CHAPTER TWO : REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a detailed introduction to the two approaches to writing - i.e. the 'product' approach and the 'process' approach besides discussing the various steps which, according to research, good writers follow during writing. It also deals with the factors such as the role of the learner, and the teacher, the classroom environment, goals, input, and activities, as essential for the success of any communicative teaching programme. The chapter also discusses the concept of a 'task' along with the principles of grading, sequencing and integrating the communicative tasks. It opens with a brief discussion of writing as a skill.

2.1 Writing as a Skill

Following are a few features of writing as a skill:

2.1.1 Different from Speaking

Writing, perhaps, is the most difficult part of language learning. All children, except those with physiological disabilities, learn to comprehend and speak their native language. All of them don't learn to read and very few learn to write fluently and legibly. Talking about the general characteristics of writing and about how it is different from speaking, White (1981 cited in Nunan 1990:36) confirms, 'writing is not a natural activity. All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet all people have to be taught how to write'. Stating the differences between speaking and writing, he explains:

This is a crucial difference between spoken and written forms of language. There are other important differences as well. Writing, unlike speech, is displaced in time. Indeed, this must be one reason why writing originally evolved since it makes possible the transmission of a message from one place to another. A written message can be received, stored and referred back to at any time. It is permanent in comparison with the ephemeral 'here one minute and goes the next' character of spoken language. (p.36)

Writing differs from speaking on a few other accounts also. It is detached from the wide range of expressive possibilities in speech. A writer is unable to exploit all the devices available to a speaker. Expanding on the issue while writing about a
school curriculum project on writing, Harold Rosen (1981 cited in Tricia Hedge 1988) explains:

Writer is a lonely figure cut off from all the stimulus and corrective opportunity of listeners. He must be a predictor of reactions and act on his predictions. He writes with one hand tied behind his back, being robbed of gesture. He is robbed too of the tone of his voice and the aid of clues the environment provides. He is condemned to monologue; there is no one to help out, to fill the silences, put words in his mouth, or make encouraging noises. (p.3)

Discussing the features of writing, Tricia Hedge (1988) further explains:

Compared with speech, effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and Information; a high degree of accuracy so that there is no ambiguity; the use of grammatical for focus and emphasis; a careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns and sentence-structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject-matter and the eventual readers. (p.5)

Traditionally, there has been a strong belief among writers about language that 'spoken language is primary and that the written language develops from it; consequently considering it to be derivative and invariably serving separate functions. It has often been assumed that written language is necessarily formal in relation to spoken language' (Brooks and Grundy 1990:16). Written language has been viewed as secondary and in some senses inferior to the spoken language; and has been used as 'a means of reinforcing language which had already been dealt with in spoken form' (White 1988:5).

However, the past two decades or so have witnessed writing being given a higher status, being developed separately from speaking. Though it is true that most formal products are often written rather than spoken. Yet it is also true, as Stubbs (1987) has shown that writing can be used in a number of ways that we usually think of as spoken. This means that if written language is used only for formal work in the classroom, how it is used in the outside world is not reflected and it is, indeed, dogmatic in tending to assume that written language is formal and spoken informal. Furthermore, in ordinary life written and spoken language are more interrelated than we are accustomed to thinking. Linguists have demonstrated that 'the purposes for which spoken and written language are used are part of the culture of a society or institution rather than properties of written or spoken language.' (Brooks and Grundy 1980:17)
2.1.2 Writing in Second Language

Of the four macro-skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, learning to write fluently and expressively (as discussed earlier) is perhaps the most difficult regardless of whether the language in question is first, second or foreign language. There can be some differences between the conventions of writing in the first and the second language, but these differences remain limited to rules of grammar and structures, whereas effective writing is much more than that. It is the activities of recall of information, brain-storming, mind-mapping and clustering, pre-writing, organising and transforming data which constitute the essentials of writing. Subsequently vocabulary and grammar enhance the effect of writing at the redrafting stage to produce a 'finished' piece. Though it is true that on the one hand, one needs to acquire a wide language base from which to make choices for effective writing, yet on the other hand, it is also true that vocabulary and grammar can only polish what has been developed and organized well and can't substitute for conceptual and organizational details. Zamel (1983:180) working with non-native university students in the USA, reports of her subjects that 'They all considered how to make meaning first, then how to order it, and finally how it can best be expressed.' She also suggests that these steps may be universals of writing. According to her, 'it seems that certain composing problems transcend language factors and are shared by both native and non-native speakers of English.' (Ibid:168)

2.1.3 A Cognitive Activity

Bell and Mumaby (1984) point out that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control over a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive, coherent paragraphs and texts.

As writing is viewed as a cognitive process and as cognitive processes are, to an extent, considered universal, it can be logically concluded that writing processes are also universal. What the non-native writers need to develop is appropriate schemata.
2.2 Some Concepts in Writing

Following are a few concepts in writing:

2.2.1 The Concept of Schemata

Schemata are mental structures which store our knowledge. These have been defined as:

'Schemata are essentially expectations which enable us to understand and interpret the world. When we join new information it is either related to existing schemata and assimilated by them or the schemata themselves expand to accommodate the new data. Rich schemata will enable the learner to develop more varied and adaptive behaviour and enable him to make sense of reality more easily.' (White 1988:7)

The schemata are stored by - or are one component of long-term memory, upon which the writer draws during the writing process. This theory is particularly relevant for second language learners. They need to draw upon appropriate schemata as a basis for organizing ideas. In the following model of writing process, Flower and Hayes (1977) incorporate long-term memory as one of the three elements. The other two are the task environment and the writing process.
The writer's long term memory knowledge of Topic, audience and writing.

Task Environment

- The Rhetorical Problem Topic
- Audience

Text Produced
- Revising

Writing Process

- Evaluating
- Reviewing
- Organizing
- Goal setting

Planning
- Translating

(Flower and Hayes, 1981:386)
This diagram is only an indication of the complex and active organization of thinking processes which go on while writing. Flower and Hayes explain their model as follows:

The arrows indicate that information flows from one box or process to another; that is knowledge about the writing assignment or knowledge from memory can be transferred or used in the planning process, and information from planning can flow back the other way. What the arrows do not mean is that such information flows in a predictable left to right circuit. This distinction is crucial because such a flow chart implies the very kind of stage model against which we wish to argue. One of the central premises of the cognitive process theory presented here is that writers are constantly, instant by instant, orchestrating a battery of cognitive processes as they integrate planning, remembering, writing and rereading. The multiple arrows, which are conventions in diagramming of this sort of model, are unfortunately only weak indications of the complex and active organization of thinking processes which our work attempts to model. (p.387).

2.2.2 Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches

The communicative approach to language teaching makes a distinction between top-down and bottom-up approaches to language comprehension and production. Bottom-up approaches 'focus on the various components of the language and then fit these together in comprehending or producing language; top-down approaches, utilize the background knowledge to assist in comprehending or using smaller elements' (Nunan, 1989:37,38).

In a way, this distinction between the top-down and bottom-up approaches is parallel to distinction between content focussed and form focussed approaches. The two approaches emphasize fluency and accuracy respectively; with fluency being the ability to write according to communicative purpose and appropriate communicative situation and accuracy being the knowledge of grammar and sentence construction. Both of these are required for effective written communication, thereby complementing rather than substituting each other. It may be explained with the help of the following diagram.
The traditional approaches to writing focus more on grammatical accuracy, whereas, with the advent of the process approach, fluency has become the order of the day. This approach seems to acknowledge the importance of organization, planning and purpose in writing and thus emphasizes on construction of writing lesson in a way in which the learners are able to activate their mental and organizational faculties and create a situation in which they become more aware of the communicative purpose i.e. their audience, the effect they wish to achieve etc. In other words, efforts are made first to develop fluency and then to develop accuracy at a later stage i.e. redrafting or editing stage. This may be summed up by the diagram below.

Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish between interactional and transactional speaking tasks. Richards (1987) distinguish between conversational and academic listening. Rivers and Temperley (1978) list a range of purposes for reading in a second language. Two schools of thought exist regarding the extent to which it is necessary to focus on linguistic form. Prabhu (1987) believes that practice of individual linguistic components is not necessary as preliminary to engagements in communicative tasks. Rutherford (1987), on the other hand, believes that a linguistic focus in the forms of 'grammatical consciousness raising activities' should be incorporated in designing communicative tasks.
2.3 **The Two Approaches to Writing**

Following are the two approaches, widely used for teaching of writing:

**2.3.1 The Model-based Approach**

Also known as the 'product' approach, this approach is language focussed with emphasis on 'form' and its correctness, and the adherence to and copying of models both of language and text. A product is the end result of the act of composition and has 'an air of finality and completeness about it' (Brookes and Grundy, 1990:22). The product of another person when it serves as an example for the writer is referred to as a 'model', whereas 'Process is the means by which we reach such a product' (Ibid:22).

The model-based approach with more focus on the 'product' rather than the 'process', is widely adopted in our classrooms of EAP. According to Nunan (1989:36), 'The focus in the classroom is on copying and imitation, carrying out sentence expansions from the words and developing sentences and paragraphs from models of various sorts'.

Within EAP such a model based approach continues to be popular for one main reason-most of EAP writing is very product oriented as the rules regarding organization and expression of ideas are very tight. Thus the learner needs to possess a good knowledge of these rules and must learn to operate within them. The concern in such an approach is with the organization of the text and the correct use of forms. The role of the model is very important as 'It provides an exemplar which it is the learner's task to replicate. Not only does the model come first in the teaching sequence, it also shows a finished text' (White 1988:6).

The writing teacher who subscribes to the product oriented approach is concerned 'to see that the end product is readable, grammatically correct and obeys discourse - conventions relating to main points, supporting details and so on' (Nunan,1989:36). In this approach, the focus right from the start is on the product which is someone else's writing, and does not demonstrate while teaching how the original writer arrived at that. It gives no indication of the process.

The model-based approach was transferred to the more recent interest in rhetoric in written discourse. With such interest, there evolved materials with a focus on the organization of rhetorical acts and the manipulation of cohesive features. This
explains 'the exercises in which the student is required to add logical connectors to 
existing sentences or to join sentences with them'. (White, 1988:5)

Both the language-focussed and rhetoric-focussed approaches to the teaching 
of writing follow the same basic procedural model, as:

Study the Model    Manipulate    Produce a 
                   elements          parallel text

(Ibid: 5)

Presenting a representative account of such a procedure, White explains:

Among the characteristics of this parallel model are: the model 
text is taken as the starting point; the text is analyzed and studied 
for features of form, content and organization; linguistic items 
and rhetorical patterns are manipulated; the new input is 
provided as a basis for a parallel writing task. Ultimately, 
students may be required to produce a parallel text using their 
own information. (Ibid: 5)

2.3.2 The 'Process' Approach

The model-based approach to writing has been criticized by the researchers for 
the teaching of both, the mother-tongue as well as ESL. Escholz (1980) and Watson 
(1982) also point out that models tend to be too long and too remote from the students' 
own writing problems, while the traditional sequence of activities - Read, Analyze, 
Write - involves the questionable assumption that advance diagnosis of writing 
problems promotes learning.

Furthermore, Escholz (1980:24) points out that such detailed analytical work 
encourages students to 'see from a mold into which content is somehow poured', 
resulting in 'mindless copies of a particular organizational plan or style'. In general, he 
views the imitation of models as being 'stultifying and inhibiting writers rather than 
empowering them or liberating them' (Ibid:24).

Flowers and Hayes (1977) have also criticized the model-based approach to 
writing thus:

In the midst of the composition renaissance, an odd fact stands 
out: our basic methods of teaching are the same ones English 
academics were using in the seventeenth century. We still 
undertake to teach people to write primarily by dissecting and 
describing a completed piece of writing. The student is (a) 
exposed to the formal descriptive categories of rhetoric (modes 
of argument-definition, cause and effect, etc. - and modes of 
discourse - description, persuasion, etc.) (b) offered good
examples (usually professional ones) and bad examples (usually his/her own) and (c) encouraged to absorb the features of a socially approved style, with emphasis on grammar and usage. We help our students analyse the product, but we leave the process of writing to inspiration. (p.452)

The 'process' approach to writing, based upon the concept of developing 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1972), in contrast to the model-based approach, propagates that language teaching should be concerned with 'what' the learner wants to say and not 'how' he says it. This approach, according to Nunan (1989:36) 'sees the act of composition from a very different perspective, focusing as much on the means whereby the completed text was created as on the end product itself. It views writing from 'a global' perspective concerned with content rather than from a 'local' perspective concerned with form. It views language learning as 'a developmental process which must go beyond quantitative increase to qualitative change' (Li Xiaoju, 1990:69).

The model-based approach treats language learners as passive recipients who without taking any initiative, just waits there to be filled with knowledge or to be trained in habits (Ibid : 68). The process approach, on the other hand, demands 'a high degree of initiative' from the learners and considers him as 'an active agent' throughout the process of writing. The learner's intention or purpose becomes of paramount concern, and the learner is seen to 'have a role as initiator, not a mere responder or a mimicker of other people's intentions and expression. From being imprisoned by an obsessions with correct form, the learner is now liberated by being encouraged to communicate by all means possible' (White, 1988:6). This approach, however, does not advocate the total abandoning of traditional concerns with form as Li Xiaoju (1990:69) further clarifies, 'Not that we do not consider quantitative increase necessary, but setting up such increases as final objectives will tend only to make the learners stop at them and never go beyond and therefore never learn the language.' It only calls for change in priorities and this change has led to the evolution of a new procedural model, as White (1988:7) presents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Communicate as far as possible</th>
<th>Study the model</th>
<th>Practise as necessary</th>
<th>Recycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Explaining his model, sometimes called the 'Deep End Strategy', White opines that learners make use of what they already know and what they can already do.
Furthermore, the focus on task means that 'neither the process nor the outcome is predetermined, while the introduction of the model after an attempt on communication has been made, places the model in a secondary position. It is not there to be mimicked, but to be drawn upon as a resource.' (Ibid: 7 emphasis added)

A growing dissatisfaction with the model-based approach led to an interest in the discovery of processes adopted by writers to arrive at their final product. One of the most important discoveries, according to Zamel (1982) was that the act of composition evolved through several stages as writers discovered, through the process, what it was that they were trying to say. In other words, one does not 'sit down and simply record, in a linear fashion, what it is that one wants to say' (Nunan, 1989:36). In many instances, the writer starts out with only the vaguest notion of this. The ideas are then refined, developed and transformed as the writer writes and rewrites. Researchers have reached at some kind of a consensus about the process of composition, as Beach and Bridwell (1984:127) point out 'The most important development in composition research over the last decade has been the study of the composing process: the ways writers discover ideas, formulate goals and plans, express their ideas, assess their own writing, revise, and edit.'

Researchers are of the view that often 'these processes go on side by side, or are interwoven and cannot be thought of as forming some kind of tidy linear progression. For instance, 'not all ideas are generated before writing begins', in fact, 'the act of writing sparks off new ideas' (Brookes and Grundy, 1990:23 emphasis added). Much before a number of studies based on protocol analysis as well as observation of how good and bad writers actually write had been conducted. Researchers have also studied skilled and unskilled writers in order to find out which strategies seemed to be most successful. Sommers and Perl (cited in Zamel 1982) observed some significant differences between skilled and unskilled writers:

- - - - less skilled writers, who view composing as more mechanical and formulaic, are so inhibited by their concerns with correctness and form that they cannot get beyond the surface in order to anticipate the needs and expectations of their readers.
- - - - less skilled writers revised in most limited way; they were basically concerned with lexicon and teacher-generated rules and rarely modified ideas that had already been written down.
- - - - unlike these writers, the more experienced writers observed by sommers viewed their writing from a more global perspective. In the process of discovering meaning, these
experienced writers changed whole chunks of discourse, and each of these changes represented a reordering of the whole.

2.4 Process of Writing

There have been a number of studies to find out how writers actually write, but unfortunately, 'process cannot be inferred from product any more than a pig can be inferred from a sausage' (Murray 1968:3). However, there can be a number of procedures for training writers and these can be summed up as below:

A. Goal-Setting

In an ideal process of writing, the writer needs to identify a purpose in writing, to set up a goal for himself as Flowers and Hayes (1980:27) agree when they say 'Goal-setting is the force which drives writing.' The writer also needs to distinguish between a goal and a product. The goal or the purpose may be to report, to review, to persuade, to interpret, to analyse and the product may be in form of a report, a critique, a dissertation, an article etc.

B. Planning

After goal-setting, the writer needs to do some brain-storming which is seen as a form of creative, goal-directed play. To begin with, the writer needs to read and reread the assignment with care as Newby (1989:47) cautions, 'You may think you know it off by heart, but have you read the clues inside it which may help you to get started?'

Certain words called 'indicators' in the title, can help. The writer has to start with an over-all plan in his head, considering 'what' he wants to say and 'who' he is writing for. The writer can 'start in the middle, the end, or with any issues which are uppermost at the time' (Flowers and Hayes 1980:27) Zamel (1982) also confirms that planning is not a unitary stage, but a distinctive thinking process which writers use over and over again during composition. She tells that her students spent a great deal of time thinking about the task at the outset, trying to figure out how to proceed. Stallard (1974) finds that his good writer subjects also spent more time on pre-writing than 'average' writers. He also tells that none of his students thought about form or organization of their papers during this pre-writing phase, but almost all of the good
writers thought about the purpose of their writing. An important consideration at this stage of writing is to match the plan to the goal (to the kind of assignment you have been given) as Michael Newby (1989:52) clarifies 'plans are never quite as orderly as the word itself suggests and each one will need to be designed specially to deal with the particular assignment you are tackling.'

Different kinds of plans may also be required for different stages of writing. The following three types of plans (suggested by Newby, 1989) in various forms, may be used for different purposes:

i. **Spider Plans** : This type of plan will have a main event placed in the centre of the diagram (the spider's body) and the results extending out from this (the spider's legs). One can even make connections running in circles round the centre (the spider's web). This type of plan can be useful for fitters whose indicators suggest outcomes, results and implications.

ii. **Flow Charts** : These are suitable plans for titles which ask for descriptions and explanations of processes or of how something changes from one state to another, or of how one event or action can set up a chain reaction. They are also useful for planning arguments which contain alternative possibilities.

iii. **Tree Diagram** : These are especially useful for assignments which require categorisation and the establishing of relationships between different parts. Starting with a single 'root', a tree diagram than branches out into its component parts. Each part in turn branches out its subordinate parts, rather like the branches and twigs on the tree, and so on indefinitely. In this way you can plan how different parts of the writing relate to each other vertically and horizontally: Some features depending on others higher in the hierarchy of the plan's structure, with others being at the same, horizontal level.

Besides these three, there can be other 'plans' such as pie charts, tables, graphs and maps that may assist the writer. Planning the structures in ways like these will allow the writer to see clearly some important parts of his writing.

C. **Drafting**

It is a very important stage in process of writing. The term 'draft' needs not to be confused with the 'product', as Brookes and Grundy (1990:22) also clarify.
'Normally, the term draft is used for a version of the text which the writer knows he or she will improve on.'

Regarding strategies at this stage, White (1988:13) suggests that 'The writer writes as though talking out loud, engaging in a conversation with an inter-locutor, who is the writer's other voice.' Making another interesting observation, Murray compares the reactions of the writers to their texts to a conversation between two workmen who mutter to each other. He feels that such reactions enable the students to move on. In other words, it may be said that the writer may talk to his 'text'.

The following techniques of rhetoric, similar to those suggested by Larson (1968) and Hughey et.al (1983) may be used:

- Describe it.
- Compare it.
- Associate it.
- Tell how it's made.
- Apply it.
- Argue for or against it.
- Look at your subject from a different point of view.
- Use a different vocabulary.

During this entire process, thinking remains simmering in the back of the mind and can be restored to from time to time.

Drafting may begin from the end, in the beginning or with any important issue. Organization, correction, or censoring the ideas is not important at this stage as White (1988:10) confirms 'they usually deal with it with a sense of urgency and momentum, with little or no concern with accuracy of expression. The important thing seems to be to get ideas down on paper, with questions of organization and correction coming later.'

D. Rewriting

In the process of writing, rewriting is an important activity. Infact, Murray (1968) has said that writing is rewriting and Maimon (1982 cited in White 1988:9) has gone to the extent of saying that 'successful papers are not written; but rewritten'. Good writers can draft out sections of writing and as they work on them, they constantly keep reviewing, revising and editing. Learner writers, on the other hand,
get unstuck when it comes to 'how' to rewrite. For instance, Sommers (1980) points out that student writers revision as word-based. They lack strategies for handling the larger elements in revision and tend to view their compositions in a linear way as a series of parts to be assembled.

Editing needs to intervene at the right time. Perl (1979) and Raimes (1985) conducted their studies on American student writers and foreign students respectively also reached similar conclusions. The former observes that editing intrudes very often and to such a degree that it breaks down the rhythms generated by thinking and writing. Premature editing, thus, can result in the writer losing track of ideas.

'Editing', for premature writers becomes 'an exercise in error hunting' (White, 1988:10). About good writers, Stallard (1974) tells that they change more words at a time. In other words, they do not change a few words, but change major chunks during the process of reading their papers at intervals during writing.

Sense of audience is another very important consideration while revising and editing. Flowers and Hayes have made a useful distinction between reader based and writer based prose. In their view, the first draft is writer based and it is turned reader-based through revision, considering how the reader is to be affected by what is written. 'Good writers', as White (1988:10) observes, 'Show great variability in the application of the rereading and reviewing process, sometimes they review one or two sentences, sometimes they reread whole paragraphs'. Murray (1968) also observes that the writer keeps learning from the writing about its meaning. He suggests two combination verbs:

Writeread  Readwrite

Such reading involves criticism with the writer first evaluating his writing in terms of global goals and later in terms of vocabulary and syntax. The writer may reformulate the whole writing or discover new ideas. Thus, revision is seen as a highly 'dynamic, multi-level and recursive' as Sommers (1980) points out:

Since writers are limited in what they can attend to during each cycle, revision strategies help balance competing demands on attention. Thus, writers can concentrate on more than one objective at a time by developing strategies to sort out and organise their different concerns in successive cycles of revision. (p.187)

Thus, the students can be encouraged to go through the following process:
Motivated getting ideas \to planning \to making outline notes \to making a revising, replanning \to editing and getting ready (Tricia Hedge, 1988:21)

Though the actual process of writing is not as simple and linear. It may move backwards and towards between drafting and revising with stages of replanning in between, as Smith (1982) confirms:

Composition is not a matter of putting one word after another or of transplanting successive ideas into words, but rather of building a structure (the text) from materials (the conventions) according to an incomplete and constantly changing plan (the specifications of intentions). (p.118)

The procedures of writing involve active participation from the students. According to Weiss (1980) the models of the process can help to demystify writing and he even advocates that teachers write themselves so that students can see how it is done. The teacher models the process and not the product in a joint act of discovery with the students. Stevick (1980:17) further suggests that 'the teachers and the students may not work in opposite directions'. According to him 'there must be a way 'which will allow the teacher to keep nearly 100 per cent of the control, while at the same time the learner is exercising nearly 100 percent of the initiative. (emphasis added)

2.5 Role of the Learner

The communicative approach or the 'process' approach emphasizes on learner-centeredness. In their comprehensive analysis of approaches and methods in language teaching, Richards and Rodgers (1986) devoted considerable attention to learner and teacher roles. They conducted an analysis to ascertain the learner roles and found the following few which are possible in the language class:

- the learner is the passive recipient of outside stimuli;
- the learner is an interactor and negotiator who is capable of giving as well as taking;
- the learner is a listener and performer who has little control over the content of learning;
- the learner is involved in a process of personal growth;
- the learner is involved in a social activity, and the social and interpersonal roles of the learner cannot be divorced from psychological learning processes;
- learner must take responsibility for their own learning, developing autonomy and skills in 'learning-how-to learn'.

The last of these points has been controversial, but there is evidence that different learners will benefit from different learning strategies. Thus as Willing (1988) also suggests that they should be encouraged to find out and apply those strategies which suit them best. Rubin and Thompson (1988) suggested the following range of strategies which have been explained by Candlin and Nunan (1987):

1. *Finding your own way*
   Helping learners to discover what ways of learning work best for them. For example, how they best learn vocabulary items. It also implies learners discovering other ways of learning from other learners in the class, and using all senses to learn in as independent a way as they can.

2. *Organising information about language*
   Developing ways for learners to organise what they have learned, through making notes and charts, grouping items and displaying them for easy reference.

3. *Being creative*
   Experimenting with different ways of creating and using language, for example with new ways of using words, playing with different arrangements of sounds and structures, inventing imaginative texts and playing language games.

4. *Making your own opportunities*
   Learning language actively by performing tasks in class, for example by interacting with fellow learners and the teacher, asking questions, listening regularly to the language, reading different kinds of texts and practising writing. There is much scope for rehearsal in the language class.

5. *Learning to live with uncertainty*
   Not always relying on certain and safe answers but trying to work things out with the help of resources, for example using dictionaries. We might include here helping learners to keep on talking and to understand the general gist of texts, rather than every language item in them.
6. Using mnemonics
Helping learners find quick ways of recalling what they have learned, for example through rhymes, word associations, word classes, particular contexts of occurrence, experiences and personal memories.

7. Making errors work
Learning to live with errors and helping learners to prevent errors from blocking their participation in tasks. Helping learners to ask for error correction and help and to learn from the errors they will make. It helps if learners can estimate the relative gravity of errors and realise that errors vary according to channel and text-type.

8. Using your linguistic knowledge
Helping learners make comparisons with what they know about language from their own mother tongue, as well as building on what they have already learned in the new language, both in terms of formal rules and conventions for language use.

9. Letting the context help you
Help learners to realise the relationships that exist between words, sounds, and structures, developing their capacity to guess and infer meanings from the surrounding context and from their background knowledge and out-of-class experience.

10. Learning to make intelligent guesses
Developing the learners' capacity to work out our meanings. Specifically to focus both on the main parts of the message and to relate these to the overall text and context. To guess on the basis of probabilities of the overall text and context. To guess on the basis of probabilities of occurrence and meaning, and to try to work from what is relevant to the text and task in hand.

11. Learning formalised routines
Encouraging learners to learn routines and whole phrases. Idioms, routinised expressions, sound sequences, dialogue extracts, are all examples of this, as are ways of expressing a variety of interpersonal functions.

12. Learning production techniques
Helping learners not to be so much concerned with accuracy that they do not develop the capacity to be fluent. In particular, to develop their paraphrasing
ability, their willingness to ask for help and their use of gestures and other devices to keep on talking.

13. *Using different styles of speech and writing*

Developing learners' ability to differentiate between styles of speech and writing, both productively and 'receptively'. Finding ways to transfer their mother tongue experience of such variation to the new language.

While learning strategies, learning-how-to-learn tasks and grammatical awareness tasks, it is argued, might appear to be non-communicative but researchers suggest that these tasks can be devised to be interactive and communicative. Nunan (1989:83) points out, 'Any activities which encourage learners to think about the nature of language and ways of learning imply a more critical and reflective learner role than those in which the learner is memorising or manipulating language.'

The role of the student as independent learner is getting increasing attention. Dickinson (1987 cited in Nunan 1989:283-84) argues strongly for the use of self-instruction and the development of independent learning skills on the following grounds:

1. *Practical reasons*
   
   In some situations, it is impossible for learners to attend regular classes. For these learners, it is a matter of self-instruction or nothing.

2. *Individual differences*
   
   Self-instruction enables us to cope with differences in aptitude, cognitive styles and strategies, and learning strategies.

3. *Educational aims*
   
   Self-instruction facilitates the development of strategies which seem to characterise the 'good' language learner. It also promotes autonomy and fulfils requirements for continuing education.

4. *Motivation*
   
   Self-instruction can have a positive effect on motivation.

5. *Learning how to learn*
   
   This reason cuts across several of the others already summarised. Finding out about learning processes, planning learning and then using appropriate and preferred strategies is a basic and important educational objective.
2.6 Role of the Teacher

Prior to the communicative approach, English teachers were like teachers of the other subjects such as History or Economics. Their job was to impart and develop the knowledge of the English language to their students as effectively as they could. Their role was to provide correct models, to set tasks, and to provide corrective feedback. The communicative approach, on the other hand, entrusts the teacher with a radically different role to play as Peter Medgyes (1990:105) suggests, 'Abandoning the safe position of general language monitor in the class, teachers will supplement their 'teaching' self with the role of co-communicator.' Richards and Rodgers (1986:24) point out that teacher roles are related to the following issues:

- the types of functions teachers are expected to fulfil, e.g. whether that of practice director, counselor or model
- the degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place
- the degree to which the teacher is responsible for content
- the interactional patterns that develop between teachers and learners.”

Resolving these issues, the communicative approach expects the teacher to create favourable conditions for learners to engage in real-life communication in the classroom. He has to initiate and stimulate activities where the learner can participate. According to Peter Medgyes (1990):

"The communicative classroom requires a teacher of extraordinary abilities: a multi dimensional, high-tech, wizard-of-oz-like super person - yet of flesh and blood. He or she must be confident without being conceited, judicious without being judgemental, ingenious without being unbridled, technically skilled without being pedantic, far-sighted without being far-fetched, down-to-earth without being earth-bound, inquiring without being inquisitive - the list is endless. But above-all he or she must be learner-centered. (p.104)

Discussing the characteristics of the communicative teacher, Harmer (1983) further opines that he has to be:

'judicious enough to realize that they are not the sole respositories of truth, wisdom and authority, but merely instruments to see that learning takes place. Therefore, they keep a low profile in all their functions: as controllers they relax their grip on the class; as accessors they resort to gentle correction; as organizers they set activities in motion and then stand aside; as prompters they perform with discretion; as participants, they play
This ability of theirs to 'withdraw' is the key to the success of the learning process as Clarke and Silberstein (1977) points out:

The teacher as teacher is necessary only when the class is attempting to resolve a language problem, for it is only in this situation that the teacher is automatically presumed to possess more knowledge than the students. This role can be minimized if students' attack strategies and reading skills have been effectively developed. If the task is realistic, and if the students have learned to adjust their reading strategies according to the task, there should be little need for teacher intervention.(p. 52)

Providing an account of teacher and learner roles, Dublin and Olshtain (1986) suggests:

The terms play and players hold out a rich potential for developing a metaphor concerning language learners. Only superficially is play a recreational activity, confined to the interests of children... As a player, one must participate actively. At the same time, one must concentrate by observing what others do. Players take part in all of the interactional configurations which are important in a communicative language course: as individuals, in pairs, in small groups, and in whole group displays. As players, participants can come to view language learning as something quite different from 'knowing' which they associate with other schooling experiences in their lives. (Pp. 81-82)

The communicative approach emphasizes on language learning as a process of discovery as Carnicelli (1980 cited in Nunan 1989:85) suggests in this connection that writing taught as a process of discovery implies that revision becomes the main focus of the course and that the teacher, who traditionally provides feedback after the fact, intervenes to guide students through the process. Teacher-student conferences need to be regularly held between drafts so that students can learn, while they are creating, as to what areas need to be worked on. Some educators feel that individual conferences are very effective and they should take the place of in-class instruction. This, however, would deny the students the opportunity to share their writing with other students, an activity that forms the basis of much process-centred instruction... This shared experience reinforces the fact that the teacher is truly not the only reader...

Moreover, this type of experience helps develop in students the crucial ability of reviewing their writing with the eyes of another.
2.6.1 Needs Analysis

Another important job that the communicative teacher has to perform is that of needs analysis. He is expected not to impose his own views of learners' needs and aspirations. Instead, as Peter Medgyes (1990) suggests, he should gain a detailed knowledge of:

- who the learners are
- what they bring to class
- why they have signed up for the course
- what expectations they have from the course

This makes the job of the communicative teacher two-fold. First, he has to cater for the specific needs of the group as a whole and secondly, he has to pay due attention to individual needs and aspirations as the learners are expected to be different in age, motivation, intelligence, linguistic level etc.

Peter Medgyes finds a parallel here between the Communicative Approach and the highly-acclaimed, Humanistic, Psychological Approach. He points out that in both views learners are seen 'not so much as full-time linguistic objects at whom language teaching is aimed, but rather as human individuals whose personal dignity and integrity, and the complexity of whose ideas, thoughts, needs and sentiments, should be respected.' (1990:106) Consultation and negotiation between the teacher and the learner is necessary for suitable learning environment in the class. A foreign language teachers needs to contribute to the self-actualizing process of the individual, by striving to be 'humans among the humans' (Littlewood 1981:94).

2.7 The Communicative Classroom

The communicative use of language can only take place in a tolerant and co-operative environment of the classroom. While describing an art room Brookes and Grundy (1990:47) suggest 'Something of this workshop atmosphere needs to be part of the language classroom, where everybody is prepared to allow fellow students and the teachers to observe their work in progress'. At the same time, he also suggests that writing is essentially a private and concentrated activity so these must be periods of quietness and calm. Most importantly, there must be an atmosphere of openness and trust. Emphasizing on the need for a co-operative classroom, they further say, 'one expects a flexible classroom where students are sometimes walking
around questioning other individuals, or working in groups, or listening to instructions and feedback to obtain, but it is important to work hard at achieving it to get the best output from the learners.' (p.48 emphasis added)

The following diagram from Wright (1987) illustrates the ways in which learners might be grouped physically or arranged within the classroom.

Nunan (1985) refers to 'mode' and 'environment' as two different aspects of learning situation. Learning mode means whether the learner is operating on an individual or group basis. If operating on an individual basis, is the learner self-paced but teacher directed, or self-directed? Environment, which is closely connected with mode refers to where the learning actually takes place. It might be a conventional classroom in a language centre, a community class, an industrial or occupational setting, a self-access learning centre and so on. Recent research prefers use of wider community as a resource for learning. Montgomery and Einstein (1982) gave a strong real-world focus to their classroom by arranging weekly excursions, the venues for which were selected on the basis of interests and needs of the learners. Strevens (1987:171) suggests that the tasks which involve community learning have three following benefits:

1. They provide learners with opportunities for genuine interactions which have a real-life point to them;
2. Learners can adopt communicative roles which bypass the teacher as intermediary;
2.8 Evaluating Writing

The question of evaluating writing has invited a lot of discussion from the researchers in recent times. In the reign of EAP, usually the final product is evaluated. The teacher only corrects the written work, grades it and points out surface errors. 'Evaluation is linked to marking down texts, exhibiting grammatical inadequacies that have little to do with writing skills' (Brookes and Grundy 1990:53).

The communicative teaching of writing, on the other hand, demands for writing outcomes to be evaluated differently for factors such as organization, purpose, readership awareness etc. rather than only for accuracy. The recent research also emphasizes on the role of the teacher being less instructional and more enabling as Brookes and Grundy (1990:53) further emphasize 'the teacher's role is that of an enabler of student self-discovery rather than that of instructor.' They also add that student collaboration and teacher intervention at the process stage are the best ways of ensuring that lines of thought are developed logically through learner discovery that we are broadly opposed to formal evaluation.

Furthermore, this approach emphasizes a lot on self-correction. There is considerable amount of research on repair techniques which demonstrates a systematic preference for self-repair or self-correction. A communicative teacher needs to maximise the possibilities for learner self-correction as different from formal evaluation which places emphasis on product that limits learner concentration on process. Rewriting or self-correction is such an important writing skill that a good teacher would provide maximum opportunity to his students for this and would include rewriting ability in any overall evaluation of learners' writing skills.

Ann Chenoweth (1987 cited in Brookes and Grundy 1990:53) also agrees when she says:

Better writers not only have strategies for correcting local problems such as word-choice, grammar and punctuation. They also deal with overall content and meaning of their writing by adding, deleting, or reorganizing larger chunks of discourse as well. Unskilled writers lack these global strategies - - - teachers of writing should structure their classes in ways that will help
students expand their repertoire of strategies for rewriting compositions.

Though a genuine problem faced by the teachers as the educational system puts a lot of emphasis in grading the product, yet it is important 'to work towards an atmosphere where activities are valued whether they lend themselves to being red-penciled and graded by the teacher or not' (Ibid:61).

2.9 What is a 'task'?

The term 'task' can be defined in a variety of ways as it is not only a term related with 'language learning'. Even within the field of second language learning, this term has been defined as something which covers a variety of functions as the following definition shows:

[a task is] a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, taking a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between. (Long 1985:89)

This, however, is a non-technical, non-linguistic definition. It involves a number of things that people do in their daily life. From a linguistic angle, the following definition by Richards, Platt and Weber (1986) would make the meaning clear:

an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative... since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake. (p. 289)

This definition defines 'task' in terms of what the learner will do in the classroom rather than in the outside world. Breen (1987) defines a 'task' as
... any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning - from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision making. (p. 23)

All these definitions imply that tasks involve communicative language use in which the user's attention is focussed on meaning rather than linguistic structure. The tasks mentioned above have a sense of completeness, they stand alone as communicative acts in their own right. This, however, does not imply a hard and fast distinction between 'communicative' and 'non-communicative' tasks.

2.9.1 Task Components

Components of a language task can be broadly specified as the goals, the input, the activities derived from this input, and finally the roles implied for teacher and learners. Candlin and Murphy (1987) suggests that tasks should contain input, roles, settings, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedbacks. Shavelson and Stern (1981) have suggested the following elements as task components:

- content - the subject matter to be taught
- materials - the things that learners can observe/manipulate
- activities - the things that learners and teacher will be doing during the lesson
- goals - the teachers' general aim for the task
- students - their abilities, needs and interests are important
- social - the class as a whole and its sense of 'groupness'
- community

Wright (1987) suggests input data which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners, and an initiating question which instructs learners on what to do with the data. He argues that objectives or outcomes are obligatory on the grounds that, with certain tasks, a variety of outcomes might be possible and that these might be quite different from the ones anticipated by the teacher. The influence of settings, and the
necessity for feedback, however, are equally important, according to him. Nunan (1989:11) gives the following diagrammatic representation to task components:

```
Goals -- TASKS -- Learner role
         V
Input  TASKS  Teacher role
         V
Activities

i. The three components i.e. 'Teacher Role', 'Learner Role' and 'Settings' have been discussed earlier in the chapter (See 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7).

ii. Goals have been defined as vague general intentions behind any given learning task. They provide a point of contact between the task and the broader curriculum and may relate to a range of general outcomes. These are not always explicitly stated, though they can be inferred from an examination of a task. There is, however, rarely a one-to-one relationship between goals and tasks as a complex task involving a range of activities may be simultaneously moving learners towards several roles.

iii. 'Input', according to Nunan (1989), 'refers to the data that form the point of departure for the task. For a communicative task, input can be derived from a wide range of sources. Hover (1986) suggests letters (formal and informal, picture stories, missing person's declaration form, family free, street map, recipe, notice board items, note to a friend, curriculum vitae and economic graphs etc. as sources of tasks. Morris and Stewart-Dore (1984) suggest that while it is neither necessary nor desirable for teachers to provide students with the opportunity of learning all different styles and registers of writing, it is possible to extend the writing options traditionally offered to students by making the following forms available as examples:

- Articles for newspapers, magazines and journals.
- Reports to different kinds of groups.
- Radio and television scripts and documentaries.
- Puppet plays.
- News stories and reports.
- Short stories, poems and plays.
- Press releases.
- Bulletins and newsletters.
- Editorials.
- Progress reports and plans for future development.
- Publicity brochures and posters.
- Instructions and handbooks.
- Recipes.
- Minutes of meetings.
- Scripts of group negotiations.
- Replies to letters and other forms of correspondence.
- Slide/tape presentations.
- Caption books to accompany a visual record of an experience.
- Comic strips for entertainment and information sharing.

(p.158)

The inclusion of such materials, however, raises the question of 'authenticity'. The point of discussion is what mixture of authentic and specially written material may be used. The argument for using authentic materials is based on the notion that rehearsal is the most effective way to develop a particular skill. Proponents of authentic materials print out that classroom texts and dialogues do not adequately prepare learners for coping with the language they hear and read in the real-world outside the classroom. They argue that learners need to engage in real-world texts in class in order to comprehend texts in the real-world. Broshan et.al (1984:2) point out 'the texts that learners will need to read in real life are in the environment around them - at the bank, in the letter box, on shopdoors and windows etc.'

iv. Activities may be defined as 'what learners will actually do with the input which forms the point of departure for the learning task' (Nunan, 1989:59). These are justified in either 'real-world' or 'pedagogic' terms. Tasks with a real-world rationale require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviour required of them in the world beyond the classroom. Clarke and Silberstein argue in favour of real-world tasks as they say:

Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, nor the medium. In addition, the purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life: 1) to obtain a specific fact or piece of information (scanning) 2) to obtain the general idea of the author (skimming) 3) to obtain a comprehensive understanding
of a reading, as in reading a textbook (thorough comprehension), or 4) to evaluate information in order to determine where it fits into one's own system of beliefs (critical reading). Our students should become as critical as we are of the purposes for reading, so that they will be able to determine the proper approaches to a reading task. (p.51)

Tasks with a pedagogic rationale, on the other hand, require learners to do things which they are not likely to be-called upon to do outside the classroom. Widdowson (1987) in defense of such tasks, argues:

...what is wanted is a methodology which will ... provide for communicative competence by functional investment. [Such a methodology] would engage the learners in problem-solving tasks as purposeful activities but without the rehearsal requirement that they should be realistic or 'authentic' as natural social behaviour. (p. 71)

Nunan (1989) illustrates the distinction between the two as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative Classroom Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distinction between the two, however, is not hard and fast. There may be some real-world tasks (as 'making a formal introduction') which the learner will come across only in the classroom and there may be some pedagogic tasks for which it is possible to create real-life contexts (for example 'Listen to an aural text and write a sentence restating the gist'). There may be certain tasks which it will be difficult to assign to one category or the other.

Rivers and Temperley (1978) suggest a second way of characterising activities on the basis of whether they are concerned with skill getting and skill using. These relate to the traditional distinction between controlled practice activities in which learner manipulate grammatical forms and transfer activities, in which learners are meant to apply their newly acquired mastery of linguistic forms to the comprehension
and production of communicative language. Their scheme is represented in the following diagram.

A third way of analysing learning activities is on the basis of whether they aim to develop accuracy or fluency. The distinction between the two has been discussed earlier in the chapter (See 2.2.2). These two, however, as mentioned earlier are not substitutes, but are complementary.
Activity types

Various types of activities may be carried out in the classroom in order to help in genuine communicative interaction outside the classroom. Prabhu (1987) has explained three principal activity types as follows:

1. Information-gap activities involve a transfer of given information from one person to another, from one form to another, or from one place to another. An activity in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information and attempts to convey it verbally to the other, or an activity in which completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text are examples of such activities.

2. Reasoning gap activities involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. Working out a teacher's time-table on the basis of given class time tables is an example of such activities.

3. Opinion-gap activities involve identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude in response to a given situation. Story completion, writing about a social issue are examples of such activities. (Pp. 46-47)

According to Clark (1987) communicative activities should enable learners to:

- solve problems through social interaction with others, for example, participate in conversation related to the pursuit of a common activity with others, obtain goods and services and make arrangements and come to decisions with others (convergent tasks);

- establish and maintain relationships and discuss topics of interest through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experience and plans (divergent tasks);

- search for specific information for some given purpose, process it, and use it in some way (for example, find out the cheapest way to go from A to B);

- listen to or read information, process it, and use it in some way (for example, read a news item and discuss it with
someone, read an article and summarize it, listen to a lecture and write notes on it;
- give information in spoken or written form on the basis of personal experience (for example, give a talk, write a report, write a diary, record a set of instructions on how to do something, or fill in a form);
- listen to, read or view a story, poem, feature etc. and perhaps respond to it personally in some way (for example, read a story and discuss it);
- create an imaginative text (for some learners only). (Pp. 238-39)

Pattison (1987) also proposes following seven activities types:

1. **Questions and answers**
   These activities are based on the notion of creating an information gap by letting learners make a personal and secret choice from a list of language items which all fit into a given frame (e.g. the location of a person or object). The aim is for learners to discover their classmates' secret choices. This activity can be used to practise almost any structure, function or notion.

2. **Dialogues and role-plays**
   These can be wholly scripted or wholly improvised, however, 'If learners are given some choice of what to say, and if there is a clear aim to be achieved by what they say in their role-plays, they may participate more willingly and learn more thoroughly than when they are told to simply repeat a given dialogue in pairs'.

3. **Matching activities**
   Here, the task for the learner is to recognise matching items, or to complete pairs or sets. 'Bingo', 'Happy families' and 'Split dialogues' (where learners match given phrases) are examples of matching activities.

4. **Communication strategies**
   These are activities designed to encourage learners to practise communication strategies such as paraphrasing, borrowing or inventing words, using gesture, asking for feedback, simplifying.

5. **Pictures and picture stories**
Many communication activities can be stimulated through the use of pictures (e.g. spot the difference, memory test, sequencing pictures to tell a story).

6. **Puzzles and problems**

Once again, there are many different types of puzzles and problems. These require learners to 'make guesses, draw on their general knowledge and personal experience, use their imagination and test their powers of logical reasoning'.

7. **Discussions and decisions**

These require the learner to collect and share information to reach a decision (e.g. to decide which items from a list are essential to have on a desert island).

Coe, Rycraft and Ernst (1983) suggest following writing activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Data</strong></th>
<th><strong>Activity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A set of model sentences and a list of unpunctuated sentences.</td>
<td>Note the use of capital letters in the model sentences and then indicate where capitals are needed in the unpunctuated sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A letter in which the sentences are scrambled.</td>
<td>Study the letter and rearrange the sentences so they are in the correct order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A letter and a conversation</td>
<td>Read the letter and write a similar one based on the information in the dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Two versions of a particular story.</td>
<td>Study the two versions, decide which you like best and why. Write a story based on the one you prefer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A set of photographs.</td>
<td>Choose at least six of the photographs and arrange them in an order which makes a good story. Discuss and then write the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A paragraph with the first and last sentences missing. Sets of possible first and last sentences.</td>
<td>Select the most appropriate first and last sentences from the alternatives provided.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Cited in Nunan, 1989:76)
2.10 Grading Tasks

Grading involves the different ways in which contents are arranged in books. It may be described in the following way:

the arrangement of the content of a language course or a textbook so that it is presented in a helpful way. Gradation would affect the order in which words, word meanings, tenses, structures, topics, functions, skills, etc. are presented. Gradation may be based on the complexity of an item, its frequency in written or spoken English, or its importance for the learner.

(Richards, Platt, and Weber 1986:125)

The grading of content for a language programme is an extremely complicated and difficult business. Input factor, learner factor and activity factor may be taken into consideration while grading tasks.

The input factor involves the wide range of sources used to derive communicative tasks and the assumed familiarity and background knowledge of the learner with the topic. Learner factors include confidence, motivation, learning pace, observed ability in language skills, cultural knowledge/awareness and linguistic knowledge. Input and learner factors, however, are not always independent. Nunan (1989) opines that there will be an interaction between the grammatical complexity of the input, and the learner's level of linguistic knowledge. He recognises the problem for the teacher or material developer is in judging how much linguistic and background knowledge the learner is likely to have. Pearson and Johnson (1972) describe this problem as follows:

(there is an interdependence) between inside the head and outside the head factors. Text readability really boils down to linguistic factors like word difficulty (how familiar are the words?) and sentence complexity (how difficult is it to wade through coordinated and subordinated text will be until and unless one knows something about the linguistic and conceptual sophistication of the reader: one person's Scientific American is another person's daily newspaper. In short, all of these factors interact with one another. (p.10)

Regarding activity factors, Nunan (1989) opines ' - - - - with the increasing use of authentic texts, there has been a tendency to control difficulty not by simplifying the input to which learners are exposed, but by varying the difficulty of the activities which learners are expected to carry out.' (p. 104) Brindley (1987) suggests that
relevance, complexity, amount of context provided prior to task, processability of language of the task, amount of help available to the learner, degree of grammatical and contextual appropriacy and time available to the learner as the factors which determine the complexity of what the learner has to do. Candlin and Nunan (1987) suggest that activities may be graded according to the general cognitive demands they make.

2.11 Sequencing and Integrating Tasks

There can be a number of ways in which the tasks can be sequenced and integrated with other tasks and exercise types which are designed to enable the students to learn how to communicate. The following approaches may be followed while sequencing communicative tasks:

2.11.1 A Psycholinguistic Processing Approach

Nunan (1985) takes cognitive and performance demands made upon the learner as criteria for grading activities. He suggests a few steps in a possible teaching sequence requiring the learner to undertake activities which make progressively more demands upon them, moving from comprehension based activities to controlled production activities and finally ones which require the learner to engage in real communicative interaction.

2.11.2 Task Continuity

Task continuity refers to 'chaining of activities together to form a sequence, in which the successful completion of prior activities is a prerequisite for succeeding ones' (Nunan, 1989:119). According to this principle, tasks are sequenced on the basis of logic of themes and learning pathways along with their complexity as determined by input, learner and activity factors. Candlin and Edelhaff (1982) have very successfully used the continuity principle in their 'challenges' material in which the various macroskills are integrated and sequenced. ‘Such interlinked sets of activities in which succeeding steps are dependent on those which come before (either in terms of content or skills), will ensure greater coherence and cohesion for your language programme’ (Nunan, 1989:120).
2.11.3 Information-gap Tasks

The use of these tasks has been supported by recent research on designing of communicative widely tasks. According to Nunan (1989:121), these tasks can, 'act as a nucleus around which a range of other tasks and exercise types can be constructed.' Such tasks focus on one hand on extracting, recording and sharing information in various classroom groupings and on the other hand, on providing practice in identifying and manipulating aspects of the linguistic system.

2.11.4 Content-based Units

Experimental content is used as a basic building block in lesson or unit design for a long time. It has several variants. In the field of language teaching, foreign language 'immersion' programmes in which language is used as a medium to talk about other things (for learning other subjects such as maths, science, history etc.) are examples of content-based courses. Evans (1986) has developed a topic approach to ESL in a school setting in which topics are broken into four sequential stages as follows:

Stage I: Visual Presentation

In the first stage, central concepts are presented through pictures, maps, models etc. Appropriate structures and vocabulary are introduced and students are given the opportunity of describing what they have seen orally and in writing.

Stage II: Building a Reading Passage

Students answer true/false questions about the visuals and use these as the basis for building a written passage.

Stage III: Analysing and Extending the reading passage

At this stage, students focus on some of the linguisting elements in the passage.

Stage IV: Creating a Passage

In the final stage, students produce their own written passage based on the language and content they have acquired in stages 1-3. The point of departure may be another visual which might be described or compared with the original visual.
This approach integrates the four macro skills. Gradually, the students are put to greater demands and slowly they reach the point where they are able to produce their original writings.

2.12 Conclusion

Beginning with the discussion of writing as a skill, this chapter presents a review of various concepts and approaches to writing, meaning of a 'task' and its components and finally, the ways in which communicative tasks can be graded, sequenced and integrated. The recent research in writing can be observed as preferring the communicative or process approach to writing to the model-based or product approach. The process approach sees language learning as an engagement in activities which stimulate thinking and consequently help in the learning process. This approach makes learning of writing 'natural and spontaneous' rather than 'imposed'. The product-oriented approach, on the other hand, relies heavily on the 'model' which in its turn acts more as a 'deterrent' rather than a 'stimulant' for the independent learning process of a learner-writer.

Communication is the order of the day and the course of FE is in the right direction of trying to make English as 'communicative' and 'functional' as possible. The recent research in writing can act as a starting point towards the goals set for the course. The writing courses prescribed for the students of FE can be better attempted with the help of an approach which emphasizes on learning a language by experience rather than by imitation. If training is provided to the students in form of tasks which acquaint them with the process and also provide opportunities to practise and master it, they will gradually become independent in writing.