
UNIT 16 TYPES OF WRITING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Structure

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16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall look at the different types of writing which can be given in the primary school, and their purposes. We shall also look at the different types of support which needs to be given for these tasks.

After you have been through this unit you should be able to :

1. Select suitable writing tasks for different levels of language learners.
2. Provide a context for written work.
3. Select or devise writing tasks which are realistic and meaningful.
4. Equip a child for a particular writing task by providing adequate support.
5. Decide on the kind of support a particular group of children require.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

A great deal of writing that is done by second language learners of English, in their junior classes, is writing that supports later writing tasks. Such writing may be given to consolidate the learning of new structures or vocabulary or to help students remember new items of language. Much of this writing is at the sentence level. Recent research in the field of writing (Krashen 1982, Hedge 1988) view this kind of writing as being fairly limited, since they agree that 'successful' writing depends on more than the ability to produce clear and correct sentences. Instead "writing tasks which have whole texts as their outcome relate appropriately to the ultimate goal of those learners who need English in their social or educational lives." Such tasks are interested in the communicative purpose of the writing i.e. the ability of the writer to be able to link and develop information, or ideas, for a particular reader. In other words, the selection of an appropriate context and style depends upon a sense of audience.

The Young learners of English as a second language, would certainly need help with linguistic form i.e. with grammar, sentence structure, etc. They also need help with the organisation of a text, particularly since writing conventions may vary from one language to another. While controlled exercises in sentence structure, grammar or paragraph development have their place in developing accuracy, they are not sufficient in themselves. These become much more effective when they are within a context, as a part of a whole piece of communication. In other words structural practice may still be a useful tool, especially when the teacher wishes to focus attention sharply and unam-

biguously on an important feature of the structural system. However, the same structural facts become more effective when they are adopted into a language which is more communicatively authentic. For example take an exercise for producing simple past tense:

- A : Gita has written the poem.
 B : She wrote it yesterday.
 C : Rahul has stitched his shirts.
 D : He stitched them yesterday.

In the above practice learners are likely to focus on the structural changes they have to make. While they may be aware of the meaning, this awareness is in no way essential to performing the task. In the next example we relate the same structural facts to a communicative function :-

- A : By the way, has Gita written the poem for the school assembly?
 B : Yes, she wrote it yesterday.
 C : Has the tailor stitched the school uniform shirt yet?
 B : Yes, he stitched it yesterday. The items serve to illustrate communicative facts as well as structural facts.

In this unit we shall look at some of the various types of writing that is done in the primary school i.e. controlled writing which supports later writing. We shall also look at different texts types; since the form of the text is very often determined by the communicative function or purpose. We shall also look at free-writing.

16.2 SELECTING SUITABLE WRITING TASKS

As has been mentioned earlier, children need to do various types of writing in English. In schools where English is the medium of instruction, a lot of written work done in other subject areas would be in English. For example word problems in mathematics, report writing for social studies, writing up science experiments, and so on. Children would also be doing a lot of writing for their own enjoyment or for social interaction. This would include expressive writings such as poems or stories, or transactional writing such as giving instructions, writing messages, writing letters or notices, writing reports. In schools where the medium of instruction for other subject areas is the mother tongue, the second reason for learning English i.e. social interaction would become more important, especially since English is a major language of communication in our country, particularly between regions.

While selecting suitable writing task we need to do an analysis of the language demands and language needs of our learners.

Language demands refer to a learning activity irrespective of the learner, and are a statement of the language skills any learner needs in order to be able to perform the task successfully. Language demands are established on the basis of the analysis of school learning tasks. This kind of an analysis is often done adhoc and inadequately in the course of daily or weekly preparation and teaching. From time to time, however, it needs to be done carefully. For example, if the children are writing speeches for a class debate they may need support or reinforcement of grammatical structures which would enable them to give opinions such as: 'in my view', 'I feel' 'according to me', etc. They may need practice in logically presenting views. They may also need to differentiate between facts and opinions.

Thus the language demands refer to the language requirements of the whole class, as viewed together.

Language needs refer to the individual learner and are a statement of what she needs to be able to do with language in order to perform a given activity or range of activities successfully. In other words, different learners will have different needs with respect to the same activity. Normally, the term 'language needs' refers to those areas of school language use in which the individual learner needs support. For example, spellings, or in the use of the past tense. The teacher in this case would give extra practice to the individual child either through dictation or a worksheet or by directing the child to a suitable exercise in the workbook. Language needs are established on the basis of the analysis of a child's performance in an activity or a range of typical activities. Language needs are visible, for example through errors - for example 'I am came yesterday' (in such a case the child requires additional practice in the use of simple past tense); they are also visible through omission or lack of variety in speech or writing. Second language learners often tend to repeat the same sentence patterns — particularly while writing. With young children we often find over generalisations of a newly acquired grammatical structure or patterns, for example when children just learn the 'ed' form of regular verbs in the past tense, we often come across words like 'bringed', 'knowed', 'gived' and so on. The learner in this case needs special reinforcement in the past tense forms of irregular verbs.

Language demands and needs can be expressed in a variety of ways. To assess the language demands of a class or the language needs of a child we need to look at :-

1. **Skills** : the 'classical' four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing.
 - the combinations in which these skills occur naturally i.e. talk (LS), or note - taking (RW)
 - lower order skills and sub-skills, for example grammatical accuracy, letter formation, word recognition.
2. **Function** : i.e. the communicative purpose of a given piece of writing. For example defining, describing a process to a friend, writing a story for a younger child. The communicative function often determines the choice of the writing form.
3. **Concepts** : in young children language plays an important role in developing basic concepts of number, shape, size, spatial relationships, time, direction and so on. Lack of understanding of basic concepts is often due to misunderstandings on account of insufficient language. Difficulty in maths are often due to this.
4. **Style** : i.e. the degree of formality and their characteristics e.g. more formal academic writing, less formal personal language. It also has to do with the appropriateness of the language to the particular form of writing, as well as the child's own particular way of expressing ideas.
5. **Grammar** : i.e. accuracy in the use of grammatical rules as well as conventions. Children often need additional practice for example, in the correct usage of irregular verbs or frequently confused words or commonly misused forms.
6. **Lexis** : accuracy in word recognition and in the productive use of the word, as well as richness in the variety of available vocabulary.
7. **Sounds/spellings** : accuracy in the production of sounds and sound patterns, spellings and spelling patterns.
8. **Discourse** : the ability of a child to understand or produce a stretch of language through the control of linking devices so that there is a logical flow in the writing. In other words, the ability to organise a piece of writing appropriately with attention to sequencing and correct order in the flow of the writing.

Looking at the varied language needs and demands, the most favoured approach to teaching of writing has been one where a teacher takes up various kinds of guided and controlled exercises in the beginning. These are designed to lead the children gradually and systematically towards free expression, by equipping them with functional competency in the second language. Earlier approaches attempted to isolate the various

difficulties involved in the production of a text and to present these separately, one by one to the children in a systematic way. For the most part, these were very much on the exercise level: to practise different grammatical structures or language conventions, such as spellings or punctuation. Recent approaches of teaching writing have seen a shift towards using the text as the basic format for practice even at the early stages. The aim of writing is seen as the ability to write a text, therefore providing guidance, and grammar practice within this context is most useful.

We have mentioned earlier that often children are able to produce a correct sentence or spelling when dealing with isolated sentence, but while writing continuous text get these incorrect. This is because writing a text demands attention to several aspects of writing at the same time. Language practice within the text is found to be most relevant and useful. While this does not rule out some sort of sentence practice, which may be necessary for the mastery of certain types of compound and complex sentence structures, we do not suggest an approach which will take the children in easy stages from sentence practice to the production of a text. Instead we use the text as the basic format for practice and within it's framework all the devices required for good writing i.e. organising, grammatical structures and lexical devices are practiced. By using texts (letters, notes, even dialogues in the early stages) as our basic practice format, rather than some other unit such as the sentence or even the paragraph, we can make the writing activities much more meaningful for the students and thereby increase their motivation to write as well. The text provides the setting within which they can practise, for example sentence completion, sentence combination, paragraph construction, in relation to a longer stretch of writing.

While selecting suitable texts for linguistically guided writing, one needs to keep the following factors in mind :-

1. Variety

Children need a wide exposure to different forms of written texts, which are appropriate for different communicative purposes. If the children have only seen descriptive and narrative prose in their text books they cannot be expected to produce other varieties of the written language, such as letters, poems or reports.

2. Context

We need to not just teach different kinds of writing, example: narration, description, etc. but we need to see that these are practised within the wider context of a text. For example, a letter may involve some description, and some narration, while a report might provide a setting for writing. Writing of a horoscope, or making plans for a school trip would give practice in writing in the future tense.

3. Realistic or authentic settings

All too often writing tasks lack reality for the children because they do not give them the feeling that they are writing for somebody. The writing is done solely for the benefit of the teacher who "corrects" it. It becomes important to identify those forms of writing which are most likely to be relevant to the needs of primary school children such as various types of personal communication (diaries, journals, notes, messages, greetings) and more formal communication - such as writing simple stories and poems.

4. Interest

Writing tasks should suit the children's interest. Fun and humour interest little children. Allow them to use nonsense words in rhymes. Let them imagine and describe impossible events, for example, what would happen if the school went up into the sky? Children enjoy make-believe. Allow them to write about things that matter to them. Provide them with language which they really need in their daily lives. Begin with the child as a centre - then choose tasks that would concern and interest the child.

5. Support

We should remember that writing tasks are generally imposed on children. Children who are beginners may not have the relevant ideas, or be sufficiently stimulated by the task to think of ideas. This is further compounded by their inhibitions in using the second language. Writing activities therefore, need to be supported initially by providing controlled, structured tasks. Gradually the tasks should give children more opportunity to do their own thinking. At this stage the tasks are linguistically guided, i.e. the children are given some stimulus such as a visual or notes or a framework, and using that support they do their own writing. At a more advanced stage when children are ready to take on free-writing, they should be introduced to the writing process, initially through guided, whole class writing in which every child in the class is involved in one piece of writing, which is produced with the participation of every child. Later the children start doing individual process writing, and support is given by the teacher at the pre-writing stage in two ways. Firstly by creating a suitable climate through discussing experiences, displays, or brainstorming sessions. Secondly, by equipping the children with suitable vocabulary, grammar and organisational skills such as linking devices or formatting which is specific to that form of writing. We shall go into this in detail in the next unit.

6. Sympathetic attitude

We cannot expect a high level of proficiency from second language learners particularly at the initial stages. We should not look so much at what the children have failed to achieve, but rather at what they have succeeded in doing.

7. Flexibility

Handling a large class of 40 or more young children in an active learning situation is not easy. Especially in the case of very young children, as they are not socially equipped for group work, and need constant individual attention. We also find that the class dynamics varies from one section of the same class to another, or in the same class from one day to another. On one day the children will work in a very focused manner, and on another day they will be very distracted. We need to set rules with the children and see that these are enforced, but more importantly, if an activity is just not working out on one day, or the children are too hyper, drop the activity, and switch to something more suitable. This kind of flexibility is required particularly when we are dealing with large numbers.

Check Your Progress 1

'How do we decide if a particular writing task is suitable for a particular class?'

16.3 WRITING IN THE EARLY STAGES

The important factors which affect writing at this stage are:

a) The child's developmental level

The writing level in the mother tongue will influence writing in the second language. If the child has not mastered organisational skills or cohesive devices required for a continuous piece of writing in the first language, it is not likely that she will be proficient in writing activities in the second language. It is unlikely that a five year old child will be able to write a report on an activity, whether in the first language or the second language. The child at this stage does not have the language competency to be able to do so. Such task would be developmentally inappropriate. Whereas if the same child were asked to write a sentence, describing the activity, it is much more within the range of the child's level, and given some support such as suitable vocabulary, it is likely that the child will be able to write this. What is essential is that writing tasks need to be geared to the child's overall developmental level regardless of which language

the child is writing in. If the child has mastered certain grammatical structures or writing conventions in the mother tongue, research findings indicate that these are likely to be transferred to the second language quite smoothly. The problem arises when the rules and conventions of the second language are different and first language transfer creates difficulty. Here the teacher needs to give special support.

b). The amount of language available with the child

Writing tasks have to consider the amount of language which the child has at her disposal. In the early stages of a language course, the principle factor which affects both the quantity and the kind of writing that can be done is the small amount of language available to the child. This is language, which to a large extent has been acquired orally and perhaps through a small degree through reading. Writing tasks need to be geared to the language available with the child, so that the child feels encouraged and motivated to try out more such tasks. Gradually the teacher needs to provide opportunities to strengthen the amount of language available.

The type of writing activities which may be undertaken at an early stage with young children, who are second language learners are :-

A) Writing at the sentence level, within the context of a text:

(i) Sentence writing using a visual

A simple picture is drawn on the blackboard or fixed on the bulletin board.

The children are given some sample sentences, using the context of the picture. For example :

- a) There is (a book) on the table.
- b) There is a pencil near the book.
- c) There are some books on the chair.

Ask the children to write similar sentences within the context of the picture.

The children thus 'create' their own sentences. They are being made to 'think' in the second language within a structured framework i.e. the visual. The teacher is able to assess whether the child can handle certain grammatical skills, in this case number and prepositions. The activity should be so structured that the children are in no doubt about what they have to write. They should not be asked to 'describe' the picture, but they should be required to write a given number of sentences, each of which is numbered. The important thing is that the activity requires each child to do her own thinking. The sentences can then be shared and evaluated as a while class activity. Some sample sentence structures can be given, but allow children to imbibe this. In other words, even if a child writes a sentence like — 'book the on the is table.' accept it. The sentence is clear enough to express meaning. Remember the child is also dealing with interference from the mother tongue, which may have a completely different grammatical structures. Give the child a little time to absorb the sentence structures in the new language. Make sure that the child is actively creating her own sentences and not just blindly copying your sentences. Our purpose is to make the child an active user, and the child needs to feel that the sentences are her creation. Gently guide the child, through exposure to correct sentences, to absorb correctly framed sentences.

A variation to this activity is to get the child to observe a more complex situation such as the classroom or the play ground and repeat the above activity within this context. It is however better to give children a very narrow focus in the beginning.

(ii) Writing a dialogue

In the early stages, it is useful to provide writing activities which will enable children to handle in the written form, material which has been learnt orally. This can be done most meaningfully in the form of short dialogues.

a) **Provide a model dialogue** together with key words which the children can use to compose similar dialogues. For example:

Read this dialogue:

A : Give me the jug, please.

B : Which one?

A : The red one, on the shelf.

B : Here you are!

A ; Thank you very much

Now use these keywords to write similar dialogues

a) hat/green/in/box

b) spoon/big/under/plate

c) bag/plastic/behind/table

The best way of doing this activity is to pair off children and let them make a simple finger puppet. Give the children one set of key words at a time, and using these let the puppets have a dialogue. Then let each pair write down the dialogue. Do a demonstration in the beginning. If some children extend the dialogue beyond the key words, praise them so that other children are also encouraged. The activity becomes fun, and at the same time provides an opportunity for using dialogues. It could lead to the creation of a puppet play. Try and think of other real situations where children can practise dialogues. Create your own activities. Remember it is often not at all easy to handle a group of 40 little ones playing with finger puppets. Sometimes it works out better to take the children outside. However these are challenges that we need to be aware of , and try and deal with.

(iii) Role play

Most children love acting. Give them very simple situations from day to day life. For example a shopkeeper and a girl buying sweets. Let two children come to the front of the class, and have a conversation. Giving clue cards often helps to give these conversations a meaningful direction. Let the rest of the class note the conversation. The teacher could make positive suggestions after the role-play. Once the class has been exposed to the form of roleplay, these could also be taken up in pairs by all the children, and the teacher could go around, and help with some language where ever it is required. The children could then be asked to write a similar dialogue for a different situation — a doctor and a patient, a shopkeeper and a customer, two friends on the phone, a parent and a child, two sportsmen. Give some suggestions of the type of language which they may use. For example:— I wonder what, How about, Have you ever, maybe, please may I, thank you.

One word of caution, we need to keep in mind that there are some very shy children, who would hate coming out in front of the class. Make sure you know the children in the class, and are sensitive to such children, by not asking them to come out in front.

(iv) Writing simple rhymes

Give the children some practice in using rhyming words.

Children love making rhyming word chains, these rhyming words can then be used in sentences. If you like, you could give the children an incomplete simple rhyme structure, let them add their own endings and complete it, for example

In every week there are seven days

Which I can use in many ways.

On Monday I can.....

On Tuesday I can.....

On Wednesday I can

On Thursday I can.....

On Friday I can.....

On Saturday I can and

In every week there are seven days

Which I can use in many ways.

Give the children a rhyming pattern. Let them draw to make their poems more meaningful or set this to music. Changing words of songs is another similar and effective activity.

(v) Change familiar songs or rhymes

Let the children take any of their favourite songs or nursery rhymes and change the words. Children have a lot of fun doing this - particularly if they actually get to sing these.

Some examples are :

Based on "Old MacDonald had a farm"

"Our school had a class eeeya eeeya ooh!

And in the class we had some fun

eeeya eeeya ooh

with a ha ha here

and a ha ha there

here a ha there a ha~ and so on.

Children can even use rhymes or songs from their mother tongues and change these to English. These should be very simple ones.

B) Activities to practice sentence linking and sequencing

Our goal through these types of activity is to familiarise the children with cohesive devices which are used in composing a text. They can then begin to combine structures which they have learnt orally to form an acceptable sequence in writing. For this purpose, in order to make any headway, it will be necessary to introduce a selected number of linking devices and to practise these through writing. It is upto the teacher to decide when and how many of these devices to teach. These might include

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| conjunctions | - until, although, so, when. |
| sequencers | - then, first, next, after that |
| linkers | - moreover, however, therefore, so that |

i) The teacher would initially give some sentence level practice

Ask the children to combine simple sentences using the given linking device.

I went home. I had dinner (then).

I want happy. I heard the sad story (until), and so on.

This kind of activity is largely mechanical and does not require the children to think about the meaning. Next they may be asked to choose linking devices which need a little thought

For example

Rahul sat		it became dark
waited	until	the sun had set
watched		the bell rang
played		his mother called him

The child has to think of a meaning relationship between the two clauses.

- 2) To make the activity more meaningful, short texts like these can be embedded within the context of a longer one (e.g. a letter, a dialogue).

For example -

Ask the students to complete a short text, using suitable linking words or phrases from the given list. (choose a letter, a joke, a short one paragraph story, etc. so that while choosing the word, the child has to keep the meaning of the whole piece in mind).

5, Nehru Place
 Geeta Chowk
 New Delhi
 6. 10. 94

My Dear Buchi,

You have begun to write in a very neat handwriting. In your last letter you asked me why I never wrote in my own handwriting. Well my handwriting in very scrawly I never bothered about it in school, one can read it. I have to type write my letters.

....., the other day, I wrote a message for my neighbour's daughter. It said 'tomorrow is a holiday',, she read it as 'tomorrow is a pollday'. Do you know what poll day means?, she didn't, she decided to find out the next day in school. Can you guess what happened?

Write soon. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

All the best

Mamu

Complete the letter given above. Use suitable words or phrases from the list given below :-

however, by the way, so, because, well, therefore, although, maybe, perhaps.

Notice that 'exercise' like the one given above, in the form of a complete text, also serve to introduce the students to such points as the layout of a letter, different modes of address and salutation. This could be done as a whole class activity on the black-board, and then children asked a copy it out into their notebooks.

C) Activities to practise sentence linking and sequencing

The students are asked to form texts by reordering sentences given in a 'scrambled list'. While the purpose of this activity is to get students to think carefully about the most appropriate order, it must not be allowed to become a simple puzzle. To help students the opening sentence may be indicated. They should work in pairs to discuss various possibilities.

1. Dogs love to fetch things
2. Besides, it doesn't matter very much if the stick gets lost.
3. It is the right shape and size to fit across the dog's mouth.
4. A stick is the best thing for a dog to fetch.
5. Most people love to throw things for a dog to fetch.
6. It is better than a bone, because a dog does not want to give the bone back to the thrower.

D) Other activities

Visual material can be given and the children asked to do a writing task. For example

i) Using Simple maps

Ask the children to use the map given to write simple directions from Ramu's house to Ali's house. This is a very good activity for reinforcing 'left/right/east/west, etc. Ask the children to use link words like - first, next, then, finally, after that, before.

Students could be asked to write directions from the school to their home (if it's not too complicated) or from school to a local market for a child who is new in the class.

ii) Expanding notes

a) One fine day, Rahul decided to go for a walk. However, the walk did not turn out to be pleasant. This is what Rahul wrote in his diary that night.

Sunday 16th June

What a day! blue sky - lovely weather. Decided to go for walk. Met Sunil- saw guavas on tree. Threw stones. Mali got furious. Chased us. Fell and hurt my knee. Reached home tired and sweaty. Amma got angry. Went off to sleep. Woke up with a headache.

Write out the diary entries in full sentences. Link them wherever possible with some of the sentence openers given below:-

Anyway I suppose of course just to make things worse
after that, perhaps

Start like this:

It was such a lovely, clear day on Sunday that I decided to go to the park for a walk....

iii) Completing descriptions

Two children Rahul and Geeta had got lost at a school mela. To help find them, the teacher asked their friends to write their descriptions.

Based on the information given fill in the form below:

Name : Rehman
Age : 6 years
Complexion : fair
Hair : black, curly, short
Special marks : One front tooth missing,
large ears, dark spot
Weight : quite heavy, a bit plump

The name of the lost boy is

He is old and is 4 ft.

He is in colour with
curly hair which

He has and a on
his He is

Now write the description of Geeta using these notes

Name : Geeta
Age : 8 years
Complexion : dark
Hair : light brown, long hair tied up in
two plaits
Special mark : nil
Weight : very thin.

While the first piece of writing is guided. The second is not. This activity can be varied. Children can be given a simple picture instead and asked to do a guided piece of writing. After which they use another simple picture to do another piece of writing on their own. Using a picture to plan a description is a useful technique for helping students see the importance of logical development in a picture.

iv) Using experiences for writing

The children could make a simple paragraph on some topic of common interest or concern. For example — they could find out how many children like watching the TV programme 'Jungle Book'. The findings could go up on the board — with the name of each child on a slip as :

Like T.V.	Do not like T.V.	Hate T.V.
PIA	MONA	RAMONA
ANU	ASIF	LUKE
RAHUL	GURJIT	
ANITA	SADIQ	
RAJU		

Such exercises provide a lot of practice for making comparison — fewer, more, most, least, less, a few, also, maybe, perhaps, could be. Children could be given a format to fill in. On the basis of this, they could prepare a very simple class report and put it up at the parents meeting.

v) Making a plan

The children could be involved in planning a picnic, a walk or some experience which they are going to have. They could be broken up into small groups.

- Group 1 - can decide on things they "will" need to take
- Group 2 - can decide on places they "can" go to
- Group 3- will decide how they would go and so on.

Each group will need to arrive at a consensus and present their ideas and suggestion in a given format. Such activities give practice in the use of the future tense "can", "will", "shall", and so on.

iv) **Similar 'thank you' letters could be written to helpers of the school, or to a special friend.**

v) **Make 'celebrations' and 'festivals' to become occasions for writing. Let children write special poems or greetings messages. Let them make their messages unusual.**

vi) **Use thematic bulletin boards .**

For example summer - make a sun. Given each child a strip of paper to make a ray. Let each child write a message from the sun to the earth or let each child write a message to the sun on the ray.

Rainy season - Make a rainbow, let children write their wishes on the rainbow. They could write little limericks on cut out raindrops, to make a rainy scene.

vii) **Have a section of Riddles.** Let five different children put up riddles. Make sure that the riddles are the children's own creation. Change the riddles every two to three days. See who is the best at answering riddles. Children could make riddle books.

viii) **Ask students to describe someone in the class without giving the person's name.** The children could then guess. The children must remember not to write hurtful things.

ix) **An exciting idea that works very well in a class is to start a pen-friends club.** This pen-friends club is however one with a difference. Ask each child to think of any other country, other than her own that she'd like to belong to . Each child should then given herself an imaginary name and an address. It should sound authentic. These should be written up on slips of paper and put in a box. Ask children from another section to do a similar exercise. Let children then exchange boxes. Children could then pick up a slip. Each child could then write to her penfriend in the next section. Ask children to gather as much information about the country they've chosen, so that they can write about it. Set up mailboxes outside each class, so that the children can receive letters. Interesting letters could be displayed.

x) **Holiday correspondence between children in the class can be set up in the same way.** Ask the children to bring the letters they enjoyed reading. These can be shared after school reopens. It's a good way of catching up on what children did during the holidays.

xi) **Diary Writing** can be very exciting for children, if they make it a meaningful personal communication. They could be taught to not just focus on what they did, but their feelings, any bright ideas, any strong reactions — things they liked, didn't like or were upset about. They could copy out some lines from a story book — a description that was thought-provoking, a funny joke, a poem.

Have one diary sharing day in the month, when any child could volunteer to share any special moments, thoughts or feelings from their diary.

xii) **Give 'mock dictation' to the class in the form of a short letter.** The children are asked to play the part of secretaries who are not very good at dictation but do not want to admit it!

While the letter is being dictated, they should try to note down, rather than write out in full, as much as they can. The children are then divided into small groups, with four or five in each group, and asked to compare their notes and write up the letter.

Activities like the ones given above help to put writing in use in a gamelike context. They help to make children excited about communication through writing. They greatly help in breaking down inhibitions about using the second language. This is a very important step. Once the children become familiar with second language in real contexts - they achieve fluency and accuracy much faster. Such activities also take away the boredom and tedium which "learning through drill" often brings about.

and language learning takes place in real life situations. This makes the children see the usefulness of these tasks as they cater to their real needs. This greatly motivates children to write. It is however, very important to make these tasks interesting and provide variety. Language learning takes place very efficiently when it is relaxed and enjoyable. Games are found to be very effective. The tasks should not be in the same form every time. Children need variety. They need to do different kinds of writing, with different functions. This equips them to deal with real situations.

The writing tasks should take the interest of the children into account. There is no point in asking a class of six year olds to write a report on eve-teasing, it is not something they know or care about.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Exposure to the written form of language by itself is not enough. Children have to be made aware of how we communicate through the written medium and how this differs from speech. In particular, they need to be shown that any piece of writing, whether or not it is addressed to a specific reader has a communicative function. They need to understand how the resources of the written language are used to fulfil this purpose.

We have seen that writing at least in any significant form, involves the ability to organise sentences into a coherent whole or text. Most writing practice therefore starts with the aim of teaching those devices of the written language which are needed to be able to write various kinds of texts. The practice of these devices should also, as far as possible, be within the framework of a text which has a definite communicative goal, so that the learners see the purpose of what they are writing.

2. Guidance in writing tasks, particularly in the early stages is essential. It helps the child to acquire linguistic competency i.e. suitable vocabulary, grammar and writing conventions over a period of time. There is a range of support the teacher can offer and this would depend entirely on the needs of the class. The ultimate discretion of the type of support to offer is with the teacher. It is a good idea to move from controlled writing — where the children are given an example and asked to reproduce the same type of writing — to linguistically guided writing — where children are given some support, for example a picture, or notes and they write within a broad framework. Once the children have acquired enough functional competency they could be given freer writing tasks. Initially the teacher would be required to take this up as a whole class activity, so that each stage the specific purpose, grammar usage, organisation of ideas, linking devices, formatting, etc. could be discussed. Once the children are ready to do individual writing, this kind of support would be given by the teacher at the pre-writing stage. The teacher can give additional formal grammar practice as and when the need arises.

Check Your Progress 3

Writing instructions can be made into a communicative activity. If we get children to work in pairs, and ask each child to write a simple instruction for her partner. The instruction should be one that the partner has to actually follow. For example : Put your hand under your bag, or sit under the table. The children then switch and the other partner writes out the instruction. Such an activity is purposeful because it has to make the meaning of the instruction clear, so that the other child can follow it. It is also very enjoyable, and yet it makes children realise the importance of writing clearly. It helps children see the communicative function of language in real life, and therefore the need to achieve a level of functional competency so that we are able to communicate effectively.