

Writing Proficiency of Grade Seven Students

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Education
In Partial Fulfillment for the Master of Education in English**

**Submitted by
Shanta Sharma**

**Faculty of Education
Tribhuvan University
Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal
2023**

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Declaration

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

Date:12-04-2023

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Shanta Sharma

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents
For the exceptional love, endless support and sacrifices.

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Firstly and most importantly, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, **Mr. Resham Acharya**, Teaching Assistant, Department of English Education, Faculty of Education, Kirtipur for his expert advice, supervision and guidance from the initial stage of my research and with regular inspirations, genuine encouragements, substantial directions and invaluable suggestions.

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Shanta Sharma

Abstract

The Present thesis entitled Writing Proficiency of grade Seven Students is an attempt to explore the free writing proficiency of basic level students of Nepalgunj City in terms of punctuation, spelling, paragraph writing, letter writing and essay writing. To meet the objective of research survey research design was adopted. To meet the objectives 40 basic level students from 3 community schools were selected by using simple random sampling procedure. Test item was used as the main tool for collecting the necessary data. Punctuation, spelling, paragraph writing, letter writing and essay writing test item were included in the test. The study showed that the students of D.S.S. were seen the most proficient in writing with average score of 22.7 and the students of S.S.A.V were seen the least proficient in free writing with average score of 12.07. The study showed that the students of D.S.S were found to be the most proficient in paragraph writing, application writing and students of S.S.A.V were found to be least proficient. In average girls were seen to be most proficient then boys. The average marks obtained by girls and boys were 33.2% and 32.14% respectively.

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 as well as it involves research problem and questions, objectives of the study and delimitations of the study. The second chapter deals with review of related literature as well as conceptual framework. The third chapter contains the research methodology which includes sampling procedure, tools for data collection, process of data collection. The fourth chapter consists of the analysis and interpretation of the data, where data have been analyzed in terms of different headings, like total proficiency, school wise proficiency. The fourth chapter deals with findings and recommendations of the study. References and appendices are appended at the last.

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List of Abbreviations

CBS	:	CentralBureauofStatics
DOE	:	DistrictEducationOffice
EFL	:	EnglishasForeignLanguage
ELT	:	EnglishLanguageTeaching
L1	:	MotherTongue
T.U	:	Tribhuvan University
SSAV	:	Shree Sharada Adharbhut Vidhyalaya
DSS	:	Dhamboji Secondary School
SNRAS	:	Shree Nepal Rastriya Adharbhut School

Chapter I

Introduction

The study entitled **Writing Proficiency of Grade Seven Students**. This section consists of background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives, significance of the study, research questions, and delimitations of the study and operational definitions of key terms.

General Background

Writing is one of the most important skills in learning a new language. It is often regarded as the visual representation of speech. In simple terms, writing is a productive skill which involves manipulating, structuring and communicating. It is a productive skill in the sense that it is related to manipulate the mechanics of writing, structuring them into sensible words, sentences and paragraphs in order to make the reader understand them earning of such complex effort. Moreover, writing is the act of placing the graphic symbols that present language in order to convey the meaning so that the reader can grasp the information. It is the last language skill and it is also the most difficult of all the skills. It is difficult not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating these ideas in readable text. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. Second language learners have to pay attention to higher level of skills of planning and organizing as well as the lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. We are able to share ideas, arouse feelings, persuade and convince other people through writing. 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 convention 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 we can say 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.

In this respect language is a means of social contact. It is a social phenomenon and used in the society. Communication can be done through several means but language is, to the far extent, most common means for communication. It is undoubtedly the human possession. It is distinctive property of human beings. This is with the unique possession of language; human beings are able to be superior and distinct from other animals. Language is also defined as a system of conventional, spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings as members of social group and participants in it culture communicate. In this regard, it is a means of intercommunication as well as social control.

Bell and Burnaby (1984, cited in Nunan, 1998) point out:

Writing is an 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 (p.36).

Similarly, White and Arndt (1991) say:

Writing is far from being 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-selecting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written as well as what has been written, and searching for language with which to express exact meaning. Moreover, writers rarely know at the outset exactly. What it is they are going to write because many ideas are only revealed during the act of writing (p.3).

From these definitions, we can say 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. That is why, it demands caution in using it. It is a transparent mirror, which can vividly present our knowledge as well as experiences. White (1991, p.3) views that, "Writing is far from a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols. It is thinking process in its own." Similarly, Harmer(1991, p.78) says, "Writing is an activity through which human beings communicate with one another and transmit their accommodate culture from one generation to another. It equally provides with possibilities to discover and articulate ideas in many ways." The definition as mentioned above given by White and Arndt and Harmer, from this definition, we can say that writing is not only concerned with the transcription of language into graphic forms instead it involves great thinking process which means writing requires plenty of intellectual effort. It is an activity through which human beings share their culture, religion, values, ideas, and assumptions from one generation to another.

Statement of the Problem

Writing skill is one of the complex processes to be developed among the students while learning language activities including controlled writing, free writing and guided writing while learning a language. Writing is a form of communication. Writing skill is one of the important skills of learning English language. Writing allows us to express our thoughts and feelings. Likewise, writing makes us smarter by engaging our memory and motor skills. It has given focus on writing skill as difficult one and should be taught only after the students have received other skill and aspect of English language teaching.

There are four different types of language skills which are known as reading skill, writing skill, listening skill and speaking skill. Among them writing skill is one of the complex process which is also taken as secondary skill. The educated person only can take benefit through it. Similarly, writing has three important branches under which we take controlled writing, free writing and guided writing respectively. Guided writing is semi-controlled writing activity. Writing is not totally controlled but guided in some way. Heaton, (1975, p.524) states, "Guided writing is an essential tool in a balanced writing curriculum, providing an additional supported step towards independent writing". Using clues or hints in the course of writing makes easier to

students in writing. Using clauses, phrases, developing skeleton, different idioms and paraphrasing are different types of activities of guided writing. I have seen that guided writing has been defined differently by various scholars. But no one has revealed the fact that what is guided writing and how it develops the proficiency of learners.

People also say that private school students are better than the community schools in writing. Therefore, I attempted to find out the writing proficiency of students being specific to free writing. Moreover, I also attempted to compare the proficiency in guided writing of grade seven students.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were as follows:

- a) To find out the free writing proficiency of grade seven students of Nepalgunj city in terms of punctuation, spelling, paragraph writing, letter writing, report writing and essay writing.
- b) To compare the proficiency of the students of community schools and also to make its item-wise comparison.
- c) To suggest some pedagogical implications.

Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following research questions

- a) What is the proficiency level of grade seven students in Nepalgunj?
- b) What are the differences in writing proficiency among different community schools in Nepalgunj?
- c) What are the difficulty levels of writing proficiency at basic level?

Significance of the Study

Though all the four language skills are inseparable from the teaching learning activities, Nepalese students learn the English language for the literacy purpose rather than linguistic purpose. They also assume that listening and speaking have low priority while reading and writing have high priority for language learning program. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize on writing skill in Nepalese context. So, this

study focuses on the writing proficiency of seventh graders in free writing.

This study will be significant mainly for the language teachers teaching English at grade seven. They are the people who can develop remedial classes or materials to improve writing skill. This study will also provide some insights on proficiency aspect of free writing. The findings of the study will be helpful for the teachers, students, researchers, textbook writers and others who are interested to work in the field of writing proficiency.

Delimitations of the Study

This study had the following delimitations:

- i. The study was delimited to Nepalgunj Submetropolitan city.
- ii. Only 40 students of grade seven (three community schools) basic level schools were selected as the sample for the study.
- iii. The study was delimited to a set of test items given in Appendix-I.
- iv. The study focused only on seven varieties of writing activities.
- v. The study was delimited only on writing skill of language.

Operational Definition of the Key Terms

The following were the key terms used in the study:

Writing proficiency. The ability to communicate information, analysis, and persuasive points of view effectively in writing. Writing proficiency is the ability of an individual to write or perform in an acquired language.

Writing error. Writing error is a mistake in the form of grammar, spelling, punctuation, or word choice that makes your paper less readable and more difficult to understand. Grammatical errors are very common and can make it difficult for readers to understand what you're trying to say.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

This chapter of research consists of reviews of related theoretical and empirical literature, implications of reviewed literature and conceptual framework of the study.

Review of Related Theoretical Literature

One of the most important aspect to help the learners to express their ideas orally or graphically is theoretical knowledge about contents and skills. The more theoretical knowledge about writing skill we have, the more we express our ideas in written form. So, this chapter aims to providing some theoretical background of the study thematically.

Writing skill. Writing is one of the most important skills in learning a new language. It is often regarded as the visual representation of speech. In simple terms, writing is a productive skill which involves manipulating, structuring and communicating. It is a productive skill in the sense that it is related to manipulate 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.

Moreover, writing is the act of placing the graphic symbols that present language in order to convey the meaning so that the reader can grasp the information. It is the last language skill and it is also the most difficult of all the skills. It is difficult not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating these ideas in readable text.

The skills involved in writing are highly complex. Second language learners have to pay attention to higher level of skills of planning and organizing as well as the lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. We are able to share ideas, arouse feelings, persuade and convince other people through writing. We are able to discover and articulate ideas in the way that only writing makes possible.

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From this definition we can say 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.

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From these definitions, we can say 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. That is why, it demands caution in using it. It is a transparent mirror, which can vividly present our knowledge as well as experiences. White (1991, p.3) views that, "Writing is far from a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols. It is thinking process in its own." Similarly, Harmer (1991, p.78) says, "Writing is an activity through which human beings communicate with one another and transmit their accommodate culture from one generation to another. It equally provides with possibilities to discover and articulate ideas in many ways." The definition as mentioned above given by White and Arndt and Harmer, from this definition, we can say that writing is not only concerned with the transcription of language into graphic forms instead it involves great thinking process which means writing requires plenty of intellectual effort. It is an activity through which human beings share their culture, religion, values, ideas, and assumptions from one generation to another. While writing, everyone needs sample of micro skills.

Writing as a process vs product. There is a great dispute whether writing is a process or writing as a product. Traditionally in curriculum practice, a distinction has been made between the activities of the syllabus designer, which have been focused on products and the activities of the methodologies, which have been focused on process. However, in modern era of ELT scenario of teaching writing, this oversimplistic division has become difficult to sustain. Process oriented approach of writing views that competent writers never produce final text as their first endeavor, it takes a long time to be accomplished and it is often painful process in which the final text comes through a successive draft. Miller (1992, p.7) views that "every writer has his /her own process but experienced writer follows some processes which include finding topic, planning, drafting, editing, revising, and producing the final draft."

Writing can not be accomplished within the single stage instead it requires several stages only then anyone can produce the effective piece of text. The writers have to make the greatest effort from the very beginning to the final product. For and foremost, he or she should find the topic on what topic he/she is going to write then should make the

planning which is considered as pre-writing activities.

Spider-gram technique is the most useful technique for the sake of gathering the ideas of brainstorming. Then the writer has to consult the materials for information. Another process to planning is to prepare notes. This can be both structured and unstructured. After that the writer has to organize the notes which mean grouping ideas into framework. This activity gives the rough idea of maintaining coherence and unity. After the organization of notes, another process of writing is to making an outline. Here the writer makes an outline on the basis of organized notes. The organized ideas are to keep in certain order and relationship. When plenty of ideas are gathered at the planning and outline stage, the first attempt at writing i.e. drafting may proceed quickly. Drafting activities make them move from pre-writing activities to actual writing activities. They are moving from writer-based to reader-based writing. Still in this stage, the writer can add, delete, substitute and make the transposition. First draft is not the final product. Again the writer revises and edits maintaining all the aspects of writing. Finally the writer produces the final text which is the goal of writing. After doing all the activities mentioned above the writing can be accomplished. This is how in this modern era writing is conceived as process not the end product. On the other hand, product oriented approach to the development of writing favor classroom activities in which the learner engaged in imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language. This mostly occurs at the level of sentences. Under the circumference of product oriented approach of writing, it is believed that student can read expected to write coherent paragraph, they should have mastered at the level of sentences. So writing classes should entirely devoted to sentences formation and grammar exercises which means the main emphasis a product oriented approach is on the development of formal aspect of language.

Importance of writing

skill. Writing is one of the most important and superior skills for learning a language. It is a productive skill, which needs proper mechanics of writing to make sensible sentences and paragraphs. Writing helps to transmit thoughts, feelings and ideas from past to present and present to future. Thus, it is a transparent mirror, which can present our knowledge as well as experiences. Writing is the output of listening, speaking and reading skills.

Writing skill is thus an important productive skill which is called 'product' and 'process'. In our examination system of all levels, the writing proficiency plays a vital role in securing good marks. If the students are not trained in writing skill, they cannot give their answers in a limited time of examination. In this way, the students must develop their writing skill to pass the examination. The students cannot be perfect in any language without the knowledge of writing skill.

Writing skill provides variety in the classroom activities. Writing is a transparent mirror that can present our thoughts, and experiences. Written documents can be preserved for long time. Writing has widely been used to transmit experiences, and knowledge related to science, technology, religion, philosophy, politics, sociology, literature and culture. Furthermore, the following points make the writings so important:

Writing is the primary basis upon which our work, our learning, and our intellect will be judged-in college, in the work place and in the community. Writing expresses who we are as a person, Writing is portable and permanent. It makes our thinking visible. Writing helps us more easily among facts, inferences, and opinions without getting confused and without confusing our readers. Writing promotes our abilities to pose worthwhile questions. Writing fosters our ability to explain a complex position to readers and to ourselves. Writing helps us to give feedback. Writing helps us to give feedback. Writing requires that we anticipate our readers' need. Our ability to do so demonstrates our intellectual flexibility and maturity. Writing is an essential job skill.

Characteristics of good writing. Writing is an art of using language. But, it is a very complex task to write clearly and explicitly. In this context, learning to write either in a first or a second language is one of the most difficult tasks. Learning to write is a difficult and lengthy process, that one induces anxiety and frustration in many learners. Good writing skills are essential to academic success and requirement for many occupations and professions. Making a simple and clear writing is difficult from the syntactic and semantic point of view. It requires the good imagination and logical sequence of thought. Ur (1996, p.159) lists the following features to distinguish written text from spoken discourse:

Permanence, Explicitness, Density, Detachment, Organization, Standard language, A learnt skill, Sheer amount and importance. Thus, writing is the systematic organization of information. The above mentioned characteristics of good writing are generalized as follows:

Simplicity. The main quality of a good writing is reducing the complexities and expressing ideas or thoughts in a natural way. Simplicity refers to tactlessness of mind; freedom from cunning or duplicity; it avoids the extra stylistic words, genres, jargons, flourishing and ambiguous words and so on. Simplicity and smoothness make writing understandable and readable which never disturbs the reader to understand the gist of the writing.

Clarity. Good writing must be absolutely free from ambiguity and should be crystal clear. There should not be different interpretations or misinterpretation in the writing. Ideas should be presented in clear, orderly, readable, understandable and informative style. Clarity refers to clearness or lucidity as to perception or understanding. The writer must always be conscious of the reader and information style. The writer should have the idea of what to say, in which sequence, what is said and how to express something. Good writing should avoid exaggeration as well as contradictory statements.

Continuity. Continuity of thought and natural link of ideas are important features in writing. Continuity means the mixture of descent, persistence, humor and deliberation. There must be continuity of thought from one word to the following word, from one phrase to another, from one sentence to another, from the first paragraph to the second paragraph and first chapter to the second chapter.

Economy. A shorter statement or analysis employing fewer terms is preferred to the one that is longer, other things being equal. The greatness of a writer lies in his/her capacity to express his/her ideas briefly and effectively. Economical writing is efficient and esthetically satisfying. While it makes a minimum demand on the energy and patience of readers; it returns to them a maximum of sharply compressed meaning. Good writing is like a gold coin, small in compass but great in value. Economy of words without sacrificing the meaning is the secret of good writing.

Coherence. Good writing deals with one topic, at a time. According to Swami (1987, p. 13), “in a good piece of writing, all the sentences are closely related to the central idea.”

Complete. Having all parts or lacking nothing refers to completeness. A good writing must be complete. It completes the topic it deals with. Good writing should avoid exaggeration and hyperbolically and self-contradictory statements.

Free from error. As writing is the permanent record of one's thoughts or ideas. It must be accurate. Every written piece has to be free from orthographic, semantic, grammatical, idiomatic, punctuation and other errors.

Besides, every good writing must have example and illustrations to explain abstract and difficult ideas and new information. There should be appropriate direction, adequate facts and figures, depth of knowledge, and specificity and maximum objectivity in every piece of effective writing.

White & Arndt, (1991, p.4) mention, “Writing involves thinking, planning, assembling, classifying and organizing processes”. Thus, ability to write good or effective English is not a god-given gift to a few people. The art of writing is based upon one's own mental capability. It is very important for specific subject matter.

The above characteristics of a good writing play a vital role for proficiency in writing of the grade nine students. Because they should have the ability to write clear, economic, simple, continuous and error-free sentences.

Components of writing. Writing is often a long and painful process in which the final text emerges through successive drafts. Thus, writing is not merely an activity of encoding verbal thoughts in printed symbols but it is the combination of various components. In this context, Heaton (1991, p.142) states that writing is not a single skill but it is the combination of the following components:

Mechanics. Mechanics refers to those aspects of writing such as spelling, use of punctuation marks (e.g. apostrophes, hyphens), capitals, abbreviations and

numbers which are often dealt within the revision or editing stage of writing. In the words of Heaton, (1975, p.145), "Mechanics of writing is the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language". Although incorrect spelling does not often prevent the understanding of a written message, it can adversely affect the readers' judgment. However, at times slight change in spelling of words can bring drastic change in the meaning they express. Overuse or under use of punctuation is often formed on by many writers or editors of English. Though punctuation is frequently a matter of personal style, violation of well-established customs makes any piece of writing look awkward to many readers. Thus, mechanics of writing is a very basic concept in writing process.

Coherence. Coherence refers to the relationship between an utterance and the meaning it conveys. It is the semantic relationship of different sense units between and among the utterances. These links may be based on the shared knowledge between the writer and the readers. Generally a paragraph has a coherence, if it is a series of sentences that develop a main idea (i.e. with a topic sentence and supporting details which relate to it). Ideas and thoughts should be connected logically in a piece of writing.

So, Harmer, (2004, pp.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 where 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, or example? A coherent text will not mask the writer's purpose (ii) the writer's line of thought, the reader 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 readers should be able to follow the story and not get confused by the time jumps and too many characters etc.

Anyway, coherence is semantic and logical relationship between different units of language in a text.

Cohesion. Cohesion refers to the grammatical and or lexical relationships between different elements of a text. This may be the relationship between different sentences or between different parts of a sentence. Sentential cohesion occurs within a sentence whereas textual cohesion occurs across sentences.

Similarly, in the words of Harmer (2004, p.22),

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.

Orthographic and paraorthographic texts. Orthography deals particularly with writing system and spelling system. Different languages of the world use different types of writing; for example, logographic writing, syllabic writing and alphabetic writing. It is equally important to draw students' attention to the fact how Paraorthographic texts can convey the same meaning more clearly and more precisely. Regarding this, O'Grady (1997, p.554) says, "Paraorthographic texts include charts, tables, graphs, etc. Students should be trained to convert a prose text into Paraorthographic display or vice versa".

Since my study has been based on guided writing, components of writing play a very crucial role for developing skills in guided writing.

Types of free composition. Composition writing can be of various types depending upon the purpose of the writer and the genre he/she is involved in. The main types of free writing are as follows:

Narrative (narrating an incident/story). Narrative composition includes simpler old stories, histories, autobiographies (story of personal life), personal experience, everyday life etc. The students are given simple narrative structures to write free composition. After that, students should follow simple structures themselves, e.g. 'a bad dream that frightened Samjhana,' 'your journey to Madi,' 'an unforgettable moment in my life' etc.

Descriptive (describing in the form of an essay or paragraph). Describing is a type of free writing on which the students express their ideas in the form of an essay or paragraph, e.g. 'Write an essay about 'Rivers in Nepal'.

Reflective (replying in the form of a letter or application). Replying is another kind of free writing. It is also creative writing. In this writing, the students read the letter/application or wanted notice and write the reply taking care of the actual purpose.

Explanatory (explaining the reasons for something etc.). Explaining is the fourth kind of free writing. It is also a creative writing. Learners think about the topics of paragraph/essay and they write about the subject matters which are responsible for.

Imaginative (pretending to be the different). Imaginative composition is a form of free composition in which students imagine themselves as different persons, or being in a different place. Imagined character may be the writer himself/herself or someone else. Fiction writing or literary writing is an example of imaginative writing.

Stages of free writing. Learning to write coherently and in a way which is appropriate for one's purpose and audience is something which many people can never easily manage in a foreign language because there exist a number of conflicting theories of planning and teaching a course in writing. Most often, process approach is used in teaching writing rather than genre-based approach. Process approach in writing consists of four basic stages.

The four basic stages of teaching writing are:

i) Planning ii) Making an outline iii) Preparing the first draft and iv) Revising, editing and producing the final draft.

The term process writing has been bandied about quite a while in EFL/ESL classrooms. It is no more than writing process approach to teaching writing. Process writing in the classroom may be constructed as a programme of instruction which provides students with a series of planned learning experiences to help

them understand the nature of writing at every point. White and Arndt (1991, p.47) present the following model for writing process:

Free writing activities. Free writing is a complex activity, which requires a variety of skills. It involves the production and arrangement of written sentences in an appropriate way. At this stage, the learners know how to select the appropriate vocabulary and structure to express their ideas in a meaningful way. They can express their ideas freely in this stage. Hedge (1986, p.6) states that “freestyle contains many different types of writing for a range of purposes, for example, writing letters, articles, instructions, notes and reports.” It has sometimes been called speed writing or quick writing because its main feature is writing as quickly as possible without stopping. Another main feature of free writing is that the writer concentrates on content rather than on the form. In this way, the primary focus is on getting as many ideas down on paper as possible. At a later stage quality can take over from quantity in a process of selection and redrafting.

Among the above mentioned types of free writing activities, the main focus here is on the paragraph writing, dialogue writing, letter writing, report writing and essay writing which are briefly described below.

Paragraph writing. A paragraph can be defined as a piece of writing in which one's thought as the central idea or controlling idea is developed by means of supporting details. The supporting details can be examples, reasons, comparative statements, or other related facts. Every good paragraph should have a controlling idea, to which its sentences are related. A paragraph is regarded as a good one only if the readers can completely understand the unit of information it contains; and if its central or controlling idea is completely developed by means of appropriate supporting details. There are different types of paragraphs such as descriptive, narrative, expository, reflexive etc.

Dialogue writing. The literal meaning of ‘dialogue’ is the conversation or talk between two people; but there can be more than two participants or characters in a conversation, involved. Dialogue takes place in real life situations. There must be a topic or subject for a dialogue. We never converse without any purpose. So a dialogue is a conversation or a talk on a topic for a particular purpose between two or among

more characters. “A dialogue literally means ‘talk between two people’”. (Dave et. al.1988). According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, “a dialogue is a conversation or talk.” There are formal and informal dialogues.

Letter writing. Letter writing is an art. It is the complete communication between friends, relatives and organizations. The information imparted by the letters should be clear and natural. The language and style differ from one letter to another. For instance, a personal letter is normally written in personal and informal style; and it can consist of colloquialisms, slang and dialects as well. On the other hand, a business letter or an official letter is written in a formal and impersonal style. The types of letter are personal letter, business letter, official letter, informal letter, letter of application etc.

Report writing. A report is a factual account of something heard, seen, done, studied, experimented etc. which is published or broadcast in written or spoken form and is intended to the target receiver. A report writer can include his opinion and recommendation on the basis of the fact observed or resulted. The form of the report has to such that the intended receiver must draw the information from the report quickly and easily. The main types of report are reporting events, reporting excursions and newspaper report.

Essay writing. ‘An essay’ means a piece of composition on a topic. The definition of it literally varies from person to person but the entire semanticity of different definition, to some extent, seems to be similar. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines ‘essay’ as a “piece of writing usually short and in prose, on any one subject”.

Narayanaswami (2000) says:

The essay is a long piece of composition on a theme or subject. It is self content, that is, it has a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning usually introduces the subject in general form. The middle of the essay develops the theme and presents the writer’s thought on it. Then the essay is brought to a close in a suitable concluding passage (p.92).

The main types of essay are; descriptive, narrative, expository and reflective essay.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

To carry out the research, I took help from different books, journals, articles and the research works previously carried out in this field. Some of the reviewed literature's are mentioned here in the following paragraphs:

Giri (1981) carried out a study on "A comparative study of English Language Proficiency of the Students Studying in Grade Ten in basic level schools of Doti and Kathmandu District." He selected ten (five from each) government-aided schools from those two districts using lottery system. From those schools, he took 100 (fifty from each district) students through random sampling as the sample for his study. His study was aimed to find out the students' ability of conversation and normal speech in English. The finding was that the students of secondary level studying in Kathmandu were better than those of studying in Doti.

Paudel (1999) carried out a study on "Comparative Study of English Language Writing Proficiency in Higher basic level schools of Gulmi and Kathmandu." The main objective of his study was to investigate the writing proficiency of the twelfth graders of Gulmi and Kathmandu districts. The finding of his study was that the students of urban areas were better than that of rural areas. This study explicitly showed that students of humanities and science faculties, specially the girls had better proficiency.

Similarly, Aryal (2001) carried out a study on "Listening Proficiency of Grade Ten Students." The objectives of his study were to find out the listening proficiency of the students in both seen and unseen texts and to compare it with the students of different schools of Gorkha district on the basis of the availability of appropriate listening test materials. The major finding of this study was that there was no significance difference between the proficiency in the seen and unseen text. Similarly, the listening test materials provided to this level are not so appropriate.

Bhattarai (2001) carried out a study on “The Use of Punctuation in Free Writing.” The main objective of his study was to establish the hierarchies of the total use, correct use and erroneous use of punctuation marks on the basis of their frequency in the written texts and to analyze their hierarchies. It did not cover the whole area of punctuation. Students used altogether thirteen items of punctuation marks. Only eleven items of punctuation were found erroneous.

Bhattarai (2002) carried out a study on “A Comparative Study of Writing Proficiency of Bachelor Level Students.” The main objective of his study was to find out the writing proficiency of bachelor level students’ in free and guided writing and to compare it between the boys and girls. The finding of his study was that the students of bachelor level are more proficient in guided writing than in the free writing. Similarly, he found out that there was no significant difference between the proficiency of boys and girls.

Sah (2003) carried out a study on “A Writing Proficiency of Class Nine students.” The main objective of his study was to find out the proficiency of nine graders in free and guided writing and the main finding of his study was that the students were seen more proficient in guided writing than in free writing with the mean score 23.725 and 18.85 respectively.

Ghimire (2004) carried out a research entitled “A Study on the Proficiency of the Students in Writing Skills.” The main purpose of his study was to find out and compare the students’ proficiency in pronunciation and to compare the proficiency of the boys and girls. The finding shows that performance of the boys was better than that of the girls. In the same way, Khanal (2007) carried out a research entitled “Letter Writing Ability of Grade Ten students’.” The main purpose of his study was to find out the students’ proficiency in using different mechanics of writing and language used in different kinds of letter writing. The finding shows that the students were poor in the proper use of mechanics of writing. They obtained only 37 marks in average, out of 100.

Kafle (2008) conducted a research entitled “A Study on the Proficiency in Guided Writing.” The main purpose of this study was to find out and compare

the students' guided writing proficiency and to find their weaknesses and strengths in writing. For this study, 60 students of class ten of Kathmandu valley and ten students from 6 schools were taken. He used test items as the tool for data collection, he found that the proficiency of girls was better than of boys and private school's proficiency was better than of public school.

Paudel (2008) carried out a research on "Proficiency of Grade Nine Students in Free and Guided Writing." The main purpose of this study was to find out the proficiency of grade nine Students' in free and guided writing. The finding of his study was that the students were seen more proficient in guided writing than in free writing.

Likewise, Karki (2010) is carrying out a research entitled "Grade Seven Students' Proficiency in Guided Writing." The main objective of his study was to find out the grade seven students' proficiency in guided writing and to compare the proficiency of girls and boys belonging to community schools. The finding of the study shows that only 37% of the students obtained above the average marks and other 63% of the students obtained below average marks. In total, the boys were more proficient than the girls.

Implications of the Review for the Study

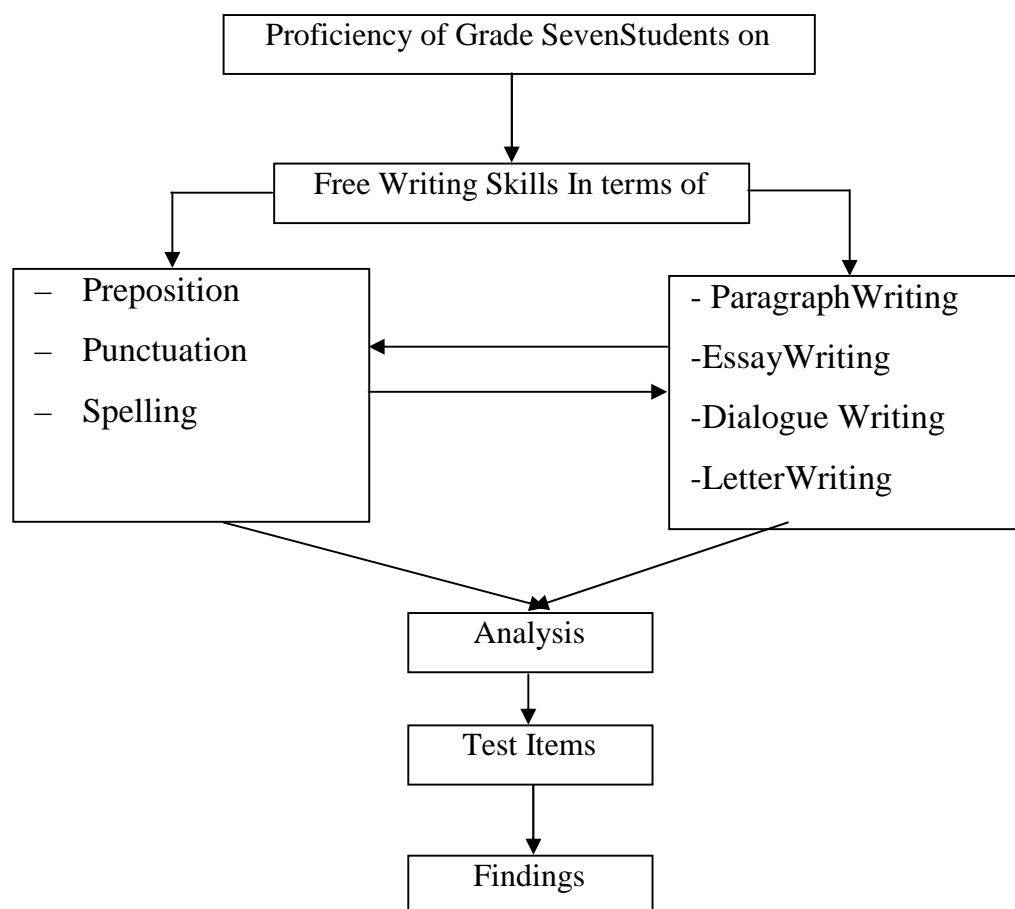
In literature review, the central concern is to examine, explore and evaluate what has been studied before relating this topic and attempt to establish the relevance information in this study. Therefore, for this research paper I have reviewed some research works and sources related to letter grading system including books, journals, articles, reports, and different theses submitted to the department of English education and so on. Honestly, I have visited different websites as well. After reviewing these entire sources and research works helped me to bring clarity and focus on research problem, improve methodology and contextualize the findings and also got lots of ideas for preparing this research work. It is equally important to examine and evaluate what has been said and what has not been said yet for finding new area for further research.

In the above discussion, I have reviewed both theoretical ideas and

empirical studies related to the topic. They are all related to some study area from the empirical research study. I got information about the various procedures needed to conduct research study. They provided researcher a lot of information regarding sampling strategy, use of tools, analysis and interpretation procedures. All these theoretical and empirical studies helped me to carry out my research study. They stood as the backbone of my research study to make more informative and reliable. The entire sources have helped me to bring the clarity and focus on research problem, select methodology and estimate the findings.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is the pictorial representation of the research study. Through the review of the related literature's mentioned in the preview section, I am curious enough to carry out the study to investigate the proficiency of grade seven students. The conceptual framework of this research study was as follows:



Chapter III

Research Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted by I while carrying out the research. I adopted the following research methodology to carry out the research:

Design of the Study

To carry out this study, I adopted survey research design. Survey research is a type of research which tries to study large and small population by selecting and studying samples in order to accomplish research purpose. It represents a wide range of target population. This is the most commonly used design in education in all of the research. It also gathers data which can be processed statically. Similarly, Kerlinger (1986) as cited in Ojha and Bhandary (2013, p.201) argues that survey research is a kind of research which studies large and small population or universe by selecting and studying sample selected from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelationship of social and psychological variables.

Survey research design is a superficial and more important research design to study and obtain opinion, attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, I selected survey research design for my research study which has provided and directed me to complete my research easily. I examined proficiency of students in free writing at basic level by taking a survey of their free writing practices in the given test.

The main reason to use survey research is Surveys provide researchers with reliable, usable, primary data to inform business decisions. They are important because the data comes directly from the individuals you have identified in your goal. And surveys give you a detailed, systematic way to view and analyze your data.

Sources of Data

I used only primary sources of data in this research study. The primary source was used for collecting and analyzing the data.

The students of grade seven who took part in the test program and the teacher teaching English in the related classes as well as the related schools of Nepalgunj were the primary sources of data. The primary data were mainly collected from the students of grade seven students of the selected schools. Likewise, I had collected secondary data from articles, thesis, journals, websites, books and research.

Population, Sample and Sampling Strategy

All the students studying in class seven in community schools of Nepalgunj were the study population for this study. The sample size of this study was forty. Ten percent student of grade seven from each school was selected as a sample for this study. For this research work, I first of all, selected three government-aided basic level schools by using simple random sampling procedure (10 Percent from each school). Then I selected students from each school as a sample for study by using simple random sampling procedure. I used the fish-bowl draw method to select the sample from the whole class.

Tools for Data Collection

The main tools for data collection were the test items. I prepared the sample questions to find out the writing proficiency of the students selected from government-aided schools. Those test items contained seven varieties of writing activities (e.g. choosing the correct punctuation, ability to find out correct spelling paragraph writing, letter writing and essay writing) each carrying different marks (10-25). I evaluated those tasks in terms of organization of information, grammar, coherence, cohesion, clarity, and mechanics of writing.

The main criteria followed by I while evaluating the students' free writing proficiency were as follows:

S.N.	Criteria	Marks allocated
1	Organization of information	2
2	Proper use of mechanics of writing	2
3	Clarity of writing	2
4	Grammar	2
5	Economy and completeness	2

Total	10
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Similarly, the proficiency of the students was determined into the ratings scale given below:

Obtained Marks	80 and above	70-80	60-70	50-60	40-50	Below 40
Proficiency Level	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Below average	Poor

Process of Data Collection

To collect the data, I prepared the test items based on the level of students. Then I visited the selected schools and contacted the school authority for the management of proper time to conduct the tests. Before distributing the test items, I consulted the students and made them clear about the nature and purpose of the task. Then, he conducted the test and collected the answer sheets of the students.

Ethical Considerations

Before collecting the data, I took permission with the supervisor for the betterment of my study. I followed the rules and norms of research and was careful while taking citation from other sources. I took only required data and information. I did not go against of my supervisor and participants while analyzing and interpreting the data. I maintained the legacy of ethnic research. The information taken from the different schools was only for my study not for publicity.

Chapter IV

Analysis and Interpretation of The Data

This is the focal part of the study. It deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data which are collected by I from the three selected schools of Nepalgunj. There were test items related with free writing namely ability of the students to find out the correct punctuation and spelling, paragraph writing, letter writing and essay writing. After the collection of answer sheets of the students, I checked and assigned the marks to those answers given by the students.

After that, the collected data was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted descriptively as well as using appropriate statistical tools and diagrams. I analyzed and interpreted the data in terms of total proficiency, school-wise proficiency and item-wise proficiency of the students in free writing.

Holistic Proficiency in Free Writing

The overall proficiency of the students of all selected schools has been analyzed and interpreted in details using mean and percentile calculation in free writing in this heading. The following table shows the overall proficiency of the students in free writing in terms of paragraph writing, letter writing and essay writing:

Table 1

Holistic Proficiency of the Students in Free Writing

S.N.	No. of Students	Marks Obtained in Free Writing		Remarks
		Average	Pass Percentage	
1	40	19.025	10	Poor

The table shows that forty students were selected from three schools of Nepalgunj submetropolitan city. The students who were selected from each school were evaluated by a set of test items related to free writing. It also shows that the mean score obtained by the students in free writing was 10.025 (out of 100)

which makes 10 percent pass in average. The result in total seems to be poor.

School-wise Proficiency in Free Writing

The proficiency of the students of Shree Sharada Adharbhat Vidhyalaya, Dhamboji Secondary School and Shree Nepal Rastriya Adharbhat School in writing has been analyzed and interpreted in detail using mean and percentile calculation. The following table shows the school-wise comparison of proficiency in free writing:

Table 2

School-wise Proficiency of the Students in Free Writing

S.N.	Variable School	No. of Students	Marks Obtained (out of 100)		Remarks
			Average	Pass Percentage	
1	S.N.R.A.S.	14	14.42	0	Poor
2	S.S.A.V.	13	12.07	0	Poor
3	D.S.S.	13	22.76	47.6	Most

The table shows that the overall average score and percentage were 16.21. The students of D.S.S. were seen the most proficient in writing with the average score of 22.76 and the students of S.S.A.V. were seen the least proficient in free writing with the average score of 12.07.

Item-wise Proficiency in Free Writing

Under this heading, the proficiency of the students of all selected schools in each item has been analyzed and interpreted in details with the help of mean and percentile calculation.

The following table shows the proficiency of the students in paragraph writing:

Table 3

Proficiency of the Students in Paragraph Writing

S.N.	Variable School	No. of Students	Marks Obtained (out of 25)		Remarks
			Average	Percentage	
1	S.N.R.A.S.	14	4.0	40	
2	S.S.A.V.	13	3.2	32	

3	D.S.S.	13	4.5	45	
	Total & Average	40	3.90	39	Satisfactory

The above table shows that the overall proficiency of students in paragraph writing was 3.90 or 39%. Among the students of these three schools, the students of D.S.S. were found to be the most proficient and the students of S.S.A.V. were found to be the least proficient in paragraph writing.

The following table shows the proficiency of the students in Application writing

Table 4

Proficiency of the Students in Application Writing

S.N.	Variable School	No. of Students	Marks Obtained (out of 25)		Remarks
			Average	Percentage	
1	S.S.A.V.	14	6.0	60	
2	D.S.S.	13	6.0	60	
3	S.N.R.A.S.	13	6.5	65	Most
	Total & Average	40	6.17	61.67	

The above table shows that the overall proficiency of students in application writing was 6.17 or 61.67%. Among the students of these three schools, the students of S.N.R.A.S. were found to be the most proficient and the students of D.S.S. and S.S.A.V. were found to be the least proficient in application writing. However, the marks obtained by the students are below the average.

The following table shows the proficiency of the students in writing description about festival:

Table 5

Proficiency of the Students in Writing Description about Festivals

S.N.	Variable School	No. of Students	Marks Obtained (out of 15)		Remarks
			Average	Percentage	
1	S.N.R.A.S.	14	5.1	51	
2	S.S.A.V.	13	4.8	48	Least

3	D.S.S.	13	5.5	55	Most
	Total&Average	40	5.13	51.33	

The above table shows that the overall proficiency of students is 5.13 and 51.33%. Among the students of these three schools, the students of D.S.S. describing about festivals was 5.5 or 55% were found to be the most proficient and the students of S.S.A.V. were found to be least proficient in describing the festivals.

The following table shows the proficiency of the students in essay writing:

Table 6

Proficiency of the Students in Essay Writing

S.N.	Variable School	No. of Students	Marks Obtained (out of 25)		Remarks
			Average	Percentage	
1	S.N.R.A.S.	14	4.5	45	Most
2	S.S.A.V.	13	2.3	23	Least
3	D.S.S.	13	2.6	26	
	Total&Average	40	3.13	31.33	

The above table shows that the overall proficiency of students were found to be 3.13 or 31.33 percent. The students of S.N.R.A.S. were the most proficient and the students of S.S.A.V. were found to be least proficient in essay writing.

Total Item-wise Proficiency in Writing

The following table shows the total item-wise proficiency of the students in free writing:

Table 7

Total Item-wise Proficiency of the Students in Free Writing

S.N.	Type of Writing	Marks Obtained		Remarks
		Average	Percentage	
1	Punctuation	3.17	31.7	
2	Spelling	5.04	50.4	
	Paragraph Writing	3.90	39	
3	Application Writing	6.17	61.67	Most

4	WritingDescriptionon festivals	5.13	51.33	
5	EssayWriting	3.13	31.33	Least
Total		4.42	44.2	

The above table shows the total average marks and the total percentage of the marks obtained by the students in different types of free writing. It shows that the total average marks and the percentage were 4.42 and 44.2 % respectively. It also reveals that the students were most proficient in application writing and least proficient in essay writing.

Chapter V

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This is the final chapter of the study which deals with the two conclusive parts of the research work viz. findings and recommendations.

Findings

This research attempts to find out the writing proficiency of grade seven students. The main objectives of the research were to find out the free writing proficiency of grade seven students of Neaplgunj city in terms of punctuation, spelling, paragraph writing, letter writing, and essay, to compare the proficiency of the students of community schools and also to make its item wise comparison and to suggest some pedagogical implications. After the completion of the analysis and interpretation of data, mainly I found that many of the students were poor in writing proficiency and only few students were good.

Furthermore the major findings of the study were summarized on the basis of above mentioned objectives which are as follows:

Holistic proficiency of the students in free writing. The forty students were selected from three community schools of Neaplgunj sub metropolitan city. Students were selected from each school were evaluated by a set of test items related to free writing. The mean score obtained by students in free writing was 10.025 (out of 100) which makes 10 percent pass in average.

School wise proficiency of the students in the free writing. The average score and percentage of school wise proficiency of the students in free writing were 16.21. The students of D.S.S. were more proficient in with the average score of 22.76 and the students of S.S.A.V. were seen the least proficient in free writing with the average score of 12.7

Proficiency of the students in paragraph writing. The overall proficiency of students in paragraph writing was 3.90 or 39%. Among the students of these three schools, the students of S.S.A.V were found to be the least proficient in paragraph

writing .

Proficiency of the students in application writing. The overall proficiency of students in application writing was 6.17 or 60.17%.among the students of three schools, the students of S.N.R.A.S were found to the most proficient and the students of D.S.S. and S.S.A.V were least proficient in application writing.

Proficiency of the student in writing description about festival. The proficiency of students in writing festivals is 5.13 or 51.33% among the students of three schools the student of D.S.S describing about festival was 5.5 or 55% were found to be the most proficient and the students of S.S.A.V. were found to be least proficient in describing the festival.

The overall proficiency of the students in essay writing. The overall proficiency of the students in essay writing was found to be 3.13 or 31.33%. The students of S.N.R.A.S. were the most proficient and the students of S.S.A.V. were found to be least proficient in essay writing.

Total item wise proficiency of the students in free writing. The total average marks and the total percentage of the marks often by the student in different types of free writing were 4.42 or 44.2% respectively. The students were most proficient in application writing and least proficient in essay writing. The student of D.S.S. Were the most proficient and the student of S.S.A.V. were seen the least proficient .in average, girls were found to be more proficient then the boys. The average marks obtained by the girls and boys were 33.2% and 32.14% respectively.

Conclusions

The present research work entitled writing proficiency of grade seven students is an attempt to find out the students proficiency. In this study, different items such as essay writing proficiency, letter writing proficiency, paragraph writing proficiency, dialogue writing and their comparison to the proficiency of holistic, schoolwise, itemwise and aspect wise variation. In terms of public schools, students have been studied. The study revealed that the marks obtained or percentages by public schools.

Before this study, I thought that majority of the students had weak proficiency in free writing. They could not take easily while writing a paragraph. I have realized that they did not have proper knowledge about punctuation. Majority that I have seen is students were not able to write a letter systematically and sequentially. Almost all lower secondary level students could not focus on the central idea of the letter. They could not maintain different parts of the letter properly. Basically, many of the students were poor. It has been seen normally while taking different kinds of test items. Through findings, we are in the position to say that only few students were good. Some of the students had very good knowledge about the content.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings of the study, I have recommended some points within three levels viz policy, practice and further research.

Policy related. The government of Nepal should make the following policies in order to improve the level of proficiency in guided writing. It should formulate the policy, for example, to encourage the student center activities and discourage the teacher centeredness in learning. Similarly, curriculum development center (CDC) should incorporate more exercises related to guide writing while designing the new course. Last but not the least; the school administration should utilize this study to formulate the policy at secondary level coursebook.

Practice related. In this level, teachers, students and other practice related people can get benefited by studying this research. They can change themselves by studying this study because the world of pedagogy is shifting rapidly from the authoritative to democratic. Similarly, teacher can change their strategy and roles to develop the proficiency of students in guided writing of their own in the necessity of classroom and the level of the learners. It can be suggested that academic professionals have to make the real learners in the demand of time as required by the content. It should not be the obedient parrots in their learning who can rot the given questions and assignments line by line. For example, as it was found in my study that private school students are better in guided writing activities in English because of more exposure and practice

time, it is recommended that the teachers have to provide much exposure and let the students practice more in English.

Further research

related. The current study only has been limited to the grade seven students of Nepalgunj. It has also only studied some of the guided writing activities. This is why the other researchers can study on the other level and other remaining activities for writing proficiency.

This work can serve as a reference tool for

those who want to carry out further researches on the area of writing. The following can be the further areas of research related to the study;

- a. They can carry out study on proficiency in guided writing using other activities to test.
- b. Similarly, they can also carry out a study in action research design on “the role of guided writing activities in enhancing English language proficiency”.

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Appendix
QuestionsfortheStudents

Attemptallquestions:

Time1.30

Fullmark-100

Name:.....

RollNo.....

School.....

Set-A

A) Attempt all mechanics questions:- (10)

1) Put the tick (✓) the letter a, b, c, or d the correct punctuation. (1)

a) To masked me if I was going to the meeting.

b) To masked me, If I was going to the meeting.

c) To masked me, if I was going to the meeting?

d) To masked me if I was going to the meeting.

2) Put the tick ((✓)the letter a, b, c, or d of the incorrect spelling. (1)

a) Judge b)lawyer c)thief d)teacher

3) Rewrite the following sentences to correct the punctuation marks. (8)

a) Jane and Jack went to the market

b) When did he leave for the market

c) What a beautiful flower

d) Thanks for all your help Nita

e) He was hurt he knew she only said it to upset him

f) She bought four things a shirt a pair of shoes a scarf and a story book

g) I have a part time job

h) Hes done the work on time

Appendix II

Marks Obtained by the Individual Students

1. Shree Nepal Rastriya Adharbhut School, Nepalgunj-2, Banke

S.N.	Name of Students	Full Marks	Obtained Marks
1	Saugat tharu	100	20
2	Juberali	100	40
3	Nabraj Dhakal	100	32
4	Dipesh Chauhan	100	26
5	Pawan Rokaya	100	23
6	Ajaya Chaudhary	100	16
7	Aarju BK	100	13
8	Madhavi Bohora	100	26
9	Madhuri Gadariya	100	11
10	Sonika Tharu	100	18
11	Susma Karki	100	25
12	Prativa Punmagar	100	21
13	Pabitra Bohora	100	17
14	Karuna Rai	100	35

2. Dhamboji Secondary School Nepalgunj-1, Banke

S.N.	Name of Students	Full Marks	Obtained Marks
1	Dinesh shahithakuti	100	28
2	Shivaraj Bist	100	40
3	Subas Dulal	100	28
4	Arjun regmi	100	26
5	Padam Bhusal	100	15
6	Bikash Shahi	100	11
7	Rama Sunar	100	12
8	Anju Ahir	100	22
9	Anjali Chaudhary	100	40
10	Grisha Oli	100	42
11	Jharana Bam	100	14
12	Nisha B.k	100	16
13	Babita B.K	100	21

3. ShreeSharadaAdharbhutVidhyalayaNepalgunj-10,Banke

S.N.	Name of Students	Full Marks	Obtained Marks
1	Santosh Kashyal	100	9
2	Momin Seikh	100	9
3	Durgesh Raidesh	100	13
4	Nabin Bishwakarma	100	16
5	Krishna Sharma	100	22
6	RoshanThapa	100	11
7	Aryan Bhandari	100	14
8	PoojaTharu	100	9
9	Aruna Dhobi	100	7
10	Lucky Shahi	100	1
11	Sangita Dhobi	100	3
12	NirmalaYadav	100	2
13	Pushpa Kumari	100	7