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**Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL at Secondary Level**

Balaram Bhattarai

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Education  
In Partial Fulfilment for the Masters of Education in English**

649 (S)

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**Submitted by**

**Balaram Bhattarai**

**Faculty of Education**

**Tribhuvan University,**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal**

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2023**

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### **Recommendation for Acceptance**

This is to certify that **Mr. Balaram Bhattra** has completed his M.Ed. thesis entitled **Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL at Secondary Level** under my guidance and supervision.

I recommend and forward his thesis to the Department of English Education for acceptance.

Date: 11/12/2022

.....

**Dr. Renu Kumari Singh (Supervisor)**

Lecturer

Department of English Education

Faculty of Education

T.U. Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

## Recommendation for Evaluation

This thesis has been recommended for evaluation from the following  
**Research Guidance Committee:**

### Signature

**Dr. Gopal Prasad Pandey**

.....

Reader and Head

Chairperson

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

**Dr. Renu Kumari Singh (Supervisor)**

.....

Lecturer

Member

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

**Dr. Hari Maya Sharma**

.....

Lecturer

Member

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

Date: 13/07/2022

## Evaluation and Approval

This thesis has been evaluated and approved by the following **Thesis Evaluation and Approval Committee:**

### Signature

**Dr. Gopal Prasad Pandey**

.....

Reader and Head

Chairperson

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

**Dr. Chandreshwar Mishra**

.....

Professor

Expert

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

**Dr. Renu Kumari Singh (Supervisor)**

.....

Lecturer

Member

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

Date: 14/02/2023

## **Dedication**

*Affectionately*

*dedicated to*

*My parents who have devoted their whole life to make me  
what I am today.*

## Declaration

I hereby declare that to the best of my knowledge this thesis is original; no part of it was earlier submitted for the candidature of research to any university.

Date: 10/12/2022

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**Balaram Bhattra**

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## Abstract

The present study entitled **Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL at Secondary Level** was carried to evaluate the performance of secondary level students in free writing activities. I used survey research design to accomplish this study. The population of the study were students studying at secondary level in community schools at Kailash Rural Municipality, Makawanpur. Among them I selected forty students as a sample through simple non random sampling procedure. A set of questionnaire and a test item were used as the main tools for data collection. The findings of the study showed that the overall competence of the students in free writing is satisfactory as the average result obtained by the students in free writing was 55.10%. The students scored 3.5 in paragraph writing, 3.35 in dialogue writing, 3.16 in short story writing, 4.03 in email writing, 4.63 in book/movie review writing, 4.13 in brochure writing and 4.75 in essay writing as the mean score. The findings of the study also showed that the students are good in essay writing, paragraph writing, review writing and dialogue writing but weak in email writing, brochure writing and short story writing. Similarly, while analyzing the writing based on testing parameters, the students were found good in the content but not in organizational part, grammar and mechanics.

This thesis has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the thesis along with background and context of the study, purposes of doing the research, significance of the research, delimitations of the study and operational definitions of the key terms. The second chapter contains the relevant literature review, implications of the review of the study and conceptual framework. It shows how other researchers found audio-visual aids significant for teaching and learning language in their studies. On the other hand, the third chapter deals with the methods and procedures followed to collect data for this study and instruments used to collect the data. Similarly, the fourth chapter encompasses analysis and interpretation of the data. It presents the responses of the participants about the issues of the research. Finally, the fifth chapter provides the discussion on the result of the study that was analyzed in Chapter Four. It also contains recommendations for the policy level, practice level and further research level. Finally, in the final section, references and appendices are included.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This study **Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL at Secondary Level** explored the challenges faced by secondary level students in free writing activities. This chapter consists of background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, and operational definitions of the key terms.

#### **Background of the Study**

Writing is one of the four skills in English that must be taught while instructing any language. Many students say that writing is the toughest part in among four other skills in language learning. It results from their lack of knowledge regarding what and how to write. Terry (2009, p.2) argues that the reason most people never write is concerned with mistakes. Graves (1994, p.59) assumes such mistakes are the result of their lack of comprehension of the fundamentals of writing, such as grammar. Writing involves more than just following grammar rules; it also involves students learning to express themselves in writing without fear of making mistakes. Indeed, they also experience problem in getting ideas, organizing those ideas and creating details, choosing the right verb tenses, and preserving paragraph coherence.

Writing as defined by Odell (1981 as cited in Khaniya, 2005, p. 137) is "...a good activity to improve our understanding of any subject". The notion is that by attempting to put knowledge or ideas on paper, they might be improved from their initial, rough state. The claim is that writing is an activity that requires the writer to develop ideas, test them, and then confirm them. Writing is such a skill which keeps us active as we communicate with one another and transmit our culture, ideas and thoughts from one generation to another, it provides us chances to acquire others' ideas, feelings and thoughts in 'a good way. Altogether there are four skills of language learning: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In conclusion, listening, speaking and reading are all considered to produce writing ability. In addition, writing is the second form of language, speech being the primary one.

Written language is primarily transactional or message oriented (Richards 1997, p. 54). The purpose of written language is to accurately, effectively, and appropriately transmit information. The purpose of written language is to accurately, effectively, and appropriately transmit information. The students' language competence is better if they can write well. Thus, writing is a significant and reliable form of communication that allows people to convey their thoughts, feelings, and emotions in orthographic forms. Whereas, Nunan (2002) believes that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity since the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously; at the sentence level, these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and letter for action, and beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and texts. This could be the reasons why in learning writing, students will have a number of problems.

According to Raimes (1983, p. 13) when students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second or foreign language, they are discussing both the difficulty of locating and expressing ideas in a new language, in addition to the difficulty of utilizing the appropriate vocabulary and syntax. However, apart from the problems that writing is difficult, the skill can be learned. Gardner (2008, p .10) states since everyone has the capacity to write, everyone has the possibility to become a professional writer if s/he learns to do so. This is because everyone is born with the ability to write. Schneider (2011) asserts that anyone who is motivated to learn writing and always practice writing dedicatedly will be able to write well because a lack of exercise is the cause of writing difficulties.

In my opinion, the help and direction provided in the exercise and assignment, directly correlates with students' success in learning to write. Additionally, understanding the different issues and going thoroughly the various studies on writing proficiency, I realized writing as a very complex process that requires many composite skills. I believe, it is a skill that improves with continuous practice. Hence, my study explores the competence of secondary level students in free writing activities and also investigates the effective measures through which the students can develop their free writing skills.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Free writing is a genre of writing that uses creativity to express ideas, feelings, and thoughts. It gives the students various ways to experiment with the language. Free writing helps learners strengthen all of their language skills as well as their writing abilities. Many students are capable of comprehending the language, but they struggle to adequately communicate their ideas in writing. The lack of appropriate English vocabulary and writing ability is the cause of the issue. When students get the chance to practice their language skills through free writing, they become much more comfortable expressing their opinions. The growing interest in writing has developed entirely to become a distinguished discipline on its own, particularly at higher levels.

From my own experience of teaching for the last five years, I've noticed that students, especially at the secondary level, have some challenges developing their writing skills. The students are unsuccessful in scoring good grades in board exams in English as writing is considered to be a complex skill for them. Similarly, the students of secondary level in Nepal lack of the adequate stock of vocabulary and practice of creativity in writing as writing is not that prioritized by the most of the teachers. Even though the students have had some courses focused on writing, their writing is still unsatisfied. The writings they produce are difficult to understand since the works are lack of proper structure, logics and coherence and cohesion. Since academic writing is one of the communication methods used in higher education and must meet certain common standards and expectations set by the curriculum, I am interested in determining the level of competence and exploring the challenges secondary level students encounter when getting involved in free writing activities.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- a. To evaluate the performance of secondary level students in free writing activities.
- b. To suggest some pedagogical implications.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions of this study were as follows:

- a. How do the secondary level students perform in free writing activities?
- b. What are the areas in free writing where students mostly face the difficulties?

## **Significance of the Study**

The study is a significant work as it attempts to find out the challenges in free writing through which the students can develop their free writing skills. The study will be significant for the teachers as it helps them to develop their understanding on free writing skills. Since the researcher can review the empirical literature and also can take the reference for the related researches, it will also be significant for them. The findings may also be beneficial for material developers, textbook writers and publishers in developing textbooks and teaching materials which are more practical and suitable for actual teaching and learning situations. Moreover, the findings of the study provide important information to policy makers and teacher educators.

## **Delimitations of the Study**

The study had following delimitations:

- ) The population of the study were students studying at secondary level.
- ) The study was limited to the response obtained from forty students of grade 9 and 10.
- ) The sample of the study were students studying in four different community schools at Kailash Rural Municipality, Makawanpur.
- ) A set of questionnaire and a test item were used as the tools to elicit the data on free writing skills.
- ) The questions in the test item were limited to the genres; paragraph writing, dialogue writing, short story writing, email writing, book/movie review writing, brochure writing and essay writing only.

## **Operational Definition of the Key Terms**

Some terminologies are used in this study to describe the study procedure and findings. The terminologies used in the context of this study give the following meaning.

**Difficulties:** The challenges that exist during the process of writing.

**EFL:** Learning English in a non-English-speaking country. We are learning English in Nepal is considered as EFL because English is not used for official purpose in our context.

**Free writing:** The writing inspired by writer's own imagination based on individual selection of vocabularies and structures.

**Secondary level:** The schooling system in Nepal from grade 9 to 12.

**Writing proficiency:** The level of competency in which an individual is able to use language for both basic communicative task and academic purpose in writing.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

The present chapter describes the existing literature and research that has been done in relation to the current study in order to determine what has already been investigated and what relevance those research works have for the current investigation. The review of theoretical literature, empirical literature, implication of the review of the study and conceptual framework are included in this chapter.

#### Review of Theoretical Literature

The literature in this chapter gives a brief explanation about some theories that support this research. The theories are related to writing skills, importance and the approaches to Writing. Additionally, free writing, its importance and effectiveness for learners are also reviewed.

**Writing skills.** Writing is one of the most important skills in learning a new language. It is often regarded as the visual representation of speech which is also known as the productive skill of language. It is a productive skill in the sense that it is related to manipulation of the mechanics of writing, structuring them into sensible words, sentences and paragraphs in order to make the reader understand the meaning of such complex effort (Harmer, 2007, p.266). Moreover, writing is the act of placing the graphic symbols that present language in order to convey the meaning that the reader can grasp the information. It is the last language skill and it is also the most difficult skill of language (Harmer, 2007). The skills involved in writing are highly complex. We are able to discover and articulate ideas in the way that only writing makes possible. Rivers (1968) states:

Writing refers to the expression of ideas in a consecutive way, according to the graphic connection of the language: the ultimate aim of a writer at this stage is to be able to express himself in a polished literary form which requires the utilization of a special vocabulary and certain refinement structures. (p. 243)

From this definition, I can state that writing is the way of expressing our ideas in a continuous process through the graphic symbols of the language. Writing requires

different mechanisms and it also requires special skill from one type of writing to another type of writing.

Bell and Burnaby (1984, as cited in Nunan, 1998) point out that writing is extremely cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of variables simultaneously at the sentence level, these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts.

Similarly, White and Arndt (1993) say writing is far from a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is a thinking process in its own right. It demands conscious intellectual effort which usually has to be sustained over a considerable period of time. Writing is a form of problem solving which involves such processes as generating ideas, discovering a 'voice' with which to write, planning, goal setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written as well as what had been written and searching for language with which to express exact meaning. Moreover, writers rarely know the outset exactly, what is they are going to write because many ideas are only revealed during the act of writing.

From these definitions, I infer that writing is a very complex process and requires mechanics of writing, coherence and cohesion to integrate information properly. Writing is an act of transmitting thoughts, feelings, and ideas from past to present and from present to future. It is a transparent mirror which can vividly present our knowledge as well as experiences.

Similarly, Harmer (1998, p. 78) says, "Writing is an activity through which human beings communicate with one another and transmit their ideas and check accommodate their culture from one generation to another. It equally provides with possibilities to discover and articulate the ideas in many ways". The definition states that writing is an activity through which human beings share their culture, religion, values, ideas and assumptions from generation to another.

In conclusion, writing is an act of rendering thoughts, feelings and ideas from past to present and from present to future in graphic form. It is a transparent mirror which can present knowledge and experiences as well.

**Writing in an ESL context.** As for the history of teaching of writing is concerned, it was not given much attention to evident from scarcity of research studies related to this skill till the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century (Krashen, 1984). Long and Richard (2003, p.15) reported that writing skills teaching was given importance during 1990s when English established its status as a language of international communication and consequently “English as L2 writing skills do not only- play an increasingly important role today in the lives of professionals in almost every field and discipline” . As one of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) writing has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English.

Brown (2002) proclaims that writing is a thinking process which can be planned and revised numerous times before getting the end product. Meanwhile Harmer (2007) further adds that students are encouraged to pay more attention to accurate language use in writing. This is because when students are involved in writing activity, they will consider how a language is used. It is believed that the language development of the students will be triggered because the students themselves will resolve the problems that writing puts in their mind. Troyka (2010) proposes that the purposes of writing enables the writers to express themselves, deliver information, convince readers and create literary work. Messages on a specific topic or subject are delivered to others through writing. To strengthen this view, Brereton (1995) adds that there are three vital elements in the context of writing which are the text or message, the writer and the reader. Tierney et. al., (1989) claims that writing skill is a complex cognitive skill because it involves the students to use appropriate intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, verbal information, language rules and motivation. Starkey (2004) adds that writing in English within the academic context needs some criteria of acceptability relative to different features of writing that comprise organization, vocabulary, language use, punctuation, correct capitalization and paragraphing.

**Reasons for writing skill complexities.** Written language is grammatically more complex than spoken language. It has more subordinate clauses, more complement clauses, more long sequences of prepositional phrases, more attributive adjectives, and more passives than spoken language. Written texts are shorter and have longer, more complex words and phrases. Written texts are lexically dense compared to spoken language; they have proportionately more lexical words than grammatical words. Lado (1964) points out writing is a partial representation of units of language expression. In academic work, in order to show their tutors that they understand these terms clearly, learners are often expected to give definitions of keywords and phrases. Academic writers define terms so that while key terms are used, readers understand exactly what is meant. As students at the secondary level learn to write inside or outside the classroom environment, they encounter difficulties that hinder their writing skills. Complexities in writing are shared between native speakers of English, and even those learning English as a second or foreign language (Aragón, Baires, & Rodriguez, 2013). Al-Khasawneh points out that EFL learners have shown that when writing in English, they have many issues in English, they rarely write. Writing is considered one of McIntyre and Gardner's most challenging skills to master. (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013) This issue can be traced back to the writing, planning, drafting, editing, and publishing of a good piece of writing (Harmer, 2007) and the components that students need to take into account when composing in English. Besides, students do not write very often, and classroom-bound is most of what they write (Adas & Bakir, 2013, p. 254). Complexities in writing are grammar, syntax, cohesion, and others, and these problems are usually faced by the learners.

**Importance of writing.** Writing is one of the most important and superior skill for learning a language because of its quality of being permanent (Harmer 1998, p.79). It is a productive skill. Writing helps to transmit thoughts, feelings and ideas from one to another in different time phases through graphic forms (Tan & Miller, 2008). Therefore, it is regarded as transparent of mirror, which can present our knowledge as well as experiences. Writing is the output of listening, speaking and reading skills.

Writing skill is the secondary and productive skill. In our examination system of all levels, the writing ability plays a vital role in securing good marks. If students are not trained in writing skill, they cannot give answers in a limited time of examination (Khaniya, 2005). The students cannot be perfect in any language without the knowledge of writing skill.

Harmer (2007, p. 86) writes “Writing as a co-operative activity, co-operative writing works well with both process and genre based approaches”. In the same way, he argues that the reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include refinement, language development, learning style and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right. So, we can say that the students who learn the English language cannot be perfect without the knowledge of writing skill. They can learn to express their ideas explicitly when they are efficient in writing. Writing helps students to learn second language, reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that they have learnt in the class.

According to Richards (1997, p. 101), “Writing language is primarily language transactional or message oriented. The goal of written language is to convey information accurately, effectively and appropriately”. Writing skill provides variety in the classroom activities. Written documents can be preserved for long time. Writing has widely used to transmit experiences and knowledge related to science, literature, religion, technology, philosophy, politics, sociology and culture. Furthermore, the following points make the writing so important.

Thus, we can say that the students who learn the English language cannot be perfect without the knowledge of writing skill because language learning is the integration of four language skills viz. reading, listening, speaking and writing. So, the students’ competence is better if they can write well. So, writing is a powerful and permanent means of communication through which human beings express their ideas, thoughts and feelings in orthographic forms.

**Approaches to writing.** According to Harmer (2007) there are a number of different approaches to the practice of writing skills in the classroom but to choose the appropriate approach for the students, teachers have to decide whether they want the students to focus on the process of writing more than its product, whether they want

them to study different written genres or whether they want to encourage writing using their creativity, (p, 87). There are different ways to approach writing in the classroom. The best practice in any situation will depend on many factors such as the type of students, the text type being studied, the school system etc. A closer look through the history of teaching of writing skills reveals that among the different approaches that have been experimented to teach writing effectively, four approaches have been the most influential which are product approach, process approach, genre approach and Eclectic Approach. Much research has strongly suggested that all these approaches carry their own weaknesses and strengths but they are complementary to each other as well (Mackey and Gass, 2005).

***Product- oriented approach.*** The product-based writing approach is a well-established means of education by which the learner is persuaded to mirror a section of example text, often given to them in the nascent stages of learning the language (Gabrielatos, 2002). According to Tahaineh (2010), in an ordinary product approach-centered class, learners are given an ordinary example of writing, which they are then required to follow and adapt in order to re-create a section of original text. The product-oriented approach is the most common and traditional approach used by EFL teachers. Brown (2002) proposed that in the case of product focused methods fruitful learning is determined by the extent to which the text is well-organized, as well as on its grammatical accuracy.

According to Gabrielatos (2002) a product approach is a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage. For instance, in a typical product approach-oriented classroom, students are supplied with a standard sample of text and they are expected to follow the standard to construct a new piece of writing. Pincas (1982) states that product-oriented approach comprises of four stages: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing. The first stage, familiarization, aims to make learners aware of certain features of a particular text. In the next two stages, controlled and guided writing, learner's practice of the highlighted features and learn how to organize the ideas until they are ready for the free writing section. The free writing stage is the end product of the learning process when students use their writing skills, structures and vocabulary that they have been taught to produce the

product. Through this section they show that they can do as fluent and competent users of the language.

***Process-oriented approach.*** Process-oriented approaches concern the process of how ideas are developed and formulated in writing. Harmer states, “A process approach asks students to consider the procedure of putting together a good piece of work.” In this approach writing is considered as a process through which meaning is created by following a number of stages. According to Tribble (1996) process approaches stress “...writing activates which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the ‘publication’ of a finished text” (Badger, 2000). In process approaches writing predominantly deals with linguistic skill, such as planning and drafting rather than linguistic knowledge, for instance, knowledge about grammar and text structure, etc.

A process-oriented approach can have any number of stages with different views that writers go through in producing a piece of writing, though a typical model is identified which include four stages: prewriting, composing or drafting, revising, editing and finally producing a finished version (Tribble, 1996). In reality the writing process is more complex than this. These various stages of writing are done in a recursive way. It means that the writer loop backwards and move forwards between these various stages.

***Genre Approach.*** This approach is regarded as one of the key approach in writing. This approach pays great attention to a variety of writing types and texts and intertwined with social needs. It also has a specific purpose in a specific context using appropriate conventions. The fundamental spirit behind this approach is writers do not write for pleasure but in different contexts (Farooq et. al., 2012). In this approach, students learn different types of sentence structures for different text types. Troyka, (2010, p.7) elaborates that learners develop their ability to compose a specific genre if learners are exposed to a variety of examples of the same genre. Anxiety among learners can be reduced among beginners because model text is given to help in their learning process. Most importantly, this approach promotes scaffolding. However, the drawbacks of this approach according to Gabrielatos (2002) mixing of textual and socio-cultural information makes the identification of the exact knowledge a difficult job.

***Eclectic Approach.*** Eclectic approach is combination of genre and process approach (Badger & White, 2000). This approach is getting popular because of it is effective in teaching writing skills. This approach is also believed to be beneficial for teachers and students in acquiring writing skills as it gives opportunity for the students to develop their creativity. This approach helps students to understand the features of target genre which enhances learners' proficiency because they get the knowledge on form and language at the same time and its function at the same time. As conclusion for writing approaches in ESL classrooms, there is a common disagreement regarding these approaches where there is no single approach that can improve writing proficiency of learners. According to Anwar and Nazir (2016), different approaches suit to different contexts. Meanwhile, Akhter (2016) also agrees that there is no specific approach that suits ESL students. Furthermore, he adds that in teaching writing skills, process and genre approach complements each other.

**The components of writing.** The good writing skill can be analyzed to group and varied skills. Heaton (1988, p.135) divides components writing into five main areas. They are grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, content and organization.

***Grammar.*** Grammar concerns about the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences (Heaton 1988, p.135). The writer has to give attention for preposition, tenses such as using of verbs, nouns, adjective, also conjunction and articles. Brown (1989, p. 34) states that grammar is a system of rule governing the conventional and relationship of words in sentences.

***Mechanics.*** It is related with the ability to use correctly words to the written language such as using of capitalization, punctuation, spelling (Heaton 1988, p.135). It is very important to lead the readers to understand or recognize what the written means to express (Brown 1989, p. 34). The use of favorable mechanics in writing will make the readers easy to the group to conveying ideas or message of writing (ibid). The explanation as follows: a) capitalization, the use of capitalization can clarify the ideas. If the sentences are not capitalized correctly, ambiguous and misunderstanding will appear. It also helps to differentiate from sentences to others. The words which are capitalized at beginning of: the name of people, organization, first and last word of title. b) Punctuation. Punctuation can help the readers to identify should be taken as a unit of meaning and suggest how the units of it relate to each other. c) Spelling. Using

of spelling has three rules; they are suffixes addition, plural formation and the change of certain words.

**Content.** The content of writing is about the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information (Heaton 1988, p.135). It should be clear to the readers. So, they can understand what the messages convey and gain information from it. Also, the content of writing should be well unity and complete because the characteristic of good writing has unity and completeness (Brown 1989, p. 34).

**Vocabulary.** Vocabulary is an essential part in order to compose writing. The writer needs vocabulary mastery well to express or write their ideas. The effective using of words or vocabulary in writing must be relevant with the topic to let the readers perceive and feel it (Brown 1989, p. 34). Someone who lack of vocabulary will be difficult to compose what they are going to express but appropriate words will help writers to compose writing (Heaton 1988, p.135).

**Organization.** Organization is the ability to develop ideas and topic which relevant in a united form (Brown 1989, p. 34). On the other hand, it concerns in ways of writer to arrange and organize the ideas or messages in writing. There are many ways in process of organization writing involves coherence, order of importance, general to specific, specific to general, chronological order and spatial pattern.

**Language Use.** Brown (1989, p. 35) states that language use in writing description and other forms of writing involve correct usage and point of grammar. However, considering that there are many points of grammar, the writer would like to quote a little literature about verbs, use modifier or adjective, adverbs, and participles in the writing, a modifier may other be a phrase (Heaton 1988, p.135). A single, well-chosen- modifier is often more effective than several used together. If it is difficult to describe with over used or warn-out modifier, find more interesting synonyms, in the dictionary.

**The main types of writing styles.** Writing has been all around us for centuries. Millions of people around the world are currently writing books, newspaper articles, academic essays, research papers, theses, restaurant menus, traffic signs etc.

(Harmer, 2007). There are mainly five kinds of writing styles: namely narrative, descriptive, persuasive, expository and argumentative (Gardner, 2008). Each writing genre has its own unique purpose and requires different skills.

***Narrative.*** Narrative is the form of writing used to relate the story of acts or events. It places occurrences in time and tells what happened according to natural time sequences. Types of narrative include short stories, novels, and new stories, as well as large part of our everyday social interchange in the form of letters and conversation (McDougal, Littlelland Company, 1999, p.104).

***Descriptive.*** Descriptive reproduces the way things look, smell, taste, feel, or sound. It may also evoke moods, such as happiness, loneliness, or fear. It is used to create a visual image of people, places, even of units of time-days, times of day, or seasons. It may be used also to describe more than the outward appearance of people. It may tell about their traits of character or personality. Good description usually has three important qualities. These have a dominant impression supported by specific details, a clearly recognizable mood, and logical development (Wishon and Burks 1980, p. 128).

***Persuasive.*** The purpose of a piece of persuasive writing is, of course, to persuade the reader of something. For example, pieces of persuasive writing might be a political leaflet, opinion piece or book review. This type of writing is usually less about facts and more about opinion. For this writing style, the writer is trying to convince the reader of the validity of a certain position or argument. Persuasive writing includes the writers' opinions, and provides justifications and evidence to support their claims (McDougal, Littlelland Company, 1999, p.105).

***Expository.*** Expository is used in giving information, making explanations, and interpreting meanings. It includes editorials; essay, and informative and instructional material. Used in combination with narrative, exposition supports and illustrates. Used apart from narrative, it stands alone as an essay. Used alone or with narrative, exposition may be developed in a number of ways as follows: a) Process. Exposition may be used to explain a process that is to tell how something is made or done. b) Definition. An explanation of what a word or a term means is another kind of exposition. The simplest form is a statement and this applies to dictionary definitions.

c) Analysis. It divides a subject into parts and examines those parts. d) Criticism. It involves evaluation, which is analyzing and weighing strengths and weaknesses (Wishon & Burks 1980, p.129).

**Argumentative.** Argumentative is used in persuading and convincing. It is closely related to exposition and it is often found combined with it. The aim is to make a case or to prove or disprove a statement or proposition (Wishon and Burks 1980, p.129). It may present arguments to persuade the reader to accept an idea or a point of view.

**Activities for writing skills in secondary level.** In regard to writing instruction at secondary level education (in grade nine and ten), the present curriculum has allocated 35 per cent weightage for teaching writing (listening 10%, speaking 15% and reading 40%) (CDC, 2014). For writing instruction, the curriculum has clearly recommended to implement writing process: planning, drafting, revising and producing the final draft (CDC, 2014). The activities applied for writing skills at secondary level curriculum in Nepal are;

**Controlled writing.** Controlled writing activity is carried out under the direct supervision of the teacher-students and have no freedom to make errors. This type of writing is helpful for the beginners. It includes combining, reproducing and completing (Rivers 1968, p.252). Combining exercises can join words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into essays. Such exercises are on the brink of production. In production exercises students write without originality, what they have learned orally or read in their textbooks. Reproducing a piece of writing may be exact reproduction of something read either by copying it or by rewriting it from memory. In completion exercise some parts of sentences are given and students are required to complete with words or phrase. The best known completion exercise is "filling the blank".

**Guided writing.** In guided writing activities, students can be given some freedom in the selection of lexical items and structural patterns for their writing exercise (Pinacus 1993, p.110). Paragraphing, parallel writing and developing skeleton into a text type of activities can be done for guided writing. The guided writing activities included in secondary curriculum in Nepal are directions,

instructions, obligations and prohibitions, posters, electronic text messages, post cards, advertisements, messages of condolence, messages of congratulations, menus, interpretation of (charts, graphs, tables, lists, pictures), short skeleton stories, news stories and invitation letters (CDC, 2014).

**Free writing.** According to Elbow and Belanoff (2000), freewriting is defined as writing any ideas or thoughts that come to mind in a given time period without stopping. Freewriting in the L1 was one of the popular methods used during late 1960s and early 1970s as a way of discovering new English instruction during the neo-progressive movement, which began by opposing the teacher centered traditional instruction which paid little attention to creativeness (Fox and Suhor, 1986). However, its popularity withered in the mid-1970s as the back-to-basics movement began because the advocates of this movement considered the English instructional methods used during the neo-progressive movement period, including freewriting, as shallow and permissive instruction with no discipline (Fox and Suhor (1986). In fact, free writing is the final stage on the development of the writing skill. Rivers (1968, p.252) says, "Free writing refers to the type of writing in any topic which gives complete freedom of expression. This type of writing is mainly characterized by the students' freedom selection of vocabulary and structure." It means student is independent to select words, organize ideas and able to express his /her thought freely. Writing free composition requires a careful planning and students should be helped in this stage too. Pinacus (1993, p.110) defines, " Free writing as the ability to write freely what has been taught", not "the ability to write anything at all". It means the writer should write any things beyond reading materials and given any topic as well. Free writing can be classified into four types: narrating, describing, replying and explaining. The free writing activities included in secondary curriculum in Nepal are, Letters and emails (personal/informal, official/formal), essays (descriptive, narrative, cause effect), newspaper articles, reviews of movies and books, brochures/ leaflets, Dialogue (with the situation given), paragraph on personal experiences, and short stories (CDC, 2014). The writings are evaluated under the two ways as suggested in the grid. Free writing Type I writing includes paragraph, short story writing dialogue writing and debate writing with the weightage of 6 marks. This type of writing has the word limit of 120 words. On the other hand, the second type of writing includes emails or letter writing, essay writing, newspaper article writing, book or movie

review writing and leaflet and brochure writing with the weightage of 8 marks. This type of writing has the word limit of 120 words.

**Testing writing.** Testing, in a broad sense, has always been an inherent part of teaching. Testing is used as a process of scrutinizing how learners have learned what the teacher wishes them to learn (Harmer 2006, p.320). Writing is a complex activity and includes various skills. To produce effective piece of writing, the writer possesses the knowledge of mechanical skills, stylistic skills, and judgment skills. Under mechanism of writing the learners should learn the alphabet, the left and right direction of English writing script, upper and lower case letters, rules of capitalization, basic spelling patterns of English and rules for words and sentence formation. It can be learnt by the learners by means of some writing practices. Mechanics mainly includes capitalization, spelling and punctuation.

According to Harmer (2006, p.321), there are four different tests at our disposal to assess writing skills: placement tests, diagnostic tests, achievement tests and proficiency tests. Placement tests show how good a student's English is in relation to a system of levels. Diagnostic tests expose learner's difficulties and gaps in their knowledge where achievement tests assess the assimilation level of a specific material and proficiency tests' aim is to find out proficiency of students in the subject matter. But, essay tests, like any other test, raise the issues of validity and reliability, which according to Harmer (2006, p.322) are two key concepts when judging test effectiveness.

**Validity:** A test is valid if it tests what it is supposed to test. Further explanation is that the validity of a test is measured on the basis of how for the information it provides is accurate, concrete and representative in light of the purpose for which it is administered.

**Reliability:** Reliability of a test is its consistency." A good test should give consistent results" (Harmer, 2006, p.322). In other words, reliability means the consistency with which a test measures the same thing all the time. For example, the same group of students should get similar results each time, they take the same test over a short period of time. It means the result is constant or less differences between the result. On the other hand, marking in subjective test (essay test) is more

problematical. Different people may score for the same piece of work differently. So, to make marking reliable and valid, subjective needs marking scale. For example, Harmer (2008, p.172) has given the scale of 0 1 2 3 4 for marking a student's presentation so that marking may avoid differences.

Hughes (2010, pp.101-2) has given the model for marking subjective test as (a) Grammar; sentence construction, subject verb agreement, person and tense in writing are checked under the grammar (b) Vocabulary: The use of vocabulary and idioms are checked under this part. Errors or mistakes in use and selection of the vocabulary are mainly checked under it (c) Mechanics: Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word usage and required are measured under this topic and (d) Form (organization): clear expression of ideas, use of ambiguous words, sentences, definitions, examples, illustrations and quotations.

The review of theoretical literature helped me to know about existing theories and the relationships between them. Through it I learnt to develop new hypotheses to be tested and also to compare and critically evaluate the approaches that other researchers have taken.

### **Review of Empirical Literatures**

While reviewing the related literature, I have found different national and international researches, which have been carried out in connection with free writing. The available literatures are summarized as follows:

Karki (2010) conducted a survey research entitled “Grade Seven Students’ Competence in Guided Writing.” The main objective of his study was to find out grade seven students’ competence in guided writing and to compare the competence of girls and boys studying in government aided schools. He used non-random sampling procedure to select 70 students from the government schools in Kavre district. He used a set of test items as the tool for the data collection. The finding of the study shows that only 37% of the students obtained above the average marks whereas remaining 63% of the students obtained below average marks. The research concluded with the note that boys were more competent in guided writing than the girls.

Khadka (2012) carried out the research “Writing Proficiency of Higher Secondary Level Students”. The main objective of this research was to find out the writing proficiency of higher secondary level students and to find out the students’ proficiency in terms of stream and sex. He used non random non-random sampling procedure in order to select the required number of students. Sixty students of class XII were selected from education and management streams and three different Higher Secondary Schools of Rauthat District. A set of test items was provided to collect required data. The finding of this study was that average proficiency of students was 24.11 out of 50. In case of sex wise comparison boys were found more proficient than girls. As there were two different streams in this research the students from management streams were found more proficient than the students from education streams.

Paudyal (2015) conducted a study on “Proficiency of Grade Eleven Students in Free Writing.” The main objective of this study was to find the free writing proficiency of grade eleven students. He used survey research design and selected 60 students from three different government schools in pyuthan by using non-random sampling procedure. A set of test items was used as a tool for data collection. The finding of this study presented that the writing skill of the students was not satisfactory and up to their level and it also showed that the boys were better than girls in free writing proficiency.

Pokhrel (2016) carried out a research entitled ‘Bachelor Level Students’ Proficiency on Free Writing’. The Study aimed at finding out the proficiency of students on free writing and identify the errors in their writing. The researcher collected data from the Bachelor first year students, studying in education and Management Faculties. To generate relevant data, the researcher used test items using the survey research. The total sample was 30 students; 15 students from Education Faculty and 15 from Management Faculty. The required data were gathered by using non random sampling procedure. This research study concludes that free writing proficiency of the students is not satisfactory. Students could not complete the target length. While writing, organization of knowledge, subject matter, presentation, illustrations, were poor. Most of the errors were found in capitalization and punctuation. Errors were also found in plural number in subject verb agreement, tense spelling and preposition.

Chairina (2017) conducted the research with the title “The Problems in Writing Faced by EFL Students”. This research was intended to describe the difficulties in writing faced by students, at SMA Negeri 3 Banda Aceh in Jakarta, Indonesia. The study was

based on survey research design in 100 participants from high school where a set of test items was used to collect data. The result of this research showed that the difficulties faced by the EFL students in writing were lack of vocabulary, lack of ideas, lack of motivation, grammar, organize idea, idiomatic expression and spelling.

Neupane (2019) carried out a research on “A Comparative Study of Writing Proficiency in Secondary Schools of Gorkha and Kathmandu District”. The main objective of this study was to investigate the writing proficiency of the tenth graders of Gorkha and Kathmandu district. He selected 10 participants by using the non-random sampling procedure in order to select the required number of students. The finding of his study showed that the students of urban areas were better than the students of the rural areas.

Shrestha (2020) carried out a study on “A Comparative Study on Free Writing Proficiency among the Secondary Level Students in Lalitpur District”. The main objective of this study was to compare the writing proficiency of students of those schools. In this study class ten students from three institutional schools and three government school of Lalitpur District were selected. He used non-random sampling procedure to select the participants. There were altogether sixty students for the data collection. The finding of his study showed that writing skills of institutional school students were better than that of the community schools students.

Khadka (2021) carried out a survey study on “The Challenges of Free Writing Skills in EFL Classroom” to explore the proficiency of secondary level students in free writing activities and to identify the challenges faced by secondary level students in free writing activities. While carrying out the study, he collected the data from forty secondary level students studying in Tamakoshi Rural Municipality through non random sampling procedure. A set of questionnaire and a test item were used as the main tools for data collection. The findings of the study showed that the students seemed to feel difficult in applying correct grammar, choice of word, and writing mechanics such as: punctuation and capitalization in free writing. The findings also showed that 83.33% of the students felt paragraph writing as the easiest area of writing while 80% of the students felt dialogue writing and 53.33 % of the students felt letter writing as the easiest area of the writing. On the contrary, 80% of the students felt essay writing as the toughest area of writing whereas 66.66 % of the students felt movie writing as the toughest area of the writing.

Most of the researches related to writing comprehension in the university are carried out on writing Proficiency. Additionally, the researches are concerned to the vague ideas of free writing. But, a limited number of researches have been carried out on effectiveness and difficulties in free writing in the EFL classrooms. Therefore, this research is different and unique. Most importantly, my research is different in the sense that very limited researches in the university have been carried to find out the effective measures through which the students can develop their free writing skills. Since its study area and sample size are too different, it is also different from other studies.

### **Implications of the Review for the Study**

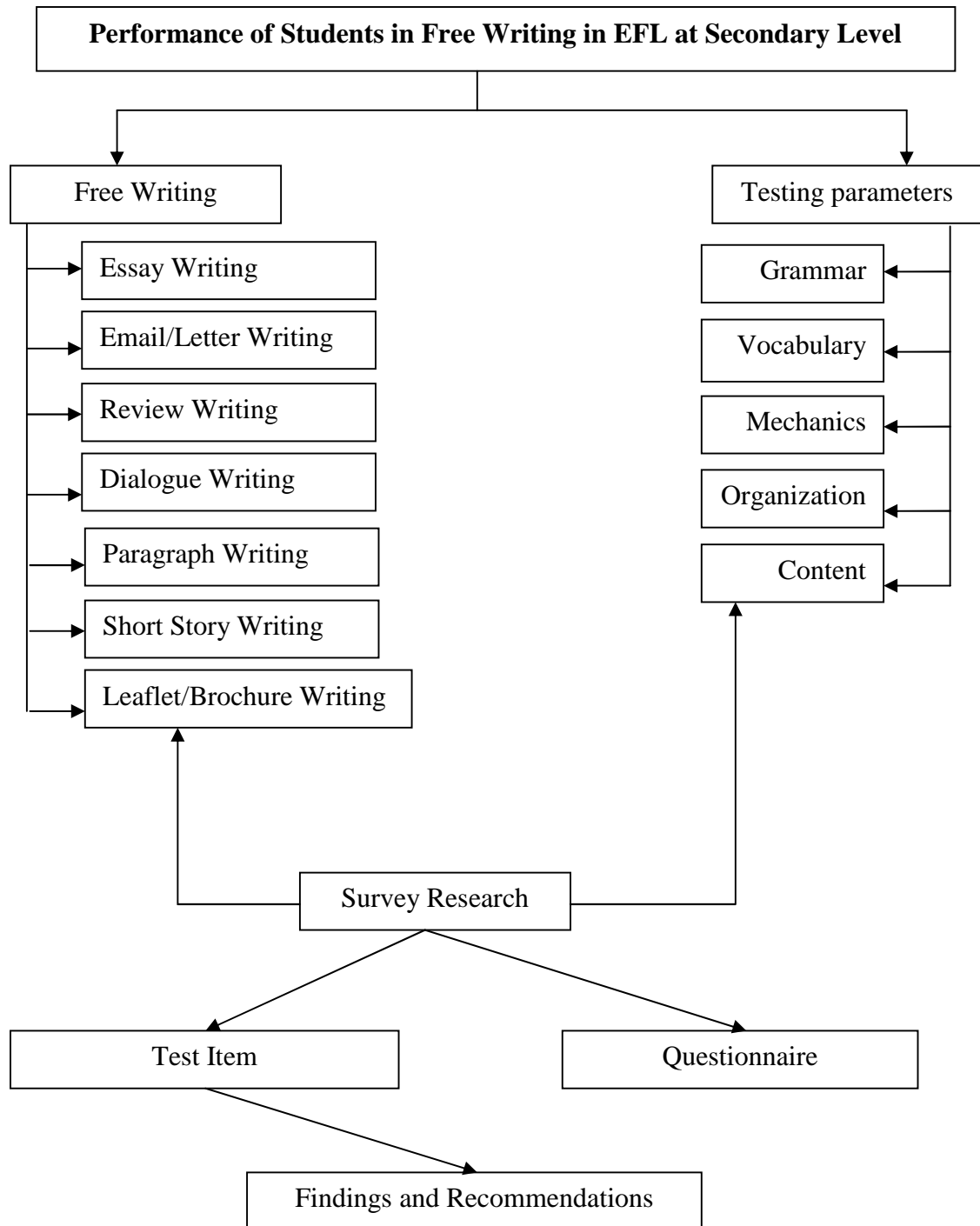
The review of the study obtains the information from the variety of sources including books, articles, journals, thesis and so on. Through the empirical and theoretical review, I got information about the various procedures needed to conduct my research study. Regarding sampling strategies, use of tools, and analysis and interpretation procedures, I gained valuable information from these studies. I got required insights from empirical and theoretical review.

Keeping the importance of review of related literature in my mind I observed Brown (1988), Gardner, (2008), Harmer, (1998), Harmer, (2007), Krashen (1984), Nunan (2002), Richard (1997) and so on. These observations took in depth of the theoretical as well as practical aspects of conducting research. In the same way, I reviewed some empirical literatures with the objective of citing for the empirical literatures. To be specific, Neupane (2019)'s research assisted me in formulating objectives and constructing research questions. Likewise, Batala (2017) assisted in designing research tools and deciding for data collection and interpretation. In the similar way, the study of Khadka (2021) provided me guidelines to improve methodology. On the other hand, the study of Pokharel (2016) provided me insight to design the conceptual framework and enabled to fit the findings into the existing body of knowledge.

In a single sentence the reviewed literature had significant value to make research scientific, systematic, relevant and consistent.

## Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is representation of the understanding of the theories by researchers and his conceptualization of the relationship between different variables. Therefore, conceptual framework of my research will be as follows:



## **Chapter Three**

### **Methods and Procedure of the Study**

A systematic study needs to follow a proper methodology to achieve the predetermined objectives. Therefore, I followed the following methodology to obtain the objectives.

#### **Design and Method of the Study**

To accomplish my research, I used a survey research design. Survey is considered to be the most popular method of investigation in educational research. It is a superficial exploration of a problem or phenomena. Survey research in education can be carried out either by a group of researchers or by an individual. Craeswell (2012, p. 376) writes, "Survey research design are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or the entire population of the people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the populations." It means to say that survey is a type of quantitative research design that enables the researchers to generalize the findings to the large population. Similarly, Nunan (2010, p. 140) says:

The main purpose of a survey is to obtain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes and events at a single point of time. Survey is most commonly used descriptive method in educational research, which is from large scale investigations to small scale attitudes.

Based on the principles outlined above, data is gathered at a single point in time with the intention of getting a broad picture of a phenomena, event, problem, or circumstance in the surveys. Survey addresses the large group of population; sampling is the most to carry out the investigation. The sample should be representative of the study population as a whole. The findings of survey are generalizable and applicable to the whole group. In other words, surveys are often utilized in large-scale studies where a significant population needs to be recruited for the study.

Survey research is a popular and widely used design in the field of education. Similarly, Bryman (1989 as cited in Sapkota, 2012, p. 138) writes, "Survey research

entails the collection of data on a number of units and usually at a single time, with a view of collecting systematically a body of quantifiable data in respect of a number which are when to discern pattern of association". We can infer from the explanation above that surveys are a crucial research strategy in the area of educational research. I strongly followed the following eight step process suggested by Nunan (2010, p.141) while conducting this research work:

Step 1: Define objectives

Step 2: Identification of the target population

Step 3: Literature review

Step 4: Determine sample

Step 5: Identifying survey instruments

Step 6: Design survey procedure

Step 7: Identify analytical procedure

Step 8: Determine reporting procedure

I used the survey research design because it is more appropriate for addressing my research issue. In addition, the survey helped me to pinpoint individual respondents and the ideal way to gather data. In conclusion, my research is based on survey design since it uses samples from a larger community and generalizes its findings to the entire population.

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Strategy**

The population of the study included students studying in secondary level in Kailash Rural Municipality, Makawanpur, however, I selected forty students from 4 different schools (10 from each) as a sample by using simple random sampling strategy from Shree Byas Secondary School, ward no 6, Shree Kamala Devi Secondary School, ward no 2, Shree Kalika Secondary School ward no. 9 and Shree Bhawani Secondary School, Ward no. 3.

### **Research Tools**

I collected data from the respondents using a set of questionnaires consisted of close and open-ended questions and a test item.

## **Sources of Data**

I consulted both primary and secondary sources of data. To accomplish the aims of the study, I used the following sources:

**Primary sources of data.** As a primary source, I collected the data from forty students studying in community schools in grade 9 and 10 in Kailash Rural Municipality by administering questionnaire and a test item.

**Secondary sources of data.** The books such as Brown (1988), Gardner, (2008), Harmer, (1998/2007), Krashen (1984), Nunan (2002), and Richard (1997) whereas, the journals of NELTA and the researches of Khadka (2012), Paudyal (2015), Batala (2017), and Neupane (2019) were used as the secondary source of data in the study.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

Firstly, I visited the specified community secondary schools i.e., Shree Byas Secondary School, ward no 6, Shree Kamala Devi Secondary School, ward no 2, Shree Kalika Secondary School ward no. 9 and Shree Bhawani Secondary School, Ward no. 3. with the official letter from the department and asked for the permission with the head teacher. Secondly, I built rapport with the selected forty respondents and clarified the objectives of the study. Then, I took their test. Next to that, I administered a questionnaire to the respondents. Finally, I collected the responses of them.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

The acquired data was analyzed and interpreted in a descriptive way as per the need of the study. I processed the collected data following simple statistical computation with the Microsoft excel application. Those processed data were explained to avoid uncertainty of presented data and to support the evidence clearly in the study.

## **Ethical Considerations**

In the research period, I was highly concerned on paying attention to different ethical aspects. The participation for the respondents was made entirely voluntary and they were not disadvantaged in any way in order to maintain research ethics. I have strictly avoided plagiarism while processing the data.

## Chapter Four

### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The systematically obtained information has been processed, analyzed and interpreted in this chapter using the proper tools to attain the objectives.

#### Holistic Competence in Free Writing

The overall competence of the students of the schools has been analyzed and interpreted in details using mean and percentile calculation in free writing under this heading. The following table shows the overall competence of the students in free writing in terms of paragraph writing, short story writing, dialogue writing, email and letter writing, review writing newspaper article writing and essay writing:

**Table 1: Holistic Competence of the Students in Free Writing**

S.N.	No. of Students	Marks Obtained in Free Writing			Remarks
		High	Average	Low	
1	40	32	27.55	23.5	Satisfactory

The table displays that while carrying out a test to 40 sample respondents from the 4 specified schools of Kailash Rural Municipality, Makawanpur, the highest marks scored by the students is 32 and the lowest is 23.5. The table also states that, the mean score obtained by the students in free writing is 27.55(out of 50) which makes 55.10% in average. Over all, as the score obtained by the students is more than fifty percentages, the result seems to be satisfactory.

**Item-wise proficiency in free writing.**With the aid of mean and percentile computations, the performance of the students from all of the selected schools in each item has been thoroughly examined and interpreted under this category. The proficiency of the students in paragraph writing is displayed in the following table:

Under this heading, the proficiency of the students in each item has been analyzed and interpreted in details with the help of percentile calculation. The following table shows the competence of the students in writing skills based on

paragraph, dialogue, short story, email book/movie review, brochure and essay writing.

**Table 2: Item-wise Competence in Free Writing**

S.N.	Items	Full marks	Marks Obtained		Remarks
			Average	Percentage	
1	Paragraph	6	3.5	58.33	
2	Dialogue	6	3.35	55.83	
3	Short story	6	3.16	52.66	
4	Email	8	4.03	50.37	Lowest
5	Review	8	4.63	57.87	
6.	Brochure	8	4.13	51.62	
7.	Essay	8	4.75	59.37	Highest
Total		50	27.55	100	

The table presents the result of the students' performance on individual question. It displays that the performance of the students is best in essay writing whereas poor in email writing. As seen in the table, students have scored 3.5 marks in paragraph writing, 3.35 in dialogue writing, 3.16 in short story writing, 4.03 in email writing, 4.63 in book/movie review writing, 4.13 in brochure writing and 4.75 in essay writing in average.

**Paragraph Writing.** As displayed in the table, the students scored 58.33 percent of marks in average in paragraph. The proficiency of students in terms of paragraph writing was found to be good in terms of other writings as it's the area which is second highest in terms of scoring. The students were found to be good in organizational part of letter writing, however, they had shown some errors in terms of mechanics such as, spelling and punctuation. Additionally, the content included in paragraph writing was also good but students were to some extent found to be confused in the concept of topic sentence. In conclusion, the errors were observed in terms of clarity of expression and appropriate grammar.

**Dialogue Writing.** The table elucidates that students are good in dialogue writing. The proficiency of students in dialogue writing is found to be good as the students have scored 55.83 % of total marks in average. The main reason behind the

good performance in dialogue writing is due to their strength in organizational aspect. Similarly, as the dialogue writing is considered to be colloquial and some informal slangs are also accepted in it they have scored better in dialogue writing in comparison. While dealing with the testing parameters the students were found good in vocabulary and organization in comparison with grammar and mechanics however some of the students were found confused in content limit as they had confusion in understanding the concept of communication exchanges.

**Short Story Writing.** The table clarifies that students are average in dialogue writing in terms of the score as they have obtained 52.66%, however, the result is not that good in comparison to other areas as it is the third lowest marks obtained by the students. The students were found to be good in terms of the content in the short story writing, however, they had shown some errors in terms of grammar and organizational part. Though the stories could see good in content, the students were not able to write story in past tense and they could not maintain the perfect layout of the story because the most of the students either didn't include title or the moral.

**Email writing.** The table gives the information that the proficiency of students in terms of email writing is found to weakest among all other areas. While looking at the average percentage the marks is more than fifty percentages i.e. 50.37 average but the score is lowest to all. While examining the test items I found that students were confused in email writing especially in terms of organizational part. They were found to be confused in between letter and email writing. They were found to have problems in layout and mechanics more.

**Review writing.** The table shows that students are found to be average in book /movie review writing. As displayed in the table, the average score is 4.63 out of 8. When I investigated the writings I found that students are poor in content, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. However, the organizational part of review was found somehow good may be because they are skillful in summarizing the story.

**Brochure Writing.** The table denotes the information that the students have scored 4.13 out of 8 in brochure writing. The marks obtained by them in average is 51.62 in percentage. The obtained data reveal that the marks obtained by the students is satisfactory as they have scored more than 50% however while comparing with the other titles it is second lowest among all. While processing and analyzing the data it

was found that majority of the students have found brochure writing tougher to some extent. Though the students responded to their answer describing about their village/town, majority of them were writing as if in the form of essay writing containing the various information in different paragraphs. While examining the test items I found that students were confused in brochure writing format to essay writing especially in terms of organizational part.

**Essay writing.** The table depicts the information that the students are found, to be good essay writing compared other writing of other areas. The average score secured by the students is 4.75 which is 59.37 in percentage. When I examined the test items I found that students are aware about essay writing in terms of content and structure. Though they are found to be poor in grammatical concepts, they tried fulfilling the words limit by writing in roman language. Actually, they are found to be unaware of cohesion and coherence and also they made several errors in terms of punctuation and spelling, but they scored good marks may be because they have been prioritizing essay writing rather than other as it is a confirmed question in exam.

Overall, students are found good in essay writing, paragraph writing, review writing and dialogue writing but weak in email writing, brochure writing and short story writing. The reasons behind their weakness in observed due to prioritizing the essay writing, paragraph writing, review writing and dialogue writing due to the examination point of view. Hence, it can be summed up that the students were taught the writing items, as being the exam and result oriented. While analyzing the writing based on testing parameters the students are found to be aware regarding the content but not in organizational part, grammar and mechanics.

**Errors committed by the students.** While examining the papers, the errors made by the students were also observed. The following table shows the no of students committing errors in the test item and their percentage based on the testing parameters.

**Table 3: Errors Committed by the Students**

Areas of Errors		Grammar	Content	Vocabulary	Mechanics	Organization
S.N	Writing	Student No and%	Student No and%	Student No and%	Student No and%	Student No and%
1	Essay	30(75%)	12(30%)	35(87.5%)	30(75%)	25(62.5%)
2	Email	25(62.5%)	20(50%)	25(62.5%)	30(75%)	25(62.5%)
3	Paragraph	15(37.5%)	10(25%)	15(37.5%)	22(55%)	24(60%)
4	Movie/Book Review	32(80%)	15(37.5%)	35(87.5%)	25(62.5%)	25(62.5%)
5	Dialogue	25(62.5%)	22(55%)	20(50%)	25(62.5%)	20(50%)
6	Short Story	26(65%)	15(37.5%)	15(37.5%)	22(55%)	32(80%)
7	Brochure	27(67.5%)	12(30%)	30(75%)	25(62.5%)	30(75%)

The table presents the errors made by the students on five different writing categories based on error areas such as grammar, content, vocabulary, mechanics and organization.

As the table shows out 40, total 30 students made errors on grammar, 12 on content, 35 on vocabulary, 30 on mechanics and 25 on organization in essay writing. Similarly, on email writing, 25 students made errors on grammar, 20 on content, 25 on vocabulary, 30 on mechanics and 25 on organization. Likewise, on paragraph writing, 15 students made errors on grammar and vocabulary, 10 on content, 22 on mechanics and 24 on organization. Whereas, on movie review category, 32 students made errors on grammar, 15 on content, 35 on vocabulary and 25 on mechanics and organization. On the other hand, on dialogue writing, 25 students made errors on grammar, 22 on contents, 20 on vocabulary, 25 on mechanics and 20 on organization. Regarding short story writing, 26 students made errors on grammar, 15 on content and vocabulary, 22 on mechanics and 32 on organization. And finally on brochure writing, 27 students made errors on grammar, 12 on content, 30 vocabulary and organization and 25 on mechanics. While analyzing the data, majority of the students made errors on vocabulary on essay writing, mechanics on email writing, organization on paragraph writing, vocabulary on movie/book review writing, grammar on dialogue and short story writing and vocabulary on brochure writing. Whereas, except

in the short story writing and dialogue writing in all the categories of writing least mistakes were made on content. Hence it is found from the data that the highest number of students made error on vocabulary, grammar and organization whereas, lowest on content compared to other titles.

### Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL at Secondary Level

In the questionnaire, Appendix 1 total 21 questions were asked in order to identify the challenges faced by secondary level students in free writing activities. The opinions of the respondents are tabulated in table 1 below.

**Table 4: Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL Classrooms**

Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Remarks
1. Feeling confident to write.	-	5%	35%	60 %	
2. Effective planning for a large writing assignment.	20%	30%	45%	5%	
3. Writing first draft and rethinking	5%	5%	15%	75%	
4. Writing effective sentences	-	15%	45%	40%	
5. Using the well-defined structure	-	50%	30%	20%	
6. Revising the writing	-	-	40%	60%	
7. Giving credit for the source	-	-	-	100%	
8. Feeling difficulty to paraphrase and summarise	95%	5%	-	-	
9. Feeling difficulty to transfer the ideas while writing	30%	20%	50%	-	
10. Ability to generate information	-	-	10%	90%	
11. Ability to make sentences comprehensible in the first draft	-	-	12.5%	87.5%	
12. Ability to make sentences lively		-	-	100%	
13. Ability to get rid of the mistakes on writing	-	-		100%	
14. Thinking in mother L1 and translating in L2	90%	10%	-	-	
15. Do you notice problems in your writing and figure out what the causes are?				100%	
16. The easiest part of writing					OEQ
17. The toughest part of writing					OEQ
18. Generating ideas on writing					OEQ
19. Writing for pleasure in free time					OEQ
20. Strategies for improving free writing skills					OEQ
21. Pre writing, while writing and post writing activities					OEQ

The first item was asked to measure the confidence level of the students on the ability of their writing. The data reveals that only 5% of them feel confidence often while 35 % do sometimes and the remaining 60% never feel confident about their ability to write.

Similarly, second item was asked to identify the effective planning of the students for a large writing assignment. The data presented in the table shows 20 percentages of them plan always, 30 percentages practice it often, 45 percentage practice it sometimes and remaining 5 percentages never do it.

Likewise, in the third item, when the respondents were asked how often they write first draft and rethink about their writing, 5 percentage teachers said that they never do that while other 5 percentage said that they do it often, 15 percentages do it sometimes rest 75% never do that.

Whereas in item 4, the respondents were measured their skills on effective use of the sentences and paragraphs, using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The responses show that 15% do it often and 45% do it sometimes while 20% never do it.

Furthermore, the fifth item was asked to know the frequency of the use of a well-defined structure (introduction, body, and conclusion) in their writing, as appropriate. The data depicted in the table show that 50 percentages of them practice it often and 30 percentages practice it sometimes however remaining 20% never practice it.

In item 6, the students were asked to respond the frequency of revising their writing to make it clear, correct, and consistent. In response to it 40% of the students said that they do it sometimes whereas rest 60 % never practice it.

Similarly, in item 7, the question was asked to measure the frequency on how accurately do they give credit for ideas and facts from other people in their writing. The table shows that none of the respondents do it.

Item 8 was asked to explore the difficulty level that the students face to paraphrase, summarise, and integrate information from different sources. In response

to it, 95% of the students said that they find it difficult always while remaining 5% found difficult often.

On the other hand, in item 9, the respondents were asked about the frequency of facing difficulty to transfer their ideas into meaningful written text because of spelling, grammar, and lack of vocabulary. In response to it, 30% percentage of them said that they face it always, 20% responded as they suffer often while other 50 % said they get troubles sometimes only.

Whereas as, in item 10 on generating lots of information fairly and quickly on the topic of interest 90% of the respondents responded that they feel difficulty always while rest 10% feel sometimes only.

Furthermore, item 11 was asked to measure the ability of the students on their skill of writing the sentences clear so that they are comprehensible to readers on first reading. The responses in the table has shown surprising results that 87.5 percentages said that they are never able to do so while a small number i.e. only 12.5 percentages are able to do it sometimes only.

While in item 12, none of the participants responded that they are able to make sentences lively in their writing.

Similarly, regarding item 13, all the students responded that they are never able to get rid of the mistakes on writing.

On the other hand, in item 14 the students were asked if they think and prepare the ideas in their language and then translate the thoughts into English. The responses of the students are shocking in the sense that almost all i.e. 90 percentages never practice it while only 10 % of them practice it often.

The final close ended question was asked to measure the frequency of noticing the problems in their writing and figuring out what the causes are. The responses of the teachers in the table show that none of them practice it.

## Open Ended Responses

Under Appendix II (B), the respondents were examined six open ended questions in order to explore their competence on free writing activities and to identify the challenges faced by the students. The collective opinions of the respondents to the open ended questions are interpreted below.

**The easiest genre of writing.** In item 16, the students were asked about the easiest area of writing among paragraph, dialogue, short story, email, book/movie review, brochure and essay. While analyzing the easiness on the areas of writing for the students, the following results were revealed.

**Table 5: Easiest Genre of Writing**

S.N.	Items	Number of students	Percentage
1	Essay	28	70
2	Email	16	40
3	Paragraph	33	82.50
4	Movie review	29	72.50
5	Dialogue	32	80
6	Short Story	22	55
7	Brochure	12	30

The table presents the result on ease felt on item wise writing as reported by the students. It is found from the data that the easiest genres of writings include paragraph writing, dialogue writing, movie/book review and essay writing. It is reflected on the data that 82.50 percentages of the students feel paragraph writing as the easiest genre of writing while 80 percentages dialogue writing, whereas 72.05percentagesbook/ movie review writing and 70 % essay writing.

The replies to the open-ended questions in item 16 revealed that the majority of respondents felt confident writing paragraphs and dialogues on the topic that was assigned and was being practiced in class. Moreover, all of them feel easy to write when they are given some ideas on brain storming. In conclusion, students find that topics they have already seen and practiced are simpler. It was also found that the students were inspired to write on these genres compared to others. Thus, inspiration

is the simplest step in the writing process. Words pour out like a roaring flood when it's there.

**The toughest genre of writing.** The hardest writing genres are covered in item 17's responses in the given table. The following findings came to light while examining the students' writing difficulty based on their writing genres.

**Table 6: Toughest Genres of Writing**

S.N.	Items	Number of students	Percentage
1	Essay	12	30
2	Email	24	46.66
3	Paragraph	7	12.50
4	Movie review	11	27.50
5	Dialogue	8	20
6	Short story	18	45
7	Brochure	28	70

The table displays the result on difficulty felt on item wise writing as responded by the students. It is seen on the table that the toughest areas of writings include brochure writing, email writing and short story writing. It is reflected on the data that 70 percentages of the students feel brochure writing as the toughest area of writing whereas 46.66 percentages of them find email writing as the toughest, while 45 percentages of the student find short story writing as the toughest area of the writing.

To sum up, brochure writing, email writing and short story writing were found difficult by most of the students while reviewing the responses on item 17. The results found that, the main reasons on feeling difficulty in such writings is due to not giving priority in terms of importance from exam's point of view and negligence from the side of the students. Most importantly, almost all the students find difficult in layout and organization. In conclusion, the part of writing where they have to think and come up with ideas seems difficult to them.

**Prioritized genre of writing.** The replies of the students in this multiple response question reveal the result that they prioritize paragraphs, dialogues and essay

writing compared to other genres of writing since these areas are frequently asked and are important from the examination point view.

**Generating the ideas on writing.** Regarding coming up with ideas for writing in item 19, mainly the students were found to develop their writing based on the samples given in book, ideas they get from teachers and surfing the related topic on the internet. The following table shows the responses collected from the students in the numeric form.

**Table 7: Generating the Ideas on Writing**

S.N.	Ways	Number	%
1	Generating the ideas on writing based on samples given in book	10	25
2	Generating the ideas based on the instructions from the teachers	22	55
3	Generating the ideas on related topic by surfing the internet	8	20
Total		30	100

The table shows the responses collected from the students on generating the ideas on writing in item 18. The data presented in the table clarifies that, 25 % of the respondents generate their ideas on writing based on the samples given in book while 55% of the respondents generate their ideas on writing based on the instructions they get from their teachers and remaining 20% by surfing the related topic of writing on the internet.

In conclusion, all of students are somehow convinced about depending on some specific source for getting the ideas to generate on their writing. The ways such as discussion among the friends on topics and mind mapping tricks were found to be completely ignored by the students.

**Writing for pleasure in free time.** Item 20 was asked to collect the opinion on pleasure of writing in the free time. The collective opinions of the students show that just 3 participants i.e. only 7.5 % of the students are habituated to write for pleasure during their free time. Out of those three participants, two of them write diary and the

one writes poems. Student 7 comments on the answer that he writes diary so that he can achieve the memories of his school life and in the form of diary. Similarly, Student 3 writes diary being inspired by Annie Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*. While student 10 writes the reason he writes in free time is because he entertains listening to English rap and loves poetry.

***Strategies for improving free writing skills.*** The students were asked to suggest the possible ways to improve free writing skills on question 21. Some of the collective responses commented by the students are mentioned below;

Student 1- *It is better to better to read the related content and get ideas from teachers.*

Student 2- *It is necessary to write something every day so that we can review and improve ourselves.*

Student 5- *We can search related content on internet.*

Student 10- *It is important to have writings checked by the teachers frequently, they should give feedback so that we can improve writings based on those feedbacks.*

Summarizing the responses, it appears that students are getting support from online sources and different composition books but they still tend to have considerably more confidence after receiving comments from their teachers. Thus, the students' advised techniques include writing something every day, looking up related information on the internet, reading about the subject in books and other reading materials, and constantly asking teachers for comments.

***Pre writing, while writing and post writing activities.*** It's not that simple to write. Writing abilities can only be developed thorough study on the topic and constant practice. It's crucial for ESL/EFL students to understand that writing is a process rather than a product. Every student must be familiar with the three stages involved in writing: pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. Pre-writing refers to things, tasks, preparations carried out before actual composing. These tasks may include analyzing the writing tasks or topics, generating ideas, collecting data, and

outlining. While Writing is the stage of actual composing papers. At this stage, one will write as you s/he has planned and make use of all data and ideas collected in pre-writing. Post-writing includes proofreading, editing, and revising the topic written.

The final open ended question was asked to evaluate some of the pre writing, while writing and post writing activities that had been frequently practiced by the teachers. The pre writing activities they practice often were reviewing the class notes, handouts, and assignment, similarly, consider the assignment carefully and notice vocabulary related to a topic. On the other hand, while writing activities often practiced were edit for organization as they are writing, use a dictionary to check things that they are not sure about while writing. Some students also said that sometimes they write in their native language first and then translate it into English. Regarding post learning activities, the students reported that they discuss their work with other students to get feedback on how they can improve it. Similarly, they also discuss their work with their teacher to get feedback on how they can improve it. They also go back to their writing to edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation frequently.

## Chapter Five

### Findings, Conclusion and Implications

This chapter deals with the major findings and conclusion of the study. It also deals with some recommendations at different levels made on the basis of the major findings.

#### Findings

The overall performance of the students in free writing in terms of paragraph writing, short story writing, dialogue writing, email and letter writing, review writing newspaper article writing and essay writing seems to be satisfactory as the average result obtained by the students in free writing is 55.10%. The students scored 3.5 in paragraph writing, 3.35 in dialogue writing, 3.16 in short story writing, 4.03 in email writing, 4.63 in book/movie review writing, 4.13 in brochure writing and 4.75 in essay writing as a mean score. Data showed that the students prioritize paragraphs, dialogues and essay writing compared to other genres of writing hence the results show that the performance of the students is best in essay writing whereas poor in email writing. It is reflected on the data that 82.50 percentages of the students felt paragraph writing as the easiest genre of writing while 80 percentages dialogue writing, whereas 72.05 percentages book/ movie review writing and 70 percentages essay writing. On the contrary, 70 percentages of the students felt brochure writing as the toughest area of writing whereas 46.66 percentages of them found email writing as the toughest, while 45 percentages of the student find short story writing as the toughest area of the writing. It is also found that out of all the participants just three of the participants only write for pleasure during their spare time.

The results of the questionnaire indicate that the students face several challenges when it comes to free writing. The majority of students, according to the data, do not feel comfortable to write since they are always worried about making mistakes. The students are not able to use well defined structure and frequently face problem to paraphrase, summarize, and integrate information from different sources. The students feel easy to write when they get seen topics and are given some ideas on brain storming but face difficulty to think and come up with ideas. However, the

technology has been supportive tool for their writing. The students were found to develop their writing based on the samples given in book, ideas they get from teachers and surfing the related topic on the internet. The techniques suggested by the students include writing something every day, looking up related information on the internet, reading about the subject in books and other reading materials, and constantly asking teachers for comments.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of the current study **Performance of Students in Free Writing in EFL at Secondary Level** was to evaluate the performance of secondary level students in free writing activities. I selected forty secondary level students studying in Kailash Rural Municipality, Makawanpur through simple non random sampling procedure. A set of questionnaire and a test item were used as the main tools for data collection. The findings of the study showed that the students are good in essay writing, paragraph writing, review writing and dialogue writing but weak in email writing, brochure writing and short story writing. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that continuous feedback of teachers on writing can be a best way to improve free writing of the students. While analyzing the writing based on testing parameters the students are found good in the content but not in organizational part, grammar and mechanics. The students are seemed to feel difficult in applying correct grammar, choice of word, and writing mechanics such as: punctuation and capitalization. It is obvious from the findings that the students feel easy to write when they get seen topics but face difficulty to unseen topics. In summary, the students have low motivation to write a brochure, and email. They seldom do practice writing at leisure time. It is sad to state that very few participants i.e. only 7.5 % of the students are only habituated to write during their leisure time. It is also found that the students feel easy to write when they get seen topics and are given some ideas but face difficulty to think and come up with ideas while engaging with free writing activities. Mainly the students are found to develop their writing based on the samples given in comprehension writing book, ideas they get from their friends and teachers and surfing the related web content. Some of the strategies suggested by the students are; writing something regularly, surfing related content on web, reading about the

related topics in book and other reading materials and getting feedbacks from the teachers frequently.

### **Implications**

The following implications have been drawn on the basis of the findings of the study. The major implications at different levels have been presented as follows:

**Policy related.** The findings of this study suggest that students do not have adequate knowledge on the effective writing strategies, so it is necessary to equip them with a wide range of learning strategies from the policy level. Writing comprehension should be taken as an important part of overall language comprehension. So, the policy makers like experts, textbook writers and course developers should design the course and activities that help to enhance the writing comprehension of the students.

**Practice related.** The first, it is suggested to the teachers to make a spirit of giving guidance to the students in the classroom. It will make the students feel interested in improving their writing skills. The second, teacher should be able to select technique in teaching writing in order to increase the student's ability in writing for example instead of teaching deductively the students should be taught inductively. The third, students should be encouraged to write daily diary, summary of reading and some literary genres so that they will have practice of writing.

**Further research related.** The current study has been limited to secondary level learners, therefore, other levels should be further investigated in this area. Similarly, this study covered a small scale due to time and expense constraint, therefore the further researches can investigate in a large scale. Moreover, the further study can be conducted about other writing activities such as, guided writing, controlled writing and competence of the university students in thesis writing. In conclusion, further studies are required to overcome the limitations of the present study and to produce more convincing evidence of the challenges on freewriting activities in EFL contexts.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix – I**

#### **Test Item**

Name of the School: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Optional)

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

F.M: 50

1. Write a paragraph on 'Importance of Education' in about 100 words. 6
2. Compose a dialogue of six exchanges in between two friends who are making their plans for their session break. 6
3. Write a short story that has ending since then they lived happily forever. 6
4. Write an email to your younger sister stating the importance of maintaining healthy habits. 8
5. Write a review on the book that you have read or on a movie that you have watched recently. 8
6. Prepare a brochure of your village/town containing its introduction, climatic information on different seasons, the places to visit, the facilities available. 8
7. Write an essay on 'Use of Cell Phones in Learning' in about 200 words. 8

**Appendix – II**  
**Close Ended Questionnaire**

Name of the School: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Optional)

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Place a tick( ) beside the most appropriate response. Using a Likert scale from 0-4, rate the following with 0 indicating not at all, 1 indicating a little, 2 indicating rather, 3 indicating much and 4 indicating very strong.

S.N.	In the English writing class.....	Always (1)	Often(2)	Sometimes (2)	Occasional ly (4)	Never(5)
1.	I feel confident about my ability to write.					
2.	I can effectively plan a large writing assignment.					
3.	I write first draft and rethink my writing.					
4.	I write effective sentences and paragraphs, using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.					
5.	I use a well-defined structure (introduction, body, and conclusion) in my writing, as appropriate.					
6.	I revise my writing to make it clear, correct, and consistent.					
7.	When writing, I accurately give credit for ideas and facts from other people.					
8.	I feel difficult to paraphrase, summarise, and integrate information from different sources.					

9.	I feel difficult to transfer my ideas into meaningful written text because of spelling, grammar, and lack of vocabulary.					
10.	On a topic of interest to me, I can generate lots of information fairly and quickly.					
11.	Can you make your sentences clear--so they are comprehensible to readers on first reading?					
12.	Can you get your sentences lively?					
13.	Can you get rid of most mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so on?					
14.	Do you think and prepare your ideas in your language and then translate my thoughts into English?					
15.	Do you notice problems in your writing and figure out what the causes are?					

**B. Open Ended Questions**

16) What is the easiest genre of writing for you (paragraph, dialogue, short story, email book/movie review, brochure and essay writing)?

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17) What is the toughest genre of writing for you (paragraph, dialogue, short story, email book/movie review, brochure and essay writing)?

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18) How do you come up with ideas for writing? What helps you the most to make your writing better?

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19) Which genre of writing do you prioritize more among paragraph, dialogue, short story, email book/movie review, brochure and essay (Multiple Response Question)? What is the reason behind that?

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20) Do you write for pleasure in English in your free time? If yes, what do you write and why?

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21) What do you think can be done to improve your free writing skills?

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22) Suggest some of the pre writing, while writing and post writing activities that you have been practicing frequently.

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*Thank You for taking the time to respond ☺.*

### Appendix III

<b>The Result of the Test Item</b>								
<b>Student</b>	<b>Paragraph</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>	<b>Short story</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Review</b>	<b>Brochure</b>	<b>Essay</b>	<b>Total</b>
S1	3	3.5	4.5	5	5.5	5	5.5	32
S2	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	29
S3	3.5	2.5	4.5	4	3.5	3	6	27
S4	4	3	3	4	6	5.5	5	30.5
S5	2.5	3	2.5	4	5	3.5	5	25.5
S6	4	2.5	2.5	5.5	5	3.5	5	28
S7	3.5	3	3	4	4.5	2	3.5	23.5
S8	4	3	2.5	4	5	4.5	5	28
S9	2.5	3	2.5	4	5	4.5	5	26.5
S10	5	3	3	4	2.5	4	5	26.5
S11	3	3	2.5	4	5	4.5	4.5	26.5
S12	3.5	4	2.5	4	5.5	3.5	4.5	27.5
S13	4	4	3	4.5	5	4.5	4.5	29.5
S14	4.5	3	2.5	4	2.5	4	4	24.5
S15	3	4	3	4	5	4	4.5	27.5
S16	3	4	3	4	5	2.5	4.5	26
S17	3	2.5	3	4	4.5	4	4.5	25.5
S18	4	4	3	3.5	5	4	4.5	28
S19	4	4	3	4	5	4.5	6	30.5
S20	4	4.5	3	4	3	4	4.5	27
S21	3	4	3	4	5	4	3.5	26.5
S22	3	4	3	3.5	3.5	4	5.5	26.5
S23	2.5	4	3.5	4	5	3.5	5	27.5
S24	2.5	4	3.5	4	5	4	5.5	28.5
S25	3	4	3.5	4	3	4	5.5	27
S26	4	4	3.5	5	5	4	5.5	31
S27	3	3.5	3.5	4.5	5	6	5	30.5
S28	3	3.5	3	4	2.5	4.5	5.5	26
S29	4	3	3.5	4	5	3	5.5	28
S30	4	2.5	3.5	4	5	4.5	4.5	28
S31	4	2.5	3.5	4.5	5	3.5	5.5	28.5
S32	3	2.5	3.5	4	4.5	4.5	5.5	27.5
S33	3.5	3	2.5	4	5	5.5	4	27.5
S34	3.5	3	3	3.5	5	5	4	27
S35	3.5	3	3.5	4	3.5	3	3.5	24
S36	4	3	2.5	3	5	6	4	27.5
S37	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	3.5	5.5	4	27.5
S38	4	3.5	3.5	4	6.5	4	4.5	30
S39	3.5	3.5	3.5	3	5	5	4	27.5
S40	4.5	3.5	3.5	4	6	3	4	28.5
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>4.63</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>27.55</b>