

Development of Writing Skill: A Study on the Teaching Practices of High School Mizo Subject Teachers in Mizoram

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Abstract

The development of writing skills holds a critical position in Mizo language pedagogy, forming the essential foundation for effective communication. This article highlights the teaching practice of Mizo subject teachers for the development of writing skills of their students. The data were collected from 70 Mizo subject teachers teaching in various schools in Mizoram affiliated to Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). It was found that 50% of Mizo subject teachers from MBSE and CBSE gave importance on all of the development of the sub-skills of language such as grammar and vocabulary, organisation of text (introduction, body and conclusion) and building and expression of ideas and argument (clarity and content). With regard to the strategy adopted for development of writing skill, 43.54% of MBSE teachers and 37.5% of CBSE teachers explain and instruct correct format based on different types of writing activities. It was also discovered that 48.38% of teachers from MBSE and 50% of teachers from CBSE gave exercises such as summarizing lessons (written), preparation of their own notes, written assignment on given topics (essay, articles, critical analysis) and creative writing exercises (story writing, poetry writing, paragraph writing) for the development of the writing skill of the students.

Keywords: Writing skill, teaching practices, Mizo subject teachers, Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

Introduction

Writing is recognized as one of the four fundamental language skills and is frequently regarded as the most challenging to master. At its most basic level,

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writing involves the transcription of spoken sounds into written symbols. However, this mechanical act represents only the initial phase of a far more complex process. Effective writing demands the integration of numerous subordinate skills. In speaking, the listener is present before us and thus, we can observe his/her reaction and modify our speech accordingly. But in writing, since the reader is not present before us, there is no instant interaction and feedback, and thus we are not in a position to clarify our ideas beyond what we have written. This absence requires that the writer exercise greater independent precision in constructing grammatically sound sentences and organizing ideas into a logically sequenced and clear structure. Therefore, achieving clarity, accuracy, and explicit meaning depends entirely on the writer's ability to anticipate the reader's needs within the text itself.

Rationale of the study

Mizo is the mother tongue or first language for majority of the secondary school students in Mizoram. However, they often struggle to express their learned knowledge or personal opinions effectively in written form in Mizo. The strong emphasis on knowledge of English language has led to neglect in learning of Mizo language both at home and in schools. This eventually leads to students not being fluent enough in their use of Mizo language both as a means of communication and also as a school subject.

Proficiency in language includes equal mastery of all the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. While many students may have mastery in the three sub-skills i.e. listening, speaking and reading, the importance of having a good writing skill cannot be overlooked. Effective writing is an essential skill for clear and precise communication regardless of a person's proficiency in the verbal communication skill. Therefore, the teaching practices employed by Mizo subject teachers for the development of the students' writing skill play a crucial role in their academic achievement as well as for their lifelong success. Furthermore, a review of existing literatures reveal a significant gap, as no specific research has been conducted in this area. Therefore, it is important to investigate the teaching practices that Mizo subject teachers in Mizoram employ to develop their students' writing skill.

Review of Related Literature

Moradian and Rahmatian (2016) carried out a study on "The Study of the Development of Writing Skill in the Textbooks of the Action-Oriented Approach, a Case of Iranian Learners of FFL". The paper analysed the written competence and corpus of Iranian learners of French at two levels (A1 and A2). The data were collected in a quantified and qualified manner with auto evaluation grids and

narrative text writing to analyze the action-oriented approach textbooks' efficiency in writing. Basically the approach of the three manuals, Alter ego, Echo and Connexions advantaging of the implicit approach grammar teaching, calls into question their effectiveness regard to the written skill. The Alter ego manual is less effective in the teaching of writing skills and in return the Echo manual is more. This difference was especially remarkable about the Content of written productions of three groups of learners. In the Iranian context that we are the only inductive approach does not meet the student needs who are used to learn the traditional manner grammar.

Akinkulere and Mohammed (2020) conducted a study on "The Development of Writing Skills through Conceptual Writing". The study was to examine the development of writing skills through conceptual writing among students of English language in Kampala District Uganda. The main findings were that, generally, the level of English writing skills was relatively low among English language students in secondary schools of the Division because the students had not mastered the art of conceptual writing. It was concluded that essay writing, as potential conceptual writing education strategies, were significantly predictive but not practically-oriented.

Delango (2021) carried out a study on "The Practice of Teaching Writing Skills Using the Process Approach: The Case of Three Selected Secondary Schools in Wolaita Zone, Ofa Woreda". The findings of the study revealed that though majority of grade ten English teachers used to plan and introduce their students writing lessons, help and assist them, encourage them to practice taking notes, make them brain storm, plan and structure their writing tasks, translate their ideas in to texts, suggest them to improve the contents, organizations, and vocabulary of the writing activities. Most importantly, the English teachers never encourage and motivate their students to follow the stages of process writing and never given enough time to pass through all the stages of process writing. They never encourage their creativity and critical thinking skills, and develop an argument to define the structure of their writing. Finally, the researcher recommended on the basis of the above findings so as to improve the practices of teaching writing skills using the most important practical alternative approach, process-oriented approach.

Vicol et al. (2024) studied "A Quasi-Experimental Study on the Development of Creative Writing Skills in Primary School Students". The research results have shown that creative writing skills are developing in young school-age students. Also, it was found that there are significant differences in the students from the experimental group, compared to the students in the control group, at the level of the nine components of creative writing skills.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the preference of high school Mizo subject teachers on the different sub-skills of language for development of the students' writing skill.
2. To find out and compare the teaching strategies adopted by the high school Mizo subject teachers under CBSE and MBSE for development of the students' writing skill.
3. To find out and compare the type of exercises given by the high school Mizo subject teachers under CBSE and MBSE for development of the students' writing skill.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was employed to study the teaching practices of high school Mizo subject teachers in Mizoram for the development of the students' writing skill.

Population and Sample

The population included all the teachers teaching Mizo subject in various schools in Mizoram affiliated to Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

Simple random sampling method was used to select 6 districts namely - Aizawl, Lunglei, Champhai, Mamit, Kolasib, and Serchhip. Further, 70 schools (62 from MBSE and 8 from CBSE) were proportionately identified using cluster random sampling and all the teachers taking Mizo subject from these schools were selected as sample for the present study.

Tool used for data collection

Data was collected using a questionnaire developed by the investigator for Mizo subject teachers to find out their teaching practices for development of the students' writing skill. The content was validated by a group of experts before sending it out to the respondents.

Statistical technique used

For the present study, simple percentage was used for analyzing the data.

Analysis and interpretation

The collected data were analyzed and interpreted based on the following objectives:

Objective No 1: To identify the preference of high school Mizo subject teachers on the different sub-skills of language for development of the students' writing skill.

The language sub-skill that is practiced and given most importance by high school Mizo subject teachers in their classrooms for development of the students' writing skill are shown in Table No. 1 below:

Table 1
Preference of high school Mizo subject teachers on the different sub-skills of language

Sub skills	CBSE	MBSE
Grammar and vocabulary	2(25%)	13(20.96%)
Organisation of text (Introduction, body and conclusion)	1(12.5%)	11(17.74%)
Building and expression of ideas and argument (Clarity and content)	1(12.5%)	7(11.29%)
All of the above	4(50%)	31(50%)
None of the above	-	-
Total	8	62

Among the 8 Mizo subject teachers from schools under CBSE, 2 teachers (25%) gave importance on grammar and vocabulary. One teacher (12.5%) stressed on the organization of written content, (introduction, body, and conclusion) while another teacher (12.5%) emphasized on building and expression of ideas and argument (clarity and content). The remaining 4 teachers (50%) claimed that they considered all of these aspects while teaching writing skill.

Similarly, out of 62 Mizo subject teachers from schools under MBSE, 13 teachers (20.96%) gave importance to grammar and vocabulary, 11 teachers (17.74%) emphasized text organization, and 7 teachers (11.29%) focused on building and expression of ideas and argument (clarity and content). A total of 31 teachers (50%) reported incorporating all of the above criteria in their teaching.

Objective No 2: To find out and compare the teaching strategies adopted by the high school Mizo subject teachers under CBSE and MBSE for development of the students' writing skill.

Result of the study to find out the various teaching strategies adopted by the high school Mizo subject teachers under CBSE and MBSE for development of the students' writing skill are shown in Table No. 2 below:

Table 2

Teaching strategies adopted by high school Mizo subject teachers for the development of students' writing skill

Teaching Strategy	CBSE	MBSE
Explain and instruct correct format based on different types of writing activities	3(37.5%)	27(43.54%)
Provide variety of texts to students to acquaint them with different writing style	2(25%)	1(1.61%)
Teach students on how to prepare drafts and edit written works before finalisation of writing task	-	7(11.29%)
Introduce different types of exercises for practise in the classroom	1(12.5%)	8(12.90%)
All of the above	2(25%)	19(30.64%)
None of the above	-	-
Total	8	62

Table No. 2 reveals that out of 8 Mizo subject teachers from schools under CBSE, 3 teachers (37.5%) reported that they provide explicit instruction on appropriate formatting for various types of writing tasks. Two teachers (25%) indicated that they expose students to diverse text types to familiarize them with different writing styles. None of the teachers reported guiding students through the drafting and editing process prior to finalizing their written work. One teacher (12.5%) incorporated a range of writing exercises into classroom practice, while 2 teachers (25%) stated that they employed all of the aforementioned strategies to enhance writing proficiency.

Out of 62 Mizo subject teachers from schools under MBSE, 27 teachers (43.54%) emphasized teaching correct formatting aligned with different writing tasks. Only 1 teacher (1.61%) reported using varied text samples to expose students to different writing styles. Instruction on drafting and editing prior to final submission was provided by 7 teachers (11.29%), while 8 teachers (12.90%) introduced a variety of practice exercises in the classroom. A total of 19 teachers (30.64%) reported implementing all of these strategies to support the development of students' writing skills.

Objective No 3: To find out and compare the type of exercises given by the high school Mizo subject teachers under CBSE and MBSE for development of the students' writing skill.

Result of the study to find out the type of exercises given by the high school Mizo subject teachers under CBSE and MBSE for development of the students' writing skill are shown in Table No. 3

Table 3

Exercises given by high school Mizo subject teachers for development of the students' writing skill

Types of writing exercises	CBSE	MBSE
Summarize lessons (written)	-	3(4.83%)
Prepare their own notes	-	12(19.35%)
Write assignment on given topics (essay, articles, critical analysis)	1(12.5%)	12(19.35%)
Write assignment for development of creative writing skill (story writing, poetry writing, paragraph writing)	3(37.5%)	5(8.06%)
All of the above	4(50%)	30(48.38%)
None of the above	-	
Total	8	62

Table No. 3 reveals that none of the 8 Mizo subject teachers from schools under CBSE reported assigning tasks that required students to summarize lessons in written form or to prepare their own notes. However, 1 teacher (12.5%) assigned written tasks such as essays, articles, or critical analyses. Creative writing assignments including story writing, poetry composition, and paragraph development were utilized by 3 teachers (37.5%). Additionally, 4 teachers (50%) indicated that they employed all of the aforementioned strategies as part of their writing instruction.

Among the 62 Mizo subject teachers from schools under MBSE, 3 teachers (4.83%) encouraged students to write summaries of the lessons, and 12 teachers (19.35%) asked students to prepare their own notes. Another 12 teachers (19.35%) reported assigning written work focused on analytical or expository writing, such as essays or article writing. Creative writing tasks were assigned by 5 teachers (8.06%), while 30 teachers (48.38%) incorporated all of these activities into their teaching practices to support the development of students' writing skills.

Findings

- Findings revealed that 50 percent of teachers gave importance on all of the sub-skills of language such as grammar and vocabulary, organisation of text

(Introduction, body and conclusion) and building and expression of ideas and argument (Clarity and content).

2. For strategy of teaching writing, 43.54 percent of Mizo subject teachers from schools under MBSE and 37.5 percent Mizo subject teachers from schools under CBSE reported that they explain and instruct correct format based on different types of writing activities while 1.61 percent of teachers from schools under MBSE provide variety of texts to students to acquaint them with different writing style and no teacher from schools under CBSE teach students on how to prepare drafts and edit written works before finalisation of writing task.
3. Teachers i.e. 48.38 percent from schools under MBSE and 50 percent of teachers from schools under CBSE teachers gave all of the exercises mentioned such as summarization of lessons (written), preparing own notes, writing assignments on given topics (essay, articles, critical analysis) and writing assignments for development of creative writing skill (story writing, poetry writing, paragraph writing).

Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, it is clear that teachers are actively working to help students improve their writing skills by focusing on key areas like proper grammar, strong vocabulary, and well-structured essays with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Many teachers taught writing skill using explanation technique and also made sure to teach the correct format for different types of writing assignments and assign a variety of exercises such as summarising, note making, essays, and creative writing tasks to give students maximum practice for the development of their writing skills. However, provision of variety of texts to students to acquaint them with different writing styles, preparation of drafts and editing of written works before finalisation of writing task were strategies that was least applied by the teachers based on their responses.

In order to develop the writing skill of students, mere explanation and instruction of correct format of writing is not sufficient. Providing the students with the model drafts, correcting and editing their works proved to be more beneficial for the development of their writing skill. It is therefore suggested that teachers provide examples of different writing styles and emphasize the importance of drafting and editing before submitting their final work. Although the need to complete the syllabus in a limited time may restrict the time for introducing various activities in the classroom, encouraging frequent writing practices as class activity as well as home assignments would help students improve and develop the essential skills leading to greater confidence and competence in writing.

Conclusion

Learning to write well is difficult but it is the most crucial skill when it comes to language. The study showed that many of the high school Mizo subject teachers are trying hard to teach important basics like grammar and vocabulary, organisation of text and building and expression of ideas and argument. However, some of the teachers are missing two key steps which are giving good examples of different writing styles and, most importantly, teaching them how to write drafts and edit their work. Since the reader is not there to ask questions, these steps are crucial for making writing clear and easy to understand. Thus, teachers need to focus more on the writing process itself and not just focus only on the final product and then, students will be more fluent in writing skill.

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