

English Writing Skill of Government High School Students in Imphal East, Manipur

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the English language writing skill of Class IX students across three government schools in Manipur, focusing specifically on student's written assignments. The study guided by the theoretical framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), examines the challenges and strengths observed in students' writing skill. As a survey for the data collection and analysis, written assignments were given to the students. The sampling for this study consisted of 73 Class IX students, selected purposively to represent a range of writing abilities. The findings reveal common difficulties, such as limited vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors and challenges in organizing ideas clearly and coherently. Despite these challenges, a few students demonstrated creativity and potential in their writing, particularly in response to expressive or narrative assignments. The study indicates that an emphasis on task-based writing abilities as emphasized in CLT, could support students in overcoming these challenges by encouraging more meaningful and communicative writing practices. The results suggest that fostering a communicative approach to writing can significantly enhance students' proficiency and confidence in English writing, providing important insights for improving writing instruction in government schools in Imphal East district and similar settings.

Keywords: Writing skill, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based writing.

INTRODUCTION

Manipur is a multilingual state with not less than thirty-three different tribes and people of different communities coexisting together. As such,

the school classroom is a vibrant example that exhibits an array of people hailing from different cultures and languages. Given such indigenous ethnic backgrounds, English language is almost always the second language of the students in the state as they learn it in the schools from the primary stage of formal education up to the higher studies.

As a whole, English education in the government secondary schools in Manipur, however, faces lack of quality education. One of the issues is the lack of timely implementation of the changing reforms of education. The other factor is the dependence on traditional methods in the teaching-learning process. Many schools still lay emphasis on rote memorization and grammar translation methods for language learning. This has failed the students in developing their communicative competence in the learning of English as a second language. While encouraging a holistic approach in language discourses in the classrooms, the students can be prepared for both academic and professional success post scholastic graduation.

The four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing were associated with language learning as emphasized in English Teaching and learning process. Out of the four, reading and listening are categorized as receptive skills as it only requires acknowledging a given material. Writing and speaking, on the other hand are referred to as productive skills. This is so because the two skills require an inner reinterpretation of a given material before it is finally produced.

SIGNIFICANCE

The study will contribute to knowledge in English education, especially in the writing skill of students in government high schools. Three Government High Schools specifically located in Imphal East district, Manipur were selected to serve the purpose. The result of the study will add another insight to the policy makers, educational administrators, teachers and students in identifying the key issues in English teaching and learning process, thus leading to informed decisions regarding curriculum development, teaching and training programs. Furthermore, it will offer a framework for improving the quality of English education in the schools, ultimately contributing to the academic growth of the students in the region.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study is focused on writing skill of English and is entitled as “*English Writing Skill of Government High School Students in Imphal East, Manipur*”.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives are:

1. To explore English writing skill of the students who are currently reading in Class IX standard in government high schools in Imphal East district..
2. To assess a gender-based performance data of the students subject to the written assignment examining their knowledge of grammar, spelling, coherence, vocabulary and comprehension.
3. To study the significance of structured grammar exercises and frequent writing practice as a regular part of academic instruction.

HYPOTHESES

H₁: There is a significant variation in English writing skill amongst students from different government high schools in Imphal East District.

H₂: There is no significant gender-based difference in the writing skill amongst government high school students.

H₃: Structured grammar exercises and frequent writing practice will significantly improve students' writing skill.

DELIMITATION:

The survey is delimited to the students who are currently reading in class nine standard in the government high schools in Imphal East and the findings of the present study will represent the overall students confined to the government high schools in Imphal East.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Crystal (2003) undertook a study on English in line with being a global language. He explored the role of English as a global lingua franca and its implications for language teaching. He discussed on how the global status of English impacted curriculum design, teaching materials and the need for culturally inclusive pedagogies.

Harmer (2007) discussed on the practice of teaching English. His work on the Teaching of English offers practical strategies in the discipline of teaching English in diverse contexts. Harmer focused on classroom management, lesson planning and integrating technology into teaching. His book 'The Practice of English Language Teaching' also addressed the challenges of teaching mixed ability groups and promoting learner engagement.

Gunamani (2017) focused on English speaking skill in the schools offering elementary education in Manipur as a whole. In his findings, it is learnt that the methodologies and approaches proposed by NCF-2005 were not properly implemented at the elementary stage. He also emphasised on the gravity of introducing conversational discourse of L2 in the elementary school students.

Rameshwor (2018) analysed the difficulties in the process of teaching and learning of English in Manipur. He identified the core issues met by the young learners as phonological problems with a relatively less emphasis on speaking practice paired together with grammatical or syntactic problems, problems in learning verb phrase, lack of trained English teachers in the government schools, lack of infrastructure with added socio-cultural problems as well. He emphasised on the improvement of up-to-date learning materials to meet the current trend of English teaching and learning activities in the state.

Vijayalakshmi and Ashalata (2020) worked on a case study of English curriculum in the secondary schools in Manipur, with a focus on the communicative approach in English language teaching. In the study, they analysed the curriculum of Board of Secondary Education, Manipur with reference to Class-X standard, where they found that more emphasis was given to reading and writing skill only. They emphasized that while learning English as L2, adopting only one or two skill would lead to fragmented learning of the language which will then inevitably impact the higher-level language acquisition and usage.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the descriptive survey method in exploratory nature has been adopted. The population of the study will cover the students of overall 39 government high schools in the two educational blocks of Sawombung and Irlbung localities in Imphal East district, affiliated to Board of Secondary

Education, Manipur. The study consists of a sample of 73 high school students of 3 government high schools located in Imphal East District for a case study based on Purposive Sampling technique. A short story in English was developed for the proposed survey. For exploring the writing skill in English, the short story was narrated and explained to the students using direct teaching method. The students are then instructed to write the story in their own words in ten sentences. Each sentence carries two marks, for a total score of 20. These 20 marks are further divided into five assessment criteria—grammar, spelling, coherence, vocabulary and comprehension—with each criterion carrying four marks.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Objective-1: To explore English writing skill of the students who are currently reading in class-IX standard in government high schools in Imphal East District.

Hypothesis-1: There is a significant variation in English writing skill among students from different government high schools in Imphal East District.

Table-1: Performance Level Distribution (All Students):

Performance Tier	Female (N=33)	Male (N=40)	Total (N=73)
90-100% (Excellent)	1	0	1
80-89% (Good)	1	1	2
70-79% (Average)	3	1	4
50-69% (Below Average)	8	1	9
Below 50% (Poor)	20	37	57

INTERPRETATION:

Table-1 analyses and confirms Hypothesis-1, showing significant variation in English writing skill among students from different government high schools in Imphal East district. A large majority (57 out of 73 students or 78%) scored below 50%, indicating poor performance. Only one female student achieves an “Excellent” score and very few reached the “Good” or “Average” levels. The results highlight widespread challenges in English writing, especially among male students and the need for focused

improvement efforts. There exists variation in the English writing skill amongst the male and female students of class-IX standard enrolled in the government high schools in Imphal East district.

Objective-2: To assess a gender-based performance data of the students subject to the written assignment examining their knowledge of grammar, spelling, coherence, vocabulary and comprehension.

Hypothesis-2: There is no significant gender-based difference in the writing skill amongst government high school students.

Table-2:Average Component-Wise Performance (%):

Component-Wise	Female (Performance in %)	Male (Performance in %)
Grammar	41.52	36.25
Spelling	63.18	40.00
Coherence	41.67	24.63
Vocabulary	34.24	22.50
Comprehension	33.94	19.50

INTERPRETATION:

Table-2 shows that female students outperformed male students in all language components, with the biggest gap in spelling (63.18% vs. 40%). Comprehension scores were low for both genders but notably higher in females (33.94% vs. 19.5%). This difference in the performance among male and female students leads to the rejection of Hypothesis-2.

Objective-3: To study the significance of structured grammar exercises and frequent writing practice as a regular part of academic instruction.

Hypothesis-3: Structured grammar exercises and frequent writing practice will significantly improve students' writing skill.

Recommendations for teachers and students have been reported on the basis of interview schedule conducted by the investigator, which are represented as follows:

1. **Targeted Interventions:** To improve overall English proficiency, schools should implement focused grammar drills and workshops aimed at enhancing coherence in writing for all students. Special attention should be given to male students, who showed significant weaknesses in spelling and comprehension, through structured remedial programs.
2. **Teacher Training:** Teachers should be equipped with data-driven teaching strategies that directly address students' weak areas, such as vocabulary development and comprehending viabilities. This will help to tailor instructions for students' specific needs.
3. **Frequent Assessments:** Regular writing exercises followed by constructive feedback should be conducted to monitor student's progress. These assessments will help to identify the areas for improvement and ensure continuous skill development.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The study highlights major gaps in English writing skill among Class IX students in government high schools in Imphal East, with 78% scoring below 50%. This confirms Hypothesis-1, showing significant variation in performance. Female students consistently outperformed male students in all components, especially in spelling and comprehension tests. This disproves Hypothesis-2, indicating a notable gender-based difference in their knowledge of the language. The results point to a need for communicative, task-based teaching methods. Factors like limited writing practice and rote learning contribute to the weak performance of the students. Targeted grammar and coherence drills, gender-sensitive remedial support, teacher training and regular assessments are essential. In conclusion, strengthening writing skill through focused interventions can significantly improve English language proficiency amongst government school students. This study adds valuable insights to the field of English education by focusing on writing skill of high school students in Imphal East. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers, education officials, teachers and students by highlighting critical challenges in English language teaching and learning. These insights can help aid in gaining more informed decisions in curriculum planning and the design for effective teacher training programmes.

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