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**Teaching Writing Skills for Engineering Students**

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**Abstract**

This research paper focuses on the writing skills of the Engineering students of all the branches especially at the time of placements. Writing in English is almost a prerequisite for the job. Now- a-days testing the writing skills of the students is mandatory before going to attend the interviews. LSRW skills are essential in the acquisition of language. In order to help the students with these writing skills, teacher has to take the initiative to motivate them. Most of the students are coming from rural areas and basically from regional medium background. So they require support at every step. Writing becomes a Herculean task to them. Triggering their requirement is a pivotal role of the teacher. Different perspectives of writing skills like free writing, mechanics of writing, vocabulary, grammar, description of a picture, paragraph, essay and summary writing and report, resume, letter and e-mail writings are discussed in this paper. Activities like pair work or group work of all the tasks are added benefit to the students. Interest and command on the identified topic of the student is not identical. Analysis and feedback of each and every activity is an added grace to the teacher and advantage to the student. If the students are trained logically from the beginning of their first year of Engineering they achieve their dream of getting a placement before completing their Bachelor's degree.

**Keywords:** activity, grammar, vocabulary, writing.

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**Introduction**

Now- a- days English Language is in greater demand throughout the world. The scenario of English Language from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to 21<sup>st</sup> century is completely changed. Students of poorer classes are also craving for English medium education. Once communication in English is a fashion but now it is necessary. English is prescribed as one of the subjects in their curriculum for engineering students of all branches. Endeavour of a teacher and student are identical. The aim of the research paper is teaching writing skills for Engineering students of all the branches especially at the time of placements, testing of their writing skills is mandatory in the interviews.

Advent of English Language Laboratory gives advantage to the students as it is the genuine platform for the students to express their LSRW skills. Every skill is essential in the acquisition of language. Among all these four basic skills Listening and Reading are receptive skills and Speaking and Writing are productive skills. Writing is an imperative skill as it should be developed in the student from the schooling. Cook (1996) claimed, "People who start learning English as an adult never

managed to learn it properly and other who learn it as a child is indistinguishable from the natives".

Writing in English is almost a prerequisite for the job today. In order to help the students these writing skills, teacher has to take the initiative to motivate them. Most of the students are coming from the rural areas and basically from regional medium background. So they require support at every step. Writing becomes a Herculean task to them. Triggering their requirement is a pivotal role of the teacher. Ignite the student with the quotations like: Bill Cosby says: "In order to succeed, your desire for success should be greater than your fear of failure." Lao Tzu says: "A journey of thousand miles begins with a single step." Thomas Henry Huxley says: "Zeal without knowledge is fire without light."

If students have the ability to read then they can write anything of their own Bill Reed says about the significance of reading for writing : "If you want to write well . . . read, read, and then read some more. Read good writing. Read bad writing. Learn to know the difference. Note for simplicity of style: noun, verb, object; noun, verb, object. It worked for Hemingway, who often said that his ultimate goal

was to create the perfect sentence. Read some Hemingway, and not just his novels, but some of his early newspaper writing. There's never been better news and feature writing, ever. When you read the works of these and other fine writers, notice the simplicity of their language and how they vary their sentence structure and length. Some sentences number two or three words; others run an entire paragraph. There are countless tips on writing well, but I leave you with this one: read first, and then write."

### Different Perspectives of Writing Skills



**Free Writing:** Instruction of the teacher is most important to encourage the student to write. Free writing is like prewriting. This is a mental activity. No topic is given to the student. Students can write on their interested topic. No grammar, spelling, vocabulary corrections will be taken place. Generating the content on the topic is very crucial in the part of the student. This activity will work very well at the beginning of the class regularly. A few students write about politics, a few of them write about nature, a few of them write about any situation which has happened in their life and so on. They have to write the topic for five minutes continuously. Count of the words will be taken into account. Whatever they may write but in the stipulated time how much they have contributed to their writing is taken into consideration. Students need to practice this free writing at home by following the instructions given in the class. This should be like diary entry at home.

**Activity:** Then students are divided into pairs. Each of them has to read aloud the written content. No judgement will be given by any student or the teacher. Teacher has to go round the class to watch the students how they are participating in the activity. Students are inspired to write more about the different topics of their choice. Teacher's observation

can encourage them to continue the free writing at home and in the class. They need to follow strictly to write four or five topics regularly for a week. Then students cannot find problem with their flow of thought.

### Syntax, Spelling, Pronunciation and Punctuation:

These are the basic writing skills. Free writing is one way good for the students to generate the content. Then they need to concentrate on different skills of writing. Reading plays a key role. If they are encouraged to read books, magazines, articles in the newspaper etc., these can give a good idea on sentence structure. At first, spelling skill catches attention of the reader or examiner along with the pronunciation and punctuation. They need to understand that the words written by them can paint concrete a picture in the mind of the examiner. Without word order or syntax no language seems good. Those who are speaking well then they can write well. Practice speaking is also more important along with writing. So every student needs to understand all LSRW skills are inter-related. Without knowing any one of these skills the skill students want to develop will not take place.

**Activity:** Students are divided into four member groups. Each group is provided an article in the news paper. They need to understand and read aloud the given article with proper syntax, spelling, pronunciation and punctuation. Intonation and flow of reading make a good sense. Everybody in the group takes a turn to read the same article. Reading four times can give a very good impact on their minds. Finally, the first member in the group focus on the difficult spellings, the second one on the differences of voice which comes into syntax, the third one on pronunciation and the fourth one on punctuation marks.

**Vocabulary and Grammar skills:** These skills are challenging activities to the students. Teachers focus on grammatical concepts which are essential for clear communication of meaning. The most significant concepts of grammar are sentence, clause, phrase. "Shaughnessy advocates four important grammatical concepts: the sentence, inflection, tense, and agreement. She recommends that teachers encourage students to examine grammatical errors in their own writing. She also cautions teachers not to overemphasize grammatical terminology to the detriment of students' ability to understand and apply the concepts." Students writing skills will be expanded through vocabulary. Students need to understand the frequency of the words. Students use low frequency words in their writings. Those words

should be replaced with high frequency words to get quality writing. Nathaniel Hawthorn said: "Words, so innocent and powerless as they are, standing in a dictionary; how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to choose and combine them." Student can express their power of thought through powerful words.

**Activity:** Again students are divided into groups. Then they can exchange their paper after writing the content of their own. One student in the group proofreads for the tenses errors, another for place of modifiers, another for agreement between subject and verb etc. This activity increases enthuse in students to improve their grammar skills. Then four or five high-frequency words will be provided to the students to rewrite the same content. Students need to work of their own for each and every meaning of the given word list. Then they use all the words effectively in their writings.

**Picture Description:** After they have got the idea of using mechanics, vocabulary and grammar they are directed to describe a picture of their choice. They need to use right expressions to describe and compare and contrast the given or selected picture. If the teacher provides the expressions it is well and good otherwise ask them to work from the internet to collect proper expressions. Students need to provide a title to the picture and interpretation of the picture. For instance, they need to concentrate on background of the picture like environment, time of day, weather, place, culture etc. They are encouraged to write as many sentences as possible for describing the picture. They have to focus on tenses, place of prepositions, sentences structures in the part of the grammar and high frequency words from the list given to them in the earlier activity. They can understand how significant the grammar and vocabulary in constructing the sentences.

**Activity:** In the newspaper, many advertisements and pictures are available. Students see and choose one of the pictures to describe. While they are doing this activity teacher has to go round the student and observe them is very important. Teacher's feedback shows impact on the young minds. They compete with each other when the teacher provides the incentives to the students. They will not find struggle to develop the content in their exams when they know this skills well. So teacher gets ready with innumerable images to ask them to describe as the result of this activity is dramatic in their future. They will be the spy on themselves for vocabulary and grammar practices.

**Paragraph, Essay and Summary Writing:** After students practicing free writing and picture description, they will be guided to handle first the paragraph writing then essay writing which consists of number of paragraphs and at last summary writing. Teacher makes them focus on paragraph writing which is the foundation for essay and summary writing. They need to learn coherence, unity and completeness in handling the paragraph. Students need to identify the importance of a topic sentence which grabs the attention of the reader and it should be free from all types of errors. Then unified paragraphs will be woven one by one, relating to the concept. Students need to start their writing exercises with a very good beginning, development and conclusion at the end. It has to be ended with a memorable thought or logic sentence of twist. All the paragraphs in the essay writing are interconnected with the main idea. Summary writing is a condensed version of reading larger texts. For this also paragraphs are the added grace. Kinds of essays are a bit tedious process to the teacher to make them understand. When they start writing the essay they could understand easily different types of essays like expository, narrative and descriptive.

**Activity:** Students are divided into groups. They are instructed to read the newspaper article thoroughly to write a paragraph or essay or summary. Through reading habits, the students improve their writing skills. While reading the articles they need to collect the high frequency words and work with the meaning and usage of those words to incorporate them in their own sentences of writing. Then everybody has to express their idea of writing to the group. Practicing paragraphs lead to the practicing of essays and summaries.

**Report, Letter, Resume and E-mail Writing:** This is the area where engineering students are getting tested. This writing is ultimate in the part of the engineering students. It is called a professional way of writing. When students arrive at their fourth year they can be able to handle all types of writing skills. At this level they have got maturity in their thinking and writing. If the teacher provides the templates of report, letter, resume and e-mail writings students can practice writing. Students are guided that the clear, concise and precise sentences and paragraphs are need to develop their professional skills. Teachers need to provide convoluted phrases instead of plain and simple English. Exams are an ideal opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills to all the students. The entrance exams like GRE, TOEFL, SAT, GMAT, CAT assess the verbal and written communications of the students.

**Activity:** Different types of letters and reports are getting published in the newspaper. Students have to observe and recognize them. If they understand the terminology for reports, letter and e-mail they can start writing of their own. Teacher has ample opportunities to give feedback to the students. Feedback makes every student thinking logically and clearly. Teacher's instructions make their ideas polished in developing their skills. They develop their own resumes and covering letters for their job opportunities according to the requirements of the companies. Students have authenticity on the content if they prepare everything of their own.

### Conclusion

Writing is one of the best effective tools of communication. It is an art; it will be developed over a period of time. Present observation reveals that energy levels of the students are very high. By proper guidance and counseling, the writing skills of the budding engineers can be channelized in such a way that they could outright stand in good stead in the chosen avenue of their lives. Inculcating the interest in them is the real obligation of the teacher. If students are trained logically in the above manner from the beginning of their first year of Engineering they achieve their dream of getting a placement before completing their Bachelor's degree. So, writing skills invariably become the deciding factors. Francis Bacon says: "Reading makes a full man; conference a ready man and writing an exact man."

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