CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Training in writing, at the undergraduate level has hitherto been associated with the teaching of isolated grammatical elements, translation exercises, drills, pattern practice, and correct sentence structure. The methodology employed has focussed on an examination of prose models and a step-by-step writing procedure in which the student having been given a topic is encouraged to formulate an outline, expand it and attend to various rhetorical aspects of the prose work. Discourse studies now enable the teacher to direct the learner's attention to deeper and more significant aspects, thereby extending the learner's understanding of the activity.

The case being made out in this research study is for a more intensive and extensive approach to writing pedagogy. Writing is an educational activity which is explanatory and formative, and which aids reinforcement of learning and supports deliberate cognitive effort. It promotes analysis and reflection in student response rather than immediacy which is characteristic of the spoken word. While reading and listening are skills that draw on conceptual knowledge, writing does not just involve the reproduction of thoughts but the explanation, development and crystallization of the thinking process.
So, while writing may not be necessarily more important than the other language skills, the teaching of writing is perceived as being an activity beneficial to the learner.

The proposal being made in this research is towards an approach in writing which is related to students' needs, teachers' perceptions and current concepts, and has as its goal the heightening of learner awareness. While text studies regard a piece of writing in terms of grammatical categories, discourse studies extend the view to the actions of various kinds which the writer performs in writing, conveying information or affecting the reader's thoughts and actions. At the undergraduate level where students require writing for institutional or occupational purposes or for personal and social tasks, discourse studies direct attention to those aspects of writing that would be beneficial to students. The methodology argued for is one of implicit teaching involving sensitization procedures which makes the learner a more effective performer in the written discoursal activity.

This study concerns itself with the teaching of writing at the discoursal level for undergraduate students. It investigates the problems encountered in a particular context in the teaching of English partly by exploring what students do and teachers think with regard to written English, and partly by examining what specialists in the field are proposing and measures that have proved effective in writing pedagogy. The study concludes with suggestions
that would provide an extension to current practices by suggesting strategies that would be beneficial to the teaching-learning community.

The enquiry begins in Chapter Two with an analytical description of the course books available at present for the teaching of written English at the undergraduate level, in order to examine the materials and methodologies presented and to identify the criteria employed by course planners for writing curricula.

Chapter Three consists of a detailed enquiry into learners' professed writing needs, and undergraduate college teachers' perceptions regarding their students' requirements. It then goes on to delineate the researcher's analysis of students explicit composing procedures. This exploration of learners' perceptions and abilities suggests strategies that can be employed for the teaching of writing.

Chapter Four, through a study of what specialists in the field have advocated, and the insights derived from the actual analysis of writing samples, goes on to formulate principles for the teaching of writing which could be employed for course construction.
Chapter Five, basing itself on the writing needs investigated in Chapter Three, and the principles for the teaching of writing arrived at in Chapter Four, offers suggestions for curriculum design for the undergraduate classroom and outlines procedures that would heighten the learner's awareness with the aim of making him a more informed and disciplined writer.