WRITING PROFICIENCY OF HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Education

In Partial Fulfilment for the Master of Education in English

Submitted by

Tirtha Khadka

Faculty of Education

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur,Kathmandu, Nepal

2012

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ABSTRACT

This research work entitled "Writing Proficiency of Higher Secondary Level Student" was conducted to find out the proficiency of twelfth graders from three different Higher Secondary Schools of Rautahat district especially in free writing. For this purpose, the research selected 60 students from three different Higher Secondary Schools of Rautahat district .The research adopted the purposive non-random sampling procedure to select the informants. The test administrated to the students to collect the necessary data. After the marks were assigned to the sampled the collection data, and analyzed and interpreted in terms of different variables using different statistical tools. The avenge proficiency of the students in free writings was found 26.75. Among the students representing three different Higher Secondary Schools; the students of Bal Niketan Higher Secondary school were found more proficient than that of the other higher Secondary Schools.

 This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the general background of the study. Which, in turn, involves free writing and few descriptions on it. This chapter also includes review of related literature, Objectives and significance of the study. The second chapter deals with methodology. Which includes sampling procedure, tools for data collection, process of data collection   and limitations of the study. The third chapter consists of the analysis and interpretation of the data, where data have been analyzed in terms of different headings, like total proficiency, college wise proficiency, sex-wise proficiency and stream wise proficiency. The fourth chapter deals with findings and recommendations of the study. References and appendices are appended to the last chapter.

DECLARATION

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

……………………
Tirtha Khadka

Date:

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCEPTANCE

This is to certify that **Mr. Tirtha Khadka** has prepared this thesis entitled **Writing Proficiency of Higher Secondary Level Students** under my guidance and supervision.

I recommend the thesis for acceptance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B.N.N.S.S.	:	Bal Niketan Higher Secondary School
Flv.	:	Flavour
G.Mt.	:	General merit
i.e.	:	That is
J.J.H.S.S.	:	Jan Jagriti Higher Secondary Schoool
J.J.H.S.S.	:	Jan Jyoti Higher Secondary School
Mcs.	:	Mechanics
Org.	:	Organization
Std.	:	Student
Viz.	:	Namely
Wrd.	:	Wording

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   General Background

Language is a means of communication. Human beings, animals as well as birds can communicate with each other within their group by using sounds and signs or both. Human beings are different from and superior to animals and birds because of language. Through the medium of language, our ideas feelings and thoughts are revealed. It is specially a human possession. Chomsky (1965, p.15) claimed the existence of innate properties of language to explain the child's mastery of his native language in such a short period of time despite of the highly abstract nature of rules of language. It is possible with the help of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which is in human mind. Lenneberg (1967, p.21) says Language is species specific behavior and certain mode of perception categorizing abilities and other languages related mechanisms are biologically determined." Language is generally considered to be the standard variety of linguistic code because it differs from other varieties of linguistic code, such as dialect, register and idiolect. For Jesperson (1922, p.4) "Language is not an end itself… it is a way of connecting souls a means of communication." Crystal (2003, p. 212) also defines language as "The systematic conventional use of sound, signs or written symbols in the human society for communication and self expression". This is a broad definition, which includes different forms of language like written language and sign language including the proper language speech. Following Wardhaugh (1998, p.1), "A language is what the members of a particular society speak". Thus, language has been defined variously by various linguists. No single definition of language is perfect in itself because none of the definitions covers all aspects of language. But, it is widely accepted that language is a complex phenomenon due to its abstract nature.

1.1.1   An Introduction to writing

Writing, the visual representation of our thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas is one of the language skills. The thing that we speak is temporary but the things imprinted as a written work can be kept for future and coming generation that they can experience the flavor of that material. So, to keep it as a memorandum or say the long term document written work or the writing is needed.

If we go back to the history of writing it has its long bygone. Harmer (2004,p.49) says:

> The history of writing is as ancient as Indus civilization. Some of the earliest writing found so far dates from about 5,500 years ago. It was found at a place called Harappa in the region where the great Harappan or Indus civilization once flourished. There is incomplete agreement about the meaning of the symbols that were discovered. However, when the discovery was made the archaeologist Richard Meadow stated that the inscriptions had similarities to what became the Indus script- the first recognized written language. Since then, many different writing systems have evolved around the world .

Writing started with our civilization. Human beings started representing their thoughts and feelings day by day that became a train. We have such evident for such writing which are dated about 5500 years ago. It has been so long that writing became the part of our life and started keeping something for future. In such a way the writing originated in the world and became the part of our life. Harmer (1997,p.16) writes:

> Our choice of language may depend upon the channel of communication. If we examine this concept more fully we can identify language skills that native speakers and competent language user process. Literate people who

use language have number of different abilities. They will be able to speak on the telephone, write letters listen to the radio or read books. In other words they pose the four basic language skills of writing, speaking, reading and listening. Speaking and writing involve language production so they are productive skills .

Each and every skill has its own specific significance; writing is one of the language skills necessary in both educational field and future career. One will be judged in part by one's ability to put ideas down in paper. It is an art which gives one to be heard and to influence others. Moreover, writing is thought as a medium of expression of ideas and views; it is one of the language skills equally necessary to be mastered by a language learner. It develops through various and continuous steps of progress and makes the students active in it. The main purpose of writing is to enable the learners for free compositions and creativity.

Writing can be classified into four different types. They are narrating , describing (e.g. in the form of an essay or paragraph), replying (e.g. in the form of letter or application) and explaining (e.g. with the reasons for something). Out of these four skills, I will use only three types of free writing except 'replying' in the test items to elicit data from the informants.

Writing is a task assigned to the students with some specific topic. There is no such restriction or boundary in such writing task. It is the final stage in the development of the writing skill. Writing involves the individual selection of vocabulary and structure for the expression of personal meaning; however, the teacher may help the students in the collection of ideas, developing an outline and supplying some language materials, writing composition is open ended in nature.

Thus, writing is a difficult task which needs systematic progress from stage to stage. Practice of free writing decreases the teacher dependency of students day by day. And,

lastly they can be the proficient writer. So, free writing is like swimming in the ocean where there is no certainty of length and depth. But, we must dive to check our swimming ability into that vast ocean. We never sink if we are a proficient swimmer.

1.1.2 Components of Writing

Writing is an art of manipulating words and sentences in an effective way. But, it is a very complex task to write clearly and explicitly. In this context, Richards (1985) says,

> Learning to write in either a first language or a second language is one of the most difficult tasks. Learning to write is a difficult and lengthy process, that one includes anxiety and frustration in many learners. Yet good writing skills are essential to academic success and a requirement for many occupation and professions (p.100).

Writing is not the random juxtaposition of words and sentences to construct a text. Rather it is an art of manipulating words and sentences in an effective way. But it is very complex task to write clearly and explicitly.

The components of writing can be divided into three main stages of writing skills. The first one is known as 'mechanics' in which the learner simply manipulates the shapes of the graphic components of the phonological items or spoken words in its written forms.

In the same way, the second component is known as 'structuring' where the learner learns the spelling of words, syntactic rules of structuring words, sentences, paragraphs and forming a text.

Similarly, the third or the highest level of writing process is called 'Semantic stage' where learner learns not only the mechanics and structuring of the rules but also the significance of using a words, phrases, or sentences in the overall context of entire written script.

1.1.2.1 Mechanics of Writing

Mechanics of writing is known as graphological system which mainly includes capitalization, spelling and punctuation. Learners must have the knowledge of mechanics of writing. Mastery over the mechanics of writing and practice on the basic skills are necessary first step for child or adult learner. Under mechanics of writing the learner should learn the alphabet, direction, upper and lower cases, capitalization, spelling patterns and sentence punctuation.

I)   Capitalization(upper case/lower case)

Capitalization refers to the correct use of capital letters. Appropriate capitalization is the matter of convention. Most of the conventions i.e. capitalizing the first letter of the first word of a sentence, the pronoun I, the first letter in the first word of the quotation and so on are very familiar to us. However, some capitalizations are matter of style rather than convention. There are rules of capitalization i.e. when and where to use a capital letters. The knowledge of using capital letters is important for writing.

II)   Spelling

Spelling is to name or write the letters of a word in their correct order. Although incorrect spelling does not often prevent the understanding of a written message. It can adversely affect the readers' judgment. However slight change in spelling can bring drastic change in meaning that carries. Spelling plays a vital important role since addition, deletion, omission or replacement of one letter with another can change the entire meaning of the word or of the whole message. Mastery of writing system requires the ability to spell. Therefore the mastery in spelling is needed.

III)   Punctuation

Punctuation is an art or systems of inserting marks or points in writing or printing in order to make the meaning clear. The proper use of punctuation marks such as comma, colon, semicolon, hyphen, dash, parenthesis, quotation marks, and apostrophe and so on helps the writer to organize written language and clarify relation between words and clauses.

1.1.2.2 Structuring

The second stage of writing is 'structuring'. In this stage of writing the learner learns the syntactic rules of structuring words, sentences, paragraphs and forming a text. This is the level up to sentence, where it tells about the structuring of words, phrases and sentences to construct a compact text. It pays attention to syntax and semantics that looks on appropriateness and accuracy.

1.1.2.3 Discourse

Discourse can be defined as the stretch of language which communicates something either in oral or in written form. Discourse analysis examines how stretches of language, considers in their full textual, social and psychological context becomes meaningful and unified for their users. It provides the insights into the problems and process of language use. In this regard Cook (1996, p. 6) says,

> The language which is used to communicate something and felt to be
>
> coherent; may or may not correspond a correct series or series of correct
>
> sentences; due to linguistic elements of discourse. So, the language in use
>
> for communication is called discourse. And full search for what gives
>
> discourse coherence is discourse analysis.

Thus, the sentences which communicate some message to the reader in written form can be said written discourse. The elements that the discourse contains can be presented as follows:

i) Coherence

Coherence can be defined as the semantic relationship of different sense units between and among the utterances. It is the relationship between different sentences based on the meaning it conveys not solely on denotative meaning. It makes our written text more

logical, well organized, and easy to understand and clear. Giving the emphasis of coherence in writing Harmer (2004, p. 24-25) says,

> Text to have coherence it needs to have some kinds of internal logic which the reader can follow with or without the use of the prominent cohesive devices when a text is coherent the reader can understand at least two things: i) the writer's purpose-the reader should be able to understand what the writer's purpose is. Is it to give information, suggest a course of action make a judgment on a book or a play, or express an opinion about old events, for example? A coherent text will not mask the writer's purpose: ii) The writer's line of thought- the reader should be able to follow the writer's line of reasoning if the text is discursive piece. If, on the other hand, it is a narrative, the reader should be able to follow the story and not get confused by the time jumps, a too many characters, etc.

Thus, coherence refers to the relationship between utterances and the meaning it conveys.

ii)   Cohesion

Cohesion can be defined as the grammatical or lexical relationship between different elements of text. Cohesion may not only refer to the relationship between different sentences but it may be the relationship between different parts of the sentences. The main contribution of cohesion in written text is that, it makes the written text more compact and smooth. Harmer (2004, p.22) says,

> When we write a text we have a number of linguistic techniques at our disposal to make sure that our prose 'sticks together'. We can, for example, use lexical repetition and/or chains of words within same lexical set

through a text to have this effect. We can use various grammatical devices to help the reader understand what is being referred to all the times, even when words are left out or pronouns are substituted for nouns.

To sum up, cohesion refers to the grammatical and/or lexical relationship between different elements of a text.

1.1.3 Testing the Writing Skill

A test is a measuring device which we use when we want to compare an individual with other individual who belongs to the same group. In other words, test or testing is the means of assessment, evaluation, and a measuring rod to evaluate the student's ability or achievement. A test is generally administered in formal situation to grade the students in language education. Thus, a test can be defined as any formal procedure for measuring ability, knowledge and performance of the students.

Hughes (2003, p.83) says, 'the best way to test peoples' writing ability is to get them to write'. As Hughes mentioned until and unless anybody writes his/her writing cannot be judged.

Heaton (1998, p.42) describes, Testing is used as a process of scrutinizing how far learners have learned what the teacher wishes them to learn. He further says, It is widely accepted that testing offers useful inputs to the teacher to be aware of the effect of his teaching, and also some insights on whether he should continue the way he teaches or change it in order to make his teaching more effective.

In a nutshell, we can say testing is a way of measuring the ability upon the related area of the tast.

Testing writing skill on its own is a way of measuring writing ability of the taste. Writing can be tested on the basis of different skills or components that should be in the writing. To test writing, we must know writing first and its components too. Until and unless we

understand what writing is and what are the essential components we cannot judge writing.

According to Widdowson (1978, p.16), one way of describing writing is to say.... the use of the visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language and another "that writing is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitting them through the visual medium as marks on paper". He further considers writing is an activity of developing a discussion as transforming information of various kinds from the writer's world knowledge to that of the reader's and that linguistics rules facilitates the transference through the linguistics rules are not sufficient to do this, knowledge of use is needed.

Above ideas are enough to explain about what testing is and what writing is. But here the problem is what is to be assessed in writing? The answer is writing strategies; such as the ability of combining information so as to make it an organize piece of writing; the appropriateness of the writing according to the intended reader. Testing writing does not include how people use commas and periods in their writing rather is of seeing how appropriately, how flexibly and how confidently the students use the resources of the writing system for accomplishing designed proposes.

Looking at the different methods of assessing writing ability of students, it is hard to assess the process aspect of their writing in such limited period. The only final product can be assessed or tested. So, testing such writing should emphasize to the organizational aspect of writing by allocating separate marks to content, organization, appropriateness and style on the other hand the knowledge of grammatical and orthographic conventions. Here organization involves coherence and cohesion, content involves supporting details for writing, appropriateness and style involves register and the proper use of words and knowledge of grammar.

Thus, we can say writing is not merely the transfer of ideas from mind to paper. It is more a process of refining the ideas.

There are different testing approaches or rubrics to test the written items. As Bachman and Palmer (1983, p.61), argue that the primary purpose of testing writing is to make inferences about the language ability of the learners and the secondary purpose is to make decision on the basis of those inferences. So, viewing the process as well as the analytical methods of testing would be the best one for reliable test.

Out of many methods of analytical testing here is Cooper's (1977, p. 31), Model which can be presented as follows:

Table No. 1

Testing Rubric

General Merit	Low	Middle	High
Ideas	3	6-9	10-14.5
Organization	3	6-9	10-14.5
Wording	1.5	3-4.5	5-7
Flavor	1.5	3-4.5	5-7
Mechanics Usage	1.5	3-4.5	5-7
Total	10.5	21-31.5	35-50

Source: Cooper (1977, p.31).

1.1.4 Process Writing

To produce a coherent and appropriate text for the readers is not easy. While producing a coherent and appropriate text the writer should go with numbers of conflicting theories of writing and one of them is process writing. Harmer (2004) says, "It is the stage a writer goes through in order to produce something in its final written form" (p.4). He further says this process may of course be affected by the content (subject matter) of the writing, type of the writing and the medium it is written in.

Various scholars have suggested different elements of process writing. According to White and Arndt (1991, p.11), process writing involves the following points:

I. Glimpsing the Process

The writer becomes ready to put his thoughts and feelings on the paper. White and Arndt (1991, p.11) say, "the writer stilled the waters of his mind to stabilize his thinking; he peered into his thoughts and one by one put them into words…"

II. Generating

Since writing is primarily about organizing information and communicating meaning, generating ideas is clearly a crucial part of the writing process. Because actually getting started is one of the most difficult and inhibiting steps in writing, idea generating is particularly important as an initiating process.

III. Focusing

Focusing includes discovering main ideas, considering purpose, considering audience and considering form.

IV. Structuring

After this, the writer chooses from among the ideas and places them in order; he scrutinizes the expression and places, them where they belong. To be specific, structuring involves grouping ideas into frameworks, considering priorities, relating structure to focal idea and so on.

V. Drafting

The writer being immersed in phrases painfully consenting, it was like darting fish with hooks in their gills, dragged from the depths of an unplumbed pool. Activities in this section mark the move from the so-called pre-writing stage to actually writing a first draft.

VI. Evaluating

It is the assessment of the draft. It is essential that the language be understandable and reasoning well maintained.

VII. Reviewing

One essential part of the process remains, though, namely to "re-view" the text, as if with a new pair of eyes. And often, even at this stage, a new look at what is on the page is quite-likely to give rise to get more ideas and thoughts which have to be worked into the

original conception. Indeed, there is a sense in which a writing task never ends; instead, we simply have to decide that we have reached the point where we must abandon our text to its fate.

However, Rivers (1968, p.245) has suggested five stages of writing which help the learner to write in the foreign language. The stages of writing are as follows:

I.   Copying

The first stage, copying (sometimes called transcription) is often called by foreign-language teachers an unworthy and unchallenging occupation for adolescent students. The work set for copying should consist of sections of work already learned orally and read with the teacher. As the student is copying, he should repeat himself what he is writing. After he has had some practices in copying accurately with correct diacritical and punctuation marks, he may continue to copy as an aid to memorization. At this stage, he repeats a sentence to himself as he copies it and then tries to say it over to him two or three times without referring to the script, copying activities may continue side by side with more advanced writing practice.

I.   Reproduction

This is the second stage of writing at which the student will attempt to write without originality what he has learned orally and read in his textbook. At first step, he will be asked to rewrite immediately each sentence he has combined without reference to his copy or to the original text. He will then compare this version with the original one. Next, he will be asked to write down sentences he has memorized, read and copied as they are dictated to him. At this stage, the writing activity on the part of the student requires variation of learned phrases since the emphasis is entirely on accuracy of reproduction.

i.   Recombination

Recombination stage where the students are required to reproduce learned work with minor adaptations. The writing of recombination of learned sentences requires not only the ability to manipulate grammatical structures, which is basic to the speaking skill but

also a second knowledge of the intricacies of representing graphically what the student is required only to recognize in reading.

At this stage, writing practice may take a number of forms. Students will write out structure drills of various kinds: making substitution of words and phrases, transforming sentences, expanding them to include further information within the limits of learned phrases, contracting them by substituting pronouns for nouns or single words for groups of words. The recombination may take the form of variations of memorized dialogue which after correction may be acted out in the classroom.

ii.   Guided Writing

In this stage, the student will be given some freedom in the selection of lexical items and structural patterns for his written exercise, but within a framework which restraints him from attempting to compose at a level beyond his state of knowledge. At the guided writing stage, the student may begin with completion exercises where parts of sentences are given and structural pattern is thus established for him. At this stage the learners are given different types of exercises such as completion, replacement, expansion or summarizing on some topics. They can include their ideas partially. Likewise, the learners can expand simple sentences by adding or modifying words and phrases. The skeleton of a story or dialogue may be supplied for the development of writing. But students are not totally free because they have to follow the guide frame.

iii.   Composition

The final stage of composition involves individual selection of vocabulary and structure for the expression of personal meaning. Composition is compiled activity which requires a variety of skills. At this stage, the writer will be increasing his understanding of the differences between speaking and writing a foreign language. Exercise in composition will at first be closely linked with materials being read and discussed; the student will be asked merely to describe, narrate and expand, or to summarize. This composition may

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consist of a summary of the contents with a personal commentary, or the narration of the story assigned previously by the teacher.

The last two stages, guided composition and composition are very important for the eleven the grade students. Both these compositions are highly emphasized in the course of higher education. Due to this fact, I studied proficiency in free writing of higher secondary level students studying in eleven grade of Kathmandu valley belonging to the streams of education, humanities and management.

In the same way, Harmer (2004, p. 48), has suggested. According to him, there are four main elements of process writing.

I)   Planning

Planning is pre-writing activity. It is a stage where writers decide what they are going to write. In this stage, some writers involve in making detailed notes and for others few jotted words may be enough. Still others may do all their planning in their heads. But the fact is that writers will have plan in this stage.

II)   Drafting

Drafting may refer to the first version of piece of writing as a draft. Harmer (2004, p.49), says, "This first 'go' at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later. The writer being immersed in phrases painfully consenting, it was like darting fish with hooks in their gills, dragged from the depths of an unplumbed pool. Activities in this section mark the move from the so-called pre-writing stage to actually writing a first draft.

III)   Editing

Once the writers have produced a daft they then usually read through what they have written to see where it works and where it different. Perhaps the order of the information is not clear or confusing. Writers may then move paragraphs around or write a new introduction, this is what we call editing.

IV) Final Version

Producing a final version is the main goal of the writing process. It is a post writing activity. It is the sum total of planning, drafting and editing in other words once the writers have edited the draft making the changes they consider to be necessary they produce their final version. This may look considerably different from both original plan and the first draft because things have changed in the editing process.

The process wheel can be shown diagrammatically as follows:

Planning   **Drafting**

Final version   **Editing**
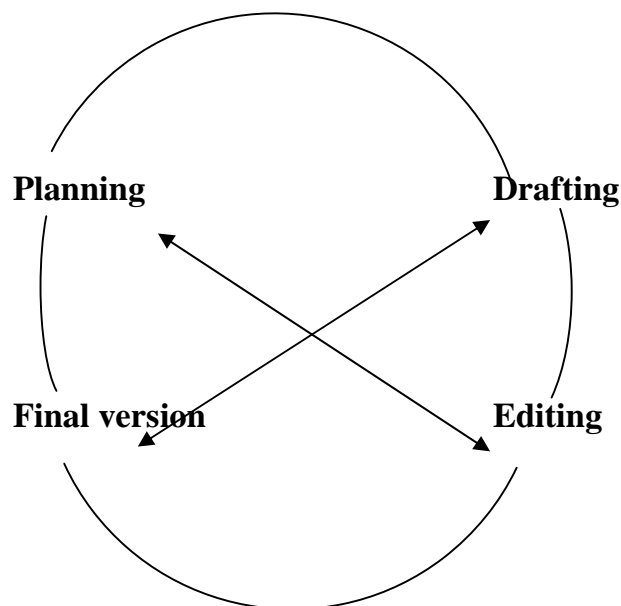
Source: Harmer (2004, p.62)

1.1.5 Writing Proficiency

Proficiency tests are designed to measure peoples' ability in a language, regardless of any training they may have in that language. The content of proficiency test, therefore is not based on the content or objectives of language courses that people taking the test may have followed rather it is based on a specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language in order to be considered proficient.

In some sort of proficiency test, 'proficient means having sufficient command of the language for a particular purpose. An example of this would be a test used to determine whether a student's English is good enough to follow a course of study at some certain university. Such test may even attempt to take in to account the level and kind of English needed to follow course in particular subject areas.

Writing proficiency is the ability of an individual to write or perform in an acquired language. The writing proficiency plays a vital role in securing good marks in the examination and it can spread our knowledge and experience to others. It is concerned with specific skills and abilities rather than general abilities. It is useful for assuring employers or academic intuitions to rely on potential employers. It helps to select people from different institutions and countries in affair manner.

Writing proficiency is one of the most important components of language proficiency. People have realized the critical importance of the search for excellence in developing writing assessment instruments that provide the best possible information about student proficiency which is quite difficult to realize, the direct topic approach has high validity but while quite typical, this method has a serious drawbacks. It will be accompanied into a smaller store range that may occur. If writers were able to find their own level by writing on to topic, then they feel comfortable with. The indirect objectives approach is not easily affected scores, but the validity of this method has been doubted (www/google. Using English com. ESL/forum /Learning English).

In order to be proficient in writing, one has to be able to express his or her ideas, feelings, emotions, and desires by using his or her own language. That is known as free writing or composition. Then, the question arises about how to test writing.

According to Hughes (2003, p.83),

> The best way to test people's writing ability is to get them to write. This is
> not an unreasonable assumption. Even professional testing institutions are
> unable to construct indirect tests which measure writing ability accurately.

And if, in fact satisfactory accuracy were a real possibility, considerations of backwash and ease of construction would still argue for the direct testing of writing within teaching institutions.

Given the decision to test writing ability directly, we are in opposition to taste the testing problem, in general forms for writing. This has the following three parts:

1. We have to set writing tasks that are properly representative of the population of tasks that we should expect the students to be able to perform.

2. The tasks should elicit samples of writing which truly represent the student's ability.

3. It is essential that the samples of writing can and will be scored reliably.

Weir (1993, p.58) states,

Two different approaches for assessing writing ability can be adopted. Firstly, writing can be divided into discrete levels, e.g. grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, and these elements can be tested separately by the use of objective tests. Secondly, more direct extended writing tasks of various types should be constructed. These would have greater construct content, face and wash back validity but would require a more subjective assessment.

Thus, testing writing is a very complex task because testing of it includes infinite number of thing such as spelling, cohesion, coherence, etc. Beside this, the complexity of testing writing increases due to the fact that writing now is not restricted to articles, books, letters, etc on paper alone. Today computer offers a wide range of opportunities to write documents, e-mails, faxes or which have made writing a more complex process because the writer has to be familiar with dazzling array of tools with which to prepare, organize

and present his write-ups. So, here the rubric of cooper became the main measuring rod. The whole writing is judged classifying it in five different topics viz. ideas, organization, wording, flavor and mechanics. And assigned marks to them which is clearly mentioned in the rubric above.

1.2   Review of Related Literature

Any study requires the knowledge of previous background to obtain the targeted objectives and deepen the study. So, I have made an attempt to review related studies, articles and reports to accomplish my study. Writing proficiency has been tested by different research scholars. Most of the researchers were just engaged only in few aspects of their writing. Here some of them have been reviewed and tried to deepen the research.

Paudyal (1999) carried out a study on "Comparative study of English language writing proficiency in higher secondary schools of Gulmi and Kathmandu". The main objective of this study was to investigate the writing proficiency of the twelfth graders of Gulmi and Kathmandu district. This study was also aimed to make comparative study of the English language writing proficiency of the students of different schools of Gulmi and Kathmandu district. For this study, he selected 100 students of higher secondary level by using purposive non-random sampling procedure. Test items were his main tools for data collection showed that the students of urban areas were better than that way of the rural areas. This study also explicitly showed that students of humanities specially the girls had better proficiency.

Barakoti (2001) carried out a study on "Errors Committed by PCL Second Year Students in Writing Free Composition." The major objective of hi study was to find out the errors committed by PCL students in writing free composition. For this purpose, he selected 80 students of PCL second year by using random sampling procedure. He used test items as the major tools to collect necessary data for his study. He found that the students had committed errors in sentence construction, spelling and organization of thought. It also showed that the students did not give proper attention to writing in comparison to other language skills.

Bhattarai (2002) also carried out the study on "A Comparative Study of the Writing Proficiency of the Bachelor's Level Students." The aim of his study was to highlight the writing proficiency of the Bachelor's level students of Kathmandu district. He selected 60 students from three different campuses and institutes of Kathmandu Valley as the primary source of his study. He used both open-ended and close-ended questions for data collection. He found that the students of institutes had greater proficiency in writing than the students of faculties.

Hedge (2005) says "It would be unwise to assume that all students or event the majority of students are skilled writers in their mother tongue. Large numbers of students leave school without becoming proficient writer."

Here, Hedge emphasizes on the important of writing and the reason for being proficient writer. In such way we can also claim the writing has became the measuring device to test someone's language proficiency and judged on the basis of the write ability.

Ghimire (2006) carried out a study on " Errors Committed by twelfth graders in Writing Free Composition" The aim of his study was to accomplish his study, he selected 100 students from five different higher secondary schools of Dhading district. He used both secondary and primary sauces. The test items were his main tools for data collection. The errors in terms of tense, agreement, article, preposition and spelling and found that the students were better in using article than in writing preposition.

Guragain (2008) carried out a study on "Proficiency in free writing of grade eleven students of Kathmandu valley". This study was carried out to compare free writing of grade eleventh students' proficiency and suggest some pedagogical implications. He used both the primary secondary sources. The proficiency was tested stream wise and findings showed that the student of humanities were good in free writing. The researcher suggested to conduct the activities for free writing that could increase the writing ability of the students.

Sharma (2009) carried out a study on "Writing proficiency of the students of higher secondary level". The major objectives of the study was to find out the writing proficiency in terms of punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement and preposition in the writing of twelfth graders. The study was for higher secondary level but the researcher just tested the one aspect of writings that is mechanics. So this study was not enough to find out the writing proficiency of the students because it only emphasized grammaticality. The area that was tested should have extended, so it is not as it was aimed.

Although the research works mentioned above are related to writing proficiency; none of the research works has been carried out purely on writing proficiency of the students of management stream and education stream. Most of the researches carried out on the same topic are just concerned only with few aspects of writing which is not able to test the writing as a whole. There is not any specific categorization of writing and showing of rubrics, too. So, this research aims to find out writing proficiency of higher secondary level. It aims to test above the syntax level too not only the mechanics. This study tends to measure writing dividing it into four elements and marks are allocated accordingly. So, I hope it will be more explicit and unique than previous ones.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

    I)   To find out the writing proficiency of the higher secondary level students.

    II)   To find out the students' proficiency in terms of stream and sex.

    III)   To suggest some pedagogical implications.

1.4   Significance of the Study

Though all four language skills are inseparable from the teaching learning activities, Nepalese students learn the English language for the literacy purpose rather than linguistic purpose. Out of four language skills, reading and writing laid priority for

language learning program. In our Nepalese context, writing skill is given priority. Writing is one of the best ways to represent anything for long time. So, it is important and should be mastered. Thus, this study focuses on the writing proficiency of twelve graders.

This study will be significant mainly for the language teachers teaching English at grade twelve to know the areas of difficulties to design materials and provide necessary help to them. This study will be significant for those people who are engaged in ESL teaching. They are the people who can develop remedial techniques or materials for effective writing. The problems that will be detected by this study will be obviously remedies for those people who want to enhance their writing. So, in one sentence it can be said that it will be significant for students, teachers, EFL/ESL trainers, and to all those who are directly or indirectly involved in teaching and learning English as second language in the country like Nepal.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The process involved throughout research work ensured the research result. Any research needs systematic study following proper methodology to achieve the predetermined objectives. To quote Kumar (1999, p.9), "Research methodology is a sequential procedure and methods to be adopted in a systematic study." So, to make my systematic research study I adopted the following research methodology:

2.1 Sources of Data

For carrying out this research, I used both the primary and secondary sources of data.

2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data

The primary sources of data for this research were the students of grade 12 studying in the Management and Education stream from three different selected Higher Secondary Schools of Rautahat district.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data

The secondary sources of data for this research were some related books written about writing proficiency and testing writing like Rivers (1968), Bryne (1982), Swami (1987), Heaton (1988), White and Arndt (1991), Karki (1996), Hughes (2003), Hedge (2005), and Journals, Articles and thesis approved in the Department of English Education. For further information I also went through many related web-sites, too.

2.2 Sampling Population and Sampling Procedure

I used purposive (Judgmental) non-random sampling procedure in order to select the required number of students. The students of class XII were selected from Education and Management stream 60 students (30 boys and 30 girls) from three different Higher

Secondary Schools were selected as the informants. I selected 10 boys and 10 girls form each school both from Education and Management streams.

2.3 Tools for Data Collection

I designed test items to collect the required information. The test items included three different types of essay questions i.e descriptive, narrative and argumentative for assessing their proficiency in free writing. The final test designed to administer among the informants carried 50 full marks.

The main tools were as follows:

(1) Test item 'A' (free writing):- It carried 50 full marks. It included three different test items for essay writing.

2.4 Process of Data Collection

I adopted the following procedure for collecting data:

i.   I visited the selected higher secondary schools of Rautahat district and talked to the concerned authority for permission.

ii. Test items had been according to the numbers of the students.

iii. I consulted my informants to make them aware of the research that I was going to conduct.

iv. I visited three different higher secondary schools for conducting the test according to the test items that I had prepared.

v.   The test was conducted among the selected students within fixed time.

vi. Answer sheets were collected from the informants.

vii. The answer sheets were examined and analyzed on the basis of pre determined marking rubrics.

2.5 Limitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations:

i) It was limited to grade twelve students of Rautahat district.

ii) The study was limited to only the students studying in the stream of Management and Education.

iii) The study was limited to only students selected from three higher secondary schools.

iv) The study was limited to only testing writing proficiency of the selected students.

v) The study was limited to only the three different higher secondary schools of Rautahat district.

vi) The study was limited to only free writing.

vii)   The study was limited to only the students of Rautahat district.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the informants. This chapter is the crucial part of this research report which consists of all the main aspects of the research study. After the collection of answer sheets, I assigned the marks to students. I first studied and interpreted the data for finding out errors in different areas especially on supra-sentential levels viz. ideas, organization, wording, flavour and mechanics to find out actual proficiency in English writing.

Finally, tabulated the marks and interpreted it by using simple statistical tools. The data that were analyzed and interpreted have been classified into the following headings.

3.1 Total Proficiency

Total proficiency of all the informants from three different Higher Secondary Schools were presented below in the table. The total number of informants for this research study were 80. Full marks assigned to them was 50. All of their writings were assigned on the basis of the rubric made by Cooper. Dividing the total writing in five different topics, the test was assigned. All the marks were divided on ideas, organization, wording, flavor and mechanics. Above mentioned rubric has clear concept about the test and its marking. Here the marks have been analyzed using mean and percentage calculation. This total proficiency included all the five general merits. Here average mark was determined calculating all those marks obtained in different merits. Following table clearly presents the proficiency of the informants:

Table No. 2

Total Proficiency of the Informants

No. of Samples	Full Marks	Average Marks	Above Average		Below Average	
			No of std. Percentage		No of std. Percentage	
60	50	24.11	40	50%	40	50%

Above table shows that the mean score obtained in their writing test by the informants was 24.11 out of 50. The result showed that the students were mild proficient in their writing. Holistic analysis seemed good. Here, 50% of the total informants are above average. As a whole, they were are good in writing.

3.2 College wise Proficiency

Informants for the research study had taken from three different Higher Secondary Schools of Rautahat district. All those Higher Secondary Schools had 20 students (per school) as informants. According to these different colleges, their proficiency had been analyzed using mean and percentage calculation. The following table clearly shows more the proficiency of the students from different colleges.

The schools I consulted were Shree Bal Niketan Higher Secondary School, Shree Jana Jagriti Higher Secondary School and Janajyoti Higher Secondary School. To make more clearly it has been presented vividly in the flowing table.

Table No. 3

College Wise Proficiency

S. No	Resource School	No. of Students	Full Marks	Average Marks	Percentage
01	Shree B.N.H.S.S	20	50	26.75	53.5
02	Shree J.Ja.H. S.S	20	50	23.875	47.75
03	Shree J.Jy.H.S.S	20	50	21.7	43.4
Total				72.325	144.65
Average				24.108	48.216

The above table shows that the average marks of those three different Higher Secondary Schools were different. The average mark of B.N.H.S.S. School was 26.75 which was 53.5% of the total marks. Similarly, the average mark of J.Ja.H.S.S. School was 23.875 which was 47.75% of the total marks. And the average mark of Shree J.Jy.H.S.S. School was 21.7 which was 43.4% of the total marks. Here through the performance of students and marks obtained B.N.H.S.S School stood in first position with 53.5% Similarly, J.Ja.H.S.S School stood in the second position with 47.75% and J.Jy.H.S.S. School remained in the third position with 43.4% of the total marks.

Out of those three Higher Secondary Schools, Bal Niketan Higher Secondary School had higher proficiency in comparison to other two Higher Secondary Schools. The average marks of Bal Niketan, Jana Jagriti and Janajyoti were 26.75, 23.875 and 21.7 respectively. If we look for the average marks of those three college i.e. 24.108 which crossed only by the students of Balniketan Higher Secondary School, where as other two colleges were below average i.e. 23.875 and 21.7 respectively.

3.3 Sex wise Proficiency

As it was declared before the research has been focused on sex wise proficiency, too. The researcher had made his research on boys and girls and tabulated them differently. Boys and girls were supposed to have different mental power and supposed to have different logical ideas and organizing power in their writing. So, here the topic had been named as sex- wise comparison. To be clear on those pre determined values whether the boys or girls were more proficient was targeted. Here in this research the total no. of informants was 60 where boys were 35 and girls were 25. To make it more clear it has been presented in the table below:

Table No. 4

Proficiency of Boys

S. No	Name of Schools	No. of Boys	Full Marks	Marks Obtained
01	Shree B.N.H.S.S	10	50	247.5
02	Shree J.Ja. H. S.S	11	50	266.5
03	Shree J.Jy.H.S.S	14	50	338.5
Total		35		853.5
Average				24.375

This above table shows that there were 10 boys from **B**.N.H.S School, 11 boys were there from J. Ja. H.S. School and 14 boys were there from J.Jy.H.S.S School. Full marks assigned to their test item was 50. The mark that was obtained by the boys of B.N.H.S. School was 247.5 which is sum of the marks obtained by all 10 boys. Similarly there were 11 boys as an informants from J.Ja.H.S. School where sum of their marks was 266.5, and lastly there were 14 boys as a informants in J.Jy.H.S.S School where sum of all 14 boys score was 338.5. If we calculated it in percentage the average marks of boys was 24.375 which falls on the middle proficiency.

Table No. 5

Proficiency of Girls

S. No	Name of Schools	No. of Girls	Full Marks	Marks Obtained
01	Shree B.N.H.S.S	10	50	287.5
02	Shree J.Ja. H. S.S	09	50	211
03	Shree J.Jy.H.S.S	06	50	95.5
Total		25		594
Average				23.76

This above table shows that there were 10 girls from B.N.H.S. School, where total marks obtained by the 10 girls was 287.5. Similarly, there were 9 girls taken as the informants for the research from J.Ja.H.S. School, where sum of all nine girls' marks was 211 and there were only six girls from J.Jy.H.S school and where the sum of marks was95.5. If we see all the marks obtained by all 25 girls who were taken as the informants of this research was 594. By using percentage calculation and simple statistical tools, we found the average mark obtained by all the girls is 23.76 which can be derived by dividing the total marks by the number of all girls, i.e. 594÷25= 23.76.

The average marks of girls fall under middle proficiency according to the rubric but if we see sex-wise proficiency, the boys were more proficient than girls in this research. Here the average marks of boys was 24.375 but the average marks of girls was 23.76 so it could be said boys were little bit proficient.

3.4 Stream wise Proficiency

The research was done under two different streams of class twelve i.e. Education and Management. All those three different Higher Secondary Schools had students from both of the streams viz. Education and Management. There were 60 informants altogether in the research where 33 were from Education and 27 from Management. To make it more clear, it has been presented in the following table:

Table No. 6

Stream Wise Proficiency

S. No	Streams	No. of Students	Marks Obtained	Average Marks
1	Education	33	691	20.939
2	Management	27	755.5	27.981
Total	60		1466.5	48.216
Average			24.108	24.108

This above table shows that there were all together 60 students as the informants of the research. Where there were 33 students from Education stream and 27 students were taken from Management stream. The total marks obtained by the informants from management stream were 755.5. The total marks obtained by the informants from the stream of Education was 691 where there were 33 informants. So, their average marks was 20.939 and the total marks obtained by the informants of management stream was 755.5 ,where there were 27 informants in it. So, the average marks of Management stream was 27.981. If we look it in a holistic way, the total marks obtained by the 60 students was 1466.5 so, the average marks should be 24.108, but the average marks from education was 20.939 which was below average. Whereas the average marks from Management was 27.981which was above average. So, it could be said the students from Education stream were less proficient than the students of the Management stream.

3.5 Topical Analysis of Proficiency

Ideas: Idea is one of the things to be measured in this research. Here, in the writing of the students how they have presented their ideas, how much the ideas are related with the problem is the matter of concern. The highest mark assigned to ideas is 14.5. If the respondent scored below 5, his ideas fall under low category if his he scored 6 to 9 he falls under middle proficiency and if he scored 10 to 14.5 his ideas fall under higher proficiency. This sub topic mainly catches the things as to how the respondent presented his ideas. It also shows how well the students understood the question.

Organization: Organization is another sub topic of this testing rubric. Organization means how the presented ideas are organized, how they are linked. Is there logical relation relationship between the following and preceding sentence etc. Organization also carries marks up to 14.5, out of fifty. If the respondent got below 5 his writing falls under low category, if he got marks 6 to 9, his writing falls under middle category and if the respondent got above 10 marks, his writing falls under higher proficiency.

Wording: Wording is another sub topic of this rubric. Here the test item is tested on the basis of wording. How appropriate words have the respondents mentioned. Are the words appropriate for the sentence and to the condition? Wording carries up to 7 marks out of 50. If the respondent got below 3, his writing falls under low category, if he got 3 to 4.5 his writing falls under middle category, and if he got up to 7 his writing falls under higher class.

Flavor: Flavor is the originality and truthfulness in writing. Here respondents writing judged on the basis of flavor in their writing. Mark to this sub-topic is assigned up to 7 out of fifty. If the respondent got below three, his writing falls under lower category, if he got 3 to 4.5, his writing falls under middle category, and if he got up to 7 his writing falls under higher class.

Mechanics: Mechanics is also the last but not the least item for testing the students' written task. Mechanical aspect looks the grammatical aspect in writing. It shows how

much the learners or writers are competent in grammatical aspect. This also carries up to 7 marks out of fifty marks. If the respondent got below, three his writing falls under lower category, if he got 3 to 4.5 his writing falls under middle category, and if he got up to 7 his writing falls under higher class.

To make it more clear, it is presented in the following table. These all five sub topic is categorized under general merit.

Table No. 7

Topical Proficiency

S. No	G. Mt.	No. of Std.	Marks Obt	Average Marks	Remarks
1	Ideas	60	459.5	7.685	Middle
2	Organization	60	336	5.6	Low
3	Wording	60	241	4.01	Middle
4	Flavor	60	208	3.466	Middle
5	Mechanics	60	206.5	3.441	Middle

This above tables shows that there were altogether sixty informants. There were five different general merits to judge the writing of informants. Students got 7.685 as average marks which fall under middle category according to the measuring rubric. In the same way, they got 5.6 as average mark in organization which falls under low category of proficiency according to the testing rubric. And in the same way wording, flavor and mechanics have average marks 4.01, 3.466, 3.441 respectively, which all fall under middle category of the proficiency based on the rubric. So, what can be said is the students are poor in organizing ideas where as in other four aspects they are in the middle category of proficiency.

CHAPTER-FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After conducting the tests, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the test papers, assigned marks to them and tabulated it under different headings. With the help of tabulation, calculation and analysis of data, the researcher came up with some findings and recommendations. This chapter deals with the two conclusive parts of the research work viz, findings and recommendations.

4.1   Findings

The major findings of the study were as follows.

i)   As a whole 50% of the students were found above average in proficiency and 50% of the students were found below average where average proficiency was 24.11.

ii) The students were found most proficient in English writing with the average marks 26.75.

iii) The students were found less proficient in English writing with the average marks 23.875.

iv) In case of sex-wise comparison boys were found more proficient than girls with the average marks 24.375 and 23.76 respectively.

v)   As there were two different streams in this research, the students from of Management stream were found more proficient than the students of the Education stream with the average marks 27.981 and 20.939 respectively.

vi) Most of the students lacked the organization skill even if they had the good ideas upon the problem they were unable to organize their ideas.

vii)   The main problem was selection and organization of words.

viii)   Students were poor in vocabulary; they could not express their ideas due to poor vocabulary.

ix) Students' writing was found with flavour of their intention in less organized way.

x) The mechanical aspect of their writing was found only satisfactory according to the level of students.

xi) The students were found least proficient in English writing with the average marks 21.7.

xii) Most of the students were found with good ideas towards the problem.

4.2 Recommendations

When we go through any research, we find problems and their remedies, too. In the same way, the research study on writing proficiency of twelfth graders of Rauthahat district showed some strengths as well as weakness of the students. The writing was tested and assigned marks to the different sub topics. So, lack of the knowledge of mechanics, lack of knowledge of ideas etc is not all in all in isolation. So, going through out their writing, found is that the same student was good in one aspect but poor in another. To make it more clear one student had good marks on ideas of writing but his use of mechanics was poor. On the basis of the findings of the research work, I suggested the following recommendations for pedagogical implications:

I. Students should be encouraged towards writing. Rewards should be used to motivate the students to participate in it. Especially government aided higher secondary schools have fewer activities in free writing. So, using any suitable approaches and methods writing habit of students should be developed.

II. The students should be made free to express themselves in various writing types such as essay writing, story writing, letter writing, an article writing and report writing.

III. Organizing their ideas was the most difficult thing for most of the students. So, activities like collecting ideas from the group and organizing them should be emphasized.

IV. One of the major demerits was less writing practice which made difficult to present their ideas in written forms. So, writing habit should be encouraged.

V. Integrated teaching may be one of the best techniques to improve proficiency in mechanical aspects of the students' writing. Self correction and peer correction technique should be used to encourage some deserved students.

VI. Students should be activated in the class in writing tasks. Teacher can only present some key ideas and should assign the task to the students in group first and individually later.

VII. Sufficient home assignment for free writing should be given to the students. And some good writing should be rewarded time and again to motivate students towards writing.

VIII. Textbooks especially on writing practice should be prescribed to the students of grade twelve allocating certain marks on it.

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