

**THE PRACTICE OF INDEPENDENT WRITING AT THE
SECONDARY LEVEL IN BANGLADESH: A MYTH OR A
REALITY?**

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TITLE

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Abstract

Writing is a unique mode of learning and it makes a unique demand to engage learners to develop their cognitive ability, critical thinking power, higher order intellectual ability and creativity. Practicing of independent writing can enhance these qualities. This study wants to explore the present status of independent writing in Bangladesh at the secondary level classroom. This study also focuses on writing and student's role to be independent writers. The study uses questionnaire teacher's adopted techniques for teaching of independent in these classrooms survey and class observation as two main sources data collection procedures for the study. The findings, which are analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative way, indicate that practicing independent writing is still a myth for us. Teaching writing is going on in a traditional and mechanical way without following any scientific and research -based approach to writing. Finally, some recommendations on future direction to develop independent writing have been highlighted being influenced by the theories of social constructivism, constructivism and progressive education and process approach to writing.

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Chapter-1

Introduction

Language is the most powerful tool of man. Bruner (in Smith,1977) believes that language extends the power of man and his thinking as well. According to him, “The shape or style of a mind is, in some measure, the outcome of internalizing the functions inherent in the language we use.” So, Bruner emphasizes on school for the growth of mental processing through the training in written language. Because, written language can make possible cognitive development as in writing the referent is absent. In this context, Vygotsky points out that “the written language....provides an occasion in which one must deploy language out of the immediate context of reference.”(ibid.) Bruner suggests that to promote cognitive development, teacher should create mental conflict among students by not limiting their written assignments.`

Bruner stresses on rewriting rather than correcting student papers because it does not improve student’s writing by correcting only. So, in teaching writing, Bruner stresses on the process writing more than the product approach (Smith,1977).

There is a unique relationship between writing and learning. Vygotsky in *Thought and Language* states that writing is an expansion of inner speech. Written speech is a detailed mode and it requires supplied subjects and topics. Writing makes a unique demand that the writer must engage in “deliberate structuring of the web of meaning”(P.100). So, the medium of written verbal language needs the systematic connections and relations of writing and learning (Emig,1977).

The role and function of English in the present global perspective is beyond all doubt. As the language of wider communication, especially due to its inevitable attachment to international trade and commerce, English has turned out to be of prime importance in the domain of our education. The role and function of English in the contemporary global avenue has been steadily implanting its value in the Bangladeshi socio-economic and educational scenario. But the question is how far are we ready to activate the specific need of English and eventually create a suitable workforce that would contribute to our national progress?

Now a days, English is the most widely learnt and taught language all over the world. Bangladesh is not out of this trend. Because of its popularity, the teaching and learning of English has become more important which is evident in the fact of the establishment of more English medium schools, introducing English as a medium of instruction at all private universities and making English as compulsory subject at all the levels of our education (Ahmed,2005). Government has introduced new methodology and approaches to cope up with the demand of a rapidly changing technological and commercial world. Though in the new methodology, all the four skills are given emphasis but writing is considered as a neglected skill in the classroom. A lack of motivation and fear work among students to write in English as it is a foreign language. Though the goal of education is to make students independent writers, most of our students like to write by memorizing instead of independent writing due to our education system. They even do not know how to become an independent writer and or the importance of becoming an independent writer. As our education system is exam oriented and for our students writing is the only basis for the assessment of their

examination as their goal is to get a good grade, students give more emphasis on memorizing rather than independent writing. Instead of introducing students to the actual research based writing process, teachers also like to teach writing in a traditional way. As the textbooks of secondary level do not focus on developing the habit or practice of independent writing in that way, teacher should use different strategies in writing to make students independent in this area. Teacher can integrate different processes based on students' type and quality to get maximum outcome from them. Though students are supposed to write something independently in their classroom or examination, our survey outcome shows that their writing is usually based on memorization. And they do not follow the actual writing process used by famous and established writers. In this regard, it is very important for teachers to raise awareness, motivate students and stimulate their thinking so that they can realize the importance of independent writing . Then it would be easier to involve them in the independent writing process. Now the researcher will discuss briefly what independent writing is, why it is important and how to become an independent writer and these will be discussed elaborately in the next chapter.

Independent writing is that when students can get the opportunities to do their own writing that means they can be able to do their writing individually using their current knowledge of writing process. Independent writers write using both self- selected and assigned topics. Independent writing is necessary because it helps students to develop their cognitive ability, thinking power and higher order intellectuality. It also enables students to develop fluency, think creatively and critically, express personal ideas and above all enjoy writing. There are various

ways to be independent writers. Following the writing process, students should give emphasis on drafting , revision, recursive reading, teacher and peer conference through which they can lead to be independent writers.

1.1 Which kind of writing practices make students Dependent writers? :

Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things, everything degenerates in the hands of man. -----

Jean Jaques Rosseau.

In Bangladesh, there are two practices of teaching writing that make students dependent and prevent them from producing a quality writing. These are formulaic writing and rote memorization.

In the book *After the End* (1993), Barry Lane states that “writers don’t need to be given formulas; they need to be shown possibilities.” Teaching formulaic writing is a great concern as it leads to a lifeless and low quality writing where students involvement in writing is absent. It does not mean that those who use forms cannot write but they cannot produce high quality writing which is purposeful, reflective and have a high command of language that today’s world expect. For the beginners or novice writers, formulaic writing may be useful because they need to learn organizational techniques and crafting gradually but it can never be the final outcome of students’ performance at any grade level. For this, Albertson (2003) in his research asserts that “learning to use a range of available organization and developmental strategies may be more worthwhile than formulas,

at least for the purpose of passing high stakes writing assignments”(“Proven Instructional Practices,” 2005).

Rote memorization is another obstacle to students becoming independent writers. It has been considered as a bad practice to produce independent writing. Some students have been encouraged to memorize another writer’s work and use it as their own writing. But this practice deprives students to enjoy the ownership of their own writing. Without doing rote memorization, students can best learn from the modeled writing of excellent writers (ibid.).

Learning from their sentence styles and writing techniques, students can apply these to their own writing. On the other hand, Students should grow their reading habit intensively as reading and writing are interrelated. Students can learn to read and write better when the two processes are linked, because development in one can make progress in another. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001),“The interconnectedness of reading and writing is profound and inescapable..... Fragmenting these complex literacy processes interferes with the greatest goal of literacy education – the construction of meaning from and through text. Using reading and writing together in harmonious concert enables learners to draw on these complementary processes at the same time as they work to construct meaning.” Teacher can use different interesting reading texts for students’ writing to make them involved in independent writing. In this way, they can come out from formulaic and memorized writing gradually. Teachers should use their own designed materials instead of using only selected text book.

1.2 What is a good writing? :

According to Steve Peha (1995-2002), a good writing should include the following criteria like-

- Important and interesting ideas are the core of a piece of writing.
- Organization that is moving from one idea to the next must be logical and effective.
- Voice must be appropriate because it is the expression of individual personality through words.
- Good writing uses right words to say the right things so word choice should be specific.
- In good writing, sentences must be fluent and expressive.
- Conventions like punctuation, spelling, grammar and other things must be correct and communicative that make writing consistent and easy to read.

(www.ttms.org)

1.3 Cognitive development of writing :

Kellogg (2008) expresses that writing skills typically develop over a course of more than two decades as a child matures and learns the craft of composition. Thus the writer progresses from a stage of knowledge telling to a stage of knowledge transforming characteristics of adult writers. Through maturation, instruction and training, writers advance to an expert stage that is knowledge crafting. Advanced writing does not involve only language system but also cognitive systems for memory and thinking as well. Thinking is closely related to writing for adult

writers. Though Kellogg (2008) views that writing can be approached at three different level like- 1.Knowledge telling, 2. Knowledge transforming, 3. Knowledge crafting, in our country, writing is usually confined to the “knowledge telling” step. Actually our education system does not let students develop their thinking power and higher order intellectual ability, so their writing remains limited to “knowledge telling” stage. Students’ writing assessment is usually based on their functional writing which is predictable that is it remains at the knowledge telling stage. They know what to write before they write and they think that’s the only way to write. So, there is no scope for cognitive or intellectual or thinking development through writing in students.

According to Kellogg (2008), the development of writing skills moves through increasingly three stages and these are- 1. The beginner’s stage of using writing to tell what one knows. 2. The intermediate stage of transforming what one knows for the author’s benefit and 3. The final stage of crafting what one knows for the reader’s benefit. Improving writing skill is a continuous process through practice, planning of writing, language generation, reviewing and mental representations as well. These must undergo continuous developmental changes through maturation and learning the specific writing tasks. These three stages are shown in the following graph :

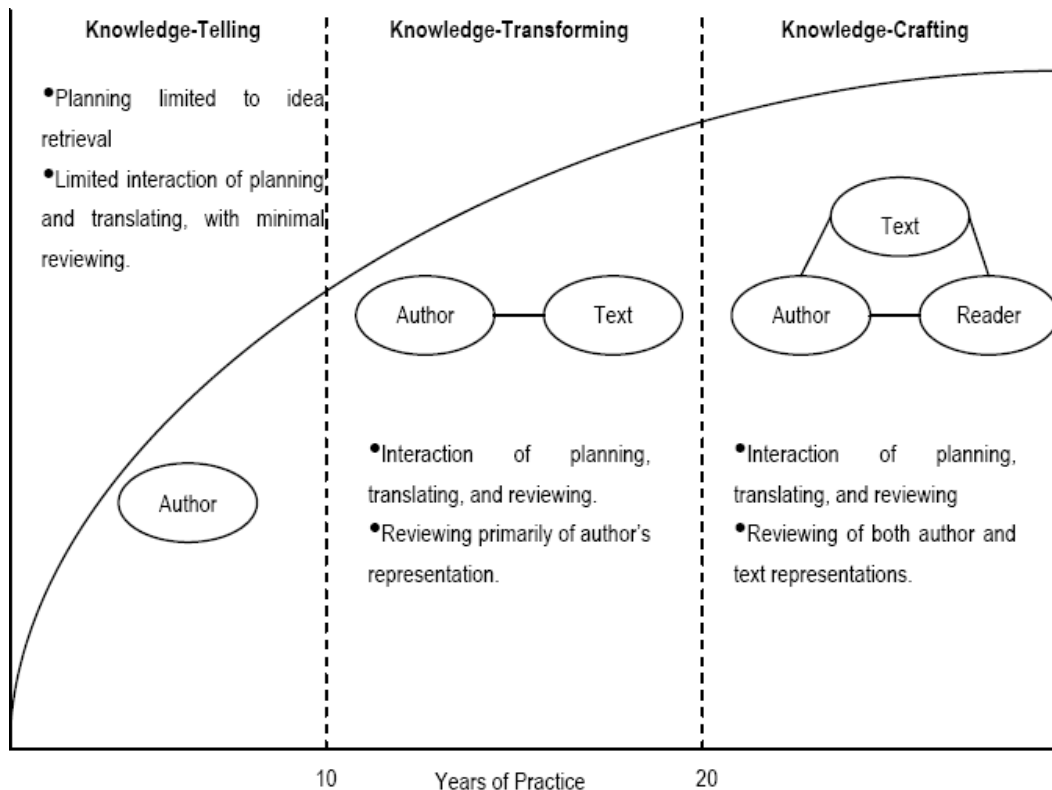


Figure 1: Macro stages in the cognitive development of writing skill (in Kellogg, 2008).

1.4 Problem statement :

In our teaching learning context, writing skill is usually considered as a proof of whether learners learnt English well or not. Learners sit for different examinations and get the grades/ scores on the basis of their writing ability and only writing ability is assessed in the examination. It leads students to memorize commercially available texts to get good grades. Actually it happens due to the exam- oriented attitude of our guardians and students. Teachers often try to ignore the independent writing activities because of exam-oriented approach.

Writing is a thoughtful and thought developing process and writers must take part as an active participant in independent writing. Due to our education system, our students are too much dependent on others and they do not want to produce anything independently. In classroom, students do not practice recursive reading while writing. They view writing as a finished product but what they fail to realize is that writing is an ongoing process of analyzing, connecting, selecting, rejecting, drafting, revising, editing and they have to go through all these in their process of writing.

On the other hand, most English teachers tend to view teaching of writing in large classes negatively. They often associate large English classes with disorderliness, lack of control, lack of students' attentiveness, lack of teacher- student interaction and therefore, ineffective. The students are comfortable in guided writing and they want to learn grammar, more specifically sentence construction, in terms of learning English writing. The students think in term of rules and dictionaries when it comes to learning new word and not reading as a process leading to writing better English. Though large classroom is a problem and we cannot avoid it in our social context, we need to make effective use of large classroom in a positive way. But the problem is, teachers do not create progressive and creative atmosphere in the classroom and that's why, they cannot involve students in classroom activities which is a hindrance to independent writing.

Though grammar is the basis of any writing, in our country, lack of students' grammatical knowledge poses an obstacle to be effective and independent writers. Though to improve one's writing, too much premature correction on grammatical

errors should be avoided during writing, without the proper knowledge of grammar, one cannot be a good writer.

So, the researcher addresses the issue of independent writing based on empirical data that are collected from the questionnaire survey among the learners and teachers at the secondary level (class 8). This study also wants to explore how far independent writing is being practiced in the English class and how the teachers use techniques to become students independent. The researcher also tries to find out teacher's role and student's role that can help to promote independent writing.

1.5 Purpose statement :

The bias of nature is set the wrong way. Education is designed to set it right .----

John Wesley.

Writing is a vast area of language production that our students and teachers are concerned with. Writing should be based on 3c's that is clear, complete and correct (Begum,2012). Without following this principle one cannot be an independent writer. So, the purpose of the study is to familiarize and to increase the practice of independent writing among teachers and students in the classroom. To make teachers and students aware of the using of writing process and using different techniques of independent writing like recursive reading while writing, redrafting, practicing of revision, teacher and peer conference are the important goals of this study. Teachers should introduce students with different writing techniques like writer's workshop, writing in the content area subjects and the use of journals or logs to make them independent writers .

1.6 Research Questions :

To serve the research purpose, the following questions have been set out and the answers of these questions are embedded within the analysis :

Question 1 :

To what extent independent writing is being practiced in the classroom ?

Question 2 :

How do the teachers implement the techniques in writing to make the learners independent ?

Question 3 :

How can we promote students' active role to become independent in writing?

1.7 Delimitation :

It is to be mentioned that this research only deals with the present states of independent writing in the classroom that is how far it is being exercised and what are the techniques used by the teacher in the writing class. It also deals with teacher's role, student's role, role of curriculum in the independent writing. Therefore, the study is going to focus on 5 schools and 100 students and 10 teachers to find out the research purpose.

1.8 Limitation :

This study does not deal with the implementation of techniques of independent writing like writer's workshop, using of the journals or logs etc. because of time constraints. Moreover, as the study will be conducted by individual interest for

Masters level, it is limited to three districts only. More specifically, it is limited to some schools and the informants who participated in the study. Though the topic of the study is a broad one, the study includes only secondary level students of Bengali medium schools (class 8). Because it is impossible to conduct the survey at all levels and at every schools in this limited time span of study.

1.9 Operational Definition :

The list of key terms provides the reader with special words or phrases that are relevant to the particular study. The operational definitions of this study are as follows :

1.9.1 Independent learning :

Independent learning is a way to take the responsibility of one's own learning and organize it as well. It helps learners to become empowered in their own learning.

1.9.2 Independent writing :

Independent writing helps students to enjoy their writing skill in composing a variety of text types. In independent writing, students should be encouraged to define their purpose, identify their audience, write down ideas and notes, think about how to organize ideas effectively and how to share drafts with peers and teachers. It also develops student's fluency, creativity and critical thinking power.

1.9.3 Product model of writing :

Writing that stresses the accuracy of form comes from the traditional or product writing approach. It is teacher-directed and is organized around a series of skills.

1.9.3 Process model of writing :

Process writing is a daily writing course of action that involves prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and presenting makes up the process writing approach. These are the same stages that successful writers or authors use (Jarvis,2002).

1.9.4 Recursive writing ;

Recursive writing means that during writing, writer should go backward of what he has written to move the process forward. Recursive reading in writing is necessary as it helps students to come up with new ideas.

1.9.5 Cognitive development :

The developmental process, by which an infant becomes an intelligent person, acquiring knowledge with growth and improving his or her ability to think, learn reason and abstract. Jean Piaget demonstrated the orderly sequence of this process from early infancy through childhood.

1.9.6 Formulaic writing :

Formulaic writing is that which follows a form to write. This writing is easy to teach, easy for students to grasp and apply, easy to produce prompt results in raising students' standardized test scores.

1.9.7 Rote memorization :

Rote memorization is a term for fixing information to your memory through sheer repetition. Rote learning is often viewed as bad practice, although some would argue that rote memorization is a necessary first step in learning some subjects.

Chapter - 2

Literature Review

A large body of literature on independent learning provides a basis for this study. This literature review expounds the importance and necessity of independent writing . To do this, this literature analysis begins with the need for writing and continues to discuss teacher's role, student's role and role of curriculum in independent writing. Then, the review presents the two fundamental approaches to writing like product approach and process approach. Finally, a brief review presents the importance of recursiveness and revision in writing ; and English at the secondary level and ELT at the secondary level which are relevant to this study.

2.1 Independent learning:

Independent learning is the technique used in order to direct one's own learning and a way of organizing learning as well(Pemberton, 1996:3). According to Thomson (1996:78), Independent learning refers to "learning in which the learners themselves take responsibility for their own learning." As language learning is 'a life long endeavour' (Thomson 1996:78), so success in learning a second or foreign language depends so much on the individual pursuit of opportunities for language use outside the classroom. It is important to help students become aware of the value of independent learning so that they can acquire the habit of learning continuously and maintain it throughout their life (Lee, 1998). Learner independency does not only involve learners to tasks or think teachers as

obsolete but also help to take a control of the task of learning so that they become empowered to engage in learning independently (Benson and Voller, 1997).

There are number of factors involved which can develop independent learning(Lee, 1998).

Self-initiated learning(Begum, 2012) is one of the most potential and pre-requisite for independent language learning. Active and self-engaged(Begum,2012) students will get more benefit than coerced students in language learning (Lee and Ng, 1994).

Another essential criteria for independent learning is learner choice. Independent learning actually helps learners to make decisions in their own learning like setting objectives, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the procedure and evaluating the outcome of learning. Through learner choice, students can be able to work at their own pace(Holec, 1981).

Esch (1996) points out that flexibility in learning can be achieved by creating a supportive environment for learners which is important in independent learning. Flexibility in learning means student can change their objectives, contents, process of learning according to their needs and interests.

Teachers' role is very pivotal in facilitating the process of independent learning and personal discovery of learners . Student –teacher rapport is crucial in this learning and to support and guide the students by helping to focus their goal, giving timely feedback, encouragement and reinforcement is teacher's duty (Kelly,1996).

Interaction, negotiation and collaboration are considered to be very important factors to become independent learners. According to Pemberton(1996), “Learning

does not take place in a vacuum and that self-direction does not necessarily imply learning on one's own."

2.2 Independent writing :

Independent writing springs from an overall culture of writing in the classroom. Independent writing is that where students are given opportunities to perform their own writing by using both assigned and self-selected topics and forms. When students can be able to write independently, then they can easily take the risks in learning, probe meaning, develop fluency, think creatively and critically, solve problems, express personal ideas and enjoy writing. Independent writing springs from the very structured writing to less structured writing ("Proven Instructional Practices,"2005).

Independent writing let students enjoy their skills in composing a variety of text types. During writing, students should be encouraged to define their purpose, identify their audience, write down ideas and notes, think about how to organize ideas effectively and how to share drafts with peers and teachers. In this writing, students have to rework with their writing in the light of teacher's and peers feedback about text organization, cohesion, grammatical choices, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and lay out ("Writing Instruction," 2007).

Independent writing is the extending of students working which can develop their writing skills through practical application. Students learn to practice and refine strategies through modeled and shared writing experiences as well as can be able to organize their thoughts and materials("Benchmark education",1997-2012).

The purpose and goal of independent writing is to provide students the benefits of-

- **Understanding the importance of writing.**
- **Applying students knowledge and skills to write independently.**
- **Making independent choices about their writing like choosing the topic or the publication format.**
- **Becoming confident about expressing their personal voice and ideas in writing.**
- **Developing skills related to each stage of the writing process.**
- **Internalizing the principles of effective writing .**
- **Using writing as a tool to communicate, create, think and learn.**

(“Proven Instructional Practices,” 2005)

2.3 The need for writing:

Though writing is considered as one of the basic skills, rather than that it is considered as a social activity. It is an enculturation into the social life of one’s community, school and workplace. So, like speech, writing is a social and cultural tool that can enable the members of the society to go together. So, it is said that “Written language allows us to know and understand our human nature, to chronicle our history and culture, to learn in all the disciplines”(Freedman, Dyson, Flower, and Chafe, 1987).

According to Brindley and Schneider(2002), writing involves a complicated, intricate and symbolic process that develops with talking, drawing and playing.

Freedman et al.(1987) also expresses that Oral and written literacy skills help to participate in occupational and social communities. Teachers' should assist students to gain control over writing's power to accomplish a range of societal purposes .

Effective writing skills are needed in all stages of life from early education to future employment. Students must be able to convey ideas and information in a clear and concise way to the society in general and in the business world as well. But the inadequacy of writing skills could hinder the progress of the curriculum and future workplaces. On the other hand, effective writing skills enable students to be proficient to convey ideas, analyze information and motivate others (National writing & Nagin, 2006).

Tierney and McGinley (1987) express their view of the mutual dependence of reading and writing activities and their impact becomes greater together than their separate influence. Within the social setting, writing offers an opportunity to support an individuals' efforts as they talk, dramatize and draw their way into more sophisticated written language.

According to the National Council of the Teachers of English of the U.S.A. (NCTE), writing is used as a tool for thinking and learning throughout the curriculum. Writers usually do not transfer their thoughts from their mind to the paper directly. But while writing, students form and develop concepts, change their ideas and find suitable ways to present new understandings. So, writing acts as a medium of thought which suggests to solve problems, to identify issues, to pose questions and to experiment with new ideas etc. As a tool for learning, writing

helps learners to envision and evaluate thoughts, providing learning support across all subject areas (National Council, 1998-2008).

Coe(1994) states that recent research on writing instruction has emphasized the importance of rhetorical context for writing .To establish a rhetorical context , learners are encouraged to respond to questions about the purpose, audience and occasion for their writing. As a result, learners can understand their responsibility for deciding the structure, language and tone of the text. This perception helps learners to internalize reasons for writing and to develop an autonomous position in relation to the writing task. For this reason, Greene and Ackerman(1995:390) said that learners are ‘not only assuming a perspective but situating it in the context of others’.

2.4 Teachers’ role in independent writing:

When students are engaged in purposeful writing tasks, teachers provide support and guidance by demonstrating how to achieve particular purposes, discussing the effectiveness of writer’s choices and giving feedback at all stages of writing. As the goal of all teaching writing is to help students become independent writers, so teachers continue to provide support until students can achieve independence to compose any texts (“Writing Instruction,” 2007)).

As Teacher’s role is very important in independent writing, so, teacher should create a supportive environment that can provide students with the appropriate structure for the goal of independent writing. Teacher should focus on writing content, process or product approach according to students need. Monitoring students progress and decision making during writing process is another

important tasks for teachers . They should assist the students as a guide and a facilitator to achieve success in writing. Teacher- student conferences play an important role in formative assessment purposes to enhance the student’s writing ability as well as to allow the student to share self –assessment information. To identify students’ achievement and their future need on a particular skill, teacher should use various assessment strategies during independent writing. Minimal teacher intervention is preferred in maintaining a student-centered approach. Finally, teachers help students by asking appropriate questions, encouraging dialogue about the writing and urging students to devote their best effort (“Proven Instructional Practices,”2005).

Teacher can act as a listener, coach and model for students in independent writing. By providing necessary skills, teacher can present the craft and involve them in modeled writing. Then teacher can introduce students with the shared writing exercises. In this way, teachers prepare students with all the abilities in the first stages of independent writing and then look for the specific skills of students independent work. Teacher should clarify, extend and refine students writing in teacher- student meeting and must pay close attention to their individual needs (“Benchmark education,”1997-2012).

2.5 Students’ role in independent writing:

Students also have some roles and responsibilities to learn writing independently. According to “Proven Instructional Practices”,(2005), students need to understand and follow the classroom routines while they are writing independently. By using classroom materials and resources, students should involve themselves in the

writing process and try to measure their success in writing. They always need to be ready for conferencing with the teacher and peer. Maintaining a writer folder is must for students and taking careful notes of their own learning and record it on the self- assessment checklist is necessary for independent writing.

Students should first follow the modeled strategy of teacher and then apply it to their own writing. Then they need to share their thoughts with the teacher and the fellow students during conferences and informal chats. Now by using the feedback from teachers and peers, students must revise and edit their writing. If the students know that the teacher is available for them to solve any problem, then the students feel comfortable with this procedure and frequently enjoy the practice of independent writing (“Benchmark education,”1997-2012).

2.6 Role of curriculum:

As independent learning is concerned with fostering the ability to take responsibility of one’s own learning(Holec :1981:3), so , Crabbe (1993) stressed the importance of curriculum in independent learning. According to him, classroom discourse can help learners in transferring classroom learning to their independent learning . It helps to focus on the purposes and problems of tasks and the techniques to solve those problems. Tasks should be designed in such a way that can model independent learning procedures. Therefore, to flourish independent learning, curricula need to integrate discourse about learning and model that kind of learning activity which the learners will try to solve independently in the future.

2.7 Traditional or Product and Process approach to writing:

Though there are a few similarities, but broadly, product and process approaches differ vastly. Actually writing teachers help students make sense of their lives and prepare students to involve in various kinds of writing activities. From both approaches standpoint, teacher's duty is to help students think clearly and convey the thoughts to others. One common belief regarding improving writing is that students must read a variety of literature extensively. On the other hand, most teachers give emphasis on the importance of learning conventions like orderly thinking, spelling, grammar, sense of purpose and audience. Finally, many teachers of both perspectives work to create an environment that allows students to take risks in their writing (Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison, 2001).

Pincas (1982b), provides the description of product approaches where she said that primarily traditional writing deals with linguistic knowledge and it focuses on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. In this approach of writing, teachers usually try to keep students at the same step of writing process. Then teachers assess the final product of students writing and rarely students get the chance to share their writing with audience during the writing process. As product gains control over process in this approach , instructors usually focus on correctness which includes lots of tests and exercises to improve sentence level development rather than students own writing (Pollington et al.,2001).

There is a concern about product approach that it makes students demotivated. When teachers select topics for students, then they feel a lack of ownership and they seem more concerned to complete the assigned topics. Students are taught the skills without context, and activities that concentrate on the individual skills cannot actually improve students writing. Student writing turns into an assessment rather than a learning experience (ibid.). According to Strech(1994), this kind of instruction usually leaves the students out of any learning experience and devoid students from using thinking skills such as organizing, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating information.

According to Tribble, Process approaches stress...

.....writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the 'publication' of a finished text. (1996:37)

In process approaches, writing deals predominantly with linguistic skills such as planning and drafting and less importance is given on linguistic knowledge like knowledge about grammar and text structure (ibid.)

The basic premise of process writing is that all students can write and it focuses on the process rather than the final product. There are many forms of process writing such as writer's workshop, writing in the content area subjects and the use of journals or logs (North central, 2008).

Although the move from product to process is a revolution in writing instruction, the evidence claims that this new direction is not being widely or effectively implemented (Dyson and Freedman, 1991).

In process approach, teachers try to draw out the learners' potential and for this they act as facilitator in learners' writing . During the process, the teacher models, guides and supports the students until they can take charge of their own writing (Boone, Farney, and Zulauf, 1996).

2.8 Recursiveness in writing :

Recursiveness is a basic pattern of writing which should occur during composing anything. Regarding writing, there is a traditional belief that it is a linear process with planning, writing and revising. But writing should be done as a recursive process that means during writing, writer should go backward of what he has written to move the process forward . Recursiveness occurs in different ways in writing. Some writers go back to their writing and reread few discourses to improve it. The unit that is reread is not necessarily a syntactic one but rather a semantic one. Other writers reread some key words or items of the topic throughout the process of writing. They reread and change it to suit the notion of the topic. There is another kind of backward movement called 'felt sense.' This type of movement is not to any words nor to the topic but it is the movement to the feelings or non- verbalized perceptions of the writers. This means when writers are given a topic, this topic calls forth images, words, ideas and vague feelings in writers' mind. Going back and repeating key words of the topic mean that they are waiting and paying attention to the vague idea and finally looking to their felt sense to capture the right words or ideas (Perl, 1980).

2.9 Revision in writing :

The first draft reveals the art, revision reveals the artist .-----

Michel Lee.

Revision is an important stage of the writing process and it needs to be taught explicitly. The focus of this step is to improve the quality of writing. Students examine their writing critically while revising and they are taught a variety of strategies to revise effectively. Students need to determine their ideas and organize clearly through the process of revision and redrafting. More specifically, they can revise their sentence structure, paragraphing, vocabulary etc. Teacher and peer conferencing can be an effective approach to revision and after this conference, they help students to improve writing by facilitating the writers in thought formulation and development of ideas(Guide to effective instruction in writing, 2005).

So, revision is a knowledge transforming activity as opposed to a knowledge telling act of writing. To be an independent writer, revision is must as writing develops from a seed idea and grows organically as a whole through proper intensive use of revision (Begum,2012).

2.10 English at the Secondary level :

To comment on writing in English at the secondary level in Bangladesh, Faruk (2001) states that we all are concerned about the sentence level skill for free writing but it is not enough. According to him, to develop students' independent writing, classroom teaching needs to shift from product approach to process approach. He also add that while monitoring students writing tasks, teacher should

concern about other micro skills involved in the writing process and to develop these skills, teachers should be careful about the outcomes of specific writing activities.

English has two kinds of role in Bangladesh like educational and social. As our education system is exam-oriented, teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Bangladesh remains concerned only to pass in the examination more than to learn effective writing strategies. Though writing excellent English is regarded as an important requirement to get a good job now a days, but how to learn writing properly is being neglected (Amin,2005). In addition to this, Hye(2005), also points out that we should think of the faulty English learning system in Bangladesh which prevents students from being a good writer.

Àra (2005:60) emphasizes on teacher's role in students learning. She stresses that teachers have to select appropriate materials according to students needs and need to know how to handle these in classroom. She also says that in reality lack of teacher's knowing the new approaches, students are not given enough chance to practice writing. Instead of learning writing techniques, students are busy with memorizing . There is hardly any involvement of the students in the classroom. As, in our country, most of the secondary classrooms are large in size, so, teachers face difficulty in organizing group work and pair work with students. But learning takes place better when a teacher can show logic or purpose for the particular activity.

2.11 ELT at the Secondary level:

Write(in Ara, 2005) points out some crucial factors responsible for the deploring state of ELT: 1) defective teaching methodology, 2) examination system, 3) inadequate teacher training 4) absence of an accreditation/ specialized body. He again says that the lack of proper co-ordination in ELT in our country has created a state of confusing and increasing the existing downward trend in poor teaching and learning. The weak students from the primary level become weaker at the secondary level and they become still weaker at the tertiary level. And these weaker students graduating from universities and colleges become teachers at the primary and secondary levels, producing still weaker students. Writer calls it ‘vicious circle of learning.’ In conclusion, Write (2005) says that country like Bangladesh must have a national ELT policy for implementing English language programs for effective teaching and learning English in Bangladesh.

The government and educationists have tried to improve the level of English language teaching in Bangladesh in the past few decades but the unsatisfactory improvement still exist in the English language performance of students , especially among the secondary students. Realizing the importance of English and considering its dominant role in the instruction of higher studies and international communication, English has been taught compulsorily in the schools, colleges and madrashas as a foreign language in Bangladesh.

The teaching of English at the secondary level aims at:

- Developing learner’s abilities of right expression and apt communication in English.

- **Developing accuracy and fluency in both oral and written expressions.**
- **Developing reading and listening comprehension ability (Hoque, 2001).**

According to Shahidullah (1999), an appropriate method of ELT should be based on the socio-cultural variables of learners. ELT methods must have the scopes for skill training through practice. In Bangladesh, as testing is memory based, so language tests do not reflect the students' actual language proficiency. A country cannot make a progressive mode of teaching and learning system without changing the traditional evaluation system.

Although the purpose of teaching English in our schools is to teach students the language by which they are to be able to express themselves meaningfully, teaching English is not so easy and every teacher's teaching standard is not up to the mark. Teaching writing is a quality, which can be achieved through more and more practice (Yasmin, 2006).

Ara (2005), believes that teachers should be aware of the changes of ELT techniques which can enhance students ability. Moreover, a national English language teaching policy is needed to clarify the goal of teaching English as well as the objectives of learning the language at different levels of education. Furthermore, not only the policy is enough, but also inspection and teacher training must be provided through government and semi government organizations to run educational institutions with proper curriculum and syllabus. The importance of policy guidelines cannot be overlooked for the efficacy of ELT program in Bangladesh.

Chapter-3

Methodology

This chapter provides an account of the methodology of the study and discusses issues pertaining to the nature of the study design, theoretical framework, setting and sampling, data gathering instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure.

3.1 Design of the study

The study has tried to investigate into the present status of writing in the secondary classroom of Bangladesh. The survey has also wanted to explore the techniques used by the teachers to develop students writing skill and whether the teachers really involve students in independent writing procedure or not. Moreover, the study focuses on teachers' role, some factors that can promote students' role in independent writing in the classroom. The nature of the study is descriptive and quantitative. According to the research and on the basis of methodology, it has been conducted by two ways – a) Survey method b) class observation. For survey, the questionnaire has been set out which is comprised of both open and close ended items to serve the research purpose. This research wants to survey on 5 Bangla medium schools where total students number is 100 (from each school 20 students) and 10 teachers from 5 schools (2 teachers from each school) . This study focuses on the students of class eight.

3.2 Theoretical Framework :

A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts that guides the research for determining what things the researcher wants to find out . This study is influenced by Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism on cognitive development and Jerome S. Bruner's theory of constructivism.

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory argues that social interaction precedes development; consciousness and cognition are the end product of socialization and social behavior. According to him, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." (Vygotsky, 1978).

To understand this theory on cognitive development, Vygotsky's principles of the More knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development(ZPD) are important. The MKO refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO is normally thought of as being a teacher, coach, or older adult, but the MKO could also be peers, a younger person, or even computers. The MKO is related to Vygotsky's another important principle ZPD. Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD as the distance between the "actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." So, this is the gap between student's current and potential

performance. It means gradually direct teacher instruction is reduced and students get confidence and learn to write independently (Hyland, 2008).

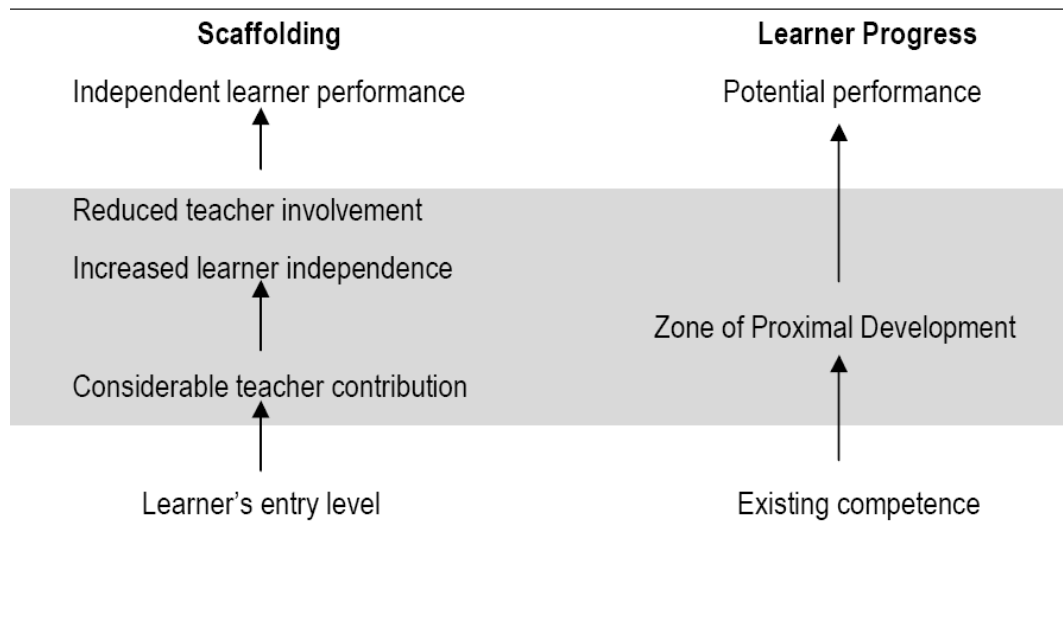


Figure:2 Teacher- Learner collaboration (Based on Feez, 1998, P-27)

So, Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development states that interactions with other people are essential to occur maximum cognitive development .

Bruner's constructivist theory is a general framework for instruction based upon the study of cognition. Bruner's theories of Spiral Curriculum and Discovery learning can be helpful to become independent writers. According to Bruner(1960), spiral curriculum is revisiting the curriculum by teaching the same content in different ways. It must be depended on students' developmental levels. Through these repeating, recounting or revisiting of topics, learners will have a clearer and progressive understanding that enhances learning.

Discovery learning is an inquiry-based constructivist learning theory that takes place in problem solving situations where the learner draws on his or her own past experience and existing knowledge to discover facts and relationships and new truths to be learned. As a result, students may be more likely to remember concepts and knowledge discovered on their own.

Discovery learning helps students to:

- encourage active engagement.
- develop creativity and problem solving skills.
- promote motivation.
- promote autonomy, responsibility and independence.

(Bruner, 1967)

Independent writing can be enhanced by the support of John Dewey's theory of progressive education (1897). Progressive education aims to make schools more effective agencies of a democratic society. By democracy, educators mean active participation by all citizens in social, political and economic decisions that will affect their lives. Margaret Naumberg in her *The child and the World* states that progressive education insists on the importance of the emotional, artistic, and creative aspects of human development-- the most living and essential parts of our natures. As opposed to the traditional classroom, in a progressive classroom teacher is a facilitator, flexible, co-operative and allow students to open discussion whereas students are self motivated, having freedom to choose topics and independent of teachers and many more. So, all these elements are closely related

to writing. In addition, a writing classroom should also focus on students independent thinking, generating thought and ideas independently which is crucial for an independent writer.

3.3 Setting :

The research will be conducted in formal setting. This study will use the classroom as a formal setting to collect data. Students' data will be collected from 5 Bangla medium schools of 3 districts(Dhaka, Narsingdi and Narail) through questionnaire and class observation. The participant schools are -1. St. Joseph higher secondary school, Dhaka. 2. Mohakhali model high school, Dhaka. 3. Narsingdi uchcha balika bidyaniketon, Narsingdi. 4. Mulia secondary school, Narail and 5.Laxmipasha ideal high school, Narail. The questionnaire provides data of secondary level students.

3.4 Sampling :

For the study, 100 students will be selected from different 05 Bangla medium schools of class eight (from each school 20 students). This study selected 05 schools, as it is not possible to cover all the schools in limited time. On the other hand, students will be selected randomly. If there are more than one section, researcher will select the first section, this criterion will be same for all schools. The researcher will go to each school respectively 05 and will take permission from authority in order to conduct this questionnaire survey. On the other hand, for survey, 10 teachers will be selected from different schools (from each school at least 2 teachers). The researcher will select only those teachers for the survey, who are currently teaching in class 8 and all the students, who are the students of class

8. We can expect some degree of similarity in their personal characteristics (intelligence, motivation, social background, experience of the world, maturity and so on).

3.5 Research Instruments :

3.5.a Questionnaire Design process :

To conduct this research two types of questionnaires have been prepared; one is for teachers and the other is for students. Questionnaires do not include any sensitive query. To design the questionnaire, ambiguous words, double- barreled questions and biased questions have been avoided. To obtain the information, questions are designed as simple as possible and in non- threatening way.

To make a purposeful questionnaire, the researcher has taken care of it seriously. At first, the researcher prepared a questionnaire and then discussed with supervisor. Being guided by the supervisor, the researcher checked, rechecked and restructured it to make it more clear and easy to answer.

In questionnaire, there are 19 questions in part A and B which is shown in appendix A. For teachers, 4 open ended questions have been asked to know the details about teachers' practice of independent writing. Part A is formed to answer the central research questions 1 and 2. Part B is related to the central research question 3. The teachers and students might not face problem to give the answers of the questions as the questionnaires have been designed in multiple choice questions pattern.

3.5.b Class Observation :

Class observation is another research instrument to collect data . This study followed a non-participant class observation strategy to collect data. The teachers were asked to continue their normal class schedule and continue teaching undisturbed. The researcher prepared a checklist to aid the observation and notes were taken in the classroom. Actually, through the classroom observation , the real picture of English writing practice in the classroom will come out. The outcome of the observation is expected to give some answers to the central research questions.

3.6 Data collection procedures :

The data is collected through questionnaire and class observation. The study will be conducted in formal setting of 05 different schools, which might take 04 weeks. The researcher will take the permission of the authority beforehand so that she can conduct the survey and class observation to collect data . In the questionnaire (appendix A), teacher and student will mark his/her options/ opinions and only teachers will give the answers of open- ended questions briefly. On the other hand, in the class observation session, researcher will try to collect data through the checklist.

3.7 Data analysis procedure :

Frequency counts and percentage of responses for the option of each item will be done in the form of table. The data will be first tabulated and then result will be presented in a descriptive manner. Then, the responses from the questionnaire

(open-ended) and class observation will be analyzed separately. The data will be compiled in two separate tables and the researcher will try to present the result in percentage and then she will give input to all these responses (data) in a descriptive form. The researcher will analyze the data in quantitative and qualitative manner to find out the research results.

Chapter-4

Results and Discussions

Part -1

The following information, tables, data etc. are given on the basis of questionnaire survey taken with the teachers and students : the summaries of teachers and students opinion are presented in percentage in two separate tables. The data will be first tabulated and then presented in descriptive way.

4.1 Tabulation of Questionnaire data (For Students):

- **Part-A :** The objective of these questions is to find out how far independent writing is being practiced and in what way in the classroom.

Total no. of students- 100

| Question | Students' response in percentage (%) | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|
| | a | b | c | d |
| 1. Do you enjoy writing practice in the classroom? | 25 | 53 | 16 | 6 |
| 2. Do you know the purpose of your specific writing assignment while writing? | 38 | 5 | 43 | 14 |
| 3. How frequently do you select the topic for writing practice in the classroom? | 18 | 20 | 32 | 30 |
| 4. Does your teacher follow the writing process in teaching writing? | 10 | 2 | 13 | 75 |
| 5. Have your teacher ever shown you a model of his/ her own writing? | 7 | 13 | 30 | 50 |
| 6. Do you share your writing with your classmates for getting feedback during the writing process? | 7 | 22 | 32 | 39 |
| 7. Does your teacher put more emphasis on grammatical structures than the content of the writing? | 64 | 25 | 6 | 5 |
| 8. How do you prefer to write if you are given a topic ? | 16 | 15 | 31 | 38 |
| 9. Does your teacher encourage you to write independently? | 30 | 1 | 39 | 18 |
| 10. Do you practice recursive reading (go back and forth to the writing and read again and again) in writing? | 10 | 6 | 14 | 72 |
| 11. While you are re-reading your writing text , do you come up with new ideas? | 6 | 7 | 27 | 60 |

- **Part-B : The objective of these questions is to find out the factors that can help independent writing.**

| Question | Students' response in percentage (%) | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|
| | a | b | c | d |
| 12. During writing, does the teacher give some advice to improve it? | 24 | 11 | 55 | 11 |
| 13. After finishing your writing, does the teacher give you feedback ? | 32 | 13 | 47 | 8 |
| 14. . If you face any problem, does the teacher have enough preparation to solve your problems ? | 35 | 17 | 40 | 8 |
| 15. Do you keep a writing folder/portfolio/writer's notebook to write down notes and important things ? | 15 | 9 | 35 | 34 |
| 16. After receiving feedback from teachers and peers, do you edit your writing accordingly? | 21 | 17 | 55 | 7 |
| 17. During writing , teacher-student relationship remains----- | 4 | 28 | 9 | 59 |
| 18. Does the curriculum introduce you with the independent writing tasks? | 15 | 16 | 53 | 16 |
| 19. Is this research helpful to improve the students' independent writing? | 71 | 29 | 0 | 0 |

For Q 1-7; 9-16; 18-19 a =Always, b= Most of the time, c= Sometimes , d= Never

For Q 8 a =by memorization, b= following the writing process, c= write whatever comes to your mind , d= as directed by the teacher.

For Q 17 a= serious, b= friendly, c= less friendly, d= combination of a & b.

Questionnaire Data analysis(students) :

To analyze students' response from the table, it is seen that ----

- The highest 53% students enjoy their writing practice most of the time which is option (b) .
- 43% students mark on option (c) that means they can know the purpose of their writing sometimes.
- Sometimes students can select the topic for writing which is option(c) and the number of respondent is 32%.
- 75% respondents opine that their teachers never follow the writing process in the classroom that is option (d).

- **The highest 50% students mark on (d) that means their teachers never show them the model of their own writing.**
- **Students say that they never share their writing with the classmates, whose option is (d) and the respondent is 39%.**
- **64% students respond that their teacher always give more emphasis on grammar than the content of writing that is (a).**
- **38% students' opinion is (d) that means they write as directed by teacher when they are given a topic.**
- **The respondents say that their teachers sometimes encourage them to write independently and 39% students mark on (c).**
- **72% students' view is that they never practice recursive reading in their writing which is option(d).**
- **During writing, the teacher gives advice to improve it sometimes (c) and the student's response is 55%,.**
- **37% teachers give feedback sometimes to the students, which is option (c).**
- **40% students answer is (c) that is sometimes teachers are available to help them .**
- **Only 35% students maintain writing folder or portfolio sometimes that is option (c).**
- **Sometimes students edit their writing and this response is 55% in option (c).**
- **59% students opine that during writing, teacher- student relationship remains both serious and friendly.**
- **The curriculum introduces students sometimes with the independent writing tasks and this amount is 55% which is shown in (c).**

- Finally 71% students think that this research will always be helpful to improve writing that is option (a).

So, from the above analysis, the researcher can draw a conclusion that independent writing is not being practiced to a great extent because all the students do not even enjoy writing practice in the classroom. Very few teachers use the writing process in the classroom where it can lead students to develop their independency. All the students do not get the opportunity to choose their own topic and they do not know the purpose of their writing tasks, which are very pivotal to independent writing. From students response we know that teachers give more emphasis on grammar than the content of the writing where too much emphasis on grammar is a hindrance to independent writing. Very few numbers of teachers encourage them to write independently. To be independent writers, recursive reading plays an important role but most of the students say that they never do recursive reading while writing. Their response shows that sometimes teachers give advice and feedback to them. The maximum number of students do not maintain a writing folder but to be reflective writers, they should keep it and the curriculum also does not introduce independent writing tasks to most of the students. So, it is clear that teachers usually do not implement any techniques to make their students independent writers properly. Most of the teachers and students do not follow the procedure of writing properly which can promote students' active participation in independent writing.

4.2 Tabulation of Questionnaire data (For Teachers):

- **Part-A :** The objective of these questions is to find out how far independent writing is being practiced and in what way in the classroom.

Total no. of teachers-10

| Question | Teachers' response in percentage (%) | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|
| | a | b | c | d |
| 1. Do your students enjoy writing practice in the classroom? | 10 | 60 | 20 | 10 |
| 2. Do you inform the students to the purpose of their writing assignment while writing? | 70 | 20 | 10 | 0 |
| 3. How frequently do your students select the topic for writing practice in the classroom? | 0 | 20 | 70 | 10 |
| 4. Does every student get the opportunity to choose their topic individually? | 0 | 40 | 40 | 20 |
| 5. Do you follow the writing process in teaching writing? | 30 | 20 | 40 | 10 |
| 6. Have you ever shown your students a model of your own writing ? | 0 | 70 | 30 | 0 |
| 7. Do your students share their writing with classmates for getting feedback during their writing process? | 0 | 50 | 50 | 0 |
| 8. Do you put more emphasis on grammatical structures than the content of the writing? | 40 | 30 | 30 | 0 |
| 9. How do your students prefer to write if they are given a topic ? | 20 | 0 | 50 | 30 |
| 10. Do you encourage students to write independently? | 60 | 40 | 0 | 0 |
| 11. Do your students practice recursive reading (go back and forth to the writing and read again and again) in writing? | 0 | 60 | 20 | 20 |
| 12. While they are re-reading their writing text , do they come up with new ideas? | 0 | 50 | 50 | 0 |

- **Part-B :** The objective of these questions is to find out the factors that can help independent writing.

| Question | Teachers' response in percentage (%) | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|----|----|---|
| | a | b | c | d |
| 13. During students' writing, do you give some advice to improve it? | 70 | 20 | 10 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| 14. After students finish their writing, do you give feedback to them? | 30 | 60 | 10 | 0 |
| 15. If the students face any problem, are you prepared to meet the students' need? | 60 | 20 | 20 | 0 |
| 16. Do your students keep a writing folder/portfolio/writer's notebook to write down notes and important things ? | 20 | 40 | 20 | 20 |
| 17. After receiving feedback from teachers and peers, do the students edit their writing accordingly? | 0 | 60 | 40 | 0 |
| 18. During writing, teacher-student relationship remains----- | 0 | 20 | 0 | 80 |
| 19. Does the curriculum allow you to introduce students to independent writing tasks? | 10 | 40 | 50 | 0 |

For Q 1-8; 10-17; 19 a =Always, b= Most of the time, c= Sometimes , d= Never

For Q 9 a =by memorization, b= following the writing process, c= write whatever comes to your mind , d= as directed by the teacher.

For Q 18 a= serious, b= friendly, c= less friendly, d= combination of a & b.

Questionnaire Data analysis (Teachers) :

By analyzing teachers' response from the table, the researcher finds that-----

- Teachers say that the highest 60% students enjoy their writing practice most of the time which is option (b) .
- 70% teachers mark on option (a) that means they inform the purpose of the writing always.
- Sometimes students can get chance to select the topic for writing which is option(c) and the number of respondent is 70%.
- 40% respondents opine that the teachers sometimes follow the writing process in the classroom that is option (c).
- The highest 70% teachers mark on (b) that means most of the time they show them the model of their own writing.
- 50% teachers say that their students most of the time share their writing with the classmates, which is (b) and 50% teachers say that their students sometimes share their writing with the classmates which is option (c).

- **40% teachers always give more emphasis on grammar than the content of writing that is (a).**
- **Teachers' opinion is (C) that means students write whatever comes to mind when they are given a topic.**
- **The respondents say that teachers always encourage students to write independently and 60% teachers mark on (a).**
- **60% teachers' view is that their students do recursive reading in their writing most of the time which is option(b).**
- **During writing, 55% teacher gives advice to improve it always which is option (a).**
- **60% teachers give feedback most of the time to the students, which is option (b).**
- **60% teachers' answer is (a) that is always teachers are available to help students.**
- **Only 40% students maintain writing folder or portfolio most of the time that is option (b).**
- **Teachers opine that most of the time students edit their writing and this response is 60% in option (b).**
- **80% teachers answer is that during writing, teacher- student relationship remains both serious and friendly.**
- **The curriculum allows teachers to introduce students sometimes with the independent writing tasks and this amount is 50% which is shown in (c).**

So, the above descriptive data analysis helps us to understand the answers of the research questions like teachers cannot make the writing practice enjoyable to the students because not all the students enjoy their writing class. Every teacher does not inform the students to the purpose of their writing tasks and let them choose their topic

individually which is a hindrance to the path of independent writing. Few teachers sometimes practice the writing process and share their writing as a model to the students. The highest number of respondents gives more emphasis on grammar than the content . As most of the teachers say that their students write whatever comes to their mind when they are given a topic, this point also emphasizes on teachers not using the writing process in the classroom. Teachers' response shows that they give advice and feedback most of the time to improve students' writing and they are available to solve their problems. Teachers also say that their students do not keep the writing folder and edit their writing all the time. That means they can not involve students fully in the independent writing process. The curriculum is also responsible as it allows them sometimes to introduce students with the independent writing tasks. On the other hand, teachers say that their relation with the students remains both serious and friendly in the writing class. Teachers also cannot make the best use of independent writing practice as their opinion differs. Most of the teachers also do not use the techniques like sharing their writing, following writing process, following recursive reading while writing, giving advice time to time and giving feedback. They even do not encourage students to write independently all the time. Actually, to promote students' active role in independent writing, teachers have to play the important role as a facilitator to the students with all the techniques. And students also must maintain their notebook, which can reflect their thinking and give emphasis on recursive reading, redrafting and editing. Curriculum designers also have the responsibility to facilitate students' writing with the independent writing tasks.

4.3 Analysis of Teacher's open-ended questionnaire response :

There were four open – ended questions designed for teachers to know the importance of independent writing, what types of writing assignments could be helpful for students to become independent writers, how teachers involved students in writing and after all, what were the obstacles to implement independent writing. Now, teachers' responses will be analyzed question by question.

According to the teachers, the importance of independent writing is to -----

- Be confident, self- dependent, creative, ambitious, and far-visioned.
- Develop accuracy and fluency in writing .
- Improve students' vocabulary, thoughts and ideas.
- Communicate and learn language.
- Develop students' thinking power and find out the inner quality of students.

Teachers opine that writing assignments may be -----

- Personal liking / disliking, interesting / sad events, cultural program.
- Writing can be practical life related, and text related as well.
- The visited place, surroundings, aim in life etc.
- Narrative or up to students' choice, nature or science fiction.
- Writing through which students can express their views and ideas.

To involve students in the writing practice, teachers emphasize on -----

- Group work, pair work and individual work.

- Giving some ideas and instructions to learn vocabulary and to write grammatically.
- Students' writing in their own words, style and thinking.
- Creating good impression about teachers and motivate students to involve in writing.
- Creating a friendly atmosphere in the classroom.

The obstacles implementing the independent writing in the classroom are-----

- Pressure to complete the syllabus in limited time.
- Lack of enough class time, motivation, knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.
- Students' tendency to memorization and not using their own thinking power.
- Large classroom and students' inattentiveness in classroom learning.
- Lack of clear conception of topic and command over English language.
- Lack of writing practice, weak curriculum design and traditional question pattern system.

So, from the teachers' responses, it is clear that all the teachers have given emphasis on the importance of independent writing because they think it helps students to be confident, creative, ambitious and far visioned. It develops students' accuracy and fluency in writing as well as their thinking power and the inner quality of students. Teachers think that to develop students independent writing, different types of writing assignments can be helpful like personal writing, practical and text related writing, writing about different types of cultural programs and the writing which can express

students' ideas and views clearly. On the other hand, to involve students in the writing practice, some teachers usually take some steps like group work, pair work and individual work. Some teachers stress on giving ideas and instructions before and during writing. Some other emphasize on making good impression and students' motivation in writing. Other teachers let students choose their topic independently and give importance in teacher- student rapport. Though, the teachers can perceive the necessity of independent writing, they face some obstacles to implement it in the classroom. They remain under pressure to complete the syllabus in due time. There is lack of class time, lack of students' motivation and lack of students' proper knowledge of grammar and vocabulary also pose problems for teachers. Teachers present some other obstacles like students' tendency to memorize everything, large class size, present curriculum and question pattern system, lack of command over English language and fear about the language.

Part-2

4.4 Class Observations :

From questionnaire (both close and open- ended) survey analysis, the researcher finds a clear picture of students' and teachers' perception and their using of independent writing in the classroom. The teachers present some obstacles (in open-ended questionnaire) to implement this independent writing. Now, by the classroom observation survey, the real picture of writing practice will come out that whether students and teachers use the techniques of independent writing or not.

The researcher has observed five English classes from the five schools . As it is a non-participant classroom observation strategy, teachers are asked to continue their normal class schedule and continue teaching undisturbed. The researcher has taken necessary notes during observation. By analyzing the observation results, the researcher discovers a sheer contradictory picture with questionnaire survey. In the practical classroom, teachers do not use the writing process and some students even do not know what the writing process is. Though teachers teach very seriously, teaching and learning or writing is exam- oriented and focus on the final product of writing not the process . Sometimes they give students the opportunity to write independently but in some classrooms, it is seen that writing is based on memorization. Teachers let them write something from their syllabus and they write it by memorizing. In the other classrooms, though the students write something independently, they do not follow the writing process to improve their writing. They usually write whatever comes to their mind about the topic but do not make drafts. Sometimes teachers give some ideas and instructions about the topic but during writing, they do not provide necessary advice or information to improve the writing content. Whatever they do, they give advice to correct students' grammatical mistakes only. The researcher has not found any group work or pair work of students because teachers view that in the large classroom , it is difficult to manage students. There is no sharing of students' writing with their peers and after writing, teachers give some feedback though it is basically based on students' grammatical mistakes and sentence formation. The teachers do not give importance on revision or recursive reading in their writing, which are very crucial to improve one's writing. Students are also very exam focused and do not want to practice anything out of their

syllabus. They try to make their writing final in one chance and to do that they go for memorization. Students also have the tendency not to share their writing with peers and get feedback from them. They want to do everything individually because of their competitive mind. Above all, the result of class observation is really unsatisfactory and it is presenting the bleak state of independent writing practice in the classroom.

So, from the class observation we find that in the real classroom, independent writing is not being practiced at all. Though teachers have the perception of the importance of independent writing and the tasks helpful for students' independency (ref: survey outcomes), they do not follow any independent writing technique in the classroom. They do not follow the process writing model to develop students' writing . Teachers only emphasize on the product of writing. So, to promote students' active role in independent writing, teachers should engage students in the independent writing process and facilitate them by the writing tasks to develop their writing. Besides this, curriculum should be designed in a way that can help to involve students fully in the writing process and teacher-student rapport also plays an important role to enhance independent writing.

Part-3

4.5 Recommendations :

“That education is a living, not a mechanical process, is a truth as freely admitted as it is persistently ignored.”-----

Rabindranath Tagore(1936)

Though 76 years have passed from Tagore’s comment, it is a great sorrow that education still exists as a mechanical process. We are not using it as a living process, rather ignoring this universal truth persistently. This is true for the writing practice in Bangladesh, which actually presents a lifeless writing picture in our education system. So, to make the writing classrooms as active learning process, the researcher recommends some steps to be followed:

Students should avoid the tendency to memorize :

The first thing to avoid is the rote memorization of students as it is a mechanical and wrong process of learning. It totally deprives students of enjoying the ownership of their writing. So, to do this, students should be motivated and curriculum should be designed in a way so that they do not need to memorize anything to get good grades .

Writing in various modes:

Different types of genre may help to develop students thinking power and writing in creative ways. Independent writing tasks can be of varied taste and types. It ranges from producing essays, short stories, brochures, social studies reports, movie reviews, book reviews, letters to the editor etc.

Students should emphasize on revision and redrafting :

Students must give emphasis on revision and redrafting of their drafts of writing. Instead of producing They should not produce new pieces of writing every day, students should revise a particular draft of writing again and again thoughtfully, critically and creatively. The aim of revision and redrafting is re-reading and changing to improve and correct one's writing as much as possible. These processes can help students to produce well - written and effective texts to communicate with the readers clearly as well as to make themselves as good writers and good thinkers.

Teacher and Peer Conference is helpful for students :

To enhance students' writing skill, teacher and peer conference can play an important role in independent writing. During the conference, the teacher needs to carefully observe the needs of each writer and addresses those needs through questioning and additional modeling. Teacher conference provides students time on task to develop good writing skills. The teacher provides the necessary support and demonstration, while leaving room for independent writing through a lot of practice.

Co-operation between peers may result in meaningful knowledge about writing and the topic of writing. Therefore, peer work should not be limited to post-writing activities, that is, responding to and talking about each other's texts on the completion of it only. It

should also include talking about the writing task and the contents and purpose of writing before and during writing the first draft.

Grammar should be given importance and should be taught contextually :

Grammar helps students to write correctly but it should not be taught as isolated skills. Sentence formation and other convention should be taught contextually like using mini – lessons.

Teacher should encourage students to learn socially :

As this study is partly guided by Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism, we can easily recommend the social learning for students. Students should learn socially that means with the help of more knowledgeable others, they can learn individually more successfully. To involve students in the social learning, teacher can help them to do group work and pair work among themselves . In this way, with the help of teachers and peers , students can enrich their knowledge about the process of writing and becoming better writers.

Teacher can Create a “Progressive classroom” to enhance students’ writing skill :

In a progressive classroom teacher is a guide, a facilitator, who is flexible, co-operative and allows students to open discussion whereas students are self- motivated, having

freedom to choose topics and independent of teachers. So, in this classroom, writing of students can easily become independent with the help of teachers' guidance.

Teacher should help students to discover their writing themselves:

Teacher should help students to discover techniques in independent writing themselves which can enhance their active participation in writing, develop creative and critical thinking and problem solving skills related to writing. It can also promote motivation, responsibility and independence as well.

Teacher should make proper use of the creative energy of young learners :

Teacher should make proper use of the creative energy of young learners in the classroom. As every student's quality is not same, the energetic students can encourage and involve others in the learning process. Being motivated, they can act as role models and be active participants in the classroom learning.

Teacher training is needed :

Teacher should have proper knowledge about how to teach writing scientifically. They should also be trained properly so that they can implement the techniques of independent writing in their classrooms. They also should have the mentality to train students truly to become independent writers.

We need a nation wide writing policy and writing tests at different levels:

The first most important thing is to create a nation wide writing policy. This well integrated writing policy must involve both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process of writing and help to produce successful independent writers for our country. So, proper authority should be concerned to introduce a writing policy for the teachers and students and ensure its appropriate implementation as well. Not only that,

a nation wide writing test is needed at different levels that can make students aware of the writing skill.

Chapter – 5

Conclusion

“Children should be led to make their own investigations, and to draw their own inferences. They should be told as little as possible, and induced to discover as much as possible.”-----Herbert Spencer.

So, the goal of learning is to let students investigate and discover their own concepts and knowledge, which lead them to be independent learners in life. The way to independent learning or writing is to start with the assistance of more knowledgeable others like teachers or peers. Gradually their involvement or contribution to the students’ learning will be reduced and finally students’ potential performance will come out. As a facilitator, teacher’s duty is to provide support and guidance to make students achieve their particular goal in writing. Curriculum should be designed to develop a literate and cultured populace so that students can write fluently, read easily, think deeply and communicate effectively and independently. We should give consistent emphasis on the development of intellectual ability, creative and critical thinking through writing and it can be possible by practicing independent writing.

Progressive education ensures students' active participation in the classroom where teacher is a facilitator who adapts, co-operates and creates a collaborative learning environment among students. A progressive classroom should give the students the freedom to choose their writing topics, purpose, goal and audience. Being self-motivated, students can engage themselves fully in the independent practice of their writing process. This flexible classroom environment and teacher- student rapport can stimulate students' thinking and increase their involvement in writing.

The government and educationists have tried to improve the level of English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh in the past few decades but the unsatisfactory results still exists in the English language classrooms, especially among the secondary students. To develop students' writing ability, different techniques can be adopted like following the writing process, doing recursive reading while writing, giving emphasis on redrafting and proper use of revision, which surely will lead them to be independent writers. The survey outcomes have shown the unsatisfactory states of independent writing of secondary students, where it is shown that independent writing is not being practiced at all. Writing practice in the classroom presents traditional and mechanical teaching approach, which poses a threat to the independent writing practice and independent thinking. Therefore, the practice of independent writing is still a myth not a reality to the secondary students. So, the goal and purpose of this study is to make writers independent at all levels .

The researcher wants to share her knowledge and experience about independent writing process before concluding this paper. This dissertation is itself an example of

independent writing which follows the process approach of writing. This paper starts with an idea which has been expanded by lots of supportive ideas and recommendations through writing again and again. By using various sources of knowledge and materials and guided by the more knowledgeable supervisor, the researcher has been able to gain knowledge and write this dissertation. To complete this paper, the researcher needs to focus on repetitive use of recursive reading, revision, redrafting and editing thoughtfully, critically and creatively. In this way, this dissertation has been written, checked and rechecked by the teacher and finally this paper is ready to be submitted. As a student researcher, it is a matter of great pleasure that this process of writing has developed the researcher's knowledge of writing and has matured the researcher's power of thinking and learning as a writer.

Appendix-A
Questionnaire : For Students

Title : The practice of Independent writing at the secondary level in Bangladesh: a myth or a reality ?

Serial No :

Institution:

Class :

Date :

Questions: part A

- **The objective of these questions is to find out how far independent writing is being practiced and in what way in the classroom.**

- 1. Do you enjoy writing practice in the classroom?**
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

- 2. Do you know the purpose of your specific writing assignment while writing?**
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

- 3. How frequently do you select the topic for writing practice in the classroom?**
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

- 4. Does your teacher follow the writing process in teaching writing?**
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

- 5. Have your teacher ever shown you a model of his/ her own writing?**
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

- 6. Do you share your writing with your classmates for getting feedback during the writing process?**
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

7. Does your teacher put more emphasis on grammatical structures than the content of the writing?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never
8. How do you prefer to write if you are given a topic ?
a. by memorization b. following the writing process c. write whatever comes to your mind d. as directed by the teacher .
9. Does your teacher encourage you to write independently?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never
10. Do you practice recursive reading (go back and forth to the writing and read again and again) in writing?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never
11. While you are re-reading your writing text , do they come up with new ideas?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

Questions: part B

- The objective of these questions is to find out the factors that can help independent writing.
12. During writing, does the teacher give some advice to improve it?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never
13. After finishing your writing, does the teacher give you feedback ?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never
14. If you face any problem, does the teacher have enough preparation to solve your problems ?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never
15. Do you keep a writing folder/portfolio/writer's notebook to write down notes and important things ?
a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

16. After receiving feedback from teachers and peers, do you edit your writing accordingly?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

17. During writing , teacher-student relationship remains-----

- a. Serious b. Friendly c. less friendly d. combination of a & b

18. Does the curriculum introduce you with the independent writing tasks?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

19. Is this research helpful to improve the students' independent writing?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

Thank you

Questionnaire: For English Language Teachers

Title : The practice of Independent writing at the secondary level in Bangladesh :a myth or a reality ?

Serial No :

Institution:

Date :

Questions: part A

- The objective of these questions is to find out how far independent writing is being practiced and in what way in the classroom.

1. Do your students enjoy writing practice in the classroom?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

2. Do you inform the students to the purpose of their writing assignment while writing?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

3. How frequently do your students select the topic for writing practice in the classroom?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

4. Does every student get the opportunity to choose their topic individually?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

5. Do you follow the writing process in teaching writing?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

6. Have you ever shown your students a model of your own writing ?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

7. Do your students share their writing with classmates for getting feedback during their writing process?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

8. Do you put more emphasis on grammatical structures than the content of the writing?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

9. How do your students prefer to write if they are given a topic ?

- a. by memorization b. following the writing process
c. write whatever comes to mind d. as directed by the teacher .

10. Do you encourage students to write independently?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

11. Do your students practice recursive reading (go back and forth to the writing and read again and again) in writing?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

12. While they are re-reading their writing text , do they come up with new ideas?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

Questions: part B

- The objective of these questions is to find out the factors that can help independent writing.

13. During students' writing, do you give some advice to improve it?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

14. After students finish their writing, do you give feedback to them?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

15. If the students face any problem, are you prepared to meet the students' need?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

16. Do your students keep a writing folder/portfolio/writer's notebook to write down notes and important things ?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

17. After receiving feedback from teachers and peers, do the students edit their writing accordingly?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

18. During writing, teacher-student relationship remains-----

- a. Serious b. Friendly c. less friendly d. combination of a & b

19. Does the curriculum allow you to introduce students to independent writing tasks?

- a. Always b. Most of the time c. Sometimes d. Never

Questions : Part C

1. Do you think it is important to teach students to be independent writers? If yes, why?

2. What kind of writing assignments do you find helpful to make your students independent writers ?

3. What do you do to make students involve in writing practice?

4. What are some obstacles that you find to implement the teaching of independent writing?

Thank you

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