PREFACE

Writing is the most difficult of all the language abilities to acquire. It becomes very important at a higher level of language instruction. Though it has been an important part of college curriculum over the decades, it has not received proper attention that it deserves in our teaching programmes. As writing is a recognized objective among most language teachers and the assessment of academic ability in our educational system has been closely associated with proficiency in writing, it should be emphasized in our classroom. Writing requires the learner to assimilate and arrange the ideas in a sequential form. It also necessitates the learner’s ability to use accurate structure and appropriate vocabulary. Composition measures the learner’s ability to organize ideas, choose proper vocabulary and formulate grammatically correct sentences. So it is considered to be the most complex of all.

The communication through writing by the undergraduate students is found to be ineffective. Particularly, the performance in writing by the students from Telugu medium background is poor because of the poor conditions of teaching English since their childhood. Such students from the rural areas constitute the majority of the student population at the undergraduate level. The abilities and skills to be required for their future
needs are to be attained by the end of the course as they do not have a systematic teaching in English after this course. If the conditions of the language teaching are improved with well-defined objectives, appropriate methods, materials and testing procedures, there will be qualitative improvement in the writing competence of the learners.

Past approaches to second language teaching have failed to develop complete sequences leading to writing. In the Grammar-Translation Approach the students were expected to translate complex sentences, conversations or paragraphs from the first to the second language. There is little attention given to self-expression in writing. With audio-lingual material, students were expected to leap from copying practice, sentence completion and pattern drill practice to controlled responses in writing. There is little emphasis on composing in the second language.

The impact of globalization has changed the role of English in India. The focus should be on the teaching of language skills than on literature. Writing serves needs beyond those served by electronic devices. As written records are a practical necessity for many classroom activities we should provide the students with an adequate acceptable standard in communication through writing. In India, quite a few studies have been conducted on improvement of writing skills of students in different universities at different levels. Research has not been done on the writing skills of undergraduate
students of Acharya Nagarjuna University. Though language teaching involves the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the written form assumes greater importance in the academic field than the spoken form. It is neglected in the classroom teaching. Hence, the need is felt by the researcher to make a study of the writing component of undergraduate students of Acharya Nagarjuna University.

The study proceeded through administration of tools like questionnaires and informal interviews to samples of teachers and students at undergraduate level in colleges affiliated to Acharya Nagarjuna University. The teacher sample consists of a group of fifty teachers working at undergraduate level in various colleges affiliated to the university. The student sample consists of a group of two hundred students from three colleges affiliated to the university. Out of these a hundred students are from Government Degree College, Movva, fifty students are from K.T.R. Women’s College, Gudivada and fifty students are from The Hindu College, Machilipatnam.

The sequence of the research study is reported in six chapters. The first chapter gives an introduction about the importance of the study of English in India. English occupies an important place as an international language, link language, window on the world, library language, etc. in pre-independence and also post-independence period. Various commissions and
committees highlighted the place of English in India. It has now become the language of globalization. As the focus of the study is teaching of writing skill at undergraduate level, topics like structure of higher education, importance of undergraduate stage, identification of learner needs and justification for teaching of writing, are discussed.

The second chapter deals extensively with the theoretical background for ESL writing. The first part focuses on the contribution of writing theories in the process of composing. The discussion proceeds to include topics like writing as an important skill, writing as a thinking process, sub-skills of writing, sequencing writing assignments, etc. The mutual relationship between reading and writing is discussed as one influences the other. Needs of learners for effective writing, and resources of written language are described. A note is given about the important aspects of writing like mechanics, organization, coherence and unity, problems in writing etc. The second part of the chapter discusses the factors influencing the writing competence of the learners. A detailed description is given about objectives, materials, methods and examinations. Along with these factors, peer group interaction, revision, correction work, remedial work and guidance of teacher are also touched upon.

The third chapter traces the research available in the area of writing process. Research in L1 rhetoric and composition played an influential role
in shaping the theory of $L_2$ writing. Reports have indicated an interdependent connection between reading and composing. Several studies have examined the role of vocabulary and some studies investigated teaching composition through debate. Many researchers worked on $L_2$ peer responses and teachers’ responding techniques. Error correction has been the topic for some of the researchers. A review of related studies in the Indian context is also included.

The fourth chapter presents a detailed picture about the scope and nature of the study, objectives of the study, specifications for the study, sample design, instruments used for the study, description of tools, administration of questionnaires, statistical treatment, etc.

The fifth chapter deals with the analysis of the questionnaires administered for teacher and student samples. The first part deals with the analysis of the teacher questionnaire including questions on personal information, objectives of teaching composition, types of composition tasks, teacher preparation, materials to teach composition, methods of teaching composition, examinations, general issues, etc. The student questionnaire is analysed in the second part and it deals with questions on personal information, aims of learning English, aims of writing composition, materials for composition, methods of teaching composition, examinations, etc. The chapter is concluded with analysis of informal tools.
The sixth chapter is the concluding chapter dealing with the major findings and observations made from the study. The pedagogical implications of the major factors influencing writing skills are discussed and the ways for improving the present teaching and learning process of second language writing are suggested.

I am grateful for the invaluable suggestions provided by the examiner for the improvement of this thesis. I am also thankful for the appreciation of some aspects of the thesis. The thesis has been modified as per the recommendations of the examiner to the best of my ability.

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