CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF COURSEBOOKS IN WRITING

This survey of coursebooks in writing offers, on the one hand, an analysis of available exercise materials for the teaching of writing and, on the other, offers a review of current theory.

The texts listed below have been selected because they represent course materials devised in India during the last ten years for undergraduate learners. There was a movement in India, in the mid-70's, to restructure tertiary education in English (in the context of the 10 + 2 + 3 pattern) and these coursebooks represent such attempts in the teaching of the writing skill.

The following texts were examined:-


The survey shall include:-

PART ONE : THE AIMS STATED BY THE AUTHORS

PART TWO : CRITERIA AROUND WHICH THE TEXTS APPEAR TO DEVOLVE

PART THREE : USES OF SUCH CRITERIA
## PART ONE

### AIMS OF THE AUTHORS (AS STATED IN THEIR PREFACES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A REMEDIAL COURSE IN ENGLISH FOR COLLEGES</th>
<th>WITTEN COMMUNICATION</th>
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<th>STRENGTHEN YOUR WRITING</th>
<th>WRITING WITH A PURPOSE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learner level catered to and assumptions regarding the learner</td>
<td>For weaker students* in undergraduate classes</td>
<td>For the student who has already completed several years of English at the school level</td>
<td>For the student at I year university or + 2 level</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Intermediate or I year degree level students</td>
<td>Intermediate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Purpose of the course</td>
<td>A supplementary course which does not replace the usual university college courses for degree learners</td>
<td>A course designed primarily with the new educational pattern in mind which is based on various vocational as well as academic objectives</td>
<td>A set of materials designed for an intensive course before a regular course of study. &quot;It is intended to meet the needs of students who study English in order to use it as a medium</td>
<td>&quot;To activate the grammatical competence that the student has acquired during his earlier training and to lead him to a meaningful use of the resources of the language for the&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;an attempt to utilize the findings of recent work in applied linguistics and language pedagogy&quot;</td>
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* All quotations in the table are from the respective coursebooks
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<td>of learning in higher education&quot;.</td>
<td>purpose of communication&quot;.</td>
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<td>vocabulary and sentence construction exercises to the more complex tasks of continuous writing&quot;</td>
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<td>3. Principles underlying the course</td>
<td>1. Remediation is not regarded as &quot;spot repair&quot; but extensive reteaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Caters to the need to give students practice in writing for a wide variety of purposes for academic study or job requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Gives practice in skills required at university for studying information subjects.</td>
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<td>1. &quot;The ability to construct correct sentences in English... does not automatically lead to the ability to do continuous writing in forms appropriate to different purposes&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. An attempt to make use of the insightful analyses of higher order writing skills that have become available&quot;.</td>
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<td>2. Exposure to language through intensive and extensive reading encouraged.</td>
<td>2. Exercises simulate those the learner would have to perform in college or at work.</td>
<td>2. Simulates the situations in which the student is expected to work independently—the lecture, seminar and report-making situations.</td>
<td>2. &quot;That the frequent gaps in student's ability to construct sentences can be remedied better in the context of practising continuous writing than by repeating &amp; revising parts of the sentence construction course&quot;.</td>
<td>2. &quot;Provide models and materials to help the learner to systematically proceed to wards maturity &amp; facility in his writing tasks&quot;.</td>
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<td>3. Inclusion of the throw-away morale building lessons.</td>
<td>3. Does not provide practice in structures but develops higher order writing skills.</td>
<td>3. Designed to develop higher order-language and study skills.</td>
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<td>4. Treatment of grammar-&quot;dis-course oriented&quot; a rhetorical framework employed.</td>
<td>4. Suitable for teachers in training or in professions where English is the medium of instruction.</td>
<td>5. Trains the student to look at the communicative function of sentences as well as aims at developing written discourse through inter sentence relationships.</td>
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<td><strong>4. What is presented</strong> A</td>
<td>24 Units (8 in each of the books I, II &amp; III) each unit made up of an extensive reading passage followed by a glossary and language work.</td>
<td>43 Units-each made up of exercises based on the following topics: communicating by letter, different ways of presenting information, description and narration, note-taking, reporting, arguing, expressing oneself.</td>
<td>13 Units-each consisting of extensive listening passages and exercises.</td>
<td>9 Units entitled &quot;The paragraph&quot;, &quot;Letter writing&quot;, &quot;Note making&quot;, &quot;Description&quot;, &quot;The use of graphics&quot;, &quot;Essay writing&quot;, &quot;Telegrams&quot;, and &quot;Short notices&quot;, &quot;Precis writing and abstracting&quot;, &quot;Report Writing&quot;.</td>
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<td>4. What is Presented B</td>
<td>1. Discussion of discourse type used</td>
<td>Exercises which do not give practice in structure but develop higher order language skills.</td>
<td>1. Listening tasks-lecture, simulating actual ones as far as possible.</td>
<td>1. Discussion of the type of discourse being taught.</td>
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<td>2. Model</td>
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<td>3. Examination of the model with the help of the guide/facilitator.</td>
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<td>Exercises on reading passages a) from the elementary and controlled to the factual, inferential and expressive.</td>
<td>1. relative control to relative freedom.</td>
<td>2. control brought about by encouraging modelling according to examples.</td>
<td>1. from control to freedom.</td>
<td>which represent the author's best guess regarding relevant and useful writing practice&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How it is presented</td>
<td>1. from texts that are simple in structure to those more complex.</td>
<td>2. control maintained by samples being within the students perceptive range.</td>
<td>1. &quot;central to periphery&quot;</td>
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BKI Chronological narration, and reporting involving descriptions of different types.
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<td>3. Gradual shift in focus from the familiar (self, family, home, school, environment) to areas in which the learner should be developing an interest, such as, public affairs, interests of state, nation and world affairs.</td>
<td>3) from the concrete to the abstract and argumentative.</td>
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<td>BK II-vocational writing</td>
<td>BK III-advanced descriptions involving role play.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Feedback for the learner, treatment of error 1. Deliberate correction of error to be avoided. 2. The student should be expected to correct his own answers.</td>
<td>Appendix with answers for very few questions</td>
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<td>7. Teacher's role in the classroom with given materials</td>
<td>1. No lectures. 2. The teacher has a guide. 3. Balance the time given to oral and written work. 4. Pay attention to tone, expressions, and gestures when speaking.</td>
<td>1. teacher-a guide and facilitator. 2. has to deliver the material/passage as a lecture or tape record it. 3. should move from group to group or become a member of a group.</td>
<td>1. Teacher-a guide/supervisor 1. Selection of tasks to suit the learner or group of learners. 1. Select &quot;to put these authentic materials to good use by relating them to the learners academic and vocational needs&quot;.</td>
<td>1. Selection of tasks to suit the learner or group of learners. 2. required &quot;to put these authentic materials to good use by relating them to the learners academic and vocational needs&quot;.</td>
<td>1. teacher-a guide/supervisor a) has to establish classroom procedures for working through the unit. b) give additional guidance where necessary to that provided in the book. c) encourage revision of written work. d) observe errors and provide remedies. e) allow for individual work pace in the classroom.</td>
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<td>8. Student's role in the classroom with given materials</td>
<td>1. The student learns by going through the reading passages and exercises and discussing them with the teacher and the class as a group.</td>
<td>1. The student is encouraged to work through the exercises independently. 2. Group discussion.</td>
<td>a) Students encouraged to:  - i) listen without reading.  - ii) work at their own pace.  - iii) work independently.  b) group work encouraged.  c) student centred tasks.</td>
<td>1. Study through a process of discovery.  2. Discussion of the type of discourse used is encouraged.  3. Study encouraged with the aid of the teacher.</td>
<td>1. &quot;Discussion and analysis of specimen writings in the form of numerous defined tasks&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART TWO

Criteria around which the coursebooks appear to devolve

Pt. 1. Learner level

When examining the table given above it is noticed that all the coursebooks cater to the intermediate learner who is at the +2 stage, having completed ten years of learning not necessarily with English as the medium of instruction. The age, aptitudes, second language level, interests, time he can devote to language learning, size of group to which he belongs, and culture are some of the factors that have been taken into account. The learner's language aptitude, cognitive style and motivations are other factors that play an important role in learning. The extent to which the texts listed above cater to these various dimensions is made manifest in the nature of the materials formulated. The need for learner accommodation is regarded as essential in language teaching pedagogy because the learner in the process goes on to redefine a text against his own priorities.

Pt. 2. Aims of the Course

Though all the coursebooks are designed for the learner at the +2 level they each have various aims - one being a preparatory or supplementary course for the weak-skilled learner, others motivated by the desire to aid the learner in writing tasks which he has to perform
in and out of the classroom, others with intent to develop the learner's observation abilities in order to develop writing, and one an attempt to utilize the findings of applied linguistics and language pedagogy to course design. This brings into focus the intentions of the materials designers which can conflict with the actual requirements of learners or those perceived by the teacher. This conflict is recognised by Allwright who formulates four points with regard to goals - i) that there are different points of view to be taken into account (teacher, learner, language teaching institution and sponsor) in a circular framework. ii) that there are different types of goals - those that refer to oneself and others. iii) that there is a great likelihood of a conflict of goals and finally. iv) that materials may contribute in some way but cannot determine goals.

Pt. 3. Principles of Course Design as stated by the authors

a) Theoretical approaches that appear to influence the design

The principles around which these courses are designed indicate the manner in which the course designers aim to

achieve their goals. Perusal of principles stated by them indicate that they do not aim to teach the abstract system of the language, or individual grammatical forms in writing. In *A Remedial Course in English for Colleges* "extensive reteaching" is envisaged with extensive reading, in *Written Communication* and *Study Strategies* there is emphasis on higher order skills, in *Strengthen Your Writing* practice in continuous writing is provided for, in *Organised Writing* the exercises involve abilities beyond those of constructing sets of sentences, and in *Writing with a Purpose* analysis of higher order skills is encouraged. Thus formal grammar, sentence analysis, and categorisation which were the pre-occupations of those who taught writing at an earlier time for example Hill, Daswani and Daswani *English Language Course for Colleges* (1971) - are absent here. In the Hill, Daswani and Daswani coursebook there is practice in grammar work, sentence level elements and structural patterns, on the one hand, and exercises in "creative writing", on the other, with no planned extended writing practice for bridging the gap between the sentence and the personal essay. These coursebooks do not concentrate on what Widdowson would term 'usage' but on what he defines as 'use'.

to give students practice in writing for a wide variety of purposes:— in *Written Communication* and in *Study Strategies* using simulations of various types, in *Strengthen Your Writing* developing writing not through sentence level grammar but through continuous writing practice, and in *Organized Writing* emphasizing the belief that more successful writing can be achieved through extended writing practice and clarity of what is to be expressed. They also appear to be moving away from the earlier view of course writers who provided practice in decontextualised instances of language and instead make more satisfactory attempts to teach writing relating it to practical meaningful activities. In this respect there is a move in the direction of Widdowson’s concept of "use". "Use", he maintains "is another aspect of performance: that which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication".3

Most of the coursebooks under study here offer the learner ranges of the functional aspect of language. The starting point now is no longer the individual sentence or parts of the sentence but the context in which this writing is being performed with emphasis on the addressee, addressee, message, situation and purpose. The different

coursebooks studied here offer ways in which these aspects of writing are taught to the student and most of them, under study, devolve around frameworks similar to the one devised by B.K. Das for the structure of expository writing:

Composition Type: Expository (Reference)

Level

I Communicative Purpose:

- Informing (Conveying information)

II Communicative Functions:

   a. Narration
   b. Description
   c. Summarising
   d. Interpretation
   e. Explanation

III Communicative Acts:

   i. identifying actions, events, processes;
   ii. identifying the participants and objects involved in these actions, events and processes, the relationships between them, and the roles (actor, instrument, beneficiary, etc.) performed by them;
   iii. identifying the temporal and spatial relationships between actions, events, participants, objects, etc.

iv. identifying cause-effect relationships;
v. identifying motivations for actions;
vi. making comparisons and contrasts;
vi. classifying events, participants, etc.
viii. providing illustrations or examples;
ix. formulating hypotheses;
x. testing hypotheses against facts;
xi. drawing inferences from available evidence;
"  making speculations for which evidence is not directly available;
"  making generalisations;
xiv. drawing conclusions;
"  offering comments, etc.5

However, Written Communication provides greater involvement with the communicative aspects of language. Its very title signifies its direction. According to Widdowson, an inventory of communicative functions in a syllabus does not by itself constitute the communicative approach. "Communication does not take place through the linguistic exponence of concept and functions as self contained units of meaning. It takes place as discourse whereby meanings are negotiated through interaction".6 This


means that" in discourse one has to work out what concepts or propositions are being expressed and what functions or illocutions they count as". 7

Comparing the strategies used by Freeman with Widdowson's remarks we realize that what the learner is continually required to do, in this text, is to work out the propositions and illocutionary acts being expressed. For example, the first letter in Topic I Unit I is written by an English girl to her Indian penfriend. The learner who reads the letter understands the propositions or facts expressed and goes on to use the clues provided in the letter to write a reply. In this way the student learns not only what correlations are employed between certain forms and functions, but how such correspondences can be established in the actual business of communicative interaction. Later in the letters written by Saira and her brother to the headmistress requesting that they be granted leave to be absent from school, the learner is made to see that the relationship between the addresor and addressee changes the linguistic codes used in each letter. The learner is thus introduced to the more interactive nature of language. Creating spirals of such involvement between the learner and the text, reading

and reciprocative writing, the author goes on to persuade the learner to respond to larger and more complex units of writing.

Pt. 4. What is presented

A. The exercises given in the units deal with communications by letter, descriptions, narrations, arguments, notemaking, summaries and report writing. This selection of exercises and the language units that would follow seems to have as its basis an emphasis on "value" rather than "signification". 'Signification' refers to the meaning sentences have when they are used to exemplify grammatical rules while 'value' refers to the meaning sentences have in larger stretches of language used for communicative purposes. To the course designer of materials for undergraduate learners, selection of items with regard to 'value' rather than 'signification' would be more satisfying to learners. Those that have a high "potential value" for the learner would prove to be more motivating - being relevant to the learner's daily requirements and affording practicality since the language involved

8. Widdowson, Teaching Language as Communication, p. 11.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 12.
corresponds to the way in which written language is operated in and out of the classroom, and has reference to the learner's own experience. High 'potential value' is explained, by Widdowson, as being those items that "would be selected not because they occur frequently as instances of usage but because they have a high potential occurrence as instances of use of relevance to the learner's purposes in learning".\footnote{Widdowson, \textit{Teaching Language as Communication}, p. 13}

Course design that is based on a specification of needs and includes items/topics that have a high 'potential value' has been advocated by the work done by the Council of Europe and David Wilkins but the disadvantages of such a course are that they can become a list of rhetorical conventions or notions similar to the structural syllabus. What the intermediate learner requires is life-like and plentiful practice to delineate, for himself norms in writing, and this can only be promoted by involvement with actual writing. \textit{Written Communication}, for example, requires the learner to perform a variety of written tasks in different contexts. Each task requires that the learner reads a communication and responds to it. A closer examination reveals that these tasks have been devised in conformity with a taxonomy which has

\footnote{Widdowson, \textit{Teaching Language as Communication}, p. 13.}
kept in mind the learner's socio-topical framework, on one axis, and his cognitive skills, on the other. Thus we have, on the one hand, a variety of communicative settings - letters of all types (descriptions, invitations, requests) visual forms that are modes of conveying specific information such as charts, maps, plans, graphs etc. newspaper reports, narrative passages, instructions on cameras, meetings, interviews, conversations and arguments, related experience of others to be retold, one's own experiences to be expressed and finally a poem. On the other hand, the tasks devised for the learner lead him from simple selection and retelling of facts, to selection of ideas from descriptive passages in which organisation is inherent in the material given, to selection and comparison of facts, selection of relevant facts from diverse passages stating different view-points and reorganisation, evaluation and appreciation. Perhaps this process is best exemplified by comparing Unit I Ex. 3 with Unit 42 Ex. 4 - both demand personal information from the self, the learner but in the intervening units the learner from starting from the point of mentioning very simply his activities, school and hobbies, has gone full circle to state his thoughts, and organise his ideas in response to different readerships and purposes with so many cognitive and psychomotor skills being aroused—that he returns to himself not only with
more practised linguistic skills but perhaps with more discriminating cognitive abilities.

Because of the absence of instructions, Written Communication more than the other coursebooks, requires the learner to focus on factors such as i) the relationship between addressor and addressee ii) subject/topic to be communicated iii) reasons and motives for communicating which affect writing. In addition the learner is introduced to the linguistic codes necessary to convey information in different forms and settings - passport applications, letters, telegrams, advertisements, descriptive passages, reports, police reports, social service work reports, statistical reporting and recording - practising 'cohesion' and 'coherence' features of writing with each activity, organising and developing propositional content.

However, different frameworks are found in each coursebook. Study Strategies with its listening passages and written exercises encourages transfer of information from spoken to written discourse. This is accomplished in various ways - often involving changes from the spoken to the diagrammatic mode, and from the diagrammatic to the written. It engages the learner in completion exercises of increasing difficulty. These completion exercises

require the learner to fill in elements in a syntactic framework. There are also exercises which require categorisation of the functional features of a passage and prediction in listening skills. Other types of exercises include rhetorical transformation\textsuperscript{13} exercises wherein the learner is required to convert one communicative act into another - in this text it often takes the form of reports or notes into descriptions and accounts, or vice versa.

The other coursebooks do not base themselves on such compact socio-cognitive or discoursal frameworks as \textit{Written Communication} and \textit{Study Strategies}. \textit{A Remedial Course in English for Colleges} for example provides extensive reading passages, glossaries and comprehension questions with an attempt to increase the learner's reading skills, knowledge of vocabulary as well as provide the learner with exercises which direct attention to some socio-linguistic features of writing. However, though there are completion exercises, where elements have to be filled in, and conversion and transformation exercises which require structural changes in a given context, the emphasis in this coursebook appears to be on reading and not on

\textsuperscript{13} Widdowson, \textit{Explorations in Applied Linguistics} (1979), p.70.
writing. *Strengthen Your Writing* bases its methodology on detailed explicit instructions, and teaches writing through emphasis on function, intersentence relationships and linkages. Forms which deal with expansion of propositional content are dealt with first and then those which deal with reduction. This results in written activities such as paragraph writing, descriptions and essays preceding reporting, notetaking and summarising. *Writing with a Purpose* also follows a similar format with elaboration exercises appearing before retrieval ones.

B. Various types of reading material are offered to the learners following the different coursebooks. In two of the courses, *Written Communication* and *Study Strategies*, the learner is exposed to reading passages selected for the high degree of reorganisation and controlled writing afforded to the learner, while selections in *A Remedial Course for English* appear to be chosen for the amount of new, interesting information offered.

Much work has been attempted in recent years on schema-theoretical approaches to reading which appears to have influenced the selection/devising of reading passages in *Written Communication* and *Study Strategies*. Carrell reports the results of a study on the effects of the rhetorical organization on different types of intermediate
learners. She cites the work of Meyer and Freedle who have investigated native readers interacting with different types of rhetorical organization and made studies in the interacting and processing strategies involved. Meyer, Carrell states, expounds five types of organization "collection, description, causation, problem/solution, and comparison" and describes each thus: The 'collection' type is recognised by its loose organization, the 'description' type is noted by grouping according to certain specifics such as chronological sequence, spatial criteria etc., presentation of a particular attribute, norm or element. Also under the category 'description' is the 'collection of descriptions' when a number of particular features/settings, attributes and specifications are included on a particular topic. The 'causation type' represents facts grouped in cause-effect relationship. The 'problem-solution' type is similar to the cause-effect with the feature of propositions in the problem half being repeated in the solution area. The 'comparison' type is based on a different scale from the 'causation type' organising propositions from opposite view points. It has been discovered that better recall has been found with the comparison/causation and problem/solution structures than with the collection of descriptions. According to the schema-theoretic view of reading, schemata

are background structures related to rhetorical organization and textual content. The reader according to this version has finite criteria relating to text schemata and approaches reading exercises with this knowledge, and in comprehension employs the schema best suited to the text. Some of the results of the study undertaken by Carrell were:

1. Tightly organized comparison, causation and problem solution types facilitated recall.
2. There were interesting differences between the recall patterns of various native language groups to English discourse.
3. The most important discovery was that "if ESL readers possess the appropriate formal schema against which to process the discourse type of the text, and if they utilize that formal scheme to organize their recall protocols, more information is received . . . . . . What this implies is that devoting reading instruction to the identification of different discourse structures may be effective in facilitating ESL reading comprehension, retention and recall." 15 Much of the thinking outlined in the schemata-theory here seems to underlie the selection and adaptation of reading passages offered to the learner in Written Communication where organisation is structured and controlled throughout and to a lesser extent (because

of the amount of instruction-talk or metalanguage) in *Strengthen Your Writing*.

On the other hand a different framework appears to have guided the selection of reading passages in *A Remedial Course in English for Colleges*. The course director appears to have selected material not to provide a model which would direct attention to conventions in writing but to encourage learners to read extracts and passages for their intrinsic value as interesting literature. This view of the good reader being also the more successful learner of the English language finds expression in the work of Elley who states that "a reading programme which emphasizes appealing stories as 'the basis' for classroom discussion and teaching would make a greater impact than the present highly structured reading programme which subordinates interest and meaning to a carefully controlled sequence of structures." ¹⁶

As a workbook of writing tasks and exercises, the controlled focussed reading passages in *Written Communication* are acceptable, but as a manifestation of the factors that foster writing they are insufficient. Therefore though an activity book to aid writing could be developed by the individual teacher on the example provided by *Written Communication*, writing itself would have to be

encouraged through the liberal accessibility of more varied reading, besides listening and speaking activities.

Pt. 5  How it is presented

Most of the coursebooks follow the pattern of discussing the discourse type used, providing a model and tasks to follow. This is done with the use of prescriptions and descriptions in *Strengthen Your Writing*, writer-learner discussions in *Writing with a Purpose*, and comprehension passages and exercises in *A Remedial Course in English for Colleges*. It results in the very deliberate focussing by the learner on language features noted in the discussion or analysis, explicit features of paragraph structure, arrangements in descriptions, format of reports, or directives regarding summarizing. This could, on the one hand, help in directing the learner's attention to certain aspects of writing to the exclusion of others, as in *Strengthen Your Writing*, or, on the other, prevent a natural insightful response from the learner because of the use of many directives as in *Writing with a Purpose*. But in *Written Communication* the teaching process employed does not use prescriptions, injunctions or formal statements. There is no overt teaching of cohesive devices, ranges of appropriateness and acceptability. The virtues of such a course are that the learner, unrestrained by directives which are usual, in most other courses, feels far more relaxed in the learning atmosphere created.
Discussions about types of writing and models for analysis used in many of the coursebooks directs the learner's attention to linguistic features but role play employed in *Written Communication* engages the learner in interactions and encourages him to transfer "his interpreting from its receptive realization as reading to its productive realization as writing."  

However this use of models in the teaching of writing poses queries. Freeman states that "control is exercised largely through asking the student to model his writing on a given example".  

The example is given by the course-writer and this raises the question as to whether the course writer's example should be the only suitable one in a given situation. Perhaps learner satisfaction would be ensured if (a) greater variety/availability of models is made possible (b) the learner is given freedom to introduce his own models in the course.

Pt. 6  Treatment of feedback

None of the coursewriters offer prescriptions or exercises for the treatment of error or measures for evaluation in the feedback obtained from the learner. Even Freeman in *Written Communication* states that "the course is intended as graded self instruction, in which

the teacher acts as an unobtrusive guide in the classroom. Yet if the learner is to work alone, there is no provision for his feedback - either through comparison with answers at the end of the text or by receiving real responses to his communications from the outside world. In this connection, it would be relevant to state that role play would be dissatisfying for the learner who requires feedback after written performance. Exercises and tasks created by the teacher should keep such a learning process in view. In the light of this limitation, what should be considered is the introduction of exercises which as Breen states require the learner to undertake communication and meta-communication. The assumption here is that genuine communication during learning and meta-communication about learning and about the language are likely to help the learner to learn.

Pt. 7 Order of presentation

In this area there is complete agreement of intention for all the coursewriters express very explicitly a need for graded teaching measures - expressing it either in terms of cognitive complexity only - concrete to abstract/factual to expressive - or also in attitudinal awareness - self to other. However, in the actual materials presented,

19. S. Freeman, Written Communication in English, p. iv.

expert manipulation of such control is found wanting in most of the texts where many variables - linguistic simplicity or difficulty of the reading/writing materials, cognitive complexity or attitudinal responses involved, learner's learning requirements and writing needs, course writers theoretical versus practical teaching beliefs tend to obfuscate the real stated intentions of the course-writer, namely, to pattern their materials on linear arrangements of simple to complex, control to freedom. In Written Communication this manipulation is far better realized as a 1:1 relationship - brought about between teacher and individual pupil.

This control and progressive decontrol is accomplished in Written Communication through the scope of the tasks which have been devised, and control of language which is used throughout the coursebook. At the beginning the writer uses rigorous control to reduce the possibility of error but later this is relaxed. The two ends of the scale are noticed if one compares Unit 1 Ex 3 with Unit 42 Ex. 4.

Besides this the learner, as in Topics 2-6 is exposed to the cognitive skills that appear to be presented in a hierarchial order.

i) selection of facts

ii) selection + some organisation

iii) selection + reorganisation
Pt. 8 Teacher's role in the classroom with given materials

The teacher's role in all the coursebooks studied is as guide, supervisor and facilitator. But the exact relationship between teacher, materials, and students is not expressed. Some of the coursebooks such as V.R. Narayanswamy's *Strengthen Your Writing* and *Writing with a Purpose* direct the teacher to encourage discussion in the classroom as well as cater to learner needs in delineating areas of difficulty, selection of materials for various different groups, classification of errors and follow up action, while in *Written Communication* and *Study Strategies* such directives are not given to the teacher.

With regards to the use of materials by teachers, Allwright perceives two approaches. On the one hand is "the deficiency view"\(^21\) - the need for suitable teaching materials to "save our learners from our deficiencies as teachers"\(^22\). According to this, the best teachers would not require materials, and at the opposite end there would be "teacher-proof materials"\(^23\). There is

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
also the "difference view"\textsuperscript{24} that materials should be

"'carriers' of decisions best made by some one other than the classroom teacher, not because the classroom teacher is deficient, as a classroom teacher, but because the expertise required of the materials writer is importantly different from that required of classroom teachers—the people who have to have the interpersonal skills to make classrooms good places to learn in. For some this conception may seem to 'reduce' the teacher to the role of mere classroom manager. For others, it 'frees' the teacher to develop the expertise needed for dealing with practical and fundamental issues in the fostering of language learning in the classroom setting"\textsuperscript{25}

Applying these two views to the materials being analysed, one notices that in materials such as \textit{Writing with a Purpose} the quantity of explicit descriptions, analysis and samples provided to teacher and learner subscribes to the 'deficiency view' (a term which requires rewording but which will be used for the need for classification) while \textit{Written Communication} subscribes to the 'difference' view. It provides well planned materials which the teacher allied to either theory or practical experience can usefully manipulate.

\textsuperscript{24} Allwright, "What do we want teaching materials for?" p.6.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
However, Allwright goes on to emphasize that the part played by teaching materials is clearly demarcated - "Materials may contribute in some way but cannot determine content". 26

Pt. 9 Learner's role in the classroom with given materials

In A Remedial Course the learner receives information regarding writing by going through selections from literature, working out exercises and discussing them with the teacher and the group. In Strengthen Your Writing, Writing with a Purpose, Organised Writing and Study Strategies the student is encouraged to learn by reading directives and injunctions given, and focussing on particular aspects of writing - as noted by the course directors. There are comprehension questions, for instance, by which the coursewriter can direct the learner's focus. The learner is deliberately encouraged to discriminate between different types of language, and to note organisational features in the passage. The students language acquisition devices are affected explicitly and directly. On the other hand, in Written Communication, the learner is encouraged to learn by engaging in role play. The learner's cognitive and psychomotor skills are aroused and the course-writer is able to direct the learner through negotiation and interaction. In Written Communication, the single text writer-cum-teacher goes on to play a

variety of roles, engaging constantly in role shifts, (penfriend, headmistress, police officer, statistician), in order to make the interaction with the individual learner a real one. There are also tone shifts - formal to casual - depending on the nature of the communication. But Freeman does not try to accomplish too many changes here so as not to confuse the intermediate second language learner.

Greater variety of writing activities and reader-writer relationships are manifested in Written Communication. However, problems could arise with such materials formulated for single teacher vs single learner methodologies but these are avoided with the element of choice afforded to the learner. In Unit I Ex I, for example, the Indian girl in replying to the English girl's letter can follow the syntactical pattern of the English girl's letter changing the necessary content words or information slots, or the learner can use her own syntactical pattern following the organisation given in the letter. Thus the low skilled learner who wishes to model his/her writing on that of the author's feels confident of his/her results while the high skilled learner can work more independently. This component of choice lends pliancy.
PART THREE

USES OF SUCH CRITERIA

This examination has resulted in a specification of some of the factors involved in the teaching of writing:

1. **The need to determine learner level**
   
   This has to be explored in the fullest measure possible for teaching begins with the learner. Materials produced for the student and teaching instruction given are dependent on the learner to be taught.

2. **A statement of aims** - once again the focal point is the learner but other factors that can influence this are the teacher, language teaching institution and sponsor.

3. **Principles of course design** which are dependent on
   
   a) the manner in which the teaching of language is viewed. Some of the considerations here involve: (i) an emphasis on use rather than usage. The need to provide the learner with a body of facts regarding the linguistic elements of the language or to sensitize the learner to the more sociolinguistic aspects of writing and the linguistic codes and routines involved (ii) the psycholinguistic factors that ought to be considered in writing.

   b) application of such viewpoints by (i) devising exercises which cater to the learner's needs and motivations
and sequencing or arranging the same. (ii) offering reading passages, if required, suitable to the aims of the course as well as listening passages. (iii) providing for group discussions and pair work in the teaching of writing.

c) formulate teaching procedures by (i) explicit prescription or more implicit methodology. (ii) determining and predicting, to some measure, the role played by the teacher and the learner or group of learners with a given set of materials or tasks.

The formulation of such criteria is useful to the teacher in the following ways:

I Adapting materials

These criteria aid in determining norms for designing exercises to teach writing in the classroom. But, often, inspite of the materials in the coursebooks being well designed, teachers in individual classrooms often face the need to modify and adapt the materials given. This has to be done as texts prescribed are either written to elaborate principles, or conform to linguistic theory or to subscribe to learner needs as seen by the textbook writer far removed from the individual classroom. In such cases criteria offered by the textbook writers in developing their courses may not prove sufficient for the teacher's needs and the teacher often has to modify texts in the light of students perceived requirements.
In such preparation, Stevick notes two features of adaptation that have importance:

"first, the various degrees of adaptation, augmentation and rewriting form a continuum, at the far end of which stands the preparation of original materials; second, before one can begin to adapt or augment or write or rewrite, and before one can even decide which of these four to undertake, it is necessary to evaluate what is available". 27.

Stevick proposes evaluation of materials in terms of three qualities, three dimensions and four components. The qualities he mentions are "strength, lightness and transparency" 28 as opposed to "weakness, heaviness and opacity". 29 "Strength", according to Stevick, involves relevant content, suitable selection of vocabulary and structure and "authentic" materials. Materials that have "strength" would be those related to students needs and interests but Stevick suggests that this is difficult to define and can be attempted with questionnaires and the teacher being "psychically 'with' one's students". 30 "Lightness", as advocated by Stevick, refers to the physical characteristics of language and "transparency" refers to the cognitive planes in language material. These the proposer realizes are not absolute criteria and may merge or conflict with one another, and have to be juxtaposed against other

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p.103.
values as well - such as learner level. The three dimensions Stevick proposes are the linguistic, the social and the topical. The linguistic refers to the elements - grammatical and structural patterns. But neither should the social and topical aspects be catered to. The social dimension should relate to the people the student needs to interact with, their social status, import and manner in which they interact. Immediate and future needs in this social dimension should be catered to - but these should not be chosen according to the conveniences of the adapter but the learners, else the materials will lose in strength. The topical dimension deals with topics/items/content/subject matter that the learner uses and is interested in: greetings, topics, of general interest, group interests. The four essential components for speech and writing according to Stevick are, "occasions for use, a sample of the language in use, exploration of vocabulary, and explorations of (phonetic, orthographic or grammatical) form".31

Stevick goes on to formulate a plan for adaptation that include the following activities:

1. Predict what the students will need and respond to in each of the three dimensions: linguistic, social and topical.

2. Make an inventory of the material at hand, in the same three dimensions.

3. Compare the results of the first two steps, in order to form a clear picture of what you need to add or subtract.

4. Draw up a list of ways in which the students may use the material. This is the most delicate step in adaptation because the list should be as heterogeneous as possible, yet stated in terms of actual behaviour that the students are to engage in. It is also the most important step, however, because it opens such valuable sources of motive power.

5. Supply whatever is necessary in order to bring the students from mastery of the existing materials to the uses which you have listed in Step 4."

Stevick's framework for evaluation in terms of qualities, dimensions and components could be useful if each dimension was explored in greater detail and defined concretely. Without such definition, the adapter has to perceive definition within his/her frame of reference. Of much greater use, is Dr. N.S. Prabhu's criteria as it translates abstract qualities in the materials that teachers look for, into more concrete terms that can be perceived and evaluated.

However, the question regarding criteria to be used in developing materials for the classroom should be made not with reference to textbook writers but through greater perception and awareness of the learner. Breen corroborates this view when he states that -

"Perhaps the criteria to guide the teacher's selection...


and use of texts (both written and spoken) reside initially, not in the texts themselves, but in the learners. If such a view was taken, then the teacher might be free of too much concern with the authenticity - or otherwise - of the communication data brought into the classroom. It might be more revealing to move from questions concerning the relative qualities of texts towards more pedagogic questions, such as: 'Can the learner's own prior knowledge, interest, and curiosity be engaged by this text?' or 'How can such prior knowledge, interest, and curiosity - about meaning, about structure, about how language might work, or about language use - be activated by this text?' Many of the answers, of course, have to be provided by the learners'.

II. While one of the uses of such criteria would result in clearer norms in evaluating and adapting materials, another would be to provide clarity on decisions as to how writing can be taught. Some of the questions that could arise around the criteria developed are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learner level</td>
<td>Should teaching begin from the teacher's starting point or the learner's starting point? This would refer to the question as to whether the teaching of writing should begin from predetermined starting points as prescribed by the teacher and rigid pre-formulated syllabi or positions where the learners...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Aims

The latter could be determined by the teacher's perception of the learner's previous knowledge, abilities, needs and interests.

Should these be fixed and predetermined targets or should they be objectives which are on-going and being continually refined? Definite static objectives where saturation point is reached is contrary to the idea of language education while ongoing continually increasing vision is synonymous with learning.

3. Principles

a) Use vs usage

Are form and function the only criteria on which exercises and reading materials should be based? Are there other aspects of language which the teacher in the classroom has to make use of in the teaching of writing?
b) Psycholinguistic factors

i) Should implicit teaching strategies be used or explicit methods? Implicit teaching strategies would involve the use of guided planned exercises for learners while explicit teaching methods would entail prescriptions as to how best it can be performed. Decisions regarding this are important in writing pedagogy. The question here is whether the language learner should treat the language task intellectually and systematically as a mental problem, or whether he should avoid thinking about the language more intuitively.

Meristic/holistic/part by part teaching approaches?

ii) Should writing be taught using holistic approaches or through part by part teaching? Methodologies that have emphasized sentential level practice have, through the years, proved unsuccessful in producing more correct sentence structure,
and have not taught learners how large pieces of writing evolve. But in methodologies such as that portrayed in *Written Communication* where writing is learned a whole act at a time rather than as a group of constituent skills the integratedness of the writing act is more easily perceived by the learner. The approach used is holistic—laying emphasis on teaching composition as a unit related to a given model and seeking to organise ideas in cognitive frameworks—rather than meritistic which progresses from the sentence to the paragraph to full length composition.

**Sequencing**

iii) As noted in all the coursebooks here, sequencing and gradation has been done by adherence to norms such as simple to complex in terms of cognitive tasks. But strict
adherence to such norms together with mechanical practice to fix learning habits could result in a teaching methodology that is dull and repetitive with linear or spiral gradation frameworks. Multiplicity of activities which in more subtle ways converge to main teaching points would perhaps result in providing variety and result in successful learning.

iv) Course construction that provides for explicit/implicit learner feedback vs course construction that makes little provision for it. In the classroom evaluation is demanded not only by the institution or governing bodies but also by the learner. Actual feedback that helps analysis is often demanded by the learner in an attempt to find out and focus consciously on what is unsatisfactory in his/her writing. Lack of interest results if there is no explicit feedback by the teacher.