

# Challenges Faced by Students and Teachers on Writing Skills in ESL Contexts: A Literature Review

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**Abstract:** English is a global language that is in high demand today. English is by far the most widely spoken language on the planet. English language writing, on the other hand, has always been difficult for second language students to master.

Developing students' writing abilities is one of the major challenges that ESL teachers face in most schools today. Nonetheless, writing has always been a major challenge for students learning English, particularly in elementary schools. Not only have that, but teachers in elementary schools faced some difficulties in teaching writing skills to students. Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate the difficulties that both students and teachers face when learning and teaching writing skills in elementary schools.

**Keywords:** Writing Skills, Teaching and Learning Writing, Challenges, Elementary School, English as a Second Language.

## 1. Introduction

English is used as a lingua franca throughout the world by people of various cultures, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. One of the most important skills for English teachers is the ability to effectively teach writing in elementary schools.

Writing is an important part of English instruction. Writing instruction has been carried out as early as the early years when students begin to learn how to correctly form letters.

There are numerous consequences that could have a significant impact on students' academic performance if they have a weak foundation in writing. Writing is not only important for improving academic performance, but it also helps with social and emotional development. Moreover, in this competitive world, writing is also one of the skills that is necessary to excel. Their inability to write well, may affect their chances to secure a job in the future. Therefore, this issue needs to be tackled effectively.

However, due to the difficulties students face in learning writing skills, teaching writing has become difficult. Some of the difficulties that ESL students face include a lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor spelling, students' readiness, and a lack of exposure to books and reading materials.

The difficulties that students have faced have made it difficult for teachers to teach writing skills. Teachers face challenges in teaching writing skills because it is difficult to motivate their students, students of various levels, difficult materials, and time constraints. To improve a student's writing ability, a teacher must devote more time to teaching writing, such as providing guidance and feedback.

As a result, a teacher must be aware of the difficulties that other English teachers face when teaching writing skills, as well as the difficulties that ESL students face when learning to write. This paper conducts a literature review on the difficulties that teachers and students face when teaching and learning writing skills.

## 2. Literature Review

Writing is one of the skills in English, along with speaking, reading, and listening. Ling claims that writing is a multiplex activity (2016). Writing activities should begin in elementary school to prepare students to produce good pieces of writing in the future. Despite the fact that elementary schools cover a wide range of subjects, writing is widely regarded as one of the most important academic subjects for students. "Story" is the beating heart of English. A "story" can be anything from a newspaper article to a research documentary to a fantasy novel. It is a method of explaining and transmitting information with a specific goal in mind. Thus, in a broader sense, all writing can be viewed as a story.

### 2.1. Demand on Writing Skills

Writing is an important skill that will benefit the students for the rest of their lives. Introducing and practicing writing with appealing activities in schools may boost students' confidence and cause them to fall in love with writing in the long run. Writing skills are immediately necessary for lower primary students to continue learning in all academic areas,

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communication, and self-expression. Writing exercises in schools promote penmanship development as well as overall academic development through problem solving and critical thinking.

Writing contributes to students' social development. Writing allows students to stay in touch with what is going on in the world around them. When writing, students must keep the audience and purpose in mind. This will also help the students with their verbal communication. Writing with feedback from friends encourages students to learn from one another. Students will need to be both literate and computer literate as they progress through their school years. While the two skills are complementary, some computer tools, such as spelling and grammar checkers, can prevent them from developing their writing skills. As an example, students who do not practice their handwriting when using a keyboard. It is also important for the students to know that they need to use their own knowledge, not by replacing their knowledge with computers, because computers can make mistakes too.

Because of the advancement of information technology, writers are in high demand to create digital media content. Digital marketing firms require the services of a content writer. News websites, social media marketing firms, and other related and unrelated IT firms require writers to assist them with writing for digital marketing channels such as brand quotes, advertisements, social media posts, blogs, and so on.

## 2.2. Purpose of Students' Writing by Using

### Different Writing Strategies

Writing exercises at the elementary level can help students improve their penmanship in a variety of ways. Students may use multiple writing methods at the same time. Pre-writing, writing warm-up, collaborative writing, sentence starters, and guided writing are some teaching writing strategies. Because they may have different teaching objectives, all writing strategies cannot be taught at the same time. Using a variety of teaching techniques to teach writing will help students improve their English writing skills. The learning process will be on the right track as students show interest and become active participants in their learning. Furthermore, using various writing strategies will encourage students to think creatively. Students can apply what they know by combining opinions and facts to create something new.

## 2.3. Challenges Faced by the Students in Learning Writing Skills

Each student may face unique challenges while learning to write. Every student is special and unique in their own way. These obstacles will prevent students from progressing toward producing a good piece of writing. The following paragraphs discuss the difficulties that students face when writing.

According to Misbah et al., a lack of vocabulary has caused students to struggle with developing writing skills. Vocabulary is the fundamental element in sentence construction, which is the foundation of effective writing skills. Students almost always use spoken and written words to communicate their ideas, beliefs, and feelings to those around them. A strong vocabulary can help students express themselves verbally or in writing. Students with limited vocabulary can benefit from the use of an electronic dictionary and increased reading activities. Grammar is also a problem for some elementary school students. Grammar is very important in writing. Grammar provides information that assists readers in comprehending its meaning. It is a structure that conveys the writer's detailed meaning to the reader. Grammar also explains the shapes and structures of words, known as morphology, as well as how they are arranged in sentences, known as syntax. Students will be anxious to write sentences with correct grammar because they have very limited knowledge of grammar. Students make mistakes in subject-verb agreement, pronouns, tenses, articles, prepositions, and basic sentence structures, according to Muhammad Fareed et al. (2016). Grammar ability can be improved through reading and grammar practice.

Poor spelling is another source of anxiety for students learning to write, according to Nyang'au Benard. Having good spelling skills will result in positive learning of writing skills. If students are having difficulty with spelling, they will be unable to progress. As Afrin mentioned, students have a habit of spelling according to their pronunciation, which results in incorrect spelling. Students will either add or subtract letters from the words. For example, "ballon" rather than "balloon." According to Nyang'au Benard, students who memorize their spelling will have better spelling. Foster agreed that another challenge in learning to write is students' readiness. According to Winarso (2016) in order to complete task successfully, readiness is very important. The readiness can either be physical readiness and mental preparedness. If this is not occurring, students will be having challenges in writing. Students will not be mentally prepared to learn in the classroom if they are not ready. It is very important for the students to be ready before they enter the classroom. According to Foster (2015) motivating and attracting the students' attention can help students' readiness in learning writing.

Another challenge for elementary school students learning to write is a lack of exposure to books and reading materials, which Foster supports (2015). According to Muhammad Fareed et al. (2016), many students find it difficult to obtain a sufficient and relevant source of information. Students will struggle to write good sentences or paragraphs if they do not read extensively. This is because reading and writing are inextricably linked. Students will lack ideas and vocabulary to write if they do not read books or other reading materials. If they read more and connect the ideas with their prior knowledge, their brain neurons will be connected and they will be able to produce good writing. Foster (2015) explained that exposing students to a variety of reading materials can help them become more aware of language awareness. Last but not least, students face another challenge: a lack of motivation. If students are not motivated, they may be unwilling to continue their learning process. According to Gbollie and Keamu, motivation is important in improving students' learning

outcomes (2017). Teachers could motivate students by using simple motivational phrases such as "Good job!", "Good try!", "Keep it up!" and so on. Positive reinforcement will motivate students to progress in their learning.

#### 2.4. Challenges Faced by the Teachers in Teaching Writing Skills

Teaching has always been the most difficult aspect for teachers. Teaching English at the primary level is obviously very different from teaching English at the secondary and tertiary levels. The challenge will render the teachers' instruction ineffective. The following are the difficulties that teachers face.

Teachers nowadays are having difficulty motivating their students. Not because of the students' misbehavior, but because they are uninterested in learning to write, as Asep claims (2014). Because their parents have given them so much freedom, the younger generation believes they can do whatever they want. When students choose to be hesitant in their learning, it indicates a lack of motivation.

Another challenge that teachers face when teaching writing is having students of various levels in the classroom. In many elementary classrooms, students from different grade levels are mixed together. Different levels of students will make it difficult for teachers to cater to all of their levels at the same time. Different levels of writing ability will necessitate different approaches from teachers. As a result, teachers are finding it difficult to plan lessons and prepare appropriate activities for their students.

Parental indifference is another challenge. Lack of parents' support will make the teachers having a hard time to help the students. Students who feel lack of warmth and affection from their parents will draw them back from succeeding in their learning process (Gündoğmuş, 2018). This is due to little guidance, motivation and support from their parents. Besides, lack of professional experience is another challenge faced by the teachers (Gündoğmuş, 2018). Having lack of professional experience will lead to stress and tension to teach at elementary school students especially among novice teachers. The multiple roles of teacher are also a challenge. The teachers' experience is depending on the level of their previous experience and training. It will take time for the novice teachers to adapt themselves with their students very well. Teachers can only prepare appropriate activities if they know well about their students' proficiency level, and interests. Not only that, longer time is needed for teachers to prepare new teaching materials, appropriate lesson plans, suitable activities, and provide comments or reflections.

Finally, according to Anyiendah, another challenge is a lack of student interest. Developing writing skills is always a difficult task, but it is always an interesting one. Some students, particularly when writing, zone out. Students are disinterested in writing because they must be knowledgeable in many areas in order to produce a good piece of work. To write a good piece of writing, students must understand punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structure.

#### 3. Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this research is to conduct a literature review on the difficulties that students and teachers face when learning and teaching writing skills. It can be concluded that school students face numerous challenges in learning to write, and it is difficult for English teachers to teach them to write. Existing literature has identified demands on English writing skills, the purpose of students' writing by using various writing strategies, the challenges faced by both students and teachers in learning and teaching writing skills, and previous studies on the challenges faced by students and teachers in learning and teaching writing skills among ESL school students. Teachers could choose the best approach to teaching writing skills by providing feedback and guidance if they understood both the students' and teachers' challenges in learning and teaching writing skills. Furthermore, the school administration should take the necessary actions to address the challenges that teachers face in order to facilitate effective teaching. Finally, teachers may emphasize the importance of learning writing skills to students in order to motivate them to do so.

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