

Why Academic Writing?

Dr. Raj Kumar Gurung*

“Writing is most solitary activities in the world”.—Paulo Coelho

Abstract

Yes, writing is really a challenging and a tough work. Academic writing is a technical writing. It differs from general writing. It is a coherent writing of good organization of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, ideas and issues, whereas general writing is just the record of something like the data of information. They cannot be put in the same bucket. In academic writing, ideas and details are well combined so that the readers will not be confused to get the intended information. The general writing does not follow all these requirements. Academic writing means the incorporation of organizing, drafting and revising. Chronological order of all the elements is what academic writing is.

Key words: Academic writing, argument, coherent, ideas and details, topic sentence, claim, reason

Introduction: Writing is Technical Presentation

Among four skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, writing is the fourth skill but it is challenging for it has a number of requirements to be fulfilled while writing. The writer has to know all the techniques of writing. The writer gets confused about selecting the topic sentence or thesis sentence. Writing format is a form, whereas the subject or the issue raised is the content. First, the format should be in proper way then the content will itself get sorted. This is what the academic writing teaches. The writing forwards certain argument coherently with the thesis sentence. The writer claims something with the evidences that are known as the reasons. The writer forwards a particular idea that is to be convincing. What idea is forwarded should be supported by the details, the evidence or examples. The ideas are to be supported by the convincing reasons so that the readers are attracted. The writing should be readers-centered. A good combination of ideas and details is called what the academic writing is.

Writing is a hard work just like jumping at the sun and it is not possible but what is possible is we would get off the ground (Bauman 3). We should not stop writing but go on writing; we can write something good for the mass people although everyone cannot become a successful writer at once. We should not calculate the success and failure in the beginning phase. A mason, for example, has to take care of well combination of cement, water and sand in a proportionate way, to construct the long lasting strong wall, the writer has to take care of combining the proper words with the proper ideas or issues so that the readers are attracted and benefitted. Only making the pile of words is verbose and it does not entertain the readers and address the issue, too.

* Associate Professor of English,
Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Exhibition Road, Kathmandu, Nepal, Email: gurung.rajkumar@gmail.com

Everyone cannot become a successful writer at once. S/he has to work hard and practice for a long time. After how long practice s/he can become a good writer? It is not guarantee and is unpredictable that how much effort is needed to grab the success. Some writers become successful in a short period of time and some cannot. Everyone cannot become as successful as Leo Tolstoy and Shakespeare. But a person who is interested in writing should go on writing. He should not calculate the success and failure at the beginning. Writing has become the most important thing today because “[t]he computer age has made writing more important than ever. Fax, email, and the Internet are replacing the telephone and the personal visiting” (Bauman³). Writing generates a new idea as it teases the human brain, the subconscious part of human mind, the super ego. This part of human mind is fertile for new creation. And “[w]hen a student engages in writing individually, he/she may face difficulties in generating ideas” (Bhandari 202) but s/he should not lag behind. Because writing process is a process of research work and idea as such cannot be easily generated at once. By the continuous research work, the great idea might be generated. This idea benefits the mass people. Thus, writing is an idea generating process. It can change the world.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were:

To enhance the bachelor’s degree and master’s degree students’ writing skills

To update the experience and knowledge of the student writers

To promote the writing language proficiencies of both the students and the teachers

To strengthen the writing skills of the beginner writers

To establish the writing culture among the students

Significance of the study

The teachers will be aware after reading this research work and they will teach their students effectively. They will know the importance of writing skills both for the teacher and the students. The students of bachelor’s degree and master’s degree will be benefitted from the findings of this paper. There is a trend of only the comprehensive reading, prioritized work but this paper will force the readers to think that writing skill has incomparable and unpredictable benefits.

Research gap

Writing practice in the classrooms in the context of Nepal is almost not. The teacher has to accomplish the course in time. Because of this obligation, they cannot do the writing practice for the students. When a teacher cannot complete the course on time, s/he has to face the threat either of the institutes or of the students. So, teaching the students writing skill practically is not strictly followed in all the colleges and universities.

Research questions

Why are not the students serious about the writing skills?

Why do not the teachers practice writing course practically in the classrooms?

Are all the teachers well skilled in writing language proficiency?

Are all the students well prepared for on the spot practice?

How much time is managed by the students for writing practice at home?

Statements of problem

The teachers are busy in accomplishing the course in time. There is not a provision of separate classes for writing practice. They just teach the contents. There are many teachers who cannot have managed the time for writing. There is not a separate course of writing class in the colleges and universities. As a result, the writing skill of the students has been worsened. The students just practice writing only in the exam times. Before that time, they do not practice the writing sincerely. The rehearsal for writing is almost none. How can they write effectively? Some of the students do not attend the class regularly and they just appear in the exams. How to settle this problem?

Methodology

The methodology is only the qualitative not quantitative. The researcher has studied the different books and journals. The researcher has analyzed the different opinions and claims of different writers in the paper. He has attempted to prove that writing is challenging work. To make his claim stronger, he has collected the opinions and statements of the writers and scholars and incorporated here in the paper.

Review of Literature

Writing is sensitive and a challenging work. M. Garrett Bauman argues that writing is like jumping at the sun. He says, "We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground. Use this course to jump at the sun" (3). Bauman makes it clear that a writer has to attempt to land on the sun even if it is not possible. It means he would get off the ground. Writing is like to jump at the sun, and this metaphor is contextual. Jeremy Harmer claims that testing the writing proficiency of the students means measure their knowledge in depth (3). Once a person sits to write something, obviously his/her writing does not get started like a personal talk or so. S/he has to think with cool mind only then writing gets sprouted. Another author, Ram Ekwil Singh, claims that writing ability is generated only from conscious learning or good comprehensions (136). Singh further suggests that writing should cohesive and coherent for good organization of ideas (139). It also indicates that a writer has to read a lot of books and articles. Similarly, Bam Dev Sharma focuses on authenticity, logical and research based (41). Yes, he is right that writing is academic writing here, and academic writing should be authentic and research based. Walter Kintsch is another writer who shares his experience that the writing process can generate a brilliant idea (141) that can be beneficial to the mass like the idea of Right Brothers. In this line, Bhim Lal Bhandari points out that the students face difficulties in generating ideas (202). Idea is the skeleton of writing and details the flesh. Without a good idea good writing is beyond imagination. So, how to generate a good idea is the first business of writing. And writing is such a powerful tool which changes the whole society, too, if writing is a real writing. What is real writing? It is difficult to locate. Bijay Kumar Panday shares his experience that one woman came to bow on his foot while he was wandering along the

Durbar Marg (Vijay Kumar 00:13.06-00:16.08). Alice Savage and Patricia Mayer cite the statement of Paulo Coelho that writing is solitary activities. One cannot write anything in the crowd of people around him/her. S/he needs to have a solitary place for writing. Therefore, writing is not dancing before the mass. Yes, writing is dancing of a number of ideas in mind but in a solitary place. In spite of all these positive vibes of the writing young generation is not interested. So, this paper can stimulate the young students of bachelors and masters level as well as some young teachers.

The impacts of writing

The impacts and influences as well as the impression of writing are innumerable and unpredictable. We can find a number of books that affect or change the readers unpredictably. The effect of *Jhola* is too touchy and moving. The readers are badly moved. This is the power of writing's miracle. So, the writing has magical power to hypnotize the readers. Similarly, one of the Nepali books, *Khusi (Happiness)* written by Vijay Kumar Panday is a good example of how a writing changes the humans. The audio book, *Khushi*, is like this:

*sansarmaadhikansamanisjhaimalaipanidheriakalsamma kun
kuraprathamik ho kun kuradoyam ho? Hosaibhayena. Pahila
je jarurichha, tyogarau, tespachhi je sambhavchhatyogarau,
bhannebodhmerojivan ma bharkharaipoprabeshgardaichha.*

*Jivankoeckalkhandamadirakobehoshimabitayen, ajapanijivanbachne kala
pratikobehosimasangharsagardaichhu. (00:00:24:31-00:00:24:53)*

(Like many people in the world, in my life, I didn't know which one is primary which one secondary? I didn't know. I thought to do which is necessary to do, then do which is possible to do. This awareness came to my mind just now. One time I spent my life drinking alcohol unconsciously. Now I have been struggling with the art of living life.) [my translation]

Panday opines that he did not have a conscience and he did what he thought it was necessary and possible to do. He did not have the awareness about which is primary and which is secondary. He did what his mind said. Drinking alcohol for him was a very good thing at one time of his life. He knew that it was not a good thing to do. Now he has been struggling with the art of living life. This well refined idea has been incorporated in his book and it has given a lot of insights to the readers of Nepali society. It has changed a number of people's mind. Panday further shares his experiences of three remarkable incidents:

One morning, Panday was walking along the Durbar Marg, a lady with good get up looked at him and bowed down to him to touch his foot because her husband had given up drinking after reading his book. Second incident is: one day as he was waiting his turn in a dental's house, an old man requested him to show him his hand, by which *Khusi* was written, to kiss, and the third one is; a high school girl's comment on the face book wall that her father's relation with the family was changed into good by reading his book. Both the girl and her father had cried after

reading the book and they had come into compromise. (Vijay Kumar 00:13.06-00:16.08) [my trans.]

This speech was delivered by the author of *Khusi* in Madan Prize distribution program. He had shared his experiences before the mass that his book had changed the drunkard husband and a man whose family relation was not good. These are what the changes Mr Panday shared; there are a number of unseen changes which he had not noticed. The author does not know how much change his writing has done. Panday clarifies that he had not written this book for this sort of change as he found or he did not think that it would be read by the people. He wrote it to express his bitter experiences of his life. Therefore, writing is a changer, light and insight. The impact of writing is unpredictable.

Writing is both imaginative and real, and it makes the readers come into the real state. What makes the reader go into the real ground? This is the presentation and expression of the words playing in and artistic ways. In that sense, the writer is an artist. This is only what a successful writing can do. A successful writing means the good selection of words in a rhythmic way to hit the target. The writing can change the pain into power, too. Some war poems encourage the armies for fighting and sacrificing happily. This is the power of writing. Writing is a combination of ideas (general) and details (specific). The idea is to be clarified by the explanations with examples. Moreover, the writer should properly use the transition words, the link words, like, in other words, on the other hand, however, therefore etc.

Albeit English language is a foreign language in Nepal, writing in English has been mandatory today. For speaking, there is not a big problem as some uneducated people can also speak communicative language although they commit some grammatical mistakes. All the people who can speak English cannot write it. The students cannot acquire writing skill as they learn speaking naturally. His/her “ability to write has to be consciously learned” (Singh 136). Speaking is unconsciously learned, whereas writing is consciously learned. In this sense, writing is a tough work and in the language proficiency, writing skill is the toughest one. So, writing work measures the students’ knowledge because “most exams, whether they are testing foreign language abilities or other skills, often they rely on the students’ writing proficiency in order to measure their knowledge” (Harmer 3). Thus, writing enhances the person’s depth of knowledge about the texts they study.

Overt and covert in writing plays the vital role. A writer has to be careful while writing. Some writers give the detail that is more than necessary, whereas some hide them. How much is to be shown and how much to be hidden. There should be a balance between showing and hiding. For example, one student wrote that “her father got married with his own servant girl.” It is overt. She had to write that “her father had a second marriage”. Main problem of writing is balancing the idea like the experienced chef knows the proportionate use of spices in the curry. Similarly, the writer has to be well experienced of selecting the words and ideas as well as the details. Only then his/her writing becomes good as a tasty food. Here writing means academic writing that is “authentic, logical and research based”

(Sharma 41). Sharma makes it clear that academic writing is research based so it is different from general writing. General writing means just the general information collected from somewhere and placed, whereas academic writing has certain procedures that the academic writer must fulfill them without fail. Otherwise, his/her writing is not accepted by the college or university. In that sense, general writing is not authentic, too. Sharma further argues:

Academic (Writing)	General Writing
Objective	Subjective
Research based	Opinion based
Well structured	Loosely structured
Broader use	Personal use
To be ready for	Just ready for
Submission for	Personal use
Evaluation . (42)	

This is clear that academic writing is for certain purpose in the college and university but general writing is just the collection of information of some personal use. The general writing does not follow all the requirements, norms and standard of writing processes and procedures. Therefore, thesis, term papers, articles, periodic journals, reference books and booklets as such are all academic writings. They are institutionally approved by the experts of the colleges and universities. Academic “[w]riting needs to be cohesive and coherent to be truly accessible” (Singh 139) so that the readers comprehend without fail. There are certain steps that a writer has to keep in mind while writing. Beginning is really challenging for most student writers. But they have to start writing from a simple topic. Singh suggests the following technical aspects:

Some more strategies are to choose a good title, write a strong lead, keep your writing tight and unified, keep sentences and paragraphs to a reasonable length, chunk your writing into manageable units, avoid antagonizing your readers, make your writing look good, use figurative and connotative language sparingly, and avoid stereotypes and offensive labeling. (140)

At first, the writer has to choose an appropriate topic or title. Most writers get confused of choosing the topic or title. After choosing the topic, the writing can go smoothly. Lede means the most important message to grab the readers’ attention to be written in two or three sentences. The sentences and paragraphs are to be in reasonable length. It should not very long or short. It must be chunked into manageable units. Using the figurative and connotative language and avoiding the stereotypes is another most important strategy of the writing. It is never good to antagonize the readers and they should not be othered.

Conclusion

Almost every professional writer does not get appropriate topics for writing at once. S/he gets confused of coining the topic sentence or thesis sentence. One must think seriously for some days for the topic. When appropriate topic gets selected, writing moves

ahead. The writers suffer from writing anxiety but s/he can manage slowly and gradually. For the refinement, it takes time. The writer has to exercise his/her mind for a long only then he comes to a topic that fits his/her issues raised. Writing process as such is an unpredictable thing that “[i]deas in the head sometimes appear brilliant” (Kintsch 141) which does not appear again and again. The academic writing is a challenge. When the brilliant ideas are generated s/he soon starts writing. Organizing, drafting and revising is a must in academic writing. The writer has to be careful while combining the ideas and details. At what time does a brilliant idea get generated? Nobody can predict it. It is generated during the writing process. But it does not mean to say that idea is always generated while writing. Sometimes it takes a long time but this long time does not help. The idea gets paralyzed.

The simple ideas are usually generated. Brilliant ideas get seldom generated. And writing can expand the horizon of human minds. It promotes the writer’s predicting and analytical power. Writing makes a man visionary and missionary simultaneously. The writer becomes far sighted gradually. Writing promotes the logical and argument power of the writer. S/he can become strong in logical and contextual presentation. But every writer suffers from writing anxiety because they don’t get idea about what to begin with. So, first problem is the area or title or topic. Which topic is appropriate for the subject the writer forwards? S/he chooses the topic after a long exercise of his/her mind but s/he falls in trouble again. Again s/he has to struggle much to come to the conclusion. The writer has to be aware of how to collect the data and supportive materials for the study. S/he should be alert like a watchdog to find the books in the libraries and to surf the internet. Then s/he should know what methodological strategies are appropriate for the study. Theoretical framework is the backbone of a research work. This matters the weight of writing. Theoretical tools and methodology play the vital role in shaping the writing and persuading the readers. Therefore, writing an academic writing is a challenge.

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