academic adult to upwards of 80,000 for a professional scientist. College students are estimated to understand some 60,000 to 1,00,000 words” (Mackey 1965:173).
Knowing a word means the speaker of a language recognises that some words are common and familiar while other words are rare, unfamiliar or even totally unknown to him. Given a list of words, with the exception of concrete nouns, a native speaker can classify them into frequent, moderately frequent, not frequent, and to a degree of accuracy reasonably close to their actual frequencies (Noble 1953, Richards 1974). To know a word implies knowing the limitations imposed on the use of the word according to variations of function and situation. Our knowledge of vocabulary includes recognition of constraints of function and situation on word choice. The register restraints often recognized according to (Chiu 1972) are temporal variation, geographical variation, social variation, social role, field of discourse, mode of discourse, etc. It is to associate specific structural and grammatical properties with words. The division between vocabulary and structure is a fact that is recognized in our use of the term ‘structural words’ for a number of frequent words in the vocabulary. Fillmore (1968) relates the structural behaviour of words to their semantic structure as reflected in case relations.

Knowing a word entails knowledge of the underlying form of a word and the derivations that can be made from it. When we learn a word we also learn the rules that enable us to build up different forms of the word or even different words, from that word. It entails knowledge of the network of associations between that word and other words in language. Words do not exist in isolation. Their meanings are defined through their relationships with other words and it is through understanding these relationships that we arrive at our understanding of words. The different ways in which associative links between words are organized are by contrast or antonym; by similarity or synonym; by subordinative classification; by coordinate classification, by superordinate classification (cf. Slobin 1971). Thus we should also know the different meanings associated with the word.
From these assumptions about word knowledge, we can understand the complex learning task that is required in acquiring vocabulary. To enhance the quality of writing many language programmes assume that vocabulary expansion will be covered by the reading programme. This is called indirect vocabulary teaching where vocabulary is acquired incidentally through practice of other language skills. Mackey (1965), and Rivers (1968), deal with vocabulary teaching only as it affects reading. Bright and McGregor (1970) gives a picture of direct vocabulary teaching. The need for rapid increase in the learner’s recognition vocabulary is the motivation behind Barnard’s (1971) *Advanced English Vocabulary* which teaches 3000 - word vocabulary. Lachowiez (1974) and Mountford (1975), familiarized the advanced student with vocabulary and language of particular registers. The most general register distinction which must be acquired is a feeling for the difference between written and spoken English. Schonell (1956) found that within the first 1000 words by frequency in a count of spoken English, 15 per cent were not present in the first 1000 words of written English. Knowing the degree of probability of encountering the word in speech or print is dealt with in Barnard (1971) and the rationale for collocation teaching is discussed in Brown (1974). Farsi (1974) pointed out that the grammatical capacities of verbs cannot always be determined by their case relations. Praniskas (1972) supported the direct teaching aimed at recognizing the basic forms of words when they are combined with different inflexional and derivational suffixes. Henning (1973) in a specific study of how second language learners store vocabulary in short term memory, found that in the earlier stages of learning, words may be stored according to acoustic links whereas later learners used semantic basis for storing words i.e. storing words according to the meaning links.
Vocabulary expansion is one of the most important areas of language teaching especially in improving the writing skill. We must have a rich concept of vocabulary and thereby adopt good teaching techniques to realize our concept.

3.6. Teaching Composition through Debate:

The teaching of composition needs a systematic method. Constantinides and Fry (1976) proposed a method of teaching composition to advanced ESL students, i.e. through debate. They began to teach overall organization and modes of development in conjunction while at the same time exploring how different sentence types relate to different paragraph modes. A debate was presented as a model in which the prime concern was the act of speaking. The debate was provided with a framework within which the student must speak. It does not allow him to write and then read or memorize a speech. Consequently he is forced to speak more or less spontaneously. The purpose was to provide opportunities for what Rivers (1972) calls autonomous interaction. Constantinides and Fry (1976) also mentioned that the methods of organization and argumentation learned in the debate model are used in writing activities. This observation is supported in an essay by Kinneavy and Kilne (1979) in which they state that there have been direct applications of work in these disciplines (philosophy, speech and education) to matters of composition. These two rhetoricians have further asserted in the same article that many of the same techniques of speech and propaganda analysis, whether made in speech departments or in allied departments, are very applicable to the written medium. They have determined that the relationship between debate, a speech discipline, and composition is significant. The patterned structure of the speech process in debate offers an analogous mechanism to the writing process in composition.
The researchers were aware of this mechanism and they worked with their students in the composition part of the programme. Debate was taught in one semester course and the students prepared and presented debates. In the process of preparing for the debates, they worked on study skills such as reading textbooks, taking reading notes, taking objective tests, doing library research, and taking lecture notes. Most of the time was spent on collecting and organizing materials for debates on topics the students have chosen. Debates were presented at the end of the course.

Composition was taught in the next semester as a separate activity. They approached the essay by first presenting paragraphs and paragraph unity and coherence, the topic sentence, adequate development, etc. The concepts were not clear to the students. They could write correct sentences in English, but not well developed paragraphs and well-organized essays. While discussing the need for more support in a paragraph, the researchers compared the use of detail in writing to the use of evidence in a debate. The learners understood what they really meant. The researchers decided to explore the teaching of other rhetorical principles by analogy to debate. They found it would work at all levels – thesis statement, topic sentences, paragraph development, proper rhetorical stance, etc. Debate textbooks discuss organization in terms of proposition, issues, contentions, logical analysis, evidence. There is a clear hierarchy of elements in the debate process from proposition to logical analysis and evidence. The same hierarchy can be followed in the composing process.

Taylor’s (1976:309) instruction in writing has emphasized grammar, sentence structure and controlled composition exercises and has provided written practice in grammar. Although correct grammar and sentence structure are important to the composing process they account for only a part of the evaluative criteria of a composition.
Research by Freedman (1979) has shown that teachers’ evaluations of compositions were influenced by specific definable parts. She discovered that the teachers valued content first and then organization, and she suggested that these criteria of good writing that seem sound can be incorporated into pedagogy (1979:160-164).

A study done for the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to determine the relevance of skills tested by the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE) further indicates the importance of organization and development in college level compositions. The results of the study show that the priority items in composition are “writing a unified essay, using supportive detail, arranging arguments logically, making verbs agree with subjects and writing expository prose” (Farrell 1981:47). Most ESL composition texts are still concentrating their pedagogical efforts at the sentence level. Mary Lawrence (1972) describes writing practice as moving from writing sentences and questions to compositions. This assumption involves first teaching the paragraph. A review of composition textbooks for freshman English classes indicates that most of them reflect practice in the “method of paragraph development”. Students are instructed to write paragraphs following certain modes of development, i.e., chronological order, cause and effect, comparison / contrast, etc. According to Meade and Ellis (1976:193), “Teachers have generally interpreted the presentation of paragraph development by these methods to mean that students should practice them, often in complete isolation from any broader context”. There is reported success in teaching students to group sentences in ways which produce acceptable paragraphs. Some argue that to teach full composition is by having students write certain types of paragraphs and then having them group paragraphs to form full compositions.
3.7. Composing for Communicating:

Leki and Carson (1997) were concerned with English for Academic Purposes and specifically with the writing experiences of ESL students. Zinnsse (1988, 1998) formulated a professional’s view, whose major contribution was to draw attention to the individual reader’s and writer’s need for simple, uncluttered text. Research by Bello (1997), Cook (1996), Dickson (1995), Hoppert (1997), Kail (1988), Kerka (1996), Kirschenbaum (1998), Meyers (1997) and Ronesi (1996), highlighted such diverse issues in writing pedagogy as general writing skills development, the ways in which reading and writing can be applied integratively for novice writers.

Raimes (1983) posited that writing is a cognitive and learning experience that helps us to “find out what we want to say” (261). She reflected on how the grammar and drill-focused tradition of writing instruction failed to elicit real communication between real writers and readers. She called attention to the composing element of the tasks labeled as “controlled composition”. She suggested that in many of these activities, control was paramount, and little composition was being facilitated.

Raimes offered three recommendations each addressing a distinct part of the process of writing instruction. First, the assignment for writing should not be reduced to some concrete or abstract theme or topic – the act of assigning must contain suggestions and guidance to complete it. Raimes said that the processes of writing are not rigid entities and she encouraged a cyclical, rather than linear, application of the processes of pre-writing, writing and revising. Second, marking papers should involve not only mere corrections of grammatical errors but also the process of conferencing with students, explanation and praise. Third, a combination of writing and reading tasks enables students to predict, such as in a specially designed cloze-test task, and in activities that aimed to
develop a sense for tone of writing and word choice, thus letting students “see that they really know about tone and textual and thematic development” (Raimes 1983: 269). Other techniques that also aimed to turn to writing class into a composing and thinking class are described.

Andersen’s (1988) paper addressed social and stylistic factors in ESP/ESL writing the practical issues related to success in writing were taken up in more detail by Kroll (1991), who investigated and described the chief components of an ESL course. Her observations included insights into the general concerns of curriculum development, the syllabus design of the writing class, the role of reading, writing assignments and theoretical issues in feedback types, covering a full spectrum of relevant factors. According to her although writing is viewed as a process, it does generate a product whose success is not easy to predict. Her main recommendation took the long-term view of what ESL students will be able to achieve in the future. “Our real goal is to gradually wean our students away from us, providing them with strategies and tools for their continued growth as writers and for the successful fulfilment of future writing tasks they might face once they have completed their writing course with us” (Kroll 1991: 261). This goal can be achieved with the continued formal and informal development of the training of writing teachers. Such training is manifold: it includes gathering reliable information on one’s own teaching, observing classes, keeping abreast of research in the field, as well as developing innovations that build group dynamics within a writing course.

Realising the impact that the nature, quality and quantity of response has on students’ writing attitudes, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) proposed that the positive motivation that this process carries is a significant factor in shaping learner behaviour. Studies showed that by promoting collaboration, students “develop a sense of community” and
they benefit from being exposed to “a variety of writing styles” (Grabe and Kaplan 1996:386). Classroom writing, although in some phases by definition a private, intimate undertaking, will approximate authentic settings whereby audiences and writers interact through the medium of publications, genres, text types and editorial preferences.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996:387) extracted four factors that seem to contribute to the effectiveness of the approach. The first is the individual’s conviction that response from the peers will be beneficial. The second factor influencing effectiveness is the formal training students receive in peer response and revision. The third factor is the awareness of goals students have in asking for and providing a response. The fourth factor refers to the requirement that once such practice is begun, participants are held responsible for their involvement. In analysis of scripts and their revisions, five criteria can be applied for writing: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics.

Evidence suggests that not all students are willing to act on the suggestions by the peers. For example, a study conducted by Sengupta (1998) revealed that among a class of Cantonese EFL students there was a marked reluctance to carrying out peer evaluation. Students saw the job of commenting on their scripts to belong primarily to the teacher, and for these participants the reader who counted was the expert instructor. The finding in Huang (1995) corroborates this result: in the pilot study, 22 Chinese university students of writing were assigned to English and Chinese discussion groups and reported little enthusiasm about providing feedback to motivate revision in a two-draft writing task. Huang hypothesized that for such group involvement to promote peer revision, a longer experience may be necessary.

In the ESL context, a slightly different result was obtained in Mangelsdorf’s study (1992). Among a culturally heterogenous mix of university students in Arizona, it
revealed that often peers were unable to provide the type of feedback that would be helpful for them to draft to script. However, a positive element of the process, according to the interviewees, was that “peer reviews led to consider different ideas about their topics and helped them to develop and clarify these ideas” (Mangelsdorf 1992: 278). Once the improvement in writing quality became obvious, participating students were more willing to share and act on suggestions in their revisions. An Asian study aimed at establishing correlation between holistic rating of EFL college writing quality and quantity of revision (Sato 1990). It investigated Japanese students’ success in a picture description task.

3.8. Teacher Feedback:

There has been little research on the teacher commentary in L₂ writing. A collection of articles on second language writing by Leeds (1996) included observations on teachers’ written response to ESL writing. The three forms that were touched upon were studies of teacher error correction, studies of teachers’ responding practices and the effects of teacher response on subsequent student writing and surveys of student reactions to teacher feedback. Researchers and practitioners have suggested that a variety of indirect, self-discovery techniques can help students to monitor and self-correct their own errors (Bates, Lane and Lange 1993, Fathman and Whalley 1990, Hendrickson 1978). This practice makes novice writers to become independent self-editors. They will be able to function well outside the writing and language classroom (Bates et al. 1993, Lane and Lange 1993). Research has suggested that indirect techniques such as noting of location of errors helps students improve their overall accuracy in subsequent drafts and also later assignments (Ferris 1995, Robb, Ross and Shortreed 1986).

Several studies have examined L₂ composition teachers’ responding techniques. These studies have included analyses of marked student papers (Cumming 1985, Zamel
1985), think-aloud protocols and teacher interviews (Kassen 1988), and surveys (Ihde 1994). Zamel (1985) analysed fifteen ESL teacher’s responses to one hundred and five student texts. She noted that the research findings agree with the major conclusions drawn concerning the response patterns of L1 teachers.

“ESL writing teachers misread student texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to texts as fixed and final products and rarely make content-specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the texts … the teachers overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers” (Zamel 1985:86). Cumming (1985) examined how ten experienced ESL teachers responded to one ESL student paper and concluded that most teacher responses focused on surface errors.

This is because the teacher responses are more favoured by most students than peer responses and induce more revision because teachers’ comments should be more specific, are able to explain what the problems are and are better able to make concrete suggestions for revision. ESL writing teachers are more concerned with providing feedback on error and other sentence-level concerns than with responding to global issues of content and organization. Bates et al. (1993:16) claimed that “… to be beneficial, feedback on errors must be accurate, clear, consistent and selective that is, priority given to these errors that most interfere with communication”.

Ihde (1994) surveyed fifty American and French teachers of ESL and EFL to examine their written feedback practices. The teachers reported that they used a range of techniques to mark papers (including circling, correction symbols, and direct correction). A few of them used summary methods (verbal comments about error patterns), and most
of them required students to rewrite their papers. A study by Ferris, Pezone, Tade, and Tinti (1997) analysed the comments given by a university ESL teacher on one hundred and eleven papers written by forty-seven different ESL students. They categorized over fifteen hundred marginal and end comments. They found they have a variety of objectives: asking for information, making requests, giving directives, giving information, praising, giving verbal feedback about grammar, mechanics, etc.

Many studies have examined the effects of different types of feedback on student writing. Cardello and Corno (1981) examined the progress of 80 beginning and intermediate-level students of college Spanish. They were assigned to one of four treatment groups: praise, criticism, praise and criticism, and no feedback. A combination of praise and criticism produced best results on both grammar and comprehension. In an experimental design that focused on the issue of content versus form in teacher feedback, Fathman and Whalley (1990) assigned seventy-two ESL students to one of four treatment groups: no feedback, grammar feedback alone, content feedback alone, and grammar and content feedback. Students were asked to write a paper and produce a revised version after receiving one of the four treatments. The biggest improvements were seen in the content group and the combined group of grammar and content.

Kepner (1991) studied the responses given to the entries of intermediate-level college Spanish students. She concluded that error corrections with rule reminders are not effective but ‘message related comments’ promoted the development of L₂ writing proficiency. In ESL writing research, students have been asked about the types of feedback they prefer to receive (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz 1994, Leki 1991, Radecki and Swales 1988). Students generally preferred feedback on grammar more than content. Researchers (Fathman and Whalley, 1990, Somers 1982, Zamel 1985 have argued that
teachers’ comments on student papers are more helpful if they are text-specific. Reviews of research (Knoblauch and Brannon 1981) have noted that there is no conclusive evidence that either marginal or terminal comments are preferable or more effective. They suggest that a comprehensive and clear end note is preferable because the teacher has more room to write at the end of the paper than in the margins. At times marginal comments have the advantage of immediacy and proximity – the teacher’s response can be given at the exact point in the essay where the issue occurs.

The writing conferences save teachers’ time and energy. Another advantage is the immediacy and potential for interaction and negotiation that the conferencing event offers. A number of studies have examined different aspects of conferencing. Early researchers (Carnicelli 1980, Sokmen 1988, Zamel 1985) supported them because students can ask for on-the-spot clarification and because “dynamic interchange and negotiation” can take place (Zamel 1985:97). Teacher response to student writing is important at all levels and in all instructional levels. Three studies (Goldstein and Conrad 1990, Jacobs and Karliner 1977, Patthey-Chavez and Ferris 1997) have linked conference discourse with subsequent revisions of the essay under discussion. These studies have identified quantitative and qualitative differences between high and low achievers.

Surveys of student reactions to teacher feedback (Cohen 1987, Cohen and Cavalcanti 1990, Ferris 1995, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz 1996) have asked respondents to describe problems they have experienced in understanding their teachers’ feedback and to explain the steps they take to resolve any misunderstandings. Students frequently reported difficulties in deciphering teachers’ handwriting, decoding correction symbols and understanding the purpose of the teacher’s questions. Such problems highlight an important point that teachers should have clear-cut strategies for response and should
communicate them effectively to the students. Mangelsdorf (1992) asked forty ESL students to respond in writing to four structured-response questions ranging from whether they found peer feedback valuable to what types of suggestions they receive from their peers. They found 55 per cent of the students had overall positive responses to peer review and 69 per cent of the total comments expressed positive reactions to peer review. She also found that 60 per cent of the comments focused on content.

Mendonca and Johnson (1994) conducted postinterviews with their 12 graduate student participants after peer review sessions and again after revisions were completed. Participants all claimed to have found peer review activity beneficial and felt both peer and teacher feedback to be important. Mittan (1989) presented guidelines for its implementation by making clear to the students from the beginning of the course that it is required, by utilizing peer review frequently throughout the term, by using peer review to accomplish a variety of goals and by holding students accountable for their responses.

3.9. Peer Feedback:

Several researchers have undertaken discourse analytic descriptions of the types of communicative moves and stances utilized and adopted by students during peer feedback activities. Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992:235) asked 60 ESL freshman composition students to respond to an essay written by another ESL student to examine “the stances the students took toward the writer of the text, the characteristics of these stances, and what these stances suggest about the students’ assumptions concerning written classroom discourse”. They found that the students’ stances fell into three categories with some overlap: interpretive (23 per cent) prescriptive (45 per cent), and collaborative (32 per cent). The stances were related to the types of discourse features on which they focused (thesis, organization, diction) and that students who adopted
collaborative stances ultimately earned the highest final grades in their composition classes.

Studies have examined the relationship between peer feedback and subsequent revision. Research questions have included whether students consider and act on their peers’ comments when revising (Connor and Asenavage 1994, Mendonca and Johnson 1994), what sorts of revisions students make after receiving peer feedback (Berger 1990, Huang 1994, Resh 1994), and whether peer feedback leads to high-quality end products (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz 1992, Resh 1994). Mendonca and Johnson (1994) reported that their twelve participants utilized peer feedback in 53 per cent of their revisions. Some of the studies have examined the types of revisions made by student writers in response to peer commentary. Berger (1990) and Connor and Asenavage (1994) used Faigley and Witte’s (1981) taxonomy of revisions to categorize the types of revisions made in response to feedback from various sources. Berger (1990) found that over 65 per cent of her participants’ revisions fell into the broad subcategory of surface changes, regardless of feedback source. Connor and Asenavage (1994) found that one of their two groups made more surface changes, whereas the other made more text-based changes.

A case study by Huang (1994) examined students’ progress in effective peer response and revision. Huang tracked four EFL students in Taiwan over two semesters, and found that the students’ feedback became more substantive and collaborative over time. Two weaker students made more progress in revision skills. They shifted from surface to text-based revisions. The stronger writers did not appear to change their revision strategies. Some studies have examined whether peer response activities have a beneficial effect on writers and their written products. In a dissertation case study, Resh (1994) examined the effects of responding to other students’ texts on three student writers.
He concluded that the activity of responding to peers’ papers does predict and influence the writers’ own future revision behaviours. In an experimental study of college French L2 students, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) found that texts written by students who revised collaboratively received higher scores than those who revised after receiving teacher feedback instead.

3.10. Error Correction:

Studies on error correction attempt to answer important questions like: why should we correct students’ written errors and does this error correction help the student accuracy to improve in the short and/or long term. The process advocates argue that we should focus primarily on students’ ideas and reviews of research suggesting that error correction is largely ineffectual (Krashen 1984, Leki 1990, Truscott 1996). We should ask whether teachers should focus on novice L2 writers’ grammar problems at all. ESL student writers’ surveys show that students affirmed the priority that students place on receiving grammar instruction and feedback to improve their writing. Recent studies suggest an increasing concern on the part of both teachers and students for improving ideas and organization. Nevertheless, many teachers would respond that the absence of any form of grammar feedback can frustrate or worry students and consequently interfere with their motivation and confidence as developing writers.

In research known as error gravity studies (Janopoulous 1992, Santos 1988, Vann, Lorenz and Meyer 1991), university faculty have been asked to assess their tolerance for students’ written errors by ranking different types of grammatical errors in order of importance. The results vary with respect to the specific, syntactic, morphological or lexical errors that professors find most egregious. The faculty are less tolerant of typical ESL errors than of typical native speaker errors, and feel that students’ linguistic errors are
bothersome and affect their evaluation of student papers. The best argument for providing grammar feedback and developing students’ editing skills is that writers must become self-sufficient in editing their own writing.

After reviewing a number of studies on error correction in L2 writing, Truscott (1996:340) concluded that “grammar correction is not effective”. There is also positive evidence in favour of error correction. Two studies reviewed and critiqued by Truscott (1996) presented positive evidence for effectiveness of error correction. Fathman and Whalley’s (1990) experimental study examined the feedback treatments and concluded that those who received grammar feedback alone or a combination of content and grammar feedback improved the accuracy of their revised essays. Two other studies reported positive effects of error correction. Ferris (1995) studied thirty ESL students, examining two in-class essays and three out-of-class essays written at regular intervals to see whether the editing approach caused them to improve their accuracy. In a discourse analytic study (Ferris 1997) found that the vast majority of the teacher’s verbal comments on grammar led to effective revisions of their later drafts.

Whether grammar correction works or not depends on whether the feedback and instruction is carried out selectively, systematically and accurately. It also depends on whether individual student differences are adequately addressed and if the studies that assess the effectiveness of error correction are designed and executed appropriately. It was suggested by Hendrickson (1978), Krashen (1984) that teachers can most effectively help students reduce their written errors by intervening between composition drafts to point out the location of salient errors. There is some evidence (Fathman and Whalley 1990, Ferris 1995, 1997, Lalande 1982) that noting error location and patterns on
intermediate draft does help students produce more accurate revisions. Error correction may be most effective when it is contextualized.

Research studies have suggested that error correction in student writing should be selective (Bates, Lane and Lange 1993, Lalande 1982, Robb, Ross and Shortreed 1986). Research on L₂ error correction has focused on the global / local distinction (Burt 1975, Burt and Kiparsky 1972). Global errors are referred to as those errors that cause a listener or reader to misunderstand a message or consider a sentence incomprehensible and they result from inadequate lexical knowledge, misuse of prepositions and pronouns, and seriously misspelled lexical items. Local errors are linguistic errors that make a form or structure appear awkward, but, nevertheless, cause a proficient speaker of a foreign language little or no difficulty in understanding the intended meaning of a sentence, given its contextual framework and they may result from misuse and omission of prepositions, lack of subject-verb agreement, misspelled words and faulty lexical choice.

Researchers in both L₁ and L₂ composition have concluded that direct correction of errors in student writing is ineffective in helping writers reduce error frequency in subsequent compositions (Bates et al. 1993, Hillocks 1986, Leki 1990). Indirect correction methods appear to have a more positive effect on long-term student improvement in accuracy and editing skills (Bates, Lane and Lange 1993, Fathman and Whalley 1990).

3.11. Review of Related Studies in the Indian Context:

Chaurasia (1978) conducted research on “Designing a Course in Written English for the First Year Degree Students in Rajasthan”. Administering questionnaires, and interviews with students, and teachers, it was found that there was L₁ interference in both spoken as well as written forms. Sufficient time was not devoted for speaking or writing.
The students were also indifferent and no exposure to spoken English was there. The syllabus should serve academic, professional, social, and personal purposes. As a part of linguistic considerations, the vocabulary should not be for science, technology, or agriculture. The vocabulary and structures should be a part of the general core of vocabulary. As per psychological considerations, the exercises should not be too easy or too difficult but challenging enough. Novelty in the type of exercises will stimulate interest in the students. For pedagogical considerations, the course designer should also decide on the best method or strategy by which to present the course units. The teaching of writing must proceed by stages from simple to complex. There should be internal assessment test in writing English.

Ayesha Banatwala (1979) studied “Designing a Course in Written English for the First Year B.A. in S.N.D.T. Women’s University”. Through the tools like questionnaires, analysis of answer scripts, and interviews with students of I B.A., the problems identified were use of mother tongue as medium of instruction, lack of exposure to English outside the English classroom, poor academic ability and lack of motivation to learn English. If need-based courses were introduced, students’ motivation was likely to be enhanced. The suggestions made were that, students must be made to think logically to develop one specific idea in a paragraph. Students should be aware of linking words to establish meaningful relationships in English.

Rachel L. Eapen (1979) worked on the topic “Towards Designing a Course in Functional Writing for Degree Classes.” Through the tools like try-out materials, try-out of selected units, pre-test, and post-test, changes in the materials were suggested. There was a need for more exercises in description. Such exercises would help to develop students’ accuracy in vocabulary use. Some colloquial expressions given in the material
need to be deleted. A survey of the context used should be made as this is necessary to ensure an adequate ‘coverage’ of possible contexts that the Indian student will need to write to perform different functions of the language. The grading of the course in terms of guided to free writing needs to be more carefully visualized. Guidance is necessary in terms of evaluation. A more systematic study of needs of the students at different levels would facilitate a more comprehensive coverage of grammatical items that need to be focused in the writing class.

Raj (1980) in his study of the Teaching and Testing of Writing Skills at the Undergraduate Level in Mysore University studied the components in writing skills in the form of grids. Every grid has six vertical columns representing components in writing skill. They are: (a) grammaticality (b) appropriateness and acceptability (c) logicality and organization (d) punctuation and spelling (e) consistency in style and (f) creativity and use of idioms and phrases. Through the tools like questionnaires, teacher interviews, classroom interviews, student interviews, it was observed that there was no organized syllabus for teaching English at the undergraduate level. The learners did not possess sufficient knowledge of English, where they can express themselves adequately through writing. There was need for employing different types of teaching materials and different methods of teaching. It was very essential to reduce the class strength and evaluate the essays for style, organization and logicality.

George (1981) conducted “A Study of the Teaching and Testing of the Skills of Writing in the New Curricula of Bombay University and in the Autonomous Colleges of Madras”. The summary of the findings was that, in the syllabus the objectives were clearly indicated and they are related to the purpose for which writing is used. The topics were subdivided into sub-skills and tasks giving examples wherever necessary which
make the course content clear and precise. The syllabus incorporated most of the skills and sub-skills which enabled the learner to meet his academic, social and vocational needs.

Deepa Pillai (1984) worked on the topic “The CBSE Class X Course ‘A’ in English – An Evaluation of Study of the Writing Curriculum”. Through intrinsic evaluation, systematic classroom observation, scrutiny of assignments, etc., the observations made were: The statement of objectives was inadequate for both teaching and testing. There was little consonance among objectives, the materials, and the assessment procedure. The curriculum did not visualize growth in writing ability by emphasizing pre-writing and revising strategies. Very little instructional support was provided to help the students in writing and it was not taken as a collaborative activity between teachers and students. Suggestions given were that instruction in curriculum should be organized and focused on meaning and communication. Writing activities should form a major part of the students' learning experiences. Adequate and appropriate testing measures should be included in the formative evaluation framework. Reading could be one of the strong bases for a writing curriculum and it should be communication-oriented, learner-centred and development-based curriculum.

Sanyal Mukti (1984) in a research project on “The Implementation of a Writing Course: A Curriculum Evaluation Study”, suggested to the syllabus-makers that there should be more communication between the agents like examining body, paper-setters, trainers, administrators, material producers, etc. Importance and weightage should be given to framing a suitable examination pattern. It was also suggested that teachers should perceive and appreciate the value of innovation and inservice training of practicing teachers through newsletters, bulletins, etc. Materials should be elaborate and exhaustive,
since teachers have no other source. The course details should be in concrete and pragmatic terms. Positive correlation should be there between course-general and course-specific skills. Teaching should be planned to impart the prerequisite skills. Attention should be directed towards the skill of producing organized writing. Ample interesting exercises of free response type can be used for testing and practice and these may be included in the materials. The textbook should incorporate teacher-orientation material. Through questionnaires, observation of classroom and students’ notebooks, it was found that the examination requirements are so rigid and limited that no skill is demanded. It required no communicative skills. The average writer lacked seriousness and revealed carelessness in following stylistic and formal conversations.

Frances G. Colaco (1985) studied “English at UG level in Mangalore University – Towards an Alternative Syllabus”. It reported the efforts to bring about a change in response to a felt-need which emerged at the time of setting up of the New Mangalore University in 1980. The study recommended the change of syllabus to a learner-centred, need-based one basing on communicative approach which has the following theoretical insights: Learner-centred syllabus which is relevant to needs, learner-teacher growth, evaluation of form and improvement, heterogeneous groups with mixed abilities, fluency, grammatical competence, etc.

Gurupdesh Singh (1985) studied “Designing a Course in Advanced Writing for Graduate Students Preparing for a Master’s Degree”. The research was carried on through the questionnaire method and the findings were that, the teaching of English at the undergraduate level in Gurunanak Dev University, Amritsar, could be described as grammar-oriented, text-oriented, translation-oriented and above all examination-oriented. The syllabus of the degree course was a confused mixture of teaching contents, test-items
and learning-objectives. In testing situations the teacher, the setter and the evaluator are different persons and no coordination was established. The suggestion was that imitation and practice should be the underlying principles and the pedagogue has to emphasize the development of cognitive skills which constitute the development of writing abilities. They wanted the learner to experience the actual process of writing rather than be presented with the descriptive features of a complete composition.

Deepa Reddy (1986) studied “The Role of Teacher in the Teaching of Writing at the College Level”. The questionnaire method was adopted and the problem was that at the end of every lesson, students would beg for notes and answers to important questions from the teacher. The teachers dictated the notes using bazaar guides and there was hardly any effort on the part of the students or the teacher. It was suggested that the students have to learn the use of reading, observation, note-taking, interviewing, etc. The syllabus was to be taught by using structural approach and the different stages in writing tasks should be sentence work, paragraph writing, production of story, skeleton composition, picture composition, outline composition, free composition, etc.

Bhaskaran Nair (1987) through his “Study of the Writing Component of the Course in English at the Pre-degree Level of the University of Calicut”, suggested to the authorities to formulate and lay down the objectives of teaching English, to prepare the guidelines for the production of teaching materials, and suggest means of evaluation at undergraduate level. The course books, source books, and other reference materials used for writing should be conducive to effective communication in writing. Materials and the effect of assessment and correction should cater to the needs of learner and provide motivation for the student. In testing there should be variety among questions and enough choice for the learner to select according to his preference. In the first year of the degree
course, guided or controlled composition and in the second year free composition should be given importance. Weightage should be given to each aspect of writing like information, content, fluency, accuracy, mechanics of writing, organization, style, etc. Workshops should be conducted for the question-setters.

K. Madhavi (1990) conducted a study on “Teaching L2 Writing in Regional Medium Schools of Andhra Pradesh”, examined the kind of writing activities employed by the teachers in relation to second language writing and suggested the ways and means to enhance writing skills. Through the tools of preliminary classroom observations, teacher interviews and student interviews, the findings were that, the economic background of the students is poor and there was no proper exposure to the language. The second language was introduced from class V and by that time the students were able to speak and write well in the mother tongue. It was found to be very difficult to manage the language classroom. There was no systematic approach in teaching and the translation method was employed in teaching and there were no opportunities for the interaction of the students. The suggestions made were that the teachers should prepare writing tasks and activities. They have to motivate the students before starting a lesson and develop a strong desire to interact with teachers. Word meanings should be taught through contextualisation and classroom interaction must be given more importance.

Rajender Singh (1990) conducted research on, “Towards an Integrated Methodology for Teaching English in Large Classes at the Undergraduate Level”. The study identified the socio- academic contexts and practices of teaching English in a particular setting in affiliated undergraduate colleges of Kurukshetra University, Haryana. The need was felt for an interactive and integrated language teaching methodology. Some aspects of linguistic and managerial abilities of teachers, the disappointingly low
proficiency level of learners, lack of high motivation to learn English, and the type of testing procedures, which emphasize the recall of the textual content from the learner rather than testing their language, skills, etc. were all discussed. The research made use of questionnaires for both teachers and learners. Through this study it was suggested that a methodology which could be managed effectively by ordinary teachers and which could produce effective learning should be adopted. The teachers could integrate and try out a package of set activities in a large class.

Regina (1994) studied “Proposals for a Classroom Strategy to Improve the Student’s Written Production in English at the High School Level”. The characteristics of situations taken into consideration are: (i) the purpose of teacher programme is the development of academic proficiency in the use of English, (ii) pre-selected language items were used by teachers, (iii) teachers could not handle English adequately, (iv) grammatical rules were presented to explain the grammatical structures, (v) students were expected to assimilate the rules explained and apply the abstract rules in concrete language use, (vi) academic proficiency of the students in English is far from satisfactory. The study takes the skill of writing not in the traditional manner of treating it merely as a productive skill. It suggests that after a thorough teaching of grammar rules, model passages can be used for practical production, which substitutes the facility that a native learner gets from his environment, and through the practice the learners can be gradually taken into actual production. The assumptions are that the ESL learners do not have the readiness for free production in English; they are not habitudated to the correct use of various structural elements in their production; reproduction of model sentences with understanding is the essential activity for the acquisition of the required competence; for rapid processing of linguistic units, familiar phrases, and sentences may provide a basis for the processing of novel phrases, and sentences which are similar to them; and if the
learners are meaningfully exposed successfully to a large numbers of samples of authentic
discourse in the second language, the competent use of the language can be imbibed.

Sailaja Rani (1995) in her M. Phil. dissertation on “A Study of Composing Process
of ESL Learner at the Secondary Level” discussed the issues of writing, and historical and
theoretical perspectives in writing. The study focused on the examination of the syllabi,
the statement of objectives and the instructional materials with special reference to
analysis of writing classes. The dissertation observed and recorded the analysis of teacher
and student responses to a questionnaire, focusing on various issues and analysis of the
performance of a few selected subjects on a variety of writing tasks, etc. She suggested
various techniques as brainstorming, conducting of survey, making a mind map using a
diagram of ideas, using questionnaires, imaginary dialogues, working for opening
questions, interviewing people, etc.

Her classroom procedure involved in composition teaching may be: (i) Discussion,
involving (the small class groups, pairs), (ii) Brainstorming / making notes / asking
questions (iii) Fast writing / selected ideas / establishing a view point (iv) Rough draft
(v) Preliminary self-evaluation, (vi) Arranging information, (vii) First draft, (viii) Self-
evaluation, editing / proof reading (ix) Finished draft, (x) Responding to draft. She
suggested that the textbooks were very important tools. They should be well-designed
instructional materials, which are both interesting and informative. Topics should be on a
wide range of subjects and contain activities which integrate all the four language skills
such as speaking, reading, listening and writing skills. The instructional techniques should
also be specified to the teacher and the learners, so as to make teaching and learning more
interesting and effective.
Radhika Rao (1996) conducted research on “Developing Writing Skills in L2 Using the L1 Abilities in a Bilingual”. The study focused on the relationship existing between L1 and L2 and proceeds to concentrate its specific attention on the transfer of L1 abilities to L2. The methodology consists of different stages. A pre-test was conducted to assess the ability of the learner’s use of cohesive devices in a monolingual test item. Selected passages containing relevant instances of structural coherence are given. In the training stage the learner is trained to understand, and use appropriate cohesive devices in the bilingual tasks and post-test was conducted to assess the learner’s performance on the use of cohesive devices with the help of final test. The study concluded with the result of the post-test showing that the learners are able to perform relatively better, after the training sessions. There is a noticeable change in the quality and the quantum of learning about the linkers. The learners are confident in their ability to use linkers and the learners exercised optionality to select the different linkers. The learners learnt to write which is a complex activity that requires coordination of language, thought, knowledge of content, accuracy and appropriacy. After the test there has been a significant improvement in their ability to use linkers. This can be attributed to instruction mode, learner preparation for task and the teaching methodology. The study suggested that bilingual education is a useful alternative education strategy and it has important pedagogical and methodological implications.

Many experiments were conducted by the cognitivists and the behaviorists and the laws of learning were drawn. These laws of learning are applicable to language learning as it is the central idea of education. In this area studies were conducted by researchers like Kagan (1965), Bloom (1968), Benedict (1934), Mead (1949), Glaser (1973), Bruner (1960), Festinger and Maccoby (1965). Silva (1993) observed that there was no coherent comprehensive theory of L2 writing and this was supported by John (1990), Krapels (1990), Krashen (1984), Raimes (1991). Although substantive L2 composition research
did not appear until the 1980’s, its theoretical frameworks can be traced directly to first
language (L₁) rhetoric and composition research (Grabe and Kaplan 1996, Krapels 1990). The role of reading as a function of general language proficiency has received considerable attention among researchers and teachers. Many studies have focused on collocations of lexical items and multiple word units. Richards (1976) drew some assumptions about vocabulary. Constantinides and Fry (1976) experimented and proposed a method of teaching composition to advanced ESL composition learners through debate. There has been a little research on the teacher feedback in L₂ writing. Several researchers have undertaken studies in peer feedback activities.

3.12. Summing Up:

Surveying a corpus of conclusive L₂ theory and research provides an introduction to processes of learning and teaching L₂ composing. Silva (1993) observes that there exists no coherent comprehensive theory of L₂ writing and this is supported by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and Krapels (1990). Even if there are conflicting theories on how learning takes place, there are certain concepts included in research. They are – identification of good models to imitate, providing opportunities for learning, individual differences, knowledge about learners, increasing transfer, learner needs, personality dimensions, attitudes etc. Principles of continuity, sequence, and integration are to be considered while planning how to teach. The Input Hypothesis of Krashen (1985) claims that in language acquisition there must be comprehensible input.

Process approach emphasizes the creator of original written discourse and researchers who worked in this field gave importance to procedures used by writers to plan, draft, revise and edit their texts. Cumming (1989) Zamel (1976, 1982) indicated a positive relationship between composing skills of L₁ and L₂. Empirical studies of
Krashen (1985, 1993) and Grabe (1991) show that reading for academic and recreational purpose positively influences L₁ and L₂ development. Braire (1966) emphasized frequent and plentiful writing. Large-scale investigations of language vocabulary were undertaken.

In teaching of composition, debate is included by Constantinides and Fry (1976) through an experiment. Taylor (1976) emphasized grammar, sentence structure and controlled composition whereas Anderson’s (1988) paper addressed social and stylistic factors in ESL writing. Kroll (1991) investigated and described the chief components of an ESL course like general concerns of curriculum development, syllabus design, role of reading, writing assignments and theoretical issues in feedback types etc. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) proposed that positive motivation carries a significant factor in shaping learner behaviour, and in analysis of scripts and their revision, the criteria that can be applied are content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics.

Though the area of teacher response has been a debate over how to provide the most effective feedback, both teachers and students feel that teacher feedback on student writing is essential. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) supported peer response and found that texts written by students who revised collaboratively received higher scores. A number of studies supported writing conferences. ESL students writers’ surveys show that, students affirmed the priority that students place on receiving grammar instruction and feedback to improve their writing.

Research studies were conducted in India on various topics related to writing at different levels of study. They include studies from different university areas. A review of such studies in the Indian context brought forth some common issues related to teaching of writing. Theoretical background considers that these aspects play a vital role in the teaching of writing skills. Regina (1994) identifies the problem of low proficiency of the
teachers. Sanyal Mukti (1984) suggested in-service and pre-service training programmes for teachers in her studies. The problem of poor economic background has been observed by Madhavi (1990) and the problem of lack of exposure to language by the learners is mentioned by Chaurasia (1978), Ayesha Banatwala (1979) and Madhavi (1990). The learners have very poor academic ability and this is observed by Ayesha Banatwala (1979) and Rajendar Singh (1990) in their studies. Deepa Reddy (1986) suggests a variety of activities and Eapen (1979) stresses the grading of activities from simple to complex. The motivation level of the students is found to be low as noted by Ayesha Banatwala (1979), Madhavi (1990) and Rajendar Singh (1990). Most of the researchers like Deepa Pillai (1984), Sanyal Mukti (1984) Colaco (1985) Gurupdesh Singh (1985) Bhaskaran Nair (1987), Rajendar Singh (1990), Sailaja Rani (1995), Radhika Rao (1996) found faulty implementation of materials, methods and examinations and lack of coordination among these factors.

Eapen (1979) suggests comprehensive grammar teaching and Raj (1980) and Sanyal Mukti (1984) stresses the important components of writing to be grammar, appropriacy and accuracy. Colaco (1985) discourages the heterogenous grouping of students with mixed abilities, Chaurasia (1978) says that sufficient time is not allotted for teaching composition. Ayesha Banatwala (1979) points out that mother tongue being the medium of instruction is a major hurdle for teaching of writing skills.

3.13. Best Practices in Teaching Writing Skills:

From the survey of the need for writing skills, theoretical foundations in ESL writing and review of literature, and considering the theories and beliefs about the nature of language and of language learning, a set of practices and principles to be applied in
teaching of writing skills are suggested in this section. They are characterized by flexibility which allows for individual interpretation, application, skill and expertise.

To have an effective performance-oriented teaching would mean that we need to systematically teach students problem-solving skills connected with the writing process that will enable them to realize specific goals at each stage of the composing process. Process writing is a commitment to content, fluency, personal voice, and revision. This approach in teaching writing can be used with personal and academic content, with literature and non-fiction and it also pays attention to product but at an appropriate stage in the process.

The communicative method in ELT is envisaged not only to develop communicative capacity in our students but also to empower them with the capability to learn how to learn and become self-directive in the long run. Littlewood (1981:1) states that “one of the most characteristic features of communicative teaching is that it pays attention to functional as well as the structural aspects of language”. Elements in the learning theory include the communicative principles which aim at real communication promoting learning, task principle (Skehan 1996), and meaningfulness principle (Johnson 1982). As writing is a purposeful selection and organization of experience engaging learners in task work, it provides context for activation of learning process.

Planning a writing course involves identifying and ascertaining goals, which originate from needs analysis. At the level of approach, we are concerned with theoretical principles. A learning theory must include the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning and the conditions believed to promote successful language learning. The theoretical principles and the review of literature suggest that a task-based communicative learner-centred approach may be evolved for teaching of writing skills.
Inclusion of theoretical principles into writing pedagogy can be considered to be one of the best practices.

According to theoretical studies of the communicative approach, the teacher should play the roles of facilitator, independent participant, organizer and guide and finally the role of researcher and learner. He should be a needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager. In organizing the tasks he should be a selector and sequencer, preparing learners for tasks and consciousness-raising. Teaching writing skills demands competent teachers with good reading habits and also who are well qualified and thoroughly trained. It is a good practice to arrange pre-service and inservice training programmes for teachers.

Theoretical studies attribute the role of a negotiator to the learner. The primary roles that are implied by task work are group participant, monitor, risk-taker and innovator. While planning a writing course, the learner background is to be considered. Students differ in their exposure and also socio-economic backgrounds. It is a good practice to arrange language programmes according to the needs, interests, attitudes etc. of the learners.

Learners’ aims are to pass in the examinations, to go in for higher studies, to get a job, read and understand newspapers and books, develop abilities of understanding, speaking, reading, writing etc. Learners should be reminded about the need and necessity of learning English. It is a healthy practice to devise techniques that seek to create intrinsic motivation among the learners. They should be given good practice and exposure in all language skills and sub-skills.

Researchers expressed that writing consists of many constituents as content, organization, originality, style, fluency, accuracy, using appropriate rhetorical forms etc. Learners’ aims are to write grammatically correct sentences, spell words correctly, recall
appropriate words, use proper punctuation marks, link sentences, organize thoughts and ideas etc. Practically useful composition activities teaching all the sub-skills of writing should be prescribed in the course.

The review of literature views planning as a key aspect of teaching a lesson efficiently. During this phase, the teacher makes decisions about goals, activities, resources, timing, grouping etc. It is a good practice for teachers to think out plans which will more likely maintain the attention and interest of the learner. Teachers should plan to exploit all the components of the course to teach writing skills.

From the research studies we can make out that materials play a vital role in teaching a language and especially in writing. Textbooks must include all the components of the language. Materials should be text-based where a typical lesson consists of a theme, a task analysis for thematic development, practice situation, description etc. Tasks should include a variety of games, role-plays, simulations etc. Realia should include signs, magazines, advertisements, newspapers, visual sources etc. It is a good practice to provide learners with prescribed materials along with supporting material giving scope for generating ideas through brainstorming, free writing, listing, mapping, outlining, etc., for teaching, testing and practicing writing.

An overall finding of research on the process approach is that all the stages must be fully implemented if the students are to build a repertoire of writing strategies. Different types of activities should be organized in different stages of writing, pre-writing, during-writing and after-writing. Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary should be provided to the learners as they are very essential components of writing. Implementation of process writing in the classroom is a healthy practice. Process writing is a highly structured activity as it necessitates the orderly teaching of process skills.
As a formative and inherently pedagogical endeavor, the assessment of students’ writing is a responsibility that is linked to the other instructional processes. It should be both summative and formative. The best practice is that the criteria for evaluation should be made known to students in advance and they should include overall interpretation of the task, sense of audience, relevance, development and organization of ideas etc. Language aspect is to be considered to be more important for composition at degree level. The examination should be communicative and integrated with a focus on communication, learner-centeredness, integrated skills, emphasis on process and tests that also teach. During evaluation of answer scripts of the students clear instructions and guidelines should be given to the examiners.

From the review some general issues emerge that need to be addressed if teaching and learning of writing skills is to be effective. At degree level ample time is to be allotted for writing as it involves an integration of many complex skills. Training should be imparted by focusing on students’ needs, interests, strength, learning styles, previous experience etc. Time allotted should be proportionate to the weightage of marks. Writing should be introduced from the beginning of the course. Learning English at degree level should be made a compulsory subject. The use of mother tongue by the teacher should be minimised, so that comprehensible input is provided to our students and judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible. Translation method should be discouraged and it may be used where students need or benefit from it. The classes should be grouped homogenously and the class strength is to be minimized. Examination-driven system of teaching language should be discouraged.

Writing has become even more crucial with the increased use of information and communications technology, although the production forms of texts are changing with the advent of fax, e-mail, internet etc. ESL teachers should blend such learning strategies and
practices into their writing classroom procedures which prescribe more student talk, more negotiation of meaning, a greater amount of comprehensible input, relaxed classroom atmosphere and greater motivation for learning. An approach accommodating these healthy practices encourages the language teacher to engage in a carefully crafted learning process.

The review of related studies in the Indian context shows that some research has been conducted in designing a course in written English (Chaurasia 1978, Ayesha Banatwala 1979, Rachel L. Eapen 1979, Frances G. Colaco 1985, Gurupdesh Singh 1985); teaching and testing of written skills (Raj 1980, George 1981); curriculum evaluation (Deepa Pillai 1984, Sanyal Mukti 1984) role of teacher in teaching writing (Deepa Reddy 1986) writing component (Bhaskaran Nair 1987); teaching L₂ writing in regional medium (Madhavi 1990, Radhika Rao 1996) integrated methodology (Rajendar Singh 1990) improvement of written production (Regina 1994); composing process (Sailaja Rani 1995) etc. the teaching and testing of writing skills, writing curriculum, role of teacher in writing, designing a course for writing, functional writing, composing process, strategies to improve student writing, etc. No research is available on factors influencing the writing skills especially at undergraduate level. The students at undergraduate level of Acharya Nagarjuna University are not able to express themselves through their writing. This drawback made the researcher feel that study of writing skills at undergraduate level of Acharya Nagarjuna University is of practical utility. Hence research on this topic is taken up. An empirical study plays a vital role in our thinking about teaching and the conduct of our classes and thereby mould our pedagogical practices to bring about effective writing. The next chapter provides a presentation of the research design adopted, the research questions and the sources of data used in the study.

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