

An Analysis and Evaluation of English Writing Skills of Class Five Students at Government Primary Schools in Dhaka City

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Abstract: Language is human speech either spoken or written and most common system of communication. The purpose of the study was to identify the ability of English writing skill of class five students at Government primary schools in Dhaka city. It also intended to identify the common errors committed by the students and the English teachers' thinking about improving their students' writing skill. To achieve these purposes 100 students and 5 teachers were chosen from 5 Government primary schools at Dhaka city. A test containing controlled, guided and free hand writing was taken from the students and a questionnaire was developed to find out the teachers' thinking about improving students' writing skill. After taking test the scripts were assessed according to examination pattern of NAPE. The test score per student and item wise score as well as responses to questionnaire were analyzed using statistical devices like percentage, frequency and mean. The students' average score of marks is 54%. In free hand writing nobody got full marks. The situation of controlled writing is satisfactory, but overall amount of errors indicates the students' inefficiency of writing skill in English. Punctuation and capitalization errors occupied the highest position. In this circumstance the teachers are putting their effort for improving students' writing skill, but they have barriers in most of the cases. Though the teachers are trying to develop their students' writing skill but it is developing very slowly indeed because of lacking of proper care by the concerned authority and as well as students' evaluation system. In that case, Government should give extra effort of the government primary school in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Capitalization, common errors, evaluation system, NAPE, Punctuation, Statistical device

1. Introduction

In the modern age, we cannot deny the importance of writing English. But the average situation of the writing English from primary level, our communicative skill has not been developed (Hussain, 2006). In previous time, there were many research on the improvement of the English learning. Considering the importance of English in our social life, English is studied as a compulsory subject in our curriculum. Basically, the learners of primary education in Bangladesh are accustomed to memorize the composition and write that memorized composition on exam script for lack of creativity or free hand writing. Moreover, the situation of government primary school in English Writing is needed to be studied. As primary level is the foundation of improving writing skill. Learning English is seen as a condition of language skills like listening, speaking reading, and writing.

English is a compulsory subject in our curriculum. Different types of steps are being taken to help pupils to develop the four skills (Listening, Speaking Reading, & Writing) in English from the very early stages of their academic career. Among four Language skills writing is one of the most important skills. The learners learn by listening and reading but show their competency in Speaking and writing. Speaking is only to communicate, but writing is the way of expressing oneself correctly and it is an everlasting document. The learners are evaluated by their writing in English in education system of Bangladesh. So, English writing skill is needed to be studied and practiced as a part of their curriculum. By that process, English Writing Skill of Class Five Students at Government Primary Schools in Dhaka City is very essential to study which will give them a

clear conception of writing ability and for improving writing skill. Different private primary schools at Dhaka city have taken steps for developing English writing skill. But in government primary school, it is unknown which inputs or combinations of inputs have impact on the quality of writing English and on achievement in writing composition. So, it was significant to study English Writing Skill of Class Five Students at Government Primary Schools in Dhaka City.

2. Importance of Writing

Every stage of life we are familiar with writing and without writing ability nobody can lead a compact life as a civil citizen. On the other hand, in education system writing is one of the means of evaluating learners' achievement in test. Begum, et.al (2005) page 289-291 indicates the importance of writing-

- To communicate something to someone in the written medium when the person cannot be spoken to.
- To make a record of what one learns in specific field and situation.
- To keep a record of one's treasure of mental processes (say, diary, records and reports) or reactions.
- To give a testimony writing of one's achievement in a field when asked to do so or when tested.
- To create new forms of knowledge where that verbal ability is the sole medium. (Boser, 1999)
- It is through writing that the students take notes and pursue higher studies.
- Written messages are more organized than spoken ones.
- Written messages can be read over and over again. There is very little missing information.

- The reader can read message at his/her own speed, time and level standing. (Aftab & Kamal:1990)

3. Characteristics of Writing

Writing contains some characteristics and these mention the nature, elements and basis of writing. The characteristics of writing are presented here from the book of Begum, et.al (2005) page 289-291-

- 1) Writing is a producing skill. We produce something through writing.
- 2) It is a linguistics process because it is related to language.
- 3) It is a means of communication. This communication is happened between the writer and the reader through reading.
- 4) It is related to literacy. Without literacy writing is not possible.
- 5) It is a creative process. Because we can build up a self – opinion through writing.
- 6) Writing is a composing or combination of many aspects. So, it is a complex process.
- 7) It is a written expression of our thoughts.
- 8) It is an action and this action is both physical and mental.
- 9) It is a well-organized and sequence of words.
- 10) Writing is purposive. Everybody writes something having a clear purpose in mind.

4. Methodology

The study is concerned with the English writing skill of class five students at Government primary schools in Dhaka city. To fulfill the purpose of the study data have been collected from the students and teachers using a combination of different data generating instrument and strategies. It includes Writing Test for students and Questionnaire for teachers.

This study is mainly quantitative as the test achievement of student was evaluated by the percentage and mean.

Moreover, the questionnaire was evaluated by quantitative way except the thinking of teachers about improving writing skill of the students. In that sense, this study is partly qualitative.

All the students of class five and English teachers of Government Primary schools at Dhaka city are the population of this study.

As the population is very wide, the researcher decreased the area of population to conduct the study in a short time. 100 students and 05 teachers were taken from five schools (20 students and 01 Teacher from each school) as sample of the study. In case of students nearly equal number of boys and girls were chosen. The researcher adopted purposive sampling technique to select the sample of total population. With the help of class teacher 20 students were selected purposively for writing test and the teacher who teaches English was requested to give valuable opinion in the questionnaire. The samples were selected from Government

Primary school at Azimpur, Suritola, Zigatola, Mohammadpur and Agargoan Taltola areas of Dhaka city.

5. Writing Test for Students

The researcher himself made the writing test item with the help of his supervisor and examined the test answer script by the direction of honorable supervisor. The test question was adapted from the question paper of primary education completion examination developed by NCTB from the English book of class five. The test question was divided into three parts- controlled writing, guided writing and free hand writing. Making sentences from the given table was included in controlled writing. Writing punctuation mark and capitalization from given passage, making question sentence by rearranging words and writing paragraph following answering questions were regarded as guided writing. Making a request dialogue from the situation is included as free hand writing. The test was taken out of 50 marks and time was 1 hour. (See Appendix I)

6. Presentation and Analysis of Data

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the collected data, processing of data and the analysis of the outcome of the study. The test score of student was classified into test marks range and item wise marks, the common errors found in the scripts were classified in 12 categories. Responses to Questionnaire are also shown here. All these have been analyzed with their frequency, percentage and mean and the teachers' thinking has been presented thematically.

6.2 Data Analysis of Student's Writing test Script

Table 10.2.A: Students' Score in English writing

Range of Score	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Mean of Score	Score %
Below - 15	09	09	27	54
16-20	20	20		
21-25	21	21		
26-30	15	15		
31-35	14	14		
36-40	12	12		
41-45	06	06		
46-50	03	03		
Total	100	100		

The table above shows that the Mean of Score is 27 and the score rate is 54%. The range of score starts below 15 (It was supposed 11 to 15 for calculation mean) to 50. The total students are 100 and frequency is also 100. It also shows that on writing test below 15 score range student rate is 9%. From 16 to 20 score range student rate is 20%, from 21 to 25 score range student rate is 21% which is the highest rate of student on test, from 26 to 30 score range student rate is 15%, from 31 to 35 it is 14%, from 36 to 40 score range student rate is 12%, from 41 to 45 the score range student rate is 6% and from 46 to 50 score range student rate is 3% which is the lowest rate of students on the writing test.

Table 10.2.E: Analysis of Common Errors made by Students

No. of Item	Type of Error	No. of Error	Percentage (%)	Mean (N=100)
1	Capitalization and Punctuation	1063	38.44	10.63
2	Word Order	520	18.80	5.20
3	Spelling	320	11.57	3.20
4	Subject/Verb Agreement	221	7.99	2.21
5	Wrong/Misused Word	166	6.00	1.66
6	Word Choice	130	4.70	1.30
7	Preposition	90	3.26	0.90
8	Verb Tense	79	2.86	0.79
9	Missing word	62	2.47	0.62
10	Article	60	2.17	0.60
11	Singular/Plural Form	37	1.34	0.37
12	Redundancy	11	0.40	0.11
	Total	2766	100	27.59

The table above shows that the total number of error is 2766. The average number of errors per student is 27.59. The error of capitalization and punctuation is the highest position in term of errors and that is 1063 times and the percentage is 38.44. The total number of student is 100 and the error in word order committed by the students is 520 times and the rate of error is 18.80%, in that case the average error per student is 5.20. The table also shows the frequency of error separately.

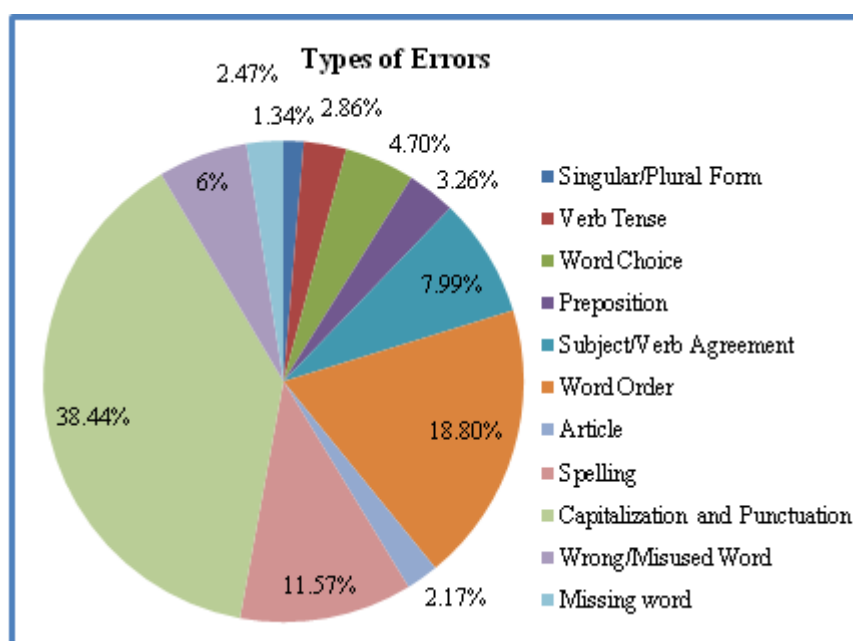


Figure 10.2. A: Type of Common Errors Committed by the Students

This figure shows all the types of common errors committed by the students along with their percentage. It is vivid from the figure that capitalization and punctuation score is the highest with 38.44% of total errors each followed by word order with 18.80% of total errors. Spelling errors occupy 11.57% of total error each. Next percentage 7.99% of errors is found in subject verb agreement. Wrong or Misused words (6.00%) is also noticeable errors. The word choice

and preposition are in 4.70% and 3.26% of total errors. The errors of verb tense, missing words and article also draw attention to errors committed by the students and their position is 2.86%, 2.47% and 2.17% of the total errors. The figure also shows the error singular-plural form is 1.34%. Finally the lowest rate of errors is 0.40% in redundancy errors.

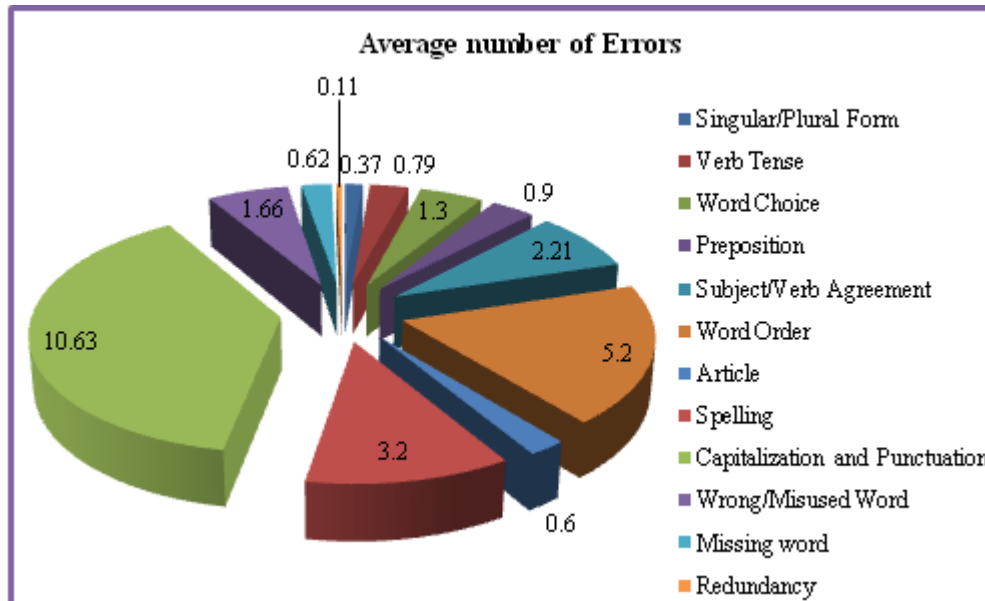


Figure 10.2.B: Type wise Average Number of errors per Student

The above figure visualizes the average number of errors committed by per student according to types of common errors. It shows that capitalization and punctuation error is the highest and in this case the average number of errors per student is 10.63. The mean of word order error is the second position and the average number of errors is 5.2. Spelling error occupies the third place in this regard (3.2). The average number of subject verb agreement error is 2.21. The next position is wrong or misused word and its mean is 1.66. The mean of errors committed by per student in Word Choice, Preposition, Verb Tense, Missing word, Article, Singular/Plural Form, Redundancy is accordingly (1.30), (0.90), (0.79), (0.62), (0.60), (0.37) and (0.11).

6.3 Data Analysis of Teacher's Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains 12 questions and among them first 9 questions are multiple choice question type and last 3 are descriptive type. In that case data collected from the teachers was arranged by the sequence of frequency and percentage of the given answer. Though the number of teacher is five, the frequency had come more than five times because of giving scope to the teacher for answering more than one option.

The above both table and figure show that 40% English Teachers emphasize on writing skill. 30% teachers give importance on Reading Skill, 20% teachers give emphasis on Speaking and 10% emphasizes on Listening skill.

Both the table and figure visualize the time which teachers spend in practicing English writing. 60% teachers responded that they are spending 20 minutes in practicing writing in their English class. Another 20% said, they spend 15 minutes for this work. 10 minute is spent by the another 20% teachers. On the other hand, nobody responded that they spend in writing once a week in their English class when they teach English.

The table and figure show the teachers' observation on students' English writing when the students make errors in

their writing. 50% teachers said that they see the spelling error in student's writing generally. 30% teacher said this is the grammar which they see in their students' writing English. Another 20% teachers observe that students make punctuation error in their writing which is very common.

The above figure and table indicate that the teachers of government primary school make correction the errors committed by the students. They show that 100% teachers correct their students' errors in writing English.

The study shows that 40% teachers correct the errors by discussing correct answer in the classroom. Another 30% teachers said that they correct the errors by writing correct answer on their paper and rest 30% correct errors by writing correct answer on the board.

The table and figure show the 100% teachers have idea about the primary competencies in writing English. They responded that they have idea about the competencies of primary curriculum in writing English.

The table and figure show the 100% teachers give the concept of Capitalization and Punctuation to learners in writing English. They responded that they give the concept of Capitalization and Punctuation to learners in writing English.

The table and figure show that 66.67% teachers gave their opinion about appropriate type of English writing for student is that the students can rearrange words to make questions and answer those. Another 33.33% teachers said that the students can write sentences from a given table. On the other hand, no teacher became agree with the opinion that the students are able to write on some given topic without memorizing as well as they can develop a dialogue on given situation.

6.4 Analysis of Teachers' Thinking about Improving English Writing Skill

In the questionnaire there were three Descriptive questions for the English teachers. And different teachers gave different opinions for improving students' English writing skill in the questionnaire. According to 3 descriptive questions the five teachers' thinking were narrated in descriptive (qualitative) format.

The Barriers Students Face to Write Free hand English:

Teacher -1:

- (a) The students cannot be able to write the Alphabet in correct order.
- (b) They cannot write correct spelling in the words.

Teacher -2:

- (a) Spelling mistake in free hand writing.
- (b) Lack of grammatical items.

Teacher-3:

- (a) Grammatical Mistakes in free hand writing.
- (b) Lacking of practice and they do much mistake to identify the correct word and spelling.

Teacher-4:

- (a) The students cannot read the sentences with the correct pronunciation.
- (b) They are unable to understand the gist.

Teacher-5:

- (a) lack of practice
- (b) Limited vocabulary.

Suitability of Present Curriculum for Improving English Writing Skill:

Teacher-1: Not Enough.

Teacher-2: It is very necessary to develop the writing skill in the curriculum.

Teacher-3: The present curriculum is too much suitable for the student for improving writing skill.

Teacher-4: In communicative learning technique present curriculum is suitable for improving Writing skill in English.

Teacher-5: Present curriculum is not enough.

Teachers' Suggestion to Improve Writing Skill:

Teacher-1: For improving English writing skill of the learner they can do-

- (a) Capital and small writing practice
- (b) Regular home work writing
- (c) Hand writing book practice. (if Govt. give them)

Teacher-2: Need practice more and more.

Teacher-3: The learner must practice free hand writing in English.

Teacher-4: Hand writing should be taken to improve writing skill every day.

Teacher-5: Need to add more grammatical item.

6.5 Major Findings

This study tried to identify the ability, common errors and teachers' thinking of English writing skill of class five students at Government Primary Schools in Dhaka city. The following findings can be summarized from this study.

6.5.1 Findings from the Students' Writing Test

- 1) By analyzing students' writing test script it has been found that the mean of writing test score is 27 and the score rate is 54%.
- 2) On writing test from 21 to 25 score range student rate is 21% which is the highest rate of student.
- 3) From 46 to 50 score range student rate is 3% which is the lowest rate of students on the writing test.
- 4) On controlled writing test 8% students obtained below 50% marks. 46% students got above 50% marks and 47% students achieved full marks (100%).
- 5) 55% of students obtained below 50% marks on the Guided writing Test. 30% of students got above 50% marks, 14% of students got above 75% marks and only 1% of the student achieved full marks (100%).
- 6) 35% of students got 0% marks on their free hand writing test. 24% of students obtained below 50% marks, above 50% mark was obtained by 41% of students and there was no student (0%) who got 100% marks in free hand writing.
- 7) On students' writing test script the total number of error is 2766. The average number of errors per student is 27.59.
- 8) There were twelve common errors on the test script. The error of capitalization and punctuation is the highest position in term of errors and that is 1063 times and the percentage is 38.44.
- 9) The lowest rate of common errors is 0.40% in redundancy errors.
- 10) Capitalization and punctuation error is the highest and in this case the average number of errors per student is 10.63 and the average number of redundancy error per student is 0.11.

6.5.2 Findings from Questionnaire

- 1) 40% English Teachers emphasize on writing skill. 30% teachers give importance on Reading Skill, 20% teachers give emphasis on Speaking and 10% emphasizes on Listening skill.
- 2) 60% teachers are spending 20 minutes in practicing writing in their English class.
- 3) 50% teachers observe the spelling error in student's writing generally.
- 4) 100% teachers correct their students' errors in writing English among them 40% teachers correct the errors by discussing correct answer in the classroom. Another 30% teachers correct the errors by writing correct answer on their paper and rest 30% correct errors by writing correct answer on the board.
- 5) Teachers (100%) know about the primary competencies in writing English.

- 6) 100% teachers give the concept of Capitalization and Punctuation to learners in writing English.
- 7) Teachers (66.67%) gave their opinion about appropriate type of English writing for student is that the students can rearrange words to make questions and answer those.
- 8) Teachers' Thinking about Improving English Writing Skill: Students need more and more practice. They should give importance on spelling, punctuation and capitalization as well as grammatical mistakes. The teachers also think that grammar book should be included as a supplementary book of English For Today. Most of them think that the present curriculum is not enough for improving English writing skill.

7. Discussion

Based on the findings of the study it can be said that the students of class five at government primary school have not still reached at the expected level in their English writing skill. They are not skilled at free hand writing because of many barriers. These barriers may be lack of practice, lack of encouragement for writing, teachers' endeavor, parents' economic status, unfavorable environment of learning, lack of consciousness about writing English. Nevertheless, the students are trying to improve.

In our country, English is regarded as a subject of study not as a foreign language. The students are not trend to writing English. That is why they memorize the English Paragraph or composition without understanding and write these in the examination. As a result, common-uncommon, suggestion etc become talked topics when examination comes.

The teachers think much for the development of the students in making good result in the examination. So they have to give time in teaching selective items for examination and they try to prepare their students to sit for centre examination not for improving writing skill. The students have not any grammar book. So, they are depending on only the textbook which is not fully suitable for present evaluation system of NCTB.

By analyzing the outcome of the study it is said that the English writing skill should be given importance in teaching English at primary level so that the students can reduce the number of errors in their writing and can be able to write free hand English in their own sentences.

8. Recommendations

It has been seen in the study that students of class five are not accustomed to free hand writing. Though their ability in controlled writing is medium level, their ability in guided writing is not satisfactory which has been shown in data analysis. Moreover, students make different types of common errors in their English writing. The teachers are thinking to develop their writing skill, but they face different barriers. In that case, the students should learn how to develop error free English writing. In their real life they will have to write something in English, they need to practice writing error free sentences. However, on the basis of findings of the study some pedagogical suggestion in order to reduce the number of errors committed by the students in

their written English as well as to improve English writing skill. The recommendations are given below-

- 1) In order to improve the quality of English as well as writing at the primary level all the English teachers should be given training in English language teaching.
- 2) To make the teaching learning process interesting, the teachers of English should use various kinds of teaching aids.
- 3) Students should be properly motivated in the classroom so that they try to learn the skills of English. (Begum, Mariam:2005:32)
- 4) An ideal language class size should be smaller. The ratio of teacher and student should be 1:40.
- 5) The teacher should apply modern approaches of teaching in lieu of traditional approaches.
- 6) Supply of teacher's guide by the NCTB should be ensured.
- 7) Regular supervision of language classroom activities by the head of the institute to make certain that the teachers follow the modern techniques instead of traditional lecture method.
- 8) For developing writing skills, the activities mentioned in the "review of related literature" can be followed in the classroom.
- 9) Parents should be more careful about students' writing practice.
- 10) Allow classroom writing to take a page from yearbook writing.
- 11) Encourage descriptive writing by focusing on the sounds of words.
- 12) Give students a chance to write to an audience for real purpose.
- 13) Establish dialogue between students from different schools who are reading the same book.
- 14) Teachers should practice with their students to write by providing helpful criticisms and not damaging ones. They should make constructive criticisms of their students' work. Over- insistence on „correctness“ hinders the learning process. The right attitude of the teachers is important for students who are grappling with the complexities of English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The language is difficult enough; teachers should not make it more difficult for them.
- 15) For improving grammar skill a supplementary book of grammar can be enlisted as text.
- 16) Finally Government should take extra care to the ordinary Government Primary School, because without the development of this large number of students it is very impossible to bring development in the field of education sector of Bangladesh.

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