



## English Teachers' Techniques of Teaching Writing Skills at School Level

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### Abstract

This study discovers the techniques employed by English teachers in teaching writing skills at the secondary level in Tanahun District, Nepal, while identifying the key challenges they encounter. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the research incorporates questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews with ten English teachers (five from public and five from private schools). Findings expose that teachers mostly use an eclectic approach, combining traditional grammar-translation methods with communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies, such as guided writing, free writing, and peer feedback. However, significant barriers hamper effective instruction, including large class sizes, insufficient teaching resources (e.g., audio-visual aids, textbooks), and students' weak foundational skills in grammar and vocabulary. The study emphasizes the need for targeted teacher training programs, improved resource allocation, and policy reforms to develop writing pedagogy in secondary education. By highlighting these challenges and practices, the research offers valuable insights for curriculum designers, policymakers, and educators aiming to strengthen English language instruction in Nepal and similar contexts.

**Keywords:** Writing skills, secondary education, English language teaching, eclectic approach, pedagogical challenges, Nepal.



## Introduction

Writing skills play an essential role in the acquisition and mastery of any language, particularly English as a second or foreign language. In the context of Nepal, English writing instruction at the secondary level is a critical foundation for learners' academic and professional futures. Traditionally, writing was treated as a secondary skill, subordinate to speaking and reading. However, modern pedagogical approaches recognize writing as an active, complex process involving critical thinking, creativity, organization, and linguistic accuracy. The ability to write effectively enables students not only to communicate ideas but also to organize thoughts logically, engage with academic content, and participate in global communication networks. Writing is integral to the broader goals of English language learning, such as academic success, employment opportunities, and intercultural competence.

Despite its importance, teaching writing skills in Nepal faces considerable challenges. English is not the mother tongue for the majority of learners, and exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. Students often struggle with grammar, vocabulary, coherence, cohesion, and mechanics. Teachers, on the other hand, must navigate large class sizes, inadequate resources, and the pressure of exam-oriented education systems that prioritize rote memorization over creative expression. Furthermore, writing instruction often lacks a systematic focus on process-oriented methods. Traditional techniques such as Grammar-Translation dominate, where emphasis is placed on grammatical correctness rather than meaningful communication. Modern methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that focus on real-life communication, student-centered activities, and meaning-making are however to be fully integrated into classroom practices.



Scholars such as Byrne (1979), Harmer (2007), and Nunan (1992) highlight that effective writing instruction requires a blend of structural knowledge (grammar and mechanics) and functional skills (organization, audience awareness, coherence, and cohesion). Process writing approaches advocate stages like brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, while product-based approaches focus on the final written output. Both perspectives offer valuable insights for developing a comprehensive writing pedagogy. In Nepal's secondary education context, understanding the techniques employed by English teachers in writing instruction and the challenges they face is essential for curriculum designers, teacher trainers, policymakers, and practitioners. There is an urgent need to adopt eclectic methods that combine traditional strengths with modern innovations, thereby enhancing both the competence and confidence of young learners in writing English. This study, therefore, seeks to explore and document the various techniques English teachers use while teaching writing skills at the secondary level, with a particular focus on Tanahun district. It also identifies the barriers that teachers encounter and proposes practical strategies to strengthen writing instruction, making it more student-centered, interactive, and effective.

### **Problem Statement**

Although the growing recognition of writing skills as a core component of English language acquisition, teaching writing effectively at the secondary level in Nepal remains troubled with challenges. Many English teachers, especially in public schools, still be sure of heavily on traditional, grammar-focused instruction methods that limit students' ability to express ideas creatively and fluently. Writing is often taught as an isolated mechanical exercise rather than as a process involving brainstorming, drafting, revising, and



editing. A major problem lies in the socio-educational context: large class sizes, inadequate teacher training, limited access to authentic learning materials, and exam-driven education systems constrain teachers' ability to implement student-centered and communicative writing activities. Moreover, students come from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, often with minimal exposure to English outside of school, further intensifying difficulties in writing instruction.

Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive research and documentation on the specific techniques employed by secondary-level English teachers in Nepal, particularly regarding how they address writing instruction and overcome challenges in real classroom settings. Without clear evidence and understanding of existing practices, efforts to improve writing instruction remain fragmented and ineffective. Therefore, this study addresses two critical gaps: first identifying the teaching techniques used by English teachers for writing instruction at the secondary level, and second examining the major challenges they face in fostering writing skills among young learners.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary aim of this study is to explore and analyze the techniques employed by English teachers in teaching writing skills at the secondary education level in Nepal, with a special focus on the Tanahun district. In line with this goal, the specific objectives of the research are:

- To identify the various techniques of teaching writing skills at secondary level EFL classrooms.
- To explore the major challenges that the teachers encounter teaching writing skills as secondary level EFL classroom.



## Research Questions

To fulfill the stated objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- What sorts of techniques do English teachers use to teach writing skills at the secondary level EFL classroom?
- What challenges do teachers face in teaching writing skills at secondary-level classroom?

## Literature Review

The teaching of writing skills has changed over decades, shaped by competing theories about the nature of writing and language acquisition. Two dominant paradigms the Product Approach and the Process Approach offer foundational insights into writing instruction. The Product Approach emphasizes the final written output. It focuses on grammatical accuracy, structural organization, and devotion to resolutions. According to Byrne (1979), writing was traditionally seen as a means to display knowledge of correct form rather than a dynamic act of communication. In this approach, students often imitate model texts and are evaluated on the correctness of their writing. In contrast, the Process Approach views writing as a non-linear, recursive process involving stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Harmer (2007) stresses that writing should be treated as a skill developed over time through meaningful practice and critical reflection. The process-oriented model encourages students to explore ideas, seek feedback, and gradually refine their work, thereby making writing an act of discovery and construction of meaning.



Another influential theoretical foundation is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework, which places writing within real-life communication contexts. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Writing under CLT is aimed not only at form but also at meaningful content and audience interaction. Additionally, concepts like coherence, cohesion, and mechanics are central to effective writing. Coherence refers to the logical flow and organization of ideas, while cohesion involves grammatical and lexical connections between sentences. Mechanics cover technical aspects such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (Widdowson, 1978; Phyak, 2007). These components form the micro-skills that good writing instruction must address. The role of the teacher is also redefined in modern frameworks. Breen and Candlin (1980) conceptualize the teacher not as a transmitter of knowledge but as a facilitator, organizer, advisor, and participant. This perspective shifts classroom dynamics towards a learner-centered environment where students take greater responsibility for their own writing development.

Finally, the eclectic approach to teaching writing combination traditional methods like Grammar-Translation with modern techniques such as task-based learning and authentic materials use — reflects a practical response to the complex needs of diverse classrooms, especially in non-native English contexts like Nepal. Together, these theoretical underpinnings guide the present study in analyzing how English teachers at the secondary level in Tanahun district teach writing skills, what challenges they encounter, and how instruction can be improved.



In contemporary writing pedagogy, the teacher's role has changed from being a simple authority figure to a facilitator, organizer, participant, and counselor (Breen & Candlin, 1980). Teachers are expected to create supportive environments that encourage student autonomy, peer collaboration, and critical engagement with the writing process. They must guide learners through stages of writing, provide constructive feedback, and model effective writing practices without dominating the creative process. This change towards a learner-centered classroom is particularly crucial in developing countries like Nepal, where traditional rote methods have historically dominated language education. Understanding these core concepts is essential for designing and implementing effective strategies for teaching writing skills at the secondary education level, particularly in contexts where English is a foreign language.

Several studies conducted in Nepal have explored various dimensions of English language teaching, particularly the development of writing skills at the school level. These studies provide valuable insights into classroom realities, teacher practices, student challenges, and instructional effectiveness.

Ghimire (2004) compared the writing proficiency of students from various academic streams in higher secondary schools. The findings indicated that students from the Education stream outperformed their counterparts, highlighting the impact of curriculum and instruction on writing outcomes. However, the study also underscored a general deficiency in sustained writing practice across all streams.

Shrestha (2004) examined the "Problems in Teaching Writing Skills in English" among Grade Nine students. The research identified several impediments, including inadequate practice, time constraints, traditional



grammar-focused teaching methods, and overcrowded classrooms. These factors collectively hindered the development of students' writing proficiency.

Similarly, Giri (2006) investigated problems related to both speaking and writing skills in lower secondary levels. His study found that large class sizes, lack of instructional materials, ineffective curriculum implementation, and demotivated students were major barriers. He also noted that teachers often relied heavily on lecture methods and neglected interactive writing tasks.

Kafle (2008) focused on "Writing Proficiency in Guided Writing among Grade Ten Students." The study found that students performed best in parallel writing tasks, while they struggled with developing longer or more complex texts. Notably, girls performed better than boys in guided writing exercises, suggesting potential gender-related differences in language engagement and instruction. However, Mainali (2011) explored students' difficulties in writing, finding that consistent homework and regular feedback contributed positively to student performance. The study supported the view that writing skills improve through continuous engagement rather than through isolated drills or assessments.

Collectively, these empirical studies underscore a shared set of challenges, insufficient instructional techniques, insufficient training for teachers, lack of resources, and passive student participation. Few studies, however, have comprehensively explored both the techniques and challenges in secondary level writing instruction across different school types. The present research seeks to fill this gap by offering a focused analysis of how English teachers in Tanahun district teach writing and what barriers they encounter in the process.





## **Methods of the Study**

This study adopts a descriptive survey design, a commonly used approach in educational research to systematically describe current practices, attitudes, and challenges within a given context. The purpose of employing this design was to collect comprehensive data from English teachers about the techniques they use in teaching writing skills and the difficulties they face at the secondary education level. The design facilitated both quantitative and qualitative analysis, enabling the researcher to uncover patterns, draw comparisons, and develop grounded recommendations. The study was conducted in the Tanahun district of Nepal, incorporating both public and private secondary-level schools. A total of ten English teachers participated in the study: five from community (government-aided) schools and five from institutional (private) schools. These teachers were selected through purposive non-random sampling, with attention paid to teaching experience, access to writing instruction responsibilities, and willingness to participate. All the selected teachers had at least one year of experience in teaching English writing at the secondary level (Grades 1–8). The diversity of school types ensured a more balanced understanding of institutional disparities in pedagogical practices and classroom environments.

## **Findings and Discussion**

This section presents the key findings of the study based on the analysis of questionnaire responses and classroom observations. The discussion integrates these findings with relevant theoretical perspectives and empirical literature to interpret the current state of writing instruction at the secondary level in the Tanahun district.



**Techniques Used by Teachers:** The study found that most teachers adopted an eclectic approach, combining elements from both traditional and modern pedagogies. The Grammar Translation Method remained prevalent, especially in public schools, where teachers often emphasized sentence correction, translation exercises, and grammatical accuracy. This was largely due to pressure from exam-oriented systems and limited pedagogical training. However, many teachers also acknowledged the limitations of this method in developing functional writing skills.

Along with grammar-based instruction, aspects of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework were observed in several classrooms, particularly in private schools. Teachers in these settings employed student-centered techniques, including guided and free writing tasks, brainstorming sessions, and interactive peer-review activities. These practices aligned with the process approach to writing, which emphasizes drafting, revising, and collaboration over simple reproduction of grammatical forms.

The use of guided writing was common in both school types, especially when introducing new text genres such as narratives, letters, or descriptions. Teachers provided prompts or outlines to help students organize their ideas. Free writing activities, though less frequent, were used in classrooms that allowed more autonomy and creative expression. Some teachers integrated peer feedback, enabling students to evaluate each other's work, identify areas of improvement, and build editing skills.

Despite these positive practices, the study noted that most teachers did not explicitly teach higher-order writing strategies such as revising for coherence and cohesion or planning for audience and purpose. The instruction



often stopped at the sentence or paragraph level, with minimal attention to text-level organization.

**Challenges Identified:** Teachers across both private and public schools reported multiple barriers that impeded effective writing instruction. These challenges were echoed in classroom observations and aligned with findings from prior studies.

**Large Class Sizes:** Overcrowded classrooms were one of the most commonly cited challenges. In many public schools, student-teacher ratios exceeded 40:1, making it difficult for teachers to monitor individual progress or provide personalized feedback. As a result, writing tasks were either skipped or handled in a perfunctory manner, with little scope for interaction or revision.

**Lack of Resources:** A simple lack of teaching materials was observed, particularly in urban community schools. Most classrooms lacked secondary visual aids, projectors, and reference materials such as dictionaries or grammar handbooks. There was no evidence of audio-visual support (e.g. digital tools), which could otherwise improve writing instruction through multimedia engagement and model texts.

**Weak Foundational Skills:** Students entered the secondary level with limited prior exposure to structured English writing. Many lacked confidences and struggled with secondary sentence formation, spelling, and punctuation. Teachers noted that students often hesitated to express themselves, fearing grammatical errors. This anxiety was intensified by a rigid testing culture that prioritized rote memorization over genuine expression. Moreover, foundational gaps in vocabulary and reading comprehension further delayed writing



development. Without satisfactory input, students found it difficult to generate ideas or organize content, often relying on memorized phrases and templates.

**Teacher Preparedness:** While some teachers demonstrated enthusiasm and creativity in their methods, many lacked formal training in writing pedagogy. In service training programs rarely emphasized writing instruction, and pre service curricula were often theoretical and outdated. Teachers expressed a desire for more practical workshops on how to scaffold writing tasks, assess writing objectively, and support struggling learners.

**Curriculum Constraints:** Teachers from both public and private schools pointed out that the curriculum offers insufficient flexibility to focus on writing. Textbooks are thick and test-focused, limiting time for process-based writing or integration of creative tasks. Moreover, high-stakes examinations tend to reward grammatical correctness and structured answers, leaving little room for process-based evaluation or formative assessment practices.

## Conclusion

Improving writing instruction at the secondary level in Nepal is not only a pedagogical concern but also a social authoritative. Writing empowers learners to articulate thoughts, engage in civic discourse, and access educational and professional opportunities. As this study demonstrates, equipping teachers with the right techniques, resources, and institutional support can profoundly transform writing classrooms into spaces of creativity, expression, and meaningful learning. This study on writing instruction at the secondary level in Tanahun district discloses a complex interaction of pedagogical practices and systemic challenges. Teachers employ an eclectic mix of traditional Grammar-Translation and modern Communicative Language Teaching methods, with



guided writing and peer feedback fostering student engagement, particularly in private schools. However, the dominance of exam-driven priorities often limits instruction to sentence-level accuracy, neglecting higher-order skills like coherence and audience awareness. Large class sizes, resource shortage, and insufficient teacher training worsen these issues, delaying personalized feedback and innovative teaching. Students' weak foundational skills and fear of errors further obstruct creative expression, compounded by a rigid curriculum that prioritizes rote learning over process-based writing. These findings align with prior studies, underscoring determined barriers in resource constrained settings. To enhance writing instruction, stakeholders must address these challenges through targeted teacher training, resource allocation, and curriculum reform that emphasizes process-oriented approaches and formative assessment. By nurturing environments that support creativity and critical thinking, schools can better equip students with functional writing skills, preparing them for diverse communicative contexts and reducing reliance on outdated, exam-centric pedagogies.

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