ASSESSING SELF-LEARNING MATERIALS FOR WRITING TASKS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING MODE (ODL)

ABSTRACT
OF THE THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
Doctor of Philosophy
In
English Language Teaching
BY
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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Abstract

Introduction

Assessing writing tasks that are offered in distance mode particularly are more challenging because writing skill itself is a very challenging activity. Unlike the conventional classrooms, the Open Distance Learning (ODL) context falls short of effective interaction between tutors, peers, counselling sessions and materials. There is hardly any literature available in the area of the assessing Self-Learning Mode (SLM) oriented writing tasks. Subsequently, assessment of writing tasks suffers since the ODL format shows lack of strategies to assess the student performance by way of appropriately designed writing tasks. Assessment of SLM in distance mode is still deprived of proper assessment strategies and henceforth the need for assessing SLM based writing task becomes a significant strategy for producing effective writing outcomes.

Till date, very little has been said and done for assessment of writing skills in ODL context. There is a need to improve the assessment method and related strategies in order to enhance the learners’ performances. Assessment of writing task in ODL is relatively a new topic and not many studies have been conducted in this area.

The study focuses on the ground reality that the effectiveness of writing tasks instruction in conventional classroom poses immense challenges and complexities. This complexity of task instruction invites serious consideration for task assessment in the ODL format. There is a need to update the assessment of the SLM based writing tasks design and course delivery strategies. The effectiveness of writing skill in formal classroom is still not very promising because of various constraints and complexities. However, the teaching of writing in anytime space and time in distance mode does not materialize as easily as it can be hypothesized on the basis of assessing writing through one-time assignments. Good and bad assignments of students are the reflection of materials students interact with. Assessing the written assignments will lead to re-assessment of writing tasks designed for SLM and therefore there is a constant need to update and assess SLM. Keeping in mind these considerations, the study takes up the following research questions:
Research Questions

1. What are the issues related to the assessment of Self-learning materials for writing tasks in ODL mode?
2. What is the impact of tutor led assignments on assessing writing tasks in ODL mode?
3. How far writing tasks can be modified to suit the concerns of assessing SLM in ODL mode?

Hypothesis of the study

1. Writing tasks are not planned for ODL learners.
2. Designing a writing task will improve the learner's performance in writing in ODL.
3. Re-assessment of writing tasks will lead to the better learning outcomes in ODL mode.

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for the research study is quantitative, qualitative and interpretative in nature. The study takes into account raters' assessment of writing task, direct writing samples and findings based on survey questionnaire.

Samples

The total number of samples selected for the study is 91. Out of which, 60 written assignment samples are drawn from different batches of BCA (FEG- 02) and MCA (MS- 015) of IGNOU Aligarh study center in order to assess the performance of ODL learners on writing tasks. A questionnaire was conducted on a separate group of 31 students enrolled in the same courses during the academic year 2013.

Method

In the present study, assessment of SLM is delimitated to two courses offered by IGNOU i.e. BCA Foundation course in English (FEG-02) and MCA Skills needed at workplace (MCS-015). Tasks based on writing skills are the primary consideration for picking up these two courses. For the assessment of tutor-marked writing assignment in accordance with SLM criteria, writing assessment rubric has been developed and the raters are the tutors of IGNOU who have taught these courses and were familiar with the target groups of the study.
Instruments

Rubric: An analytical rubric for assessment of writing task was designed to assess the students’ writing assignments and units of SLM for the same course. It described the quality of writing tasks in SLM and level of student’s performance in each of the scoring category by separating and weighing the individual on four components: writing tasks objectives and contents, organization of unit (example, logical arrangement of ideas, cohesion, etc.) language use and vocabulary by assigning the numerical values (see chapter 5 for rubric design).

Survey: The questionnaire selected for the research study was a close ended questionnaire. It consisted of four sections, designed to identify the ODL students’ needs, problems and difficulties regarding writing assignments, counselling sessions and rating the writing tasks given in their syllabus from relevant to extremely irrelevant and from easy to most difficult writing task. The questionnaire is divided into four sections (see chapter 5 for the design of questionnaire).

Data Interpretation and Analysis

For the purpose of assessment of writing task in Self-learning materials (SLM) the mean scores of two raters were used with the results tabulated and analysed. The scores of raters on analytical scoring were calculated to check the reliability through mean. The scores of the raters were reliable and it proved that ODL learners writing skills are not very well developed. The survey questionnaire was also conducted to generalise findings on difficulties of ODL learners with respect to their writing performance and tutor rating.

Finding of the study

The study investigated the assessment of writing tasks in SLM to cater the writing needs of ODL learners. The most important finding is related to the raters’ assessment of the written samples (paragraph writing and letter of complaint) of ODL learners on four criteria (objectives and contents of writing tasks, organization, language use and vocabulary). The raters’ mean score of all the four criteria was found to be reliable and it was found that ODL learners are very poor in writing skills. It was found that ODL learners copy each other assignments and plagiarise too.
According to the survey findings, most of the learners reported that assignments are related to the course but on the other hand, they also reported that assignments are very difficult to comprehend. Therefore, they adopt malpractices in writing assignments. ODL learners also reported that they need more counselling sessions and tutor’s attention in solving their problems related to the course and assignments.

MCA (MCS-105) learners reported job application as the most relevant writing task followed by curriculum vitae and letter of appointment, as these three tasks are frequently used genres in writing and are related to their professional development. They also reported writing reports, writing memo and negotiating letters as the most difficult writing tasks.

The BCA (FEG-02) learners reported writing paragraph as the most relevant writing tasks followed by report writing and writing composition. They also reported summary writing as the most difficult writing tasks followed by report writing and note taking.

The data highlighted the difficulties in learning to write in addition to the learner’s lack of interest, awareness and motivation in writing as well as lack of opportunities of practice in writing. The writing tasks need modifications to suit the concerns of ODL learner. Assessing the quality of written assignments and tasks can be an important way to assess the quality of SLM. If effective assessment strategies are applied to any distance writing course than it could provide benefits to the course and learners.

Recommendations

1. There is a need to design special writing tasks according to the needs of ODL learners.

2. SLM needs modification for simpler writing tasks following the concept of TBLT methodology that will give novice ODL learners practice of writing in different stages leading to improvement in low ability of writing skill.

3. SLM also need to be incorporated with proper self-assessment criteria for learners, so that they can assess their progress and can perform better in assignments without cheating/copying each other work.

4. The design of the writing task actually should conform to the test measures.
5. Positive washback effect of assessment of writing task must find significant space in ODL curriculum and SLM (Weigle, 2002).

In-service teacher training at distance

1. Mostly training programs and seminars are hypothetical and they are quite distanced from the learner; there is a need for regular follow-up and training programs.
2. Teachers in conventional mode too need training to facilitate the regular learning and they can get this training through ODL mode and vice versa.
3. Trainers also need training in terms of catering to the need of teachers where writing is an area which requires more attention.
4. In training programs teacher must be given training in almost all the areas of writing so that they can overcome with the fear of writing.
5. While designing the SLM, tutor/teacher/instructor need to be put at the centre of decision making process.
6. There should be effective communication between learner and the tutor through various configurations available through multimedia.
7. Training should also be given to teachers in terms of given feedbacks on writing anticipating their problems (Verma, 2008)

Implications for Monitoring Writing and assessment procedures

To sum up, the training procedures related to the writing task-assessments must be able to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is the writing task? Does it need revision?
2. Are there enough writing activities or remedial writing activities?
3. What strategies can be introduced to make students writing effective?
4. How effective is the assessment system? Does it require any change?
5. Do the writing activities match the learning outcomes?
6. How effective is the tutor support system? Does it require any change?
7. Is there enough scope of feedback on the written assignments in ODL mode?
8. How effective are the training procedures for course writers and tutorial system?
9. Is there any mechanism to provide different topics/task to different learners?
10. Is there any training given to tutors to check malpractices in ODL system while assessing the writing tasks?

11. How counselling sessions can be used to generate better and effective writing skills?

12. How tutors can introduce the assessment of writing tasks on the basis of differentiating learning and varied writing abilities?

Significance of the study

The research study takes into consideration the writing difficulties and problems of students who are studying in distance mode. Not much research has been done in the area of writing practices in ODL mode.

The study is especially significant in the context of assessing writing tasks design to tailored to the needs of ODL learners since these learners consider themselves inferior to students of formal mode.

The study has its pedagogical implications for distance tutors, students as well as material writer and designers. The study is an attempt to make writing tasks more flexible, comprehensible and accessible in SLM mode and obviously this has wider educational implications as well. Assignments help in bridging distance between the teachers and the students. If properly designed, writing assignments can be considered as an effective way of communication and can prove more effective than the personal contact programs (Chander, 1991). Satyanarayana &Sesharatnam (1992) say that assignments are an important way in obtaining feedback from tutor and establish the contact between the two.

SLM developers could also derive benefits from this study. They can develop the design of writing tasks that could be inbuilt into SLM. The study will be benefit both distance learners and distance teaching and design of writing tasks will provide greater opportunities to distance learners to become better writer as they need to survive professionally in the competing world.

Limitations of the study

1. The assignment sheets collected for assessment are from different years of different batches because it was not possible to test the effectiveness of
designed tasks on the same group of which the assignments have been collected.

2. Only two courses of IGNOU, FEG-102 (BCA) and MCS-16 (MCA) are taken for assessment of writing tasks as it is not possible to assess the entire courses that are operated in IGNOU and the regional center of Aligarh (IGNOU) has been taken for locale of the study.

3. The sample for questionnaire consisted of a fairly small group. It is difficult to collect data because students are not available. The time for the contact program is very limited just for two to six days and not many students turned up for counseling sessions.

4. Therefore, the questionnaire is conducted on different batches and writing assignments are collected from different batches.

Organization of the study

The research study consists of five chapters which are as follows:

Chapter 1: The Statement of Intent

The purpose of this chapter is to gives an outline of the proposed research study and discusses the background, theoretical framework, context of the study, rationale and problems to be investigated in the light of topic, hypothesis, objectives of study, research methodology, significance of the study, limitations and organization of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Tasks-based language teaching: Researches in Second language writing

This chapter provides the theoretical background to task-based language teaching, with specific reference to second language writing. The discussion is further carried on task, approaches to tasks based language and its methodology for implementing in classroom. Finally, the chapter will have a focus on the insights gained from the Task-based Language Teaching and writing task features so that it informs the ODL writing task assessment.
Chapter 3: Review of Literature on Open and Distance Learning mode (ODL): An overview of Strategies of course delivery Self Learning Materials (SLM)

This chapter briefly summarizes the ODL teaching and learning processes of various distance teaching universities/open universities in the world, drawing insights from distance teaching universities. The chapter discussed design and development of SLM and various strategies of course delivery.

Chapter 4: Review of literature on Assessing Writing in Formal and ODL mode

This chapter reviews assessing writing in formal and ODL mode and assessment of different tasks types, testing measures, benchmarks and assessment in ODL.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology: Results and Discussions

This chapter is based on research methodology. It describes the research design leading to results and discussions. It includes discussion of methods, samples, and procedures of data collection. The discussion reports important findings and implications of the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Suggestions and Recommendations.

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FACULTY OF ARTS
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)
2014
To Syed Sarwat Nazeer

Just a way of saying, thank you Father
Certificate

This is to certify that Ms. Zainab Sarwat carried out her Ph.D. work on the topic ‘Assessing Self-Learning Materials for Writing Tasks in Open and Distance Learning mode (ODL)’ under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, it is her original work. In my opinion it is suitable for submission for the award of degree of Ph.D. in English Language Teaching.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Miss. Zainab Sarwat (En No. FF 0532) has completed the following formalities successfully which are required for the submission of a Ph.D thesis as per the university ordinances.

1. Completion of the course work
2. Presentation of pre-submission seminar
3. Publication of at least one paper from the thesis

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[Signature]
Zainab Sarwat
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List of Abbreviation

L1- English as a First Language
L2- English as a Second Language
ESL- English as a Second Language
EFL- English as a Foreign Language
LSRW- Listening Speaking Reading Writing
SLM- Self-Learning Materials
ODL- Open and Distance Learning Mode
IGNOU- Indira Gandhi National Open University
BCA- Bachelor of Computer Application
MCA- Master of Computer Application
PEG-02- Foundation Course of English
MCS-015- Communication skills needed at workplace
PPP- Presentation Practice Production
ALM- Audio-Lingual Method
CLT- Communicative Language Teaching
SOS- Structural-Oral-Situational
TBA- Task Based Approach
TBLT- Task-Based Language Teaching
TBS- Task-Based Syllabus
DEC- Distance Education Council
NZTCI- New Zealand Technical Correspondence Institute
TMAs- Tutor-marked Assignments
CMAs- Computer-marked Assignments
SDA- Standardized Direct Assessment
Chapter 1

Statement of Intent

1.0. Background to the study

1.1. The challenges of writing in Formal ESL classrooms

Out of the four major skills of English language (i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), writing is considered to be the most difficult and complex skill to acquire. At the same time the practice of teaching writing is less compared to reading and speaking (Yan, 2005). Fleming and Stevens (2010:89) say that ‘Writing is often the most painfully and formally learned of the three areas of English (misleading termed) ‘attainment target’ in the National Curriculum’.

Writing is difficult and complex because attention toward developing writing skill is very low from primary to secondary to higher education and as a result students and teachers are not able to develop their competence in writing, which makes it complex and difficult. Huge quantity of curriculum is being transacted through writing both in teaching, learning and in assessment (Ibid: 2010). The negligence toward writing skill is mainly because the teachers do not find opportunities to streamline the writing instruction in the classroom. Teachers also lack other teaching resources. Even if the resources are available to them they are not fully utilized for reasons beyond the control of classroom teacher. Learners on the other hand find writing more challenging because they are partially dependent on textbooks and partially on teachers for learning to write. Compared to the writing work required in the school/classroom, learners get little opportunities to practice effective writing skills.

The instructional attention given to writing is not worth the required learning outcomes. If we look at the issue of writing in curriculum, it is worth quoting the ideas of Prahlad (2010), and he suggests three types of curriculum. First, Grammar-based curriculum, which mainly focuses on grammatical issues where learner should be able to form grammatical correct sentences. Teaching of writing therefore is controlled by grammatical and lexical graded structures, learners write in a much guided pattern to avoid inaccuracy. The second type of curriculum follows refers to the functional approach to writing in which learners are given interesting writing tasks for practice so as to attain meaningful communication through the effective use of language. And the third type of curriculum is process-based in which act of
composing writing is taught to the learners by engaging them in the problem solving tasks. But the real time conditions of classroom writing do not match with the expected outcome of the curriculum (Nehal, 2012). Certain obvious constraints of teaching writing delimit the actual scope and functions of writing. Learners are exposed to writing situation only in formative and summative examination or in real life writing task situation. A real life writing task here implies the writing done in the real life situation like writing report, a letter or application to any authority etc. Teaching of writing has never been fully operationalised in language classrooms contrary to the curriculum guidelines envisaged in various reports and commissions. Teaching of writing in conventional teaching setup highlights difficulties, such as overload of classes, lack of time, crowded classes etc. The other constraints are fixing the writing classroom according to the mixed and heterogeneous group (Carpenter and Hunter, 1981). While at the same time; it becomes difficult for a teacher to handle the problems of each and every learner in large classrooms. Providing teacher feedback on writing becomes difficult in classrooms (Cowie and Heaton, 1977 cited in Ibid). Instructional materials for writing, particularly in the formal context are not easily forthcoming and even if they are made available, the teacher cannot adapt those materials with respect to the needs of the learners for various reasons that go beyond the control of the teacher.

The outcomes in writing in large formal ESL classrooms have not been very promising for various reasons since measuring effective writing outcome is quite a complex one. Enormous amount of integration and curriculum transaction are required in materializing writing. At times, this is beyond the scope of teacher to implement it in a classroom. However, this is not to deny that writing instruction even in this situation is impossible. The fact is that, it has never been on the top agenda for teaching composition yet writing is very often used as a tool to assess academic content. Although, there has always been the concern for individualized instruction for handling the process of composing, but this is often left to the learner for his personal initiative or home assignment. Attention to individualized instruction in writing is one of the major problems in conventional mode of teaching writing. Individualized instruction is not possible in the traditional classrooms environment because there is one teacher assigned to a class who cannot address the multiplicity of writing issues emerging in a large class size. Since writing demands a heavy feedback
and follow-up work and consequently immediate and individualized feedback on writing is not always possible in formal classrooms.

As discussed above conventional writing programs do have the above limitations of various nature, and one can very well imagine as to what the level of difficulties would it be in case of teaching writing is situated in a distance mode program. Conversely, writing tasks when it needs to be streamlined in a distance led program, the nature of writing instruction, SLM, feedback and follow-up work altogether invites a different context. This potential of learning writing through distance has never been realized. This is because writing is considered as essentially an internally motivated and self-initiated activity whereas the conventional programs go with the whole class approach. However, the conventional classroom teaching has also become ineffective in failing to tap, nurture and monitor the silent and unassuming learner. Of course, there are limited outcomes in writing catering to just small numbers in conventional classrooms. The rest of the learners who are not motivated do not get opportunities to write and they fail to access the materials. With the result, standardized materials often remain short of learner differences, differentiated instruction and varied learning styles.

It is very difficult to produce a coherent piece in second language because of the interference of first language, structuring different layers such as writing structure, style and organization (Nunan, 1999 cited in Ibid). The emphasis is largely on getting end product, however, the greater challenge is more on reorienting the process to the product keeping in mind the required genres.

1.1.1. Challenges of writing at learner’s level

Learners find writing boring and difficult because the focus on teaching of writing is very low. Very less exposure is given to learners to practice writing in the classroom. Hence, writing is tested in examinations. Another problem that ESL learners face in writing classroom is in handling the structures. It is one obvious problematic area for ESL writers to encounter while writing. ESL writers often face problems in choosing correct syntax. Organizing syntax is one step removed from organizing a written text. Most of the learners struggle between the structure of syntax and organized structure of a written text. Rather they are often confused with structure of a written text with that of the content. At the same time communication process sometimes demands
complex structure which is crucial to the development of a written text. However this is not the case always. Some learners do have text in their mind, but fail to bring up the appropriate syntax.

Organizing a written text is also another difficult area for many ESL learners. At the level of organization, the challenging task for learners is to produce a well-organized text. They must also connect the ideas coherently that gives complete meaning. But generally, learners fail to produce a coherent text. There is another problem area that learner encounters at the level of vocabulary where lack of clarity is evident. Lack of correct grammatical patterns, organization, and choice of vocabulary, creates writing insecurities among ESL learners. These demands create problems for writers and to overcome these problems, students seek help from their teachers who in turn are also not competent in writing (Hedge, 1988).

1.1.2. Challenges of teaching writing at Teacher’s level

Teachers on the other hand are also responsible to some extent for not creating interest among learners for writing. The condition of writing in ESL classroom is getting worse day by day not only because it is not well received by learners but also because teachers are not well equipped in teaching of writing. Teacher’s insecurities are due to the fact that time allotted for teaching of writing is insufficient and to attend the problems of each and every learner in the given time is impossible. In some cases ESL teachers have no training in teaching writing as they are not experienced writers. Heterogeneity in the classroom also increases the problems for teachers. There is no time to test writing in the classroom and at the same time teachers fail to provide feedback on learner’s draft. The challenge of teaching of writing is also immense because there is a great pressure on teachers to complete the course in the given time and with the result learners are engaged in writing and often they lose interest in writing. Also, most ESL teachers keep writing skill at the end of the session compared to other skills. Creating interest among learners for practicing writing activities and task becomes impossible.

Chuo (2004) observes that learners’ attitude toward writing is also negative. They are unable to cope with their difficulties. Therefore, Chuo emphasizes that in order to improve their teaching methods in writing teachers should come up with innovations and interesting instructional design (cited in Ismail, et.al, 2012).
1.2. Challenges of writing Instruction at Open and Distance Learning mode (ODL)

On the other hand, individualized instruction backed up by Self-learning material (SLM) is possible in distance mode. It is quite obvious from the above discussion that writing instruction in traditional/ formal classrooms is not very promising. Although, efforts are on improving teaching methods and course design for ESL classrooms, yet results are not so promising.

In distance mode, learners are totally dependent on instructional material provided to them. Teaching assistance is given to them only through counseling sessions and that too only for 3-4 counseling sessions. Openness of distance mode has made it open book for learners which means learners are free to use any material apart from material provided to them by institution. But this does not solve their problem. Writing problem is even more prominent among distance learners. They can be divided in terms of:

1.2.1. Reality check

1.2.2. Learners Barriers to distance learning

The problems encountered by the learners are related to teacher contact hours, student-support services, feedback, isolation, lack of training and experience. In formal learning classroom, teacher is present in the classroom to solve the problems of learners but in distance mode there is no concept of teacher. This sometime creates frustration among distance learners. But of course SLM can supplement this gap. The major concern for the distance learners is getting feedback on their written assignments or contact with the teacher. There is no face to face contact with the teacher on daily basis or weekly basis, therefore this creates insecurities among students about learning and students are not able to do the self -check exercises provided in the materials. Keegan (1986) says that the absence of teacher in distance learning removes communication between the teacher and learners (Galusha, 1998). However, using technologies like telephone, email and counseling sessions have reduced this barrier to some extent but access to technology is not possible for every student. Therefore, distance materials need to be designed in keeping with the learners' isolation levels and other concerns. Feedback can be provided on learners' written assignments through email but again not many opportunities are created on
these lines. There is a high level of frustration among distance learners facing problems of maintaining communication between learners and academic institution concerned. Contacts with teachers are area of concern for distance education planners (Woods, 1996 cited in Galusha, 1998).

Another important area of concern lies in distance education is Self -learning Materials (SLM) themselves: Institutions must consider the development of standard materials, curriculum development, support services, course content and timing for developing distance learning program. In comparison to course materials used in formal institutions, distance materials are inferior to them. Learners’ level, their need, background schooling must be considered before developing materials. Many believe that curriculum and assessment material must cater to the actual conditions of the distant learner. Assessing learners’ performance is also another very major problem area is distance learning. However, self-assessment exercises are given in the SLM but they are not of great help to the learners, at least in case of developing writing skills. In order to test the learners’ performance, it is important to assess the quality and effect of SLM first. Assessment of material will help in initiating the remedial measures needed in the problem areas. More research into SLM methods and design is needed as this would provide benefits to the course and learners (Jackman, et al, 1994).

1.3. Writing practices in Open and Distance Learning mode

1.3.1. Writing Assignments

Distance learners can make use of writing skills by way of designing the SLM provided to them. Assignments are prepared according to the course level and objectives of curriculum based on set assessment procedures. Usually assignments are distributed from study centers much before the course begins. This gives ample time to learners to study the texts and write their assignments. In order to discuss problems with the tutor in counseling sessions and one can refer to other reference materials, and internet resources. These written assignments are assessed against set criteria to which learners have to follow while writing them. The design of writing assignments is intended to develop the writing habits based on self-study among the distance learners. At the same time, assignments gives tutor an idea about the difficulties and problems that learners are facing in understanding the materials and in writing
assignments. Therefore, writing assignment is considered very important. It keeps distance learners busy in writing activities which enhances their writing capabilities.

1.3.2. Problems with writing assignments

As discussed previously regarding the challenges of writing, learners do face problems in developing writing skill. The constraints of teaching and learning writing in a formal mode have been discussed and if we look at these constraints in a distance mode set-up, they appear to be very different and much more enormous. A distant learner has to supplement the absence of teacher through SLM and they have to exploit only limited opportunities to meet the tutor, that too, rarely in counseling sessions. Obviously, these constraints force distance learners to adopt unfair writing practices. Although exceptions are there, majority of learners are involved in writing malpractices. They are as follows:

1.3.2.1. Unfair writing practices

BBC Dictionary (1993:679) defined malpractice as, ‘a behavior in which someone breaks the law or the rules of their profession in order to gain some personal advantage’ (cited in Jumani, et.al, 2011:7). The purpose of this quote is to show that some malfunctioning is done by distance learners in written assignments by the following means.

1.3.2.1.1. By cheating/copying: The most common problem in written assignments that occur by way of cheating other’s work. While cheating, the person forgets to check the errors and mistakes committed by the writers. Copying is another type of malfunctioning in writing assignments. Copying is done in an intelligent manner by shuffling paragraphs to give a different look. Learners find easy to copy and their primary concern is to get marks.

1.3.2.1.2. By Plagiarism: This is a very common and serious writing issue manifested by learners both in distance and formal education. Plagiarism is a practice in which one person writes or speaks words of other person exactly the same without acknowledging the original source. James (2006) defines plagiarism as ‘the deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or idea as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise’ (cited in Jumani, et al, 2011: 8). In distance learning, learners while writing assignments plagiarize content, text without mentioning sources and
references. A majority of learners are involved in this practice intentionally or unintentionally.

1.3.2.1.3. By Deception: In distance learning, students some time produce fake assignments. They do not write assignments rather they produce assignments of previous learners and make false excuses. Some do not submit assignments on time and some pretend they have already submitted their assignments etc. These kinds of excuses are very common in distance learning. When such a condition is evident, how is it possible to make writing skill effective through distance learning? Writing is possible in distance learning because SLM does provide help to distance learners. Still learners face problem in preparing assignments based on the objectives of SLM. The learners are poor in writing assignments due to difficulty in understanding the study material, a lack of guidance from tutor and professional advice. Circumstances are very different for certain learners who cannot meet their tutor on regular basis at the same time students lack requisite reading skills to write clearly. This disinterests them in taking up work (Jumani, et.al, 2011).

Writing is possible in distance learning but writing tasks in SLM needs modification that should go with the norms of writing tasks built into the SLM mode. There is a need to break down the writing tasks into simpler task right from the pre-writing strategies and down to the feedback process.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The contemporary studies on teaching of writing can be traced back from the beginning of 19th century. During this period of the writing course were designed in a way to give learners practice on grammar, style and organization of a written text. But during the 20th century there was a paradigm shift in the focus of writing instruction. In classrooms, learners were given freedom to express their thoughts freely on paper. Importance was given to learners’ self-expression in writing. The second half of the century brought some major changes in writing instruction (Silva, 2006). Different approaches to writing bring in with them different writing operationalities in the teaching and practicing of writing. One of the approaches to writing is product approach, which has seen its growth from audio-Lingual method based on behaviorist psychology of learning. The proponents of behaviorist theory believe that a language can only be learnt through ‘habit formation’. Therefore, in product approach
systematic learning of writing patterns through repetitions and mimicking is favored to maintain the accuracy in writing and it promotes error free learning. In classroom, teachers are supposed to give learners rigorous practice of fixed writing patterns like drilling exercises, grammar based exercises, one word substitution until learners reached to the perfection (Raimes, 1991). Process approach marks a total shift from product approach. Writing is viewed as process. It is recursive and generative in nature. It involves planning in terms of pre-writing, multiple drafting and discovery procedures. It is based on feedback mechanism (Silva, 2006; Hedge, 1988).

Another approach to writing is Genre based approach. The genre-based approaches view writing as a social and cultural communication based on the context of the culture. The genre approach to teaching writing emphasizes the teaching of particular genres learners needed involving the social communicative acts (Paltridge, 2004 cited in Gao, 2007). Swales (1990) pointed out that genre knowledge plays an important part in learner’s knowledge about writing if they are to be academically successful (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). According to genre based approach, writing is concerned with knowledge of language, and is closely associated to a social purpose, text structure and form (Badger and White, 2000). Students get an idea to apply what they have learned into their own writing (Yan, 2005). These approaches are still in practice in ESL context. They bring some small and big changes in writing instruction but they never have completely disappeared from the curriculum. Before the concept of task came different methods in ESL context like Grammar translation method, Direct method, Audio lingual method, Situational oral method and Communicative approach to language teaching.

The concept of task emerges from Communicative approach and N.S. Prabhu (1987) was considered as a pioneer in Task Based Approach (TBA). Prabhu (1987), in 1979 started his very famous ‘Bangalore project’ and completed in 1984 (Sanchez, 2004). The emergence of TBA came into existence due to teaching of English in southern India (Bangalore) to primary and secondary schools approximately for three years. The teaching was done and carried out by a ‘group of teacher’s trainers and English teachers’. The project was supported by the ‘Regional Institute of English’ in Bangalore and ‘British Council’ in Madras. The project is referred by different names like ‘Bangalore Project’, the Bangalore Madras project or the ‘Procedural syllabus project’ and the team of the project referred this as ‘Communicational Teaching
Project (Prabhu, 1987:1). The aim of this project was to give a systematic input to the learners so that they can get chance to practice any part of language structure through the use of activities. In this way, a learner can achieve a desired meaningful outcome. This is because the focus of project was not only on communicative competence but also on grammatical competence which was hypothesized to develop in the duration of meaning-focused activity (Ibid).

Tasks represent the mental process of a teacher planning and delivery of writing course. Tasks make teaching more powerful, if the task selection is according to the learners’ writing needs. As writing tasks are important for language teachers, similarly, writing tasks are equally important for learners. Because at the end of the classroom teaching, it is the writing task that is required by the learners. Hence writing tasks hold important place in second language teaching (Hyland, 2003). Language scholars and linguists define the term task in different ways. This issue will be revisited in chapter 2 in detailed. (See for a detailed discussion on task based language teaching in chapter 2).

Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

The term open and distance learning and its definition are relatively new in the field of education having gained prominence only in the past 15 to 20 years. Since traditional system was unable to cope with the current needs, therefore Distance Education System took birth to cope with the current and future needs of the educational development. ‘Distance education is being called upon to meet some of the felt-needs in several countries all over the world’ (Sharma, 1986 cited in Reddy, 1993:239). For instance, in all countries, it is felt that there should be ‘greater access to higher education’ (Selim, 1986 cited in Ibid). Further, there is a need to provide continuing education to meet the changing requirement of people working in various walks of life. The system that can meet all these demands has to be innovative and flexible. Distance education get operates through study centers, assignments, audio-visual aids, personal contact programs, tutorial guidance and study material. Learners do not have to be in one place at a time, nor do they have any specific schedule for their coursework. They can study anytime, anyplace.

ODL is based on stand-alone, self-study materials- learners who do not have to leave their homes to study; and often give print-based with communication through postal
services or telephone. Large number of students can study as compared to formal education system. ODL increases the scope of learning by giving greater opportunities to the students. It can be well defined as separation of students from teacher, class and time. They can, however, use a variety of means for tutor-learner contact, including the postal system, telephone, videos, and audiocassettes, electronic mail and television and radio broadcasts. Self-learning material (SLM) designed for distance learning mode needs special attention. It compensates the absence of teacher, since the teacher is inbuilt in the material. It adopts a particular style, format and language. The important factor is that it should arouse interest at every level of learning. Interactivity is the key to open and distance learning. One of the most striking features of SLM is that learner can learn alone, there is no need to form a group and wait for others. Moreover, learner can set his/her own pace convenient to his/her learning rather than with the pace of group, which may be too fast or too slow. Therefore, it is a kind of private learning where a learner is all alone with his material. Another important feature of SLM is its availability at any time. Learner can access the material at any time s/he wishes to rather than following some strict routine or time table. The deadlines are set only for assignments and not for studying materials. Other important feature includes availability of material at any place. Learner can carry his/her material at workplace, home, study center, while travelling or even during holiday or vacation. The only limitation is with computer assisted material or audio-video material but development in technology has improved this also. SLM can be used by maximum number of learners at the same time. There is standardized and uniform content which means all the learners are receiving same study materials. An important feature of SLM is that the contents are standardized prepared by a team of expert. Apart from these features, SLM has built in design of receiving feedback. SLM continuously provide feedback on learners’ performance through inbuilt self-check exercise, or self-assessment question which helps them in monitoring their learning and check their performances. Another distinctive feature of SLM is that it contains explicit aims and objectives i.e. clear statements for teacher and learners in terms of what the teacher has to do and what learners are supposed to do after completing the study materials (Lockwood, 1998).

The SLM are so designed that learners are actively engaged in the process of learning. It includes various activities, in- text questions and self- assessment questions.
Writing skills can be taught effectively through open and distance mode of learning by supplying the most interactive self-learning material. It provides open access for the learners and facilities flexibility in learning. (See chapter 3 for detailed discussion on SLM and ODL)

**Assessment of writing tasks in ODL**

Learners and teachers both see writing assessment as an important process for improving writing. Writing assessment involves teacher’s response to the learner’s written work in the form of comments, grades etc.

Written Assessment in conventional delivery system is heavily dependent on learning outcomes manifested as a byproduct of examination achievements whereas ODL assessments are largely routed through written assignments as a byproduct of accessing the ODL self-learning materials. Compared to the conventional system, assessing writing in distance mode is enormously a challenging and complex job for the tutor. These complexities are due to the fact that there are anticipated anxieties of providing feedback to an ODL learner. The ODL learner might get confused since there is a lack of verbal interaction and this often confuses the interpretation (Ferris, 2006). Tutor sometimes get frustrated because no interaction space is possible. Therefore, responding to writing is not an easy process.

Many ODL learners are not well prepared for writing; their experience is that of copying out teacher-supplied notes, which may have left them with no capacity to take their own initiative in writing. Thus, if SLM provides follow up- writing activities as part of the assignment that would further strengthen the writing process. Assessing writing tasks in ODL mode is not a simple process. It is not simply putting a check mark and providing generalized comments on the writing. It demands tutor-based feedback mechanism and learner-based strategies as to forge a connection between them. Training is also necessary because through training tutors it is possible to consolidate and strengthen the tutor assessment techniques and procedures. Training tutors and course writers are important steps for improving the quality of writing assessment in ODL mode. Tutors need to encourage the learners to maintain the portfolio. Learner profile will help the tutor in identifying the problem area and also a tutor can refer back to previous assignment any time if there is a need for doing so. It
will also help the tutor to check gradual progress in writing. Tutors need to be further trained on providing sensitive feedback to the learners (COL, 2003).

In formal classroom, teachers and learners find opportunities for assessing their learning. But in ODL mode, learners hardly enjoy all these opportunities. ODL learners have very less chance to get assessed properly in terms of their needs, writing assignments, and learning outcomes. They do not get opportunities to diagnose their own error or mistakes before sending their assignments to the tutor. Face-to-face learners can have an access to follow up work and can rectify their errors before and after submitting the assignments. While ODL learners lack all these assessment possibilities and they require such follow up work through tutor checked assignments. Therefore ODL learners require inbuilt writing assessment tasks in terms of assignments with well-designed self-assessment criteria for learners. Tutors and SLM also need self-assessment so that learners can have more practice before submitting the assignments. Learners in ODL mode need assessment tasks that must be backed up by a well-defined feedback and grading mechanism (Morgan &O’Reilly, 1999 and STRIDE, 2003).

The assessment therefore needs to be more transparent for ODL learners and it should display the writing skills that the learners have acquired during the course. In a way, tutor can judge as accurately as how many learners have shown their own knowledge or how far the assignment shows evidence of copying, cheating and plagiarism.

Furthermore, the assessment should give the tutor an indication of the suitability of writing task designed for course and therefore, it will also become a source of evaluate the TBLT methodology used in ODL framework.

ODL learners, on the other hand would also get benefit from such an approach as they would receive more fair and accurate assessment (Zacharias, 2012). (See chapter 4 for detailed discussion).

1.5. Context of the study

1.5.1. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

IGNOU is considered one of the best and longest Open University in India. The stress of educating all puts a great pressure on government which in turn puts more responsibilities and pressure on formal education system. Therefore, National Policy on education of India decided to overcome the problem and education was extended
to non-formal system changing and expanding the learning teaching facilities in the country. With this aim, in 1985, IGNOU was established. IGNOU has a major responsibility of educating people of country and promoting open and distance learning in the country. IGNOU has been established under an act of parliament which has very wide and clear objectives of lifelong education, promoting adult education, providing opportunities to those who left their studies because of some personal or other reasons, educating housewives, educating young learners who could not make into main stream education.

IGNOU offers a wide range of courses and programs including different diplomas, degree courses and different certificate courses. Ample choices are given to learners for choosing the course according to their needs and requirement. IGNOU is an established body which is responsible for promoting and coordinating distance education system in the entire country. Under the act of IGNOU, two very important centers are established namely Distance Education Council (DEC) and Staff Training and Research Institute for Distance Education (STRIDE).

IGNOU offers courses for two types of learners. The first category comprises of learners who do not have any qualifications i.e. they have never attended any formal course. The second category comprises of those learners who have some formal qualification. Another important feature is that the course is prepared in the form of credits. IGNOU offers short term and long term courses in the areas of Graduation, Post-graduation, Research, Diplomas, Training programs, Vocational programs etc. IGNOU has its Regional and Study center all over the country (Matheswaran, 2005)

1.5.1.1. IGNOU Regional center at Aligarh

IGNOU Regional center-Aligarh was established as Sub-Regional Center in February 2006 and upgraded as Regional Center on 18th January 2008. The district of Western Uttar Pradesh covered by this Regional Centre include Aligarh, Agra, Budaun, Etah, Etawah, Firozabad, J.P.Nagar, Kashiram Nagar (Kasganj), Mahamayanagar (Hathras), Mainpuri, Mathura, Moradabad, Sambhal and Rampur with its network of 18 learner support centers. The total geographical area of the region is 426164 Sqkm, which is 17 percent of the total area of the Uttar Pradesh and the population of the region as per 2011 census was reported 33944682 persons. This area has relatively low literacy which was recorded only 51.7 percent. Out of the total population of the region nearly 78 percent resides in the rural area which is relatively higher than the national as well
as state average. The region has predominance of the other backward classes which constitute 54 percent of the total population of the region (Available at: http://rcaligarh.ignou.ac.in).

1.5.1.2. IGNOU Study Centre at Aligarh

IGNOU also has its Study Centre (2713) at Aligarh and is located near Aligarh Muslim University. IGNOU is one kind of unique institution which helps in providing education opportunities to those who have never been able to access basic education or any other formal education. IGNOU offers ample number of courses, which can help people to enter mainstream education. The study material of IGNOU is also used by learners from conventional education (John, 2012).

1.6. BCA and MCA course description

School of Computer and Information Science provides computer education program for BCA undergraduate. The basic objective of this course is to open a channel of educating students for higher computer knowledge to those who have completed their 10+ and are interested in taking comport/IT as their profession.

1.6.1. The BCA program

It is completed in six semesters and in 1st semester there is a compulsory subject of Foundation Course in English (FEG-02) divided into 4 blocks. Its main purpose is to make distance learners proficient to use basic writing skills in their everyday and professional life. The focus of FEG-02 is mainly on written discourse. The Foundation Course in English is meant for students who do not take a foundation course in Hindi or any other modern Indian language. The course is assigned 4 credits and requires about 120 hours of study on students' part. It is divided into 4 blocks of 6 units each. The main objective of the course is to develop the composition skills of students. The different kinds of composition included in the course are:

- Paragraphs
- Expository composition
- Argumentative composition
- Narrative composition
- Descriptive composition
- Notes
- Reports
- Summaries (Foundation Course in English 2, 2010)

1.6.2. The MCA Program

After acquiring the Bachelor degree of Computer Applications (BCA) at IGNOU, there is further educational opportunity for students to go for master program i.e. Master in Computer Applications (MCA). The program aims at giving the students a complete background in theoretical and application oriented course. It is also designed on a semester system. In the first semester, the focus of all the subjects is on skill development and therefore one course is on language use i.e. Skills Needed at Workplace. The focus is on listening, speaking and writing skills so that students can be prepared for professional development (MCS-015, Skills Needed at Workplace, 2012).

1.7. Rationale

Assessing writing tasks that are offered in distance mode particularly are more challenging because writing skill itself is a very challenging activity in this set up. Unlike the conventional classrooms, the Open Distance Learning (ODL) context falls short of effective interaction between teachers, peers and materials. There is hardly any literature available in the area of assessing Self-Learning Mode (SLM) oriented writing tasks. Subsequently, assessment of writing tasks suffers since the ODL format shows lack of strategies to assess the learner performance by way of appropriately designed writing tasks. Assessment of SLM in distance mode is still deprived of proper assessment strategies needed to be developed for producing effective writing outcomes.

Till date, very little has been said and done for assessment of writing skills in ODL context. There is a need to improve the assessment method and related strategies in order to enhance the learners’ performances. Assessment of writing task in ODL is relatively a new topic and not many studies have been conducted in this area.

The study focuses on the ground reality that the effectiveness of writing tasks instruction in conventional classroom poses immense challenges and complexities. This complexity of task instruction invites serious consideration for task assessment in the ODL format. There is a need to update the assessment of the SLM based writing tasks design and course delivery strategies. The conditions of writing skill in
formal education are not very promising than, what could it be in the distance mode? Writing in distance can be judged through learners’ assignments. Good and bad assignments of learners are the reflection of materials learners interact with. Assessing the written assignments will lead to re-assessment of writing tasks designed for SLM and therefore, there is a constant need to update and assess SLM.

In the present study, assessment of SLM is delimited to two courses offered by IGNOU i.e. BCA Foundation course in English (FEG-02) and MCA Skills needed at workplace (MCS-015). Tasks based on writing skills are the primary consideration for picking up these two courses.

1.8. Statement of problem

The ODL context falls short of effective interaction between teachers, peers and materials. There is hardly any literature available in the area of the assessing SLM oriented writing tasks. Subsequently, assessment of writing tasks suffers since the ODL format shows lack of strategies to assess the student performance by way of appropriately designed writing tasks. Assessment of SLM in distance mode is still deprived of proper assessment strategies needed to be developed for producing effective writing outcomes. Till date, very little has been said and done for assessment of writing skills in ODL context.

There is a need to improve the assessment method and related strategies in order to enhance the learners’ performances.

Assessment of writing task in ODL is relatively a new topic and not many studies have been conducted in this area. Assessing the quality of written assignments and tasks can be an important way to assess the quality of SLM. If effective assessment strategies are applied to any distance writing course than it could provide benefits to the course and learners.

1.9. Hypothesis of the study

1. Writing tasks are not planned for ODL learners.
2. Designing a writing task will improve the learner’s performance in writing in ODL.
3. Re-assessment of writing tasks will lead to the better learning outcomes in ODL mode.
1.10. Research Questions

1. What are the issues related to the assessment of Self-learning materials for writing tasks in ODL mode?
2. What is the impact of tutor led assignments on assessing writing tasks in ODL mode?
3. How far writing tasks can be modified to suit the concerns of assessing SLM in ODL mode?

1.11. Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for the research study is quantitative/ qualitative and interpretative in nature. The methodology has been divided into two sections, for section 1 is based on raters’ assessment of writing task and section 2 is based on survey questionnaire.

1.11.1. Samples

The total subjects for the study is 91. Out of which, 60 written assignment samples were drawn from different batches of BCA (FEG- 02) and MCA (MS- 015) from IGNOU Aligarh study center, to assess the performance of ODL learners on writing tasks. A questionnaire was conducted on a separate group of 31 students enrolled in the same courses during the academic year 2013.

1.11.2. Method

For the assessment of tutor-marked writing assignment in accordance with SLM criteria, writing assessment rubric has been developed and the raters are the tutors of IGNOU who taught these courses and are familiar with the groups who are taken as a part of the study.

1.11.3. Instruments

a. Analytical rubric: For assessment of writing task, rubric was designed to assess the students’ written assignments and units of SLM for the same course. It described the quality of writing tasks in SLM and level of student’s performance in each of the scoring category by separating and weighing the individual on four components: writing tasks objectives and contents, organization of unit (example, logical arrangement of ideas, cohesion, etc.) language use and vocabulary by assigning the numerical values (see chapter 5 for rubric design).
b. Survey: The questionnaire selected for the research study was a close ended questionnaire. It consisted of four sections, designed to identify the ODL students' needs, problems and difficulties regarding writing assignments, counselling sessions and rating the writing tasks given in their syllabus from relevant to extremely irrelevant and from easy to most difficult writing task. The questionnaire is divided into four sections (see chapter 5 for the design of questionnaire).

1.12. Significance of the study

The research study takes into consideration the writing difficulties and problems of students who are studying in distance mode. Not much research has been done in the area of writing practices in ODL mode.

The study is especially significant in the context of assessing writing tasks design to tailored to the needs of ODL learners since these learners consider themselves inferior to students of formal mode.

The study has its pedagogical implications for distance tutors, students as well as material writer and designers. The study is an attempt to make writing tasks more flexible, comprehensible and accessible in SLM mode and obviously this has wider educational implications as well. Assignments help in bridging distance between the teachers and the students. If properly designed, writing assignments can be considered as an effective way of communication and can prove more effective than the personal contact programs (Chander, 1991). Satyanarayana &Sesharatnam (2000) say that assignments are an important way in obtaining feedback from tutor and establish the contact between the two.

SLM developers could also derive benefits from this study. They can develop the design of writing tasks that could be inbuilt into SLM. The study will be benefit both distance learners and distance teaching and design of writing tasks will provide greater opportunities to distance learners to become better writer as they need to survive professionally in the competing world.

1.13. Limitations of the study

1. The assignment sheets collected for assessment are from different years of different batches because it was not possible to test the effectiveness of designed tasks on the same group of which the assignments have been collected.
2. Only two courses of IGNOU, FEG-102 (BCA) and MCS-16 (MCA) are taken for assessment of writing tasks as it is not possible to assess the entire courses that are operated in IGNOU and the regional center of Aligarh (IGNOU) has been taken for locale of the study.

3. The sample for questionnaire consisted of a fairly small group. It is difficult to collect data because students are not available. The time for the contact program is very limited just for two to six days and not many students turned up for counseling sessions.

4. The questionnaire is administered on different batches and writing assignments are collected from different batches.

1.14. Organization of the study

The research study consists of five chapters which are as follows:

Chapter 1: The Statement of Intent. The purpose of this chapter is to gives an outline of the proposed research study and discusses the background, theoretical framework, context of the study, rationale and problems to be investigated in the light of topic, hypothesis, objectives of study, research methodology, significance of the study, limitations and organization of the study.


This chapter provides review on task-based language teaching, with specific reference to second language writing. The discussion is further carried on task, approaches to tasks based language and its methodology for implementing in classroom. Finally, the chapter will have a focus on the insights gained from the Task-based Language Teaching and writing task features so that it informs the ODL writing task assessment.

Chapter 3: Review of Literature on Open and Distance Learning mode (ODL): An overview of Strategies of course delivery Self Learning Materials (SLM)

This chapter reviews the teaching and learning processes of various distance teaching universities/open universities in the world, drawing insights from distance teaching universities. The chapter discussed design and development of SLM and various strategies of course delivery.
Chapter 4: Review of literature on Assessing Writing at formal and ODL mode. This chapter reviews the literature on assessing writing in formal and ODL mode in terms of assessment of different tasks types, testing measures, benchmarks and methods of assessment in ODL.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology: Results and Discussions

This chapter is based on research methodology. It describes the research design leading to results and discussions. It includes discussion of methods, samples, and procedures of data collection. The discussion has been made on the findings and at the end important findings have been reported.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Suggestions and Recommendations.

NOTES

REFERENCES

APPENDICES
Chapter 2

Review of Literature on Tasks-based language teaching: Researches in Second language writing

The chapter reviews the literature on task-based language teaching, with specific reference to second language writing. The discussion is further carried on task, approaches to tasks based language and its methodology for implementing in classroom. Finally, the chapter will have a focus on the insights gained from the Task-based Language Teaching and writing task features so that it informs the ODL writing task assessment.

2.0. Introduction

In the field of second language acquisition, writing has been regarded as one of the most important skills. Numerous researches have been conducted as to how to teach writing most effectively in the classroom. However, there is no single theory or approach so far which can be thought of as a perfect solution to complexity of learning to write (Raimes, 1991 cited in Chen and Chen, 2005). Recent studies conducted in the field of second language writing have shown that students need to make efforts in learning to read and write. Studies conducted so far revealed that out of the four major skills, writing is a complex composing process which includes planning, organization, transforming and reviewing (Flower and Hayes, 1980, 81 cited in Chen and Chen, 2005). Writing represents literacy and it is therefore important that in a classroom, teacher should focus his/her attention on the improvement of students' writing for increasing the literacy rate (Almog and Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1999 cited in Ibid).

Researches in writing started in late 1960s and 70s in USA and UK. It started addressing the students’ problems and needs in academic writing. There is a wide diversity in the needs of L2 writing students. A more clear distinction is the need of writing that can be made in terms of those writers who have studies or used English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). Students who fall under ESL category are those who need to learn English generally for their survival purposes in academics. Whereas EFL students who fall under EFL category are those who are living in countries in which English is not spoken or written by community and they need to learn English or need to learn to write in English. The wide range of
L2 learners has different writing abilities need proficiencies. This has proposed future researches in second language writing (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

2.1. Researches on writing in second language

For some years, writing has not been given its due attention. It is partly because of the nature of writing itself. Rosen (1981) pointed out that writing in second language suffers from the complexity of expressions that are possible in spoken language like gestures, facial expressions, body movements, postures, pitch, tone, stress and a possible modification or adjustment by speaker unlike written language where writer has little or no sense of his/her reader. However, recent theories in writing do suggest that writing is done with specific aim of keeping the audience in mind (cited in Hedge, 1987).

Therefore, writing demand clarity of ideas, high degree of organization, information, and careful selection of vocabulary, grammatical correct sentences and appropriate style. All these issues along with some others which are not mentioned here make writing more challenging for second language learners of English (Hedge, 1987).

2.1.1. Focus on Form/product approaches to writing

During 1960s-70s the focus was on form/product approaches. In 1966, Audio Lingual Method (ALM) was used for teaching English language. In ALM, primary focus was on spoken language while writing served as a secondary means only to 'reinforce' oral drills of the language. Writing was viewed as the medium of completing sentences, drill exercises, fill-ins, substitution exercises, transformation and completion in which content was already provided by teacher. Writing, therefore, was used to test how well learners had followed the accurate grammatical rules. In early 1970s, classroom teaching of writing was based on 'controlled composition tasks' in which students' focus was mainly on grammatical transformation like they were asked to change the 'verb from present to past' (Widdowson, 1987:116 cited in Raimes, 1991:408). Apart from grammar, 1970s was also the period when Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric also had a great influence on teaching writing (contrastive rhetoric examined the difference and similarities in writing across the cultures). Kaplan's (1966) approach gave training in identifying the topic sentence examples and illustration in the paragraph. This helped in imitating the paragraphs and essays (see Reed, 1990; Eggington, 1987; Hinds, 1987 and Tsa, 1983; Connor, 1984; Johns, 1984
cited in Raines, 1991: 409). Pincas (1982a) described writing in terms of linguistically correct and appropriate use of vocabulary, proper syntax and cohesive devices. This is how Pincas (1982b) described the nature of writing which has its focus on end product. Product approach has been categorized into four stages for learning to write:

1. Familiarization: It means making learners familiar with certain features of text. For example, making learners familiar with preposition, article and with kinds of verb through essay writing.

2. Controlled writing: In this stage, learner practices the sentences in a controlled manner. He/she is given a model or table and to guide to writing simple sentences.

3. Guided writing: After practicing controlled writing, learners are given writing activity based on the activity which they have already done.

4. Free writing: Finally, students are allowed to write on their own following the same pattern which they have followed in guided and controlled stage (Badger & White, 2000).

Pincas (1982a: 24) favors learning as imitating model and providing models, substitution, tables as a stimulus to which learners respond and write.

To conclude, product or form focused approaches mainly focus their attention on form i.e. structure of language. Writing is developed in the form of guided form where writing models, input were provided by the teacher and students were supposed to respond to them and imitate the model in order to bring accuracy in writing (Badger and White, 2000).

The product approach to writing was criticized mainly because of less attention given to learner’s planning stage. Learners were not allowed to write at their own rather they were forced to imitate the text (Ibid). The focus was mainly on the end product. The teachers who supported product approach were more concerned with the end results which should be legible and sensible. Legible and sensible results mean to refer to grammatically perfect sentences, observing right mechanics and conventions and developing appropriate vocabulary as part of well-organized piece of writing. This perfection can only be achieved through copying, imitating, words and developing the sentences provided by the teachers (Mekhlafy, 2009). The pre-
assumptions of students’ writing were made because students were not composing in their own style rather in a controlled guided form, which made writing a habit formation. This approach hardly expresses the original thoughts and ideas of learners (Zamel, 1976). Form dominated approaches led the way for further research design. In 1976, there was a gradual development from more than sentence combining and translation. Teachers and researchers reacted against the form focused approach and they shifted their attention to developing more research in L2 writing. Accuracy was replaced by ‘process’, ‘idea generation’, ‘meaning making’, revision, editing, multiple drafting and writers were given importance on the basis of how they write and what goes in their mind when they write. Writers in L2 writing were the creators of the text and this led to ‘process approach’ where variety of tasks were introduced in the classroom in which students were free to use their ideas in written text, and could work in pairs, revise their text and write and re-write (Peyton, 1990; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Spack, 1984; Bruffee, 1984; Long & Porter, 1984 and Hall, 1990). Teachers started giving their students freedom of composing text, selecting topic, generating ideas, writing, revising and re-writing. They also provided feedback to students on their written drafts. Some practitioners paid attention to the grammatical form at the beginning of the writing but some totally overlooked the accuracy (Benesch & Rorschach, 1989; Cramer, 1985 cited in Raimes, 1991).

During 1980s, there was a continuous debate between L1 and L2 writing research composition theories and as a result, shift was made from product to process writing. Hillocks (1986) advocated that ‘process’ was an effective mode of writing instruction (Dyer, 1996:312)

2.1.2. Process approach

Reaction against product approach resulted into the development of process approach to writing. During 1970s and 80s, researchers felt that the product approach to writing didn’t give learners the actual writing practice and writers only suffered mental pressure in obtaining the end product without revealing the fact how they achieved that product (Raimes, 1983). However, researchers like Arndt (1987) and Raimes (1985) were of the view that product approach to writing should not be completely abolished. They suggested that product approach should be used in writing lessons for exploring and analyzing rather than imitating the text. The very important finding which emerged out of research pointed out that writing was not a linear process of
collecting information, outlining and writing rather it involved different stages of generating ideas, planning, writing, evaluating, revision, multiple drafting, providing feedback. Zamel (1983) and Arndt (1987) found that planning was the stage which continuously occurred in writing process. A writer plans throughout from planning to writing to reviewing stages. Process approach to writing was blamed as ignoring ‘form’ but researchers favored it by providing the fact that revision was an important stage in process writing which enabled writers’ (learners) mental faculty to judge their own and their peer draft and re-write it, whether for ‘form’ or ‘content’ (Johnston, 1996:348). Process approach to writing offered lot more apart from different stages. It involves thinking, generating ideas, planning, rehearsing, re-reading, evaluating, and revising. Process approaches advocates the stages which a writer goes for obtaining a piece of writing. It involves important stages of planning or ‘pre-writing’, ‘composing or drafting’, ‘revising’, ‘editing’, ‘feedback’ (Tribble, 1996: 39). In process approach, writing is viewed as a recursive act rather than linear. For example, a writer may check his/her pre-writing activities while revising and may re-draft. In process approach to writing, teacher mainly facilitates learning and provides stimulus mainly to those who are young learners and are under the influence of their mother tongue. It gives freedom to the students to think on their own to express themselves. However, process approach to writing ignores the content and grammar. Hedge (1987) identifies that process approach advocates four stages in pre-writing; the audience, the generation of ideas, organization and the purpose of writing (Zamel, 1976; Badger &White, 2000).

The criticism against process approach came from Cope and Kalantzis (1993:57) ‘the process writing teacher waiting while the child struggles for control and ownership……..actually favors white, middle class students’ (Badger &White, 2000:156). Process approach to writing was also criticized because it considered all kind of writing as being produced by the same set of process. Also, it did not give learners sufficient linguistic knowledge of language (Ibid). Horowitz (1986) pointed out that evaluating many times by peers would not give the writer (learners) any ideas about their writing abilities (Kim &Kim, 2005). This approach did not provide any insight on how a skilled writer and a novice write composes. A skilled writer may not produce more drafts in comparison to unskilled writers who will come up with multiple drafts and will spend more time on writing and drafting. Most of the
researchers focused on two or three drafts by focusing mainly on ideas, organization, and coherence (Johnston, 1996).

2.1.3. Process writing to task based instruction

Researches in L1 and L2 writing composition during mid-1970s were totally dominated by process approach in which learners had to go through with different stages of planning (pre-writing), writing, feedback, peer feedback. The role of a teacher is now more of a facilitator who doesn’t judge writing in terms of bad or good, accuracy and vocabulary (see Lawrence, 1975; Zamel, 1976, 1980). The idea of process approach to writing is to make students learn writing in a more natural way by giving freedom to learn writing in an exploratory manner. The more they will write the better writers they will become (cited in Dyer, 1996). But during 1980s, process approach was criticized. Horowitz (1986a) says that process writing failed in preparing students for ‘academic writing task’ such as ‘examination writing’ or ‘highly structured writing assignments’. As there was no control on individual writer’s behavior, it ultimately failed in judging a piece of writing (Horowitz, 1986b:446 cited in Dyer, 1996:313). According to Horowitz (1986), process approach lacked in addressing the concepts of writing tasks specific to the needs of students. Swales (1986:8-9) also advocates an approach which ‘emphasizes less the cognitive relationship between the writer and his or her internal world and more the relationship between the writer, the writing environment and the intended readership....’ (cited in Dyer, 1996:313).

This notion gives birth to the concept of ‘task’ which is supported by psycholinguistics, linguistics and cognitive researchers. It shows that language form cannot be acquired separately but only when it is combined with the meaningful task where the learner’s attention is focused on meaning i.e. task completion and not on language use only (Long 1992: 35 cited in Ibid).

Long (1985) defines ‘task’ (target), ‘as a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others’. Crookes (1986:1) defines tasks ‘as a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective’ (cited in Dyer, 1996:313). Horowitz (1986:455) defines academic writing task usually undertaken by a university professor which mainly emphasize ‘recognition and reorganization of data and de-emphasized invention and
personal discovery' (Dyer, 1996:313). Further, Horowitz classified seven types of academic writing tasks:

1. Summary writing
2. Annotated bibliography
4. Connection of theory and data.
5. Case study
6. Synthesis of multiple sources
7. Research project (Horowitz, 1986:449-51)

Currie (1993) gave a similar kind of list of conceptual activities and writing tasks.

1. Finding and recording information
2. Classifying
3. Comparing
4. Determining
5. Causation

Thus the focus was shifted from product to process to task-based writing instruction in the light of communicative tasks.

2.2. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In the recent years, language learning has seen tremendous growth. Apart from many changes, one of the important changes is that language is not simple learning rules. Rather, it is generally seen as a ‘resource’ for creating meaningful communication. This very purpose of communication served the underlined growth of communicative language teaching (CLT) in language learning (Nunan, 1989:12).

CLT aims to develop learning ability to use language in real life communication. Brown and Yule (1983) pointed out that CLT had two main purposes; the ‘interactional purpose’ and ‘transactional function’. In the interactional purpose, language is used to establish contacts and in transactional function language is used to exchange information. In this respect CLT shares a lot of similarities with previous methods of language teaching like ALM and Oral-situational method which claimed to use language for communication purpose, however, these methods focused on linguistics competence, lexical and grammatical aspect of language and CLT is drawn
upon functional/notional model of language (Halliday, 1978) and communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) (cited in Ellis, 2003:27). Widdowson (1978) put forward his view by saying that the focus of structural approaches were on the ‘usage’ i.e. the ability of using language correctly whereas the objective of CLT was on ‘use’ of language i.e. the ability of using language meaningfully and appropriately (Ellis, 2003: 28). Howatt (1984) drew upon the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ version of CLT. ‘The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching.....The strong version of CLT on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication as it is not merely a question of activating an existing knowledge of the language, but also of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former version could be described as ‘learning to use English’, the latter version justify ‘using English’ to learn it (Howart, 1984:279 cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986:66 and Ellis, 2003:28). The weaker version of CLT becomes visible in the notional/functional syllabuses proposed by Wilkins (1976) and Van Ek (1976). The stronger version of CLT, evident in Krashen and Tessell’s (1983) Natural approach, was also regarded as central for using tasks (Candlin (1987). Also, the stronger version involved learners on using language for effective communication (Ellis, 2003). The role of weak and strong version of CLT also implies in ‘task supported language and task- based’ communicative practice for language teaching in a more traditional way. The stronger version of CLT sees task as a means of making learners enabling to learn language by using it as a means of communication (Ellis, 2003).

2.3. Task-supported Language Teaching

Weak version of CLT employed the PPP procedure for teaching language which focuses on specifically on structural and grammatical features in notional and functional terms. PPP consists of Presentation-----Practice-----Production (see Gower and Walters, 1983). The procedure is followed by presenting specific language items to the learners. These items are practiced in a controlled manner in an exercise which finally provides opportunities to the learners to use them in language production. In this production stage; tasks are introduced. This view of language teaching was criticized on many grounds. Rutherford (1987) said that in PPP,
language was seen as a product that could be acquired as ‘accumulated entities’ (Ellis, 2003:29). Researches in second language acquisition have shown that language can not be learned in this controlled way as L2 acquisition is a ‘process’ where teaching is not seen in terms of PPP (Ibid). Practically, it is also difficult for learners to acquire the targeted forms due to their incapability in terms of their strategic competence. However, despite of such criticism, researchers believed that PPP was highly durable for teaching grammar. Skehan (1996b) suggested that because of this control procedure it benefitted students immensely. Brumfit (1979) suggested some changes in PPP i.e. starting with production stage followed by presentation and practice stages. By doing so, task will come first. But this will also not solve the problem of presenting and practicing features, learners failed to use during production stage. A better alternative would be to view language curriculum as two separate entities; one which follows traditional approach and the other based on task (Ellis, 2003).

2.3.1. Task based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT is developed on strong version of CLT. Tasks can function as a useful device for planning a communicative curriculum. TBLT curriculum involves ‘an integrated set of processes involving, among other things, the specification of both what and how’ (Nunan, 1989:1). TBLT emphasizes the aspect of methodology (Kumaravadivelu, 1993 cited in Ellis, 2003). The distinction between design of syllabus and methodology can be seen in terms of selection of tasks i.e. designing a task based curriculum selecting carefully the tasks for the learners and grading the tasks preferably in order in which learners will do the task. The methodology could be divided in terms of pre-task, during-task and post-task (Skehan, 1996a cited in Ellis, 2003). Methodology of TBLT has been discussed in detail in the later section of this chapter.

2.3.1.1. The basis of a Task-Based approach (TBA)

Those who favor TBLT believe that students can learn a language better while engaged in using real language tasks in the classrooms. This kind of practice is provided to the learners by designing tasks based on games, discussions, problem solving activities. It requires learners to use language for successful completion of tasks. Willis and Willis (2007) provided some of the important aspects of Task based approach:
1. Many people can operate effectively in a foreign language even though they make a lot of mistakes.

2. Learners will not be able to do a task unless they have a command in grammar.

3. TBT accepts the importance of grammar.

4. TBT is not suitable for learners who are preparing for exams.

5. A teacher needs not be highly experienced to use TBLT effectively.

6. A teacher cannot exercise TBLT unless he/she has a fair level of language accuracy and fluency.

7. TBLT can be used for teaching both spoken and written language.

8. Tasks are always done in pairs or group (Willis & Willis, 2007:1).

2.3.1.2. Approaches to TBA

There are usually two important approaches which are followed in TBA 'Form-based approaches and Meaning-based approaches'.

2.3.1.3. Form focused approach

In form focused approach, teacher, in the beginning of teaching, focuses the attention of learners at some particular form or grammatical structure in the text. Learners by the end of the class are expected to achieve the level of understanding and to produce those targeted form accurately. The common formula of doing form based approaches is 'PPP model (i.e. presentation → practice → production). In this model, teacher illustrates two or three new forms, and learners are supposed to practice them under the controlled monitoring of a teacher. When they have enough practice of targeted form, they are asked to produce those targeted forms in communicative activities.

Form focused approach have four main characteristics:

1. Teacher introduces the specific targeted form which are later practiced and produced in a communicative activity.

2. Teacher introduces the form before learners get engaged in a communicative activity.

3. Teacher controls the learners’ language.

4. The success of target form is judged in terms of whether learners’ have produced the targeted forms with the level of expected acceptable level of accuracy (Willis and Willis, 2007):
2.3.1.4. Meaning-focused approach

Proponents who favour meaning based approach believes that effective learning can take place when learners are allowed to use language for communication without fearing about its accuracy. This involves focusing on meaning. A meaning focused approach has the following characteristics:

1. Learners are free to use language; teachers do not control learning language.
2. The achievement of task is judged by whether the learners have communicated successfully or not.
3. The focus is on how to express well, using language. Teacher helps the learners only to provide clarification if needed and monitors their activity.
4. Primary focus is on meaning. More time is spent on activities to provide communication in classroom. Focus on form come later (Willis & Willis, 2007).

2.4. Characteristics of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Swan (2005:377) classifies the following characteristics of TBLT:

1. Instruction should be given in the target language where the focus is on the meaning rather than on language learning.
2. Activities should be designed keeping in the mind the learner’s need. It should be learner centered rather than teacher centered.
3. Since TBLT favors naturalistic learning, not giving target like accuracy.
4. In order to maintain accuracy, students should be provided with the lessons having focus on forms. It will draw their attention toward linguistics elements.
5. Communicative tasks are measured for such an approach which should have its focus on meaning and accuracy.
6. Pre-task, during task and post task methodologies should be adopted for classroom teaching (Buyukkarci, 2009)

2.5. The concept of Task complexity for grading tasks

Sequencing and grading of a task is one of the obvious problem faced by a syllabus designer. The question is how to sequence a task in a course/syllabus? What should be the grading criteria? How to sequence a difficult task? Which way will be better to make learners complete a task by maintaining a meaningful communication.
Sequencing is one of the major issues which need to be addressed before designing any syllabus. (Sanchez, 2004).

A task-based lesson may involve sequence of inter-related tasks. Introduction of a task by a teacher is the first stage of task which makes learners involve in exchange of ideas which helps them to keeping focus on the topic. It also assists learners to use their own knowledge and opinion on the subject. Secondly, it provides opportunities to use different set of ideas and vocabulary related with the task. The first stage forms the background to start with the second learning stage. In this stage, learners are more involved in meaning focused activities (Willis and Willis, 2007).

Widdowson (1990) pointed out that sequencing of task is not an easy job in particularly when the grading criteria are to be used. A number of criteria for grading tasks have been proposed (see Brindley, 1989; Candlin, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1998 and Robinson, 2001). There are various criteria for task complexities in terms of:

1. Input: There are various factors which are related with input. They are:
   a. Medium: Input medium refers to the information presented in written or pictorial form which learners use and interpret while using their own time, understanding and exposure to L2. Input can also be presented in the oral form.
   b. Code complexity: The lexical and syntactical complexity of input also influences the learner’s ability to comprehend input texts. Simple sentences with relatively high sounding vocabulary are easier to understand than the complex sentences with low sounding vocabulary. However, there is no reason where by a complexity of the code inevitably involves a corresponding increase in the interpretative density of the text (Candlin, 1987:20 cited in Ellis, 2003: 222). It has been noticed that elaborative inputs employing devices like paraphrases rather than simplification are more easily comprehended than simplified input (Oh, 2001 cited in Ibid).
   c. Cognitive complexity: It is more important than code complexity. This involves the mental processing of the inputs, content information of the input provided. Brown et.al (1984) provided sequencing of tasks from simple to complex level. The task was divided into three stages. First task-
'Static type' was considered as the easiest task (Ellis, 2003:223). In this task, information is given to all the speakers which are to be exchanged (for e.g. a 'map task' in which the speaker has all the information which he/she will pass to the listener to give directions). The second type of task 'dynamic task' is a bit difficult. In such tasks, characters, events, situations, and stimulus materials are given to the speaker. Speaker uses his own language and background knowledge for describing a task (for example, characters of a story, their behaviour, places, appearance etc). The third and most difficult task is the 'abstract task' which involves drawing out inferences from abstract information to establish between ideas, reasons and statements (Ellis, 2003:223). Prabhu (1987) is of the view that learners have more difficulty in working on a task that involves 'concept' that go with the naming objects and actions.

The second dimension of cognitive complexity as referred by Brown et al (1984) is the amount of information that needs to be processed, i.e. if a task input contains few elements, it becomes easier for the learners to comprehend the task. Skehan (2001) suggests that cognitive complexity is also determined by the way, the input is structured. Tasks in which inputs are structured clearly may be easier to perform than those in which inputs are loosely structured.

d. Context dependency: 'The context dependency of input may have an impact on complexity' (Ellis, 2003:223). For example, textual inputs if supported by visual information, is relatively easier to process information. Nunan (1989) also supported this idea that text supported by visual effects like photograph, pictures, tables, diagram, graphs etc. were easier to understand.

e. Familiarity of information: It is concerned with the relationship between the task and the individual learner's knowledge of the world. Prabhu (1987) says that knowledge of world can make task difficult or easier for the learner depending on how much they are familiar with purposes and constraints of task (Ellis, 2003). Task designers refer to familiarity of information as an important factor for determining the task complexity.

2. Factors related to the task conditions: The three important factors that have been discussed in literature for the task conditions are:
a. Negotiation: Some researchers have suggested that a learner is provided with the opportunities to negotiate a task that will lead to a more successful task outcome.

b. Task demands: It refers to the condition whether the task imposes a single task demand or dual task. Robinson (2001) stated that it has been investigated in educational research by studying the effect on performance of learner by adding a second task to the main task. Robinson (2001), explained this factors in a 'map task' in which the route was either marked on the map (single task) or either learners were supposed to described the route to be followed (dual task) (Ellis, 2003:225).

c. Discourse mode: Skehan (2001) conducted a research to see the effect of using monologic and dialogic task on the performance of the learners. Skehan (2001) noticed that dialogic tasks had greater accuracy and complexity while monologic tasks had greater fluency. However, dialogic tasks would be easier in terms of giving more opportunities to the learners to scaffold each other's performance than monologic task.

3. Process of performing a task: The cognitive process involved in completing a task has a major influence on the task complexity. The role of reasoning is important to complete a task. According to Prabhu's (1987) description of activities (see section 2.9.3) information-gap task was proved as the easiest, opinion-gap task as difficult and reasoning-gap task intermediate. In the reasoning-gap task, Prabhu identifies the reasoning needed as a key factor in determining the complexity. The distance between the information provided and the information arrived at as an outcome i.e. the number of steps involved in the deduction, inference, or calculation is a measure of the relative difficulty of tasks.

4. Factors relating to task outcomes: The task outcomes involves different factors like:
   a. Medium of outcome: Like the input, outcome of task also influences the task complexity. Again, pictorial and written products may be proved easier than oral products depending upon the difficulties, individual learners experience with different media.
   b. The scope of the outcome: Not much related literature is available on the complexity of outcomes. It is assumed that task with closed outcome will
be easier where participants know the right answer and thus can direct their efforts more purposefully and perhaps, more economically' (Ellis, 2003: 226).

c. The discourse domain of the outcome: Again no basis in research is available to determine which discourse domain poses the greatest cognitive demands.

d. Complexity of the outcome: Skehan (2001: 173) identifies that complexity of outcome is an important factor in decision making tasks. Skehan (2001:173) says, 'some task require only straight forward outcomes in which a simple decision has to be made. Other requires multi-faceted judgments, in which the case or position of learner argues during a task can only be effective if it anticipated other possible outcomes, and other learner's contribution' (Ellis, 2003: 227).

Table 2.1 summarizes the various criteria discussed above. However it is very difficult to understand each and every criterion with present stage of knowledge. It is difficult to judge the certainty of a task, like whether a task involves static but unfamiliar information or an abstract task but involves familiar information. Also it cannot be estimated how the criteria determine the complexity of task. Thus, grading of task cannot follow a precise rule or procedure.
Table 2.1. Criteria for grading tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Input</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Medium</td>
<td>Pictorial → written</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Code complexity</td>
<td>High frequency vocabulary; short and simple sentences</td>
<td>Oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cognitive complexity</td>
<td>Static → dynamic</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Information type</td>
<td>Few elements/relationship</td>
<td>Many elements/relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Amount of information</td>
<td>well defined structure</td>
<td>Little structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Degree of structure</td>
<td>here-and-now orientation</td>
<td>There and then orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Context dependency</td>
<td>familiar</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
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<td>4. Familiarity of information</td>
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<th>B. Conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interactant relationship</td>
<td>Two-way</td>
<td>Three-way</td>
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<tr>
<td>(negotiation of meaning)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Task demands</td>
<td>Single task</td>
<td>Dual task</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Discourse mode required to perform the task.</td>
<td>Dialogic</td>
<td>Monologic</td>
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<tr>
<th>C. Processes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cognitive operation</td>
<td>Exchanging information → Reasoning few steps involved</td>
<td>Exchanging opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Reasoning need</td>
<td></td>
<td>Many steps involved</td>
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<th>D. Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Medium</td>
<td>Pictorial</td>
<td>Written → oral</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Scope</td>
<td>Closed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discourse mode of task outcome</td>
<td>Lists, descriptions, narratives, classifications</td>
<td>Instructions, arguments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Ellis, 2003: 228)
2.6. Methodology in Task Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching involves different stages for completion of a task. Various designs have been proposed by Prabhu (1987), Estaire and Zanon (1994), Skehan (1996), Willis (1996) and Lee (2000). All these researchers have proposed three important phases for a task that reflect a task based lesson (Ellis, 2003).

Designing a task for any skill (LSRW) is a complex process which goes through several stages of selection, gradation and adaptation as per the required situation and condition. Task components are also considered in designing a task. Components are important aspect of task which has been discussed in later section. When a designed task is used in the classroom, it is performed or broken down into three stages i.e. ‘Pre-task’, ‘During-task’, and ‘Post-task’. Pre-task and Post task stages are not obligatory for teachers to perform in the class, however, during-task stage assumes the central position. But it is evident how researchers have favored the use of pre-task and post-task stages. The tasks are designed, keeping in mind pre-task and post-task activities. They are very important for the development of learning activities in the classroom.

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(Source: Ellis, 2006:10)
2.6.1. Pre-Task stage

A pre-task is a stage before the actual task is introduced to the class. In this stage, learners and teachers undergo simple activities which are similar to a task which they will undertake further. This stage aims at brainstorming of learners and preparing the learners for learning. Prabhu (1987) defines ‘pre-task’ as “a task to be attempted publicly”. Here ‘publicly’ implies to the ‘learners in a classroom’. A teacher must consider pre-task activities very important as during this stage, a teacher introduces a new topic and prepares the learners to work on a task. Pre-task helps the learners to understand the nature of the task. Learners get the idea of what is demanded from them. It helps learners prepare themselves for the task. Teachers get idea of learner’s problems, their weaknesses and strengths. In this way, pre-task prepares the learners to perform in next activities which they are supposed to do at their own (Prabhu, 1987:53-54). Lee (2000) describes the importance of ‘framing’ the task to be performed and suggests that one way of doing this is to provide an advance organizer of what the students will be required to do and the nature of the outcome they will arrive at (Ellis, 2006:11). Dornyei (2001) emphasizes the importance of presenting a task in a way that motivates learners. Skehan (1996: 25) says that the teacher during the pre-task phase, ‘emphasis on the general cognitive demands of the task, and/or linguistic factors. Attentional capacity is limited, and it is needed to respond to both linguistic and cognitive demands……then engaging in activities which reduce cognitive load will reduce attentional capacity of the learner to concentrate more on linguistic factors. These alternatives will lead to:

1. Supporting learners in performing a task similar to the task they will perform in the during-task phase of a lesson.
2. Asking learners to observe a model of how to perform the task.
3. Engaging learners in non-task activities designed to prepare them to perform the task.
4. Strategic planning for the main task performances’ (Ellis, 2006: 11).

Pre-task is conducted in a class through question-answers activity. Question/answer should be based on the task that a teacher want to do in the class. The entire lesson can be divided into smaller stages so that it can be easy for a teacher to lead the class. In turn, learners will also be able to understand the lesson and outcomes of the task. A teacher should work according to a lesson plan. A good lesson plan must contain-
1. Pre-task activities, giving learners some idea of what is going to happen in the class.

2. A set of graded question or instructions together with parallel question is to be used as needed (Ellis, 2006:11).

In Prabhu’s (1987) point of view, ‘pre-task is not a demonstration but a task in its own right’. The teacher uses pre-task to ‘scaffold’ learners’ performance of the task with the expectancy that this will help them in understanding and solving the main task on their own. Another way of overcoming the difficulties of a task is to ask students to observe a model of how a task can be performed. This involves presenting them with a text (oral or written) to explain an ‘ideal’ performance of the task. Skehan (1996) and Willis (1996) suggest that simply observing how others perform a task can help in reducing the cognitive load on the learners (Ellis, 2006:11-12). According to Willis (1996), teachers act as facilitators who engage the learners in exploring the topic with the help of useful words and phrases. Teachers’ job is to exploit materials that need to be relevant and related with the task (Ellis, 2006). According to Prabhu (1987), pre-task activities can be performed through interaction between students and teacher in the form of question-answer activities. It again depends on tasks nature. If a task is difficult for learners, their teacher can plan his/her lesson according to the learner’s needs. He/she can lead the class step by step to achieve the expected outcome. He/she ensures that all types of learners are able to understand what is required of them. According to Prabhu (1987) him, pre-task serves as a medium between task and outcome. A teacher uses his/her expertise in exercising pre-task techniques to scaffold learner’s performance of task. He/she facilitates them in using their cognitive and linguistic skills and enables them to perform the main task on their own (Ellis, 2006; Prabhu, 1987). Researchers have given different ways of conducting pre-task activities in a classroom. Some important techniques are discussed below:

2.6.1.1. Providing a model

One of the easiest ways of doing the pre-task activities is through providing a model of task i.e. the main task will be performed by the learners later. This may involve presenting them with oral or written text. This will also reduce the cognitive pressure that in-built on learners’ mind while passing through task phase (Skehan, 1996 and Willis, 1996). However, the model should be accompanied by some activities based on the specific features of a task which learners are required to acquire. These features
may include analyzing grammatical features of written text, linguistics features, spoken aspects or written features (Ellis, 2006).

2.6.1.2. Non-Task Preparation Activities

These activities are aimed at reducing the cognitive and linguistic pressure placed on learners. In these activities, learner’s content knowledge or background knowledge information serves as a means of pre-task activities for defining the topic area of a task. Willis (1996), provided a list of such activities like ‘brainstorming’ and ‘mind-maps’ (Ellis, 2006:13). Advance knowledge about tasks will help learners in processing and formulating the language needed to express their ideas. This reduces the complexities of a task and on one hand and enhancing the task outcome on the other (Ellis, 2006).

2.6.1.3. Strategic Planning

Lastly, learners should be given proper time for planning their performance for a task. Having accessed to a task, learners will perform a task with strategic planning. They need to perform according to the work plan they have been provided. It depends on a teacher as to how he/she is planning work plan for learners- like whether the learners are given a work plan and left to decide on their own or whether the learners are provided with guidance on the work plan.

2.6.1.3.1. No Planning: Some ideas are given to learners and they plan their working criteria on their own groups or individually.

2.6.1.3.2. Guided planning: In this case, teacher’s guidance is given to the learner where the learner’s attention is focused on form content or form and content both (Foster and Skehan, 1999 cited in Ellis, 1996).

2.6.1.4. Conclusion

Pre-task is a way to provide various opportunities to teachers and learners to come to a successful task outcome. In these four ways, teachers can help to contribute to better learning and to better task performance. Skehan (1998) pointed out that these stages served a way to introduce learners with new language items that they could use in task performance. It also reduces mental pressure from learners and activates their cognitive faculties. However, it is not possible to make learning or learner perfect for performing a task through pre-tasking. But studies have shown that adopting pre-tasking methodology will surely benefit the learning and task outcome (Ellis, 2006).
2.6.2. The During-Task Phase

From teaching point of view, there are two options available to the teacher for during task stage to take place in the classroom. Firstly, teacher can modify or change a task according to the learners' needs and difficulties encountered in the pre-task stage performance. This stage is called 'task-performance options'. Second, teacher and students can plan and make a decision about how to perform task. This is called process option.

2.6.2.1. Task performance options

According to research studies till date, three task performance options have been figured out. The first option is related with 'time'. It means whether students should be given a time limit for completing a task. A teacher can give a limited time or students can complete the task in their own time. According to Lee (2000), teacher should set strict time limits. On the other hand, Yuan & Ellis (2002) found that students performed better in unlimited time and produced more accurate language. They performed task better than to those who performed in a time boundation. It seems that if a teacher wants to have focus on form/accuracy in a task performance, then students should be given their own time. And, if they want to have student's focus on fluency, there must be a set time limit. The second task-performance option is based on whether to supply student with input data while they perform a task or not. In some tasks, input data is in-built while in some other tasks it is optional.

2.6.2.2. Process options

Process options are different in nature from task-performance as they are concerned with the discourse of the task rather than pedagogical planning about how to handle a task. Process options take into account the process involved in the task while it is being performed.

2.7. Approaches to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

There are different approaches which underlie teaching in TBLT. The first traditional approach came from 'Humanistic language teaching'. Humanistic approaches encourage 'learners to recognize their feelings and put them to use by caring for sharing with others' (Ellis, 2003:31). Moskowitz (1977) gives examples of humanistic exercise for language learning. During this task, students will give some personal information about themselves. For example like 'three adjectives' that describe them.
The useful purpose of 'identity card' task is to encourage students to open up while the linguistic purpose is to make learners habituated or comfortable in 'asking and answering question' (Moskowitz, 1997 cited in Ellis, 2003:31). This kind of task can contribute to TBLT.

Another approach to TBLT comes from Prabhu (1987) in the form of Procedural syllabus. Prabhu developed a method of teaching in southern India in secondary school where dominated SOS method was replaced by TBLT. Prabhu (1987) designed meaning focused activities in which learners are focus their attention on conveying meaning and extending information. Prabhu (1987) discussed the different kind of tasks used in Bangalore project. There were some obvious problems with procedural syllabus. For example, it was only possible in the presence of task. Also, selection and grading of tasks was difficult and was not based on learner's need (Long and Crookes, 1992).

A third approach to TBLT is the 'process syllabus' advocated by Breen (1984, 1987), Candlin (1980, 1984, 1987) and Murphy (1987). Breen and Candlin's focus was on learner and learning processes involved and not on the language or language learning processes. Candling (1984) suggested that a syllabus was successful or not, can only be judged after the end of the course 'by observing not what was planned, but what took place' (Long & Crookes, 1992:38). Breen (1984:56) says, that 'a process syllabus addresses the overall question, who does what with whom, on what subject matter, with what resource, when, how, and for what learning purpose (s)' (Long & Crookes, 1992: 38 and Ellis, 2003:33). Breen (1984) proposed a model for course design:

a. Making general decision about classroom language learning (which students need to learn what, how they prefer to learn it, when with whom and so on)
b. Alternative procedure for making those decisions (the basis for an eventual working contract between teacher and learner).
c. Alternative activities such as teacher led instruction, group work and laboratory use (Breen, Candlin & Waters, 1979).
d. Alternative tasks i.e. different types of pedagogic tasks, students may select from to realize the activities (Long & Crookes, 1992:39).

At the level of task, the actual working processes of the classroom are realized. Problems with process syllabus are similar to procedural syllabus. Like procedural
syllabus, process syllabus also lacks in identifying the needs of learners in pedagogic tasks which raises the problems for selection of tasks. Breen and Candlin (1987) advocated that learners should be given flexibility to change according to circumstances. The arbitrariness in selection is due to the lack of identification of learners need. Moreover, some learners and teachers might recognize the suitable tasks that are relevant to their future needs. The problem with procedural syllabus is that it focus is away from the form of language.

2.8. Defining Task

A task is defined by many researchers like Brown & Yule (1983), Candlin (1989), Nunan (1989), Robinson (2001), and Skehan (1998) in terms of activity which has its primary focus on obtaining meaningful purpose. A task should have some problem solving activities through communication. There should also be some sort of relationships between pedagogical and real-world tasks on one hand and between the task completion and the assessment of the task on the other hand (Ruixue, 2006).

Various researchers have defined the tasks in the following ways:

Long (1985) defined task as a ‘piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of task include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form…. In other words, task means the hundred and one things done by people (Ellis, 2003:4; Sanchez, 2004:48)

Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined task ‘as an activity that involved individual in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation‘ (Ellis, 2003:4). Bygate et al (2001) defined task ‘as an activity which require learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to obtain objective’ (Ibid).

Richard, Platt and Webber (1985) defined task as ‘an activity which was carried out as the result of processing, or understanding language i.e. as a response. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape and listening to an instruction while performing a command may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what is regarded as successful completion of task. The use of a variety of tasks in language teaching is said to make teaching more communicative→ since it involves a purpose for
classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake’ (Ibid).

Prabhu (1987) defined task as ‘an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcomes from given information through some process of thought and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process was regarded as a task’ (Ibid: Samuda and Bygate, 2008:63).

Nunan (1989) defined task as ‘a piece of classroom work which involved learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention was primarily focused on meaning rather than on form. The task should also have a sense of completeness’ (Ibid: Sanchez, 2004:49).

Lee (2000) defined task as a ‘classroom activity or exercise that has: (a) an objective obtainable only by the interaction among participants, (b) a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and (c) a focus on meaning exchange. 2. a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans’(Ibid: 4-5).

Crookes (1986) defined task as ‘a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, at work, or used to elicit data for research’(Ibid: 5)

Skehan (1996a) defined task as ‘an activity in which meaning is primary; there was some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance was in terms of task outcome’ (Ibid: 5; Samuda and Bygate, 2008:63; Sanchez, 2004:49).

In all these definitions, task involves the meaningful use of language to perform various communicative functions.

Ellis (2003), after studying and observing various definitions on tasks framed his own definition that included different aspects and which went like this:

a. ‘task’ is a work plan
b. A task involves a primary focus on meaning
c. A task involves real-world processes of language use
d. A task can involve any of the four language skills
e. A task engages cognitive processes
f. A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome (Ellis, 2003:9 & Samuda and Bygate, 2008:64).

Samuda and Bygate (2008:65) attempted a critical explanation on Ellis's definition of task. According to Ellis, 'task is a work plan', Samuda & Bygate (2008) pointed out that if they considered task as a work plan it would be related only to the teacher's working plan. It will not take into account what actually happens in the classroom i.e. this definition will neglect the learners' activities in the classroom which is the main focal point as part of the role of a task. Samuda & Bygate (2008), propose that rather defining a task as 'work plan', it will be more appropriate to define task as a 'holistic type of pedagogical activities'. This will include both the work plan of teachers as well as the learners’ perception of this plan. How learners will interpret it and how teachers and learners enact on it, will also be covered under this definition. The second factor is that 'a task involves a primary focus on meaning'. This is related to the next component of Ellis's definition which involves real-world processes of language use. A task may involve any of the four skills (LSRW) respectively. All these descriptions have one thing in common i.e. 'language use'. The term 'language use' implies a focus on 'real world activities' and 'meaning'. Hence, Samuda and Bygate (2008) argued that the language use was the key element of the definition. In the last point, Ellis (2003) introduced a new concept in the definition of task i.e. the notion of cognitive process. Using any language involves some kind of cognitive activity which leads to the concept of problem solving. There can be two outcomes of cognitive process. First, a problem can be set by a task designer which needs to be solved by learners (Prabhu, 1987, cited in Samuda and Bygate, 2008:66) and learners might face problems on the basis of their personal knowledge/experience.

Samuda and Bygate (2008:69) redefine the Ellis definition of task after highlighting some of the challenges and issues of Ellis definition. They concluded that:

a. A task is a holistic pedagogical activity.

b. A task involves language use.

c. A task has a pragmatic and non-linguistic outcome.

d. A task is used to create some challenges aimed at language development.

e. A task is aimed at promoting language learning through process or product or both.
Hence, according to Samuda and Bygate (2008), the definition of a task will be like this—‘a task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcomes while meeting linguistic challenges, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both’ (Samuda and Bygate, 2008: 69).

2.8.1. Summary

Long’s (1985) definition of task has its focus on day to day physical activities of people which do not include any language use and cannot be performed in a classroom. Whereas, Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) definition involves use of language for attaining the desired goal in any particular situation. Bygate (2001), on the other hand, defined task in terms of activity through which learner used language in order to achieve the goals or objective of the lesson. Richard, Platt and Weber’s (1985) had also defined task as an activity, which involves understanding of language more than the production of language. In Prabhu’s (1987) term, task is also an activity in which learner arrives at a meaningful outcome through thought processing, which is controlled by a teacher. Nunan (1989) views task as a classroom activity in which learner uses the target language for producing meaningful communication for achieving target goals. Lee’s (2000) definition has two concepts of task. Firstly, task is seen as an objective for attaining meaningful interaction among learners. Secondly, task involves uses of target language for producing meaningful activities. In broader terms, Crookes (1986) defined task an activity undertaken for some research or data work. According to Skehan (1996a), task is an activity which is carried out to attain a meaningful communication in real world in which assessment is decided by successful outcome of the task performance.

2.9. Task Components

A task differs from learner to learner in terms of posing demand it pose on a learner, his/her writing ability and comprehending skills. The discussion about task cannot be completed without discussing its components. A task is made up of different components. Different language scholars have given their own interpretations of task components. According to Candlin (1987), a task must possess ‘input’ (refers to the source or data that is given to a learner to act upon), ‘roles’ (specifies the character and relations that are assigned to each learner when participating in a task), ‘setting’
(refers to the arrangement for a task that is to take place in or outside the classroom), ‘action’ (refers to the performance of learners in a task), ‘monitoring’ (supervising a task when it is in progress), ‘outcomes’ (goals of a task achieved after performing a task), and ‘feedback’ (refers to the evaluation of a task, whether the goals that targeted has been achieved or not) (Nunan, 1989:47). Shevelson and Stern (1981) suggested that a task designer should take into consideration the following components.

- Content, i.e. the subject matter to be taught
- Materials, used by learners as the source for learning.
- Goals, the aims and objectives of a task.
- Students, keeping in mind the needs, interest, and abilities of the students.
- Social communities, this can be view as setting. (Shavelson & Stern, 1981:478 cited in Ibid).

Whereas Wright (1987) suggested that task mainly contains only two components ‘input’ and ‘data’. These two components give learners a source to work with. The source may be materials, teachers or by learners themselves. However, Wright’s definition poses some sort of dissatisfaction because no task can be completed if there is no participant, settings, and activities. On the other hand, Shavelson and Stern seem to be more concerned with general education methodology rather than focusing on second language learning. Nunan (1989) suggested five core components which constitute a task. They are as follows:

![Fig 2.1: Components of a writing Task](image)

(Source: Nunan, 1989: 48)

2.9.1. Goals

Nunan (1989) provided a detailed description of goals in tasks. According to him, ‘goals are vague intentions behind any given task’. Goals refer to the learning objective of a task (Nunan, 1989 cited in Hyland, 2003:116). Goal is important because it relates the task to the objective of the unit and syllabuses (Richards
& Rodgers, 2001 cited in ibid: 117). For instance, a teacher may give different replies when asked a question 'why did you engage a learner in a particular task'. The possible answers might be like this,

- 'I wanted to develop their confidence in speaking'
- 'I wanted to develop their personal writing skills'
- 'I wanted to encourage them to develop their interactional skills'
- 'I wanted to develop their study skills'

However, goals may have different purposes ranging from communication skills to cognitive skills. Also goals may describe the nature of teachers and learners. A simple task may have one goal to be achieved by learners and on the other hand a complex task may have more than one goal to be achieved. A recent classification of tasks comes from a large-scale language curriculum project in Australia (The Australian language Levels, or ALL projects), which goes like this:

1. Communicative: Example, establish and maintain interpersonal relations and through this exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings, and to get things done.

2. Socio-cultural: Example, have some understanding of everyday life patterns of their contemporary age group in the target language speech community. This will cover their life at home, at school and at leisure.

3. Learning- how-to-learn: Example, to negotiate and plan their work over a certain time span and learn how to set themselves realistic objectives and how to devise the means to attain them.

4. Language and cultural awareness: Example, to have some understanding of the systematic nature of language and the way, it works (Clark, 1987:227-32 cited in Nunan, 1989:49).

As said earlier, a task may have more than one goal. It may have communicative purpose with combining the needs of socio-cultural aspect as well. Task goal should provide a link between classroom activities and real world objectives (Hyland, 2003:117).

9.2. Input

Input comprises different types of materials which a learner acts upon. Input can be in a form of 'short text', (like a short paragraph, a short description of a place, a short
biographical text, etc) 'visual', (comprising of small video clip of a dialogue between two friends, or between a doctor and a patient, or a picture etc) 'audio' (oral, like telephonic conversation, dialogue) 'electronic' or 'multimedia data' (Hyland, 2003:116-117). Input provides learners a stimulus to discuss, interpret and put thoughts on paper or to perform on it. A purpose for writing and input gives opportunities for learners to process information (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:108-9 cited in Hyland, 2002:101). Hover (1986) suggested the following inputs:

- Letters (formal/informal), newspapers extracts, pictures stories, telecom accounts, driver's license, missing person's declaration forms, social security forms, business cards, memo notes, photographs, family trees, drawings, shopping lists, invoices, postcards, hotel brochures, passport photos, swap shops cards, street map, menu, magazine quiz, calorie counter, recipe, extract from a play, weather forecast, diary, bus timetables, notice board items, housing request forms, star signs, hotel entertainment programs, note to a friend, seminar programs, curriculum vitae, economic graphs, etc. A similar kind of list is provided by Morris and Stewart-Dore:
- Articles for newspapers, magazines and journals.
- Reports to different kind of groups
- Radio and television scripts and documentaries.
- Puppet plays.
- News stories and reports.
- Research reports.
- Short stories, poems, play.
- Press release.
- Progress report.
- Publicity brochures and posters.
- Instructions and handbooks.
- Recipe.
- Minutes of meeting.
- Scripts of group negotiations.
- Replies of letters and other forms of correspondence.
- Slide/tape presentations.
- Caption books to accompany a visual record of an experience.

However, there is no restriction for a teacher to confine him/her with this range of input. Depending on the interest of learners, a teacher may choose other inputs to provide learners with the opportunities of learning different styles of writing.

2.9.3. Activity

Activities are the reflection of the components already discussed above. Activities imply on how well a learner exploits the input in completing a task. Activities can be categorized as real world task/activities or pedagogic activities. There are different types of activities having their focus on different language forms and skills in and outside the classroom. The different types of activities have been discussed in this in section. First let us see what different scholars have said on activities. Clarke and Silberstein (1997:51) presented their views on activity from two perspectives i.e. from real-world and pedagogic aspects. According to them, ‘classroom activities should remain parallel to the ‘real-world’ as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium.

According to Widdowson (1987:71), ‘...what is wanted is a methodology which will...provide for communicative competence by functional investment. [Such a methodology] would engage the learners in problem solving tasks as purposeful activities but without the rehearsal requirement that they should be realistic or ‘authentic’ as natural social behavior’ (Nunan, 1989:60). Authenticity is very important aspect of materials and when brought into classroom, needs some alteration in order to cater the needs of the learners. Here are some examples of classroom activities in which students can use authentic material in order to meet real world language objectives.

2.9.3.1. Activities using cultural objectives

Activities are designed by using culture knowledge to develop real-world language. For this purpose, Tomalin and Stempleski (1998) developed an activity- ‘cultural composition’. In this activity, teacher randomly distributes different pictures of ‘buses’, ‘tickets’, ‘receipts’, ‘money’, etc collected from different countries and they are supposed to write a story on those items in a group. After a group activity, they...
were asked to write their story individually. This kind of activity is helpful in generating ideas, information sharing, and discussion within the group (Oura, year.n.d:76. Available at://www.jrc.sophia.ac.jp/kiyou/ki21/gaiopdf).

2.9.3.2. Listening activity

Listening is one such skill of language that has been neglected in teaching context. Therefore, Porter and Robert (1987), keeping in mind the listening skills, developed an activity ‘Eavesdropping’. The aim of this activity is to make students good writers on the basis of their listening powers. Students were made to listen to some tape, conversation or a telephone call and were asked to fill in the blanks or complete the dialogues or story on the basis of what they listened. Other activities could be like students may be asked to watch some English program on TV. On the basis of that program, they may be asked to take down notes and write a report, summary etc on it (cited in Ibid).

2.9.3.3. Viewing activities

Stempleski and Tomalin (1990) have given many creative approaches for using videos in the classroom. One of the ways of using video is through ‘silent viewing of video clips’ to students after which they are asked to guess what the speaker was doing and saying. Another type of activity can be like this show some small clippings to the students and ask them what will happen in the next scene or video.

All of these activities using authentic material and engaging students in performing specific task can be very meaningful experience for students. It is one of the ways of bringing real-world experience into the classroom. Learners also feel more confident in using language (Oura, year.n.d:77-79). Brumfit (1984) gave a description of fluency based and accuracy based activities. He suggested that “...the demand to produce work for display to the teacher in order that evaluation and feedback could be supplied conflicted directly with demand to perform adequately in the kind of natural circumstances for which teaching was presumably a preparation. Language display for evaluation tended to lead to a concern for accuracy, monitoring, references rules, possibly explicit knowledge, problem solving and evidence of skill-getting. In contrast, usage of language use requires fluency, proper expressions. It will be the most prominent features, as they tend to be in the conventional model where the student produces, the teacher corrects, and the student tries again” (Nunan, 1989:63).
Brumfit makes the point that accuracy and fluency are not opposite, but are complimentary to each other. Another classification of activities comes from Prabhu (1987). They are as follows:

2.9.3.4. **Information-gap activity**

This activity involves a transfer of given information from one person to another or from one form to another or from one place to another—generally calling for ‘decoding or encoding’ of information from or into languages. One example is pair work in which each member of the pair, having a part of the total information (example, an incomplete picture), attempts to convey it verbally to the other. Another example could be completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text. This activity often involves selection of relevant information. Learner may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer.

2.9.3.5. **Reasoning—gap activity**

It involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inferences, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher’s timetable on the basis of given class timetables. Another is deciding what course of action is best (for example, cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as in information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two.

2.9.3.6. **Opinion—gap activity**

It involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of social issues. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one’s opinion. But there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcomes from different individuals or on different occasions (Prabhu, 1987: 46-47).
Clark (1987) gives seven types of communication activities. The purposes of these activities were to make learners able to:

1. Solve problems through social interaction with others. For example, participate in conversation related to the pursuit of a common activity with others, obtain goods, services and necessary information through conversation or correspondence, make arrangements and come to decisions.

2. Establish and maintain relationships and discuss topic of interest through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experience and plans.

3. Search for specific information purposefully, process it, and use it in some way (for example, find out the cheapest way to go from A to B).

4. Listen to or read information, process it, and use it in some way (for example, read a news item and discuss it with someone, read an article and summarize it, listen to a lecture and write notes on it).

5. Give information in spoken or written form on the basis of personal experience (for example, give a talk, write a report, write a diary, record a set of instruction on how to do something, or fill in a form).

6. Listen to, read or view a story, poem features etc. and respond to it personally in some way (for example, read a story and discuss it).


2.9.4. Roles

Here, a role implies the assigned duties to the learners and teachers. Roles have an important part to play in completing a task. Roles imply 'the parts teacher and learner play in task execution and the relationships between them' (Nunan, 1989 cited in Hyland, 2003:116). Earlier in traditional writing class, teacher used to have the authority to execute the task the way she/he wanted and learners were the passive recipients. But now, the scenario is very different. In TBLT classroom, learners have more roles to play and teacher's role is of facilitating and mentoring the learning activities (Welght, 1987 cited in Hyland, 2003:119). The new writing classes have put more responsibilities on both teachers and learners. Harmer (2001) gave eight major roles that a teacher could perform while assessing classroom learning. These roles include, 'assessor', 'organizer', 'prompter', 'resource participant', 'tutor', and

Table 2.3: Teacher's and Learner's role in TBLT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's Role</th>
<th>Learner's Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Selector and sequencer of tasks</td>
<td>1. Group participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main role of a teacher is to select the tasks, keeping in view the learning needs of the learners. Therefore, teacher has an important role in selecting, grading, adjusting and creating a task that suits the entire classroom.</td>
<td>Sometimes, students work in pairs or small group in a task. There may be whole-class activities or individual work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Preparing learners for tasks</td>
<td>2. Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before taking a task, a teacher plans his/her teaching in terms of pre-tasking. Pre-tasking helps the students in learning and recalling useful words and phrases, which makes a task easier for them on one hand and displays the task process on the other hand.</td>
<td>In TBLT, tasks are used to make learning easier and interesting. Classroom activities should be designed and planned in a way that students get clear idea of how language is used for communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Consciousness raising</td>
<td>3. Risk-taker and innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher helps the students in building their knowledge in both form focus and meaning focus activities.</td>
<td>The skills of interpreting, guessing, predicting from linguistics and contextual clues are some innovative sides of learners which are seen during-task stage. Learners are the creators of the task. They play with the source and apply their prior knowledge for completing a task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: cited in Buyukkarci, 2009:316)
2.9.5. Setting

It involves the classroom setting or arrangements that are required in performing any task. There can be various settings depending upon the task and its nature. If a task has to be performed in a classroom, then the classroom is the site for learning. If a task is related to a real-world activity, the learning setting could be library, home or even the classroom etc. which depends on the requirement of a task. If different kinds of settings are provided to the learners, than the learners will apply their mind in different directions. This will help them in doing practice of different kinds of assignments in and outside the classroom. It will also help them in avoiding repetition in their writing task. Setting also implies the working nature of learners, i.e. whether the task need to be done in pair or individually or it involves whole class discussion etc (Hyland, 2001:117). This has an advantage on learners’ writing as when a learner starts working in a pair or group, the ongoing discussion leads to the ‘decision-making’ and ‘self-paced’ writing practice. Teacher needs to put learners in a group in such a way that has balanced both average and good students. Both pair-work and group work encourages the learners to put forward their thoughts, and share their ideas. This practice increases the chance of interaction ‘planning’, ‘rehearsing’, and ‘re-editing’ their writing, which are very important elements in process of writing. There may be a group of students who prefer to work alone or might not consider themselves comfortable in a group. In such a case, teacher can interact with learners if they find a task difficult and can have a whole class discussion (Hyland, 2003:117-118).

2.9.6. Summing up

Tasks should be designed in a way the ‘goals’ supplied by ‘input data’, ‘the activities’, ‘the setting’, and the role which are assigned to teachers and learners all should work in a one line for the successful completion of the task. In designing a communicative task, these components are very crucial for the successful completion of a task (Oura, yearn.d:72).

2.10. Types of Tasks

There are number of classifications attached to the theory of tasks. Some researchers defined tasks in pedagogic sensé while some others in terms of real-world tasks.
There are two other categories of tasks in which mechanics and stages of tasks are defined. Let us see and discuss these tasks in detail.

2.10.1. Real-world Task

The reason behind real-world tasks is to make learner practice what is required of them to do in the world outside the classroom (Nunan, 1989:40). The actual intention behind real-world task is to ‘rehearse’ the real-world behavior (Ibid). Real-world tasks are ‘unrestricted’ in the form of language use, material use and the types of activities that are performed. The features of real world tasks are as follows:

1. They are goal-oriented or goal guided activities. Goals are related to the unit or curriculum. Performance is evaluated on the basis of how much targeted goals have been achieved.

2. The steps are sequentially connected to each other and one step leads to another. If any step leading to the preceding step is performed wrong or left unperformed, there will be a failure in the task outcome.

3. The process and procedures applied in the fulfillment of the task condition and the effective and efficient achievement of the final goal, which is what really matters when we are engaged in a task.

4. Tools needed and procedures applied vary depending on the goal’s aim.

5. The goals to be achieved may not necessarily be a problem to solve.

6. While performing the task, efficiency is closely connected to the level of attention devoted to it. Human beings, however, work with limited processing systems. Therefore, if we concentrate on a specific area or topic, another one will probably be totally or partially abandoned.

7. Tasks in real life language situations are fully holistic. In their realization the whole person is involved: mind, body, thought and action. When coordination and cooperation is not provided, efficiency of task performance declines (Sanchez, 2004:51).

Real-world tasks or ‘target task’ trains the learner to use target language successfully in the real world (Oura, year n.d.). The real-world task when adapted for the classroom requires some kind of modification in terms of its language nature according to the level of learners. For example, ‘the learners will listen to a weather forecast and identify the predicted maximum temperature of the day’ or ‘the learner,
listening to a weather forecast, decides whether or not to take umbrella or sweater outside' (Nunan, 1989:40-41). If this kind of task is used in the classroom, the tape could be re-recorded at the slow pace. Therefore, a teacher can alter a task in accordance to the learner's requirements and situations (Ibid).

2.10.2. Pedagogic Tasks

Breen (1987) defined pedagogic tasks as "any structural language learning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedures, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task" (cited in Oura, year n.d:73-74). Breen's definition bring out the fact that pedagogic task takes into account the importance of outcomes that a learner will achieve after completing a task.

Learners are required to do many things in the classroom other than just rehearsal for the performance outside the classroom. ‘Learners will be involved in various activities that facilitate the development of their general language proficiency’ (Oura, year n.d:73). Tasks taking psycholinguistic rationale are referred as pedagogic tasks. Psycholinguistic approach means ‘it engages learners in tasks which they unlikely perform outside the classroom, however, the tasks stimulate the internal process of acquisition’ (Nunan, 1989:40). Richards, Platt and Weber (1986) refer to pedagogic task as ‘action carried out as a result of processing or understanding languages. For example; drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command. Using different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative’ (Oura, year n.d:73). Nunan (1999:25) refers to pedagogic task as ‘classroom work that involves learner in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their intention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning’ (Ibid:73-74). The pedagogic tasks are selected with reference to the real-world tasks. Therefore, successful completion of pedagogic task would enable learners to acquire the skills needed to master real-world target tasks. For example; ‘a learner listens to a weather forecast and decides whether or not to take an umbrella or sweater to school’, its related pedagogic task might be ‘the learner listen to an aural text about the weather and answers the questions afterwards on whether the given statements are true or false?’ (Nunan, 1989:40 and Oura, year n.d). When a learner understands the nature of a pedagogic task then only he will start mastering ‘related activities or exercise’. While performing and progressing these tasks, learner developed necessary
skills to complete the target task. Later on he/she can use these newly developed skills outside the classroom (Oura, year, n.d:74). When learners are exposed to the real-world task, they are provided with a model of the target language behavior to practice key language items. Let us see the steps involved in the development of a pedagogic task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify target task</td>
<td>Giving personal information in a job interview</td>
<td>To give learners the opportunity to develop language skills relevant to their real-world needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide model</td>
<td>Students listen to and extract key information from authentic/simulated interview</td>
<td>To provide learner the opportunity to listen to analyze ways in which native speakers or users of the target language carry out the target task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify enabling skills</td>
<td>Manipulation drill to practice wh-question with do-insertion</td>
<td>To provide learner with explicit instruction and guided practice in those grammatical elements needed to perform the target task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devise pedagogic task</td>
<td>Interview simulation using role cards</td>
<td>To provide learner the opportunity to mobilize their emerging language skills through rehearsal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, there is no hard and fast difference between the real-world tasks and the pedagogic tasks. Real-world tasks form the ground for pedagogic task and vice versa also. The difference between the two is that of rationale. Real-world tasks have rehearsal rationale while pedagogic tasks have psycholinguistic rationale.

**Table 2.5: Real-world task and pedagogic task in communicative classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative classroom task</th>
<th>Task type</th>
<th>Real-world</th>
<th>Pedagogic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task type</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>Psycholinguistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Need analysis</td>
<td>Second language theory research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Nunan, 1989:40).

The selection of real-world task will definitely depends upon the needs of learners while the pedagogic tasks are selected based on the reference to some theory or model of second language acquisition (Nunan, 1989:40). The contrast between the two is identified when they are executed in the classroom. In real-world task and pedagogic task, the contrast can be made in approach they take i.e. ‘meaning vs. form’. Both the components are important in language learning. Some proponents of task based language teaching put emphasis on meaning focused activity while the others focus on form focused activities. ‘Meaning is “contained in” and “contained by” the form in which it is inserted’. Form alone cannot be left and is worthless for communication, if meaning is not attached to it. It is also very true that learners ‘consciously’ or ‘subconsciously’ put their focus on form in language learning. It is, however, useless until the activity does not arrive at any meaning i.e. task goal should be achieved. Tasks, useful for language learning, are communicative task in nature. Language tasks are useless in nature if they do not engage learners in a successful communication. Real-world task when cultivated into a pedagogical task the goals get changed completely. For example, ‘buying a ticket’ for travelling to New York, implies that all the stages in performing the task will be focused on buying the tickets. When such type of a task is changed into a pedagogic task, the students may find it difficult to understand the meaning and usage of difficult words. As a result, they might also get busy in
searching the meaning of words from dictionary. Hence it is important to keep in mind the ‘goals’ of the task i.e. real-world and pedagogical tasks have some different goals. Therefore, whenever the changes are brought into a task, the goals also get changed. Therefore ‘procedure’, ‘underlying the action’, and the ‘process as a whole’ must be designed in order to achieve targeted goal of the curriculum (Nunan, 1989: 41; Sanchez, 2004).

2.10.3. Graphalorical tasks

This is a kind of task related to the mechanics of writing. One kind of analysis can be for checking the mechanics present in a written piece. Graphology refers to the technique of writing that one possesses. Graphology reveals the trait in one’s writing. These traits are punctuation marks, spelling etc. Graphalorical tasks help in acquiring mechanics of writing which are very essential in developing a good piece of writing. These kinds of tasks fulfill the demand required for writing task. It specifically deals with hand writing, spelling and punctuations. Graphalorical tasks are more important for beginners who need to take into consideration every bits of writing mechanics. However, this can not be only for beginners, the problems with mechanics can also be seen in many L2 writers as well. Hence, graphalorical tasks are very important for both the novice as well as the experts writers in order to understand the proper use of punctuations, which may include ‘semi colons’, ‘reported speech marks’, ‘paragraph division’, ‘apostrophes’, and ‘commas’ (Hyland, 2003:120-121). An example of graphalorical task can be like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working in pairs, choose the correct option with proper punctuation mark from the following sentences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Alice are you doing homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Alice, are you doing your homework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Alice, are you doing your homework!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Coe, Rycroft and Ernest, 1992:26-7 cited in Hyland, 2003:121)

Today, the writing scenario has changed from pen-paper to keyboard-computers. ‘Keyboard abilities also encourage free writing as learners do not have time to stop and correct punctuation or spelling errors until they have finished (Hyland, 1993 cited in
Hyland, 2001:121). Even cut and paste techniques need assistance in reordering the content with correct punctuations (Ibid).

2.10.4. **Scaffolding Tasks**

'Scaffoldings' means providing assistance to the learners in building their understanding of a text and the language complexities involved in (Hyland, 2003:123). This enables the teachers who are in a position to provide 'input' for a task and instruction that will give support and challenges a learner to complete a particular task. Teacher's role is of giving assistance to the learners if they get stuck somewhere. The main purpose of language scaffolding is to 'increase learners' independence and control, moving from basic noticing activities through manipulation of model tasks that varying the degree of guidance (Hyland, 2003:124). In order to improve learner's language competencies, a task can be divided into four stages:

2.10.4.1 **Language familiarization**

It deals with general and very basic or early knowledge regarding language use, patterns and forms. Familiarization tasks involve learners in examining the aspects of text and practicing the selected items of 'grammar and vocabulary' (Hyland, 2003:125). An example of language familiarization could be 'learners can be given two sets of letters and asked to compare a formal and personal letter'. Learners can notice the difference between the languages used in both type of letters.

2.10.4.2. **Manipulations of models**

Model is source of manipulating activities. Model formed the base for familiarization task as learners are supposed to discuss the selected features of the target text. However, the proponents of process writing were against the use of model text because learner might be able to understand only 'rhetorical' form of a text thereby neglecting the processes of 'inventing', 'drafting', and 'revision' (Zamel, 1983 cited in Hyland, 2003:127). Following model text can be dangerous for students, therefore, they must get exposed to the different text and activities in order to know the techniques of 'content generation and drafting skills'.

2.10.4.3. **Controlled and guided composition**

Controlled and guided composition tasks are noticed into the context of model text. These task develops learners' confidence and fluency by giving learners text frame to
complete a parallel text to write. These tasks involve learners reworking or finishing a model. For example, ‘activities include rewriting a text from another point of view’, ‘writing middle or end of a story’, etc. Guided task may include:

- Information gap on which students exchange information to complete a writing task.
- Translation activity in which a text is translated from a picture, map or any other source.
- Key words writing in which students are asked to generate a writing paragraph from the sets of given key words.
- Picture writing where writing text is produced from pictures.

The controlled and guided writing tasks are designed and intended for beginner writers who are in process to gain familiarity with new genre (Hyland, 2003:128).

2.11. Task-Based Syllabus (TBS)

In the last 20 years there have been wider ranges of syllabus introduced from time to time. Syllabus designing is the matter of selecting, grading, sequencing, and justifying the contents of curriculum. Earlier, the syllabus which were introduced were mainly concerned with the linguistic features such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary etc. But from time to time things have been upgraded from grammar to structural to situational to functional to communicative to task-based syllabus. The question arises why there was a need felt for task-based syllabus (Nunan, 2001). Wilkins (1976), a British applied linguist, gave two terms ‘synthetic approaches’ and ‘analytical approaches’ to syllabus design. In synthetic approach, the language is being taught by breaking into different parts where learners are supposed to learn step by step so that there may be a gradual acquisition of whole language structure (Wilkins, 1976:2 cited in Nunan, 2006:12). However, this is a traditional way of organizing syllabus in order to make learning simple for a learner. It is done by breaking language into its constituent’s part and introducing each part separately and step by step. At the same time, in 1960s, there was a similar concept of learning in which the focus was on mastering the language elements. The syllabus was designed in a way that simple language items were introduced prior to the difficult ones. But the new items were not introduced until the learner mastered the current item thoroughly. Synthetic approach remained dominating till Wilkins (1976) introduced the alternative to synthetic
approach i.e. analytical approach in his book 'Notional Syllabuses'. In analytical approach, learner was presented with 'holistic chunks' of language and was required to analyze them or break them down into their constituent parts. The main difference between the two approaches was that, in the former one, learner was taught language items separately which was already broken up by the syllabus designer. However, in the latter approach, the learners were supposed to break the language chunk on their own knowledge and understanding. Task-based language teaching has grown out of this alternative approach to language pedagogy. Since then, the concept of 'task' has become a central element in syllabus design, classroom teaching and learner assessment. It is worth noticing that the teachers who have been brought up in traditional approaches still find it difficult to cope with present classroom situations (Nunan, 2006:13). TBS became important in the classroom because it was based on the learner's need analysis. 'Task-based syllabus represents a particular realization of communicative language teaching instead of beginning with process of grammatical, functional, notional and other items. The syllabus designers conducted a need analysis on learners and concluded a list of targeted learners' need to carry out in the 'real-world' outside the classroom' (Nunan, 2001, pg.n.d. Available at: http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/syllabusdesign.html). For example, going for a job interview, checking into a hotel, opening an account in a bank, etc (Ibid). In order to plan task-based syllabus, it is important to consider the following points:

1. From the starting point, determine the goal (s) of the course in achieving best pedagogic purpose, skill to be focused (listening, speaking, reading, writing, learner training) and language to be focused.

2. The designer needs to make choice of task types and to relate them to particular themes that tasks will deal with. This stage results in organizing tasks with specified themes in terms of activities that learner will do.

3. The third step involves the nature of tasks that are to be used in detail by selecting input, condition, process and outcomes. The selection of task will be determined by both psycholinguistic value and practical consideration to any specific teaching context (Ellis, 2003)
Table 2.6: An example of part of a task-based syllabus for general proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>General activity</th>
<th>Task options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School timetables</td>
<td>1. Listing: constructing timetables from instructions/ descriptions.</td>
<td>Input: pictorial/ written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Comparing: examining timetables to identify the frequencies of lessons in</td>
<td>tight structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different subjects</td>
<td>Conditions: shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Problem solving: constructing timetables for teachers of particular</td>
<td>information, two-way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subjects from given class timetables</td>
<td>optional information,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>requirement convergent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Processes: explaining/reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dialogic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcomes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pictorial/written closed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Adapted from Prabhu, 1987 cited in Ellis, 2003: 229)

4. The last step involves the sequencing of tasks.

2.12. Criticism to TBLT

The main concern of TBLT lies in its implementation in the classroom. Inexperienced teachers usually fail to understand the objectives of tasks. They generally make learners practice the task rather than involving them in meaningful communication. Carless (2004) conducted a study in Hong Kong’s elementary school to find out teachers’ attitude and understanding toward TBLT and the ways through which teachers were implementing TBLT in their classrooms. Through data collection, it was found that teachers’ demonstrated poor knowledge of what was task. Also they failed in engaging learners in successful communication. Carless (2004) concluded from the study that the main reasons of problems in implementing TBLT are:

1. Students’ interference of mother tongue.

2. Teachers didn’t have any control over the class once the learners started task performance; there was a lack of discipline.
3. Tasks were not chosen according to the needs of the learners. Mostly, the tasks involve non-linguistics activities like drawing which do not involve the use of second language (Ellis, 2009 and Phayak, 2008).

Therefore, in this teaching context, TBLT didn’t work effectively. Another research was conducted in this direction by McDonough and Chaikitmongkoi (2007) in Chiang Mai University in Thailand. Task based approach was used to replace the old form focused teaching to draw the answers on what was the reaction of teachers and students to a task-based course and what are the concerns, the teachers have about the course. Through different means of data collection, McDonough and Chaikitmongkoi (2007) reported the reactions of both the teachers and students who participated in the course are:

a. Learners became more independent in doing activities.

b. There was some concern among teachers regarding the poor command on grammar.

c. Learners realized the importance of course as it has to meet their real-world academic needs.

McDonough and Chaikitmongkoi (2007) also reported that course designers attempted to revise the course in order to help both the teachers and students to adjust with the task based course. It provided the remedial materials to the learners to understand the task assignment and to reduce the activities in the course. In this context, TBLT was a successful approach (Ellis, 2009). Then, what went wrong in Hong Kong’s elementary program? There may be various factors like the students in elementary school had very limited English proficiency whereas in Thailand, the students were in university who had relatively high level of understanding in English. The teachers at Hong Kong elementary program were not directly involved in designing of the task, whereas teachers at Thailand University were involved. There were no opportunities for the Hong Kong teachers to revise the materials but teachers at Thailand University were involved in revising the materials (Ibid).

These differences pointed out other important factors that must be tailored for the successful implementation of TBLT.

1. The performance task must be designed according to the proficiency level of the students. For example, if the learners demand inputs for completing a task,
then a task should start with providing inputs to the learners rather than promoting output.

2. Tasks need to be put in a class for a trial to see whether the learners are using L2 successfully or not then, it should be revised in the light of that.

3. Teachers should have a clear knowledge and understanding about task.

4. Both the teachers and students need a clear understanding of what is the purpose and rationale for performing a task.

5. Teachers who are involved in teaching task-based course must be considered while developing the task materials (Ellis, 2009).

These points are preferable not only for TBLT but also for any other form of teaching. However, there are some more structural problems to TBLT that cannot be addressed easily. Some language educators have more social critique arguing that there is no single approach to language teaching that should be adopted in all teaching contexts (ibid).

Wan (2005) states that TBLT is an advanced teaching approach. The hypothesis associated with TBLT is a result of ‘noticing’ during the communicative activity which is controlled by inflexible developmental sequences (Buyukkarci, 2009:318). BLT offers a different rationale for the use of tasks and different criteria for the design of task. It focuses less on grammatical syllabus and lacks in justifying the task type, sequencing and evaluation of performance. TBLT successfully develops learner’s authority; however, it is less effective in teaching a new language. According to Skehan (1996), TBLT, if implemented carelessly than the purpose of the task gets failed. TBLT is also criticized because it made learners involved in communicative meaning without focusing on form that they use in communication (Buyukkarci, 2009).

The emphasis on the communicative learning or the teaching of language is not new. This classifies TBA within the ‘conversational and/or natural approach’ (Sanchez, 1992; 1997 cited in Sanchez, 2004:65). New methods are not to be accepted because their efficient nature or novelty. TBA faces problems especially with the second language learners. However, it cannot be ignored that, if implemented correctly, BLT adds useful elements and will contribute to the communicative language teaching with valuable procedures. (Sanchez, 2004).
2.13. Insight gained from TBLT and writing task features for assessing writing tasks in ODL

1. Task should be designed in a way that it provides the writing practice both for novice and skilled writers. Taking the insights from process-based approach, the generation of ideas, planning, writing, evaluating, revision, multiple drafting, providing feedback within the time limits of ODL framework can be used in order to make writing tasks interesting.

2. Writing is viewed as a recursive act of planning, pre-writing, composing, feedback, revising and drafting. This recursiveness is important for writing tasks in ODL framework because it will give the ODL learners much more practice of writing in the light of different stages important for the development of writing.

3. In process approach, writing has its focus more on organization and coherence. The attention is given to form/accuracy later. Therefore, writing tasks in SLM should be designed keeping in view the novice ODL writers where the focus of writing should be more on communicative functions of writing than focusing on accuracy. Accuracy is important factor which can be dealt in later stages of activities.

4. The idea of tutor-led discussion on writing should go into assessment of needs of second language writer in ODL context.

5. The idea of freedom and to write naturally in ODL context needs to be seen in the light of time factor analyzed with the tutor providing counseling sessions to the second language ODL writers.

6. Taking into account of the criticism of process approach, ODL second language writer needs to be counseled carefully within a stipulated time frame for submitting the assignments.

7. Writing tasks should be based on ODL learner's needs. Too much emphasis on process based-creative writing activity will disturb the time frame of the ODL framework. Controlled and scaffold writing tasks are also applicable in the framework of ODL. These tasks need to be oriented towards problem-solving activity and higher order thinking skills used in processing communication skill (see for the design of sample writing task for ODL in chapter 6).
8. Choice of writing tasks in ODL mode is vital to the needs of the learners in ODL conditions. Tasks should be based more on reorganization of data rather than invention and personal discovery (Dyer, 1996: 313).

9. The main objective of the task should be based on the premise that it should lead to the use of written language in real life communication.

10. Sequencing and grading of the task is one of the obvious problem faced by the SLM writers. Grading and sequencing of writing tasks is also an important feature for selecting tasks in ODL framework, keeping in view the needs and writing potential of distance learners.

11. Materials and tasks do not emphasize purposeful writing based on the differential abilities of the learners. Usually the material consists of extensive reading of text that is beyond the comprehension level of ODL learners. The writing tasks are not broken into a clear set of activities for the ODL learners. Generally speaking, one common task is not sufficient enough to yield results in writing outcomes for the ODL learners. The advantage is only for the advanced learners, whereas the novice learners struggle hard to comprehend the meaning of the text and the purpose involved in doing a particular task.

12. Tutors and material designers need to know the background knowledge of learners in terms of both language information and expected content to be delivered on the basis task required.

13. As professional skills, the task sometimes fails to function even as simple tool of transferring information from one text to the other. Rather than they become easy prey for malpractices in writing like copying, cheating, plagiarism, producing fake assignments.
Chapter 3

Review of Literature on Open and Distance learning mode: An overview of strategies of course delivery based on Self-Learning Materials (SLM)

This chapter reviews the teaching and learning processes of various distance teaching universities/open universities in the world, drawing insights from distance teaching universities. The chapter discussed design and development of SLM and various strategies of course delivery.

3.0 Introduction

Education is the vital tool for the development of any nation and human resource development. All the countries in the world are emphasizing on the development of education with a view to developing all the cross sections of the society. Looking at the educational scenario, in our country, last five decades have seen tremendous growth in the field of education.

India comprises 17% of total world population. This makes approximately 1 billion population of different socio-cultural and economic background. The formal education is accessible more to those who are living in town and cities. The courses or programs that are offered by formal colleges/Universities are limited as they cater to the population of the particular sections of the society. Weaker sections of the society find it difficult to afford the admission in the universities, also their choices of courses are not offered by all the universities. On the other hand colleges/universities have rigid rules for admitting the students. Increasing demands in enrollments have put tremendous pressure and burden on the universities and ultimately the quality of education suffers.

The National Policy on Education (1986) found that in India, education opportunities are inadequate and are not equal. To overcome the problems of equality, cost-effectiveness of the present formal system of education is distance education and open universities provide education to the deprived as well as other sections of the society. Education can be made more accessible to meet the higher education needs of a wider class of learners. Distance education is an alternative to different clientele such as adults, housewives, college dropouts or those who have missed opportunities for regular studies (Matheswaran, 2005).
The last four decades have seen a tremendous growth in the field of Distance Education. The horizon of distance education has broadened widely so much that it is now considered as a separate discipline. As the growth rate is increasing day by day, the pressure of education on universities, colleges and schools is also increasing. The population of the world put great challenges and demand on formal education system. The growth of distance education has not only fulfilled the education needs of adults but also numbers of people who are enrolled in some other colleges but wanted to complete the courses are also participating in distance programs. And also those who are doing job and unable to attend colleges on a regular basis have enrolled themselves in distance course to complete their studies (Matheswaran, 2005; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000; Desai, 2010).

The history of distance education can be traced long back as correspondence education. According to Matheswaran (2005:5) 'correspondence education implies that two or more parties are in contact with one another in writing. Consequently, correspondence teaching is taken to mean teaching in writing, in the course of which the learner and teacher regularly write to each other'. The delivery system was based on postal mail system in print form. The correspondence programs were first introduced in Europe and USA in the latter half of 19th century. In 1910, there were more than 200 correspondence schools in the United States (Young, 1984 cited in Ibid). Later other countries like Russia, Australia and New Zealand also used correspondence education. In England, numbers of private correspondence colleges were established. With the efforts of Gibson, 'International Council for Correspondence Education' (ICCE) was established in 1939. First world conference of the council was held in 1938 at Victoria B.C with 88 participants from Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand and Scotland participated (Matheswaran, 2005:7).

The distance education as a concept has been used by the following different names in different countries like:

- Correspondence education (in most of the countries including India)
- Home study (North America and Europe).
- External studies- Open learning- open university off-campus' studies (Australia)
- Extra-Mural (New Zealand)
- Education a distance (Spanish speaking countries).
- Tele-Enalignment (France)
- FerbUniversitat (Germany) (Matheswaran, 2005:7)

A remarkable development in the field of distance education has been brought by the Commonwealth countries with the establishment of Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in 1988 at Vancouver in Canada as part of Commonwealth Minister of Education and Commonwealth Head of Government. COL has contributed to uplift the distance education system and improving the quality of course material, emphasized training and developing staff, improving delivery system and dual mode—which combines face-to-face learning with the distance education.

3.1. Difference between Formal and Distance education

Sims (Satyanarayana and Seshratnam, 2000:17) draw on the differences between the distance education and conventional education as ‘in the contiguous learning environments, communication is personal and face-to-face; in the non-contiguous environments communication may be personal and face-to-face for limited periods of time, but it is largely written, mechanical, electronic or some other means of communicating at a distance....Learning is fundamentally an individual process and each person enters the process with techniques and levels of achievement uniquely his own. The method of correspondence study provides simultaneously an educational device for individualization in three distinct senses- student ability, variety of course offerings and flexibility for time and place of study’.

It can be concluded from the definition that that difference between both the modes is of communication. The table below shows the differences between formal and distance education mode.

72
Table 3.1: Formal Vs Distance education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Distance Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learners meet on a regular basis in the classroom.</td>
<td>Learners may be separated by time and space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learners meet their teacher daily.</td>
<td>Very rarely learners meet with their instructor face to face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Materials are used as instructed by the teacher.</td>
<td>Learning materials need to be self-explanatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher need to be at the instruction where the course takes place.</td>
<td>Instructors can physically be anywhere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Matheswaran, 2005)

Cropky and Kahl have differentiated the two systems in terms of psychological assumptions

Table 3.2: Face-to-face education and Distance education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face to face education</th>
<th>Distance education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction between the students and teacher is on daily basis.</td>
<td>Communication is through counseling sessions or through some media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher can change her teaching style according to the learners’ needs and demands.</td>
<td>SLM act as a teacher which delayed in adapting to the needs of learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment is built to support learning activities.</td>
<td>Learners environment is built to serve other purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct control of learners by teacher is possible.</td>
<td>No concept of teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials are not very objective in nature</td>
<td>Learning materials are of very high standard, well organized and clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High degree of feedback and assessment is possible</td>
<td>Low degree of assessment and feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivation, self-learning and planning level are low.</td>
<td>Self-motivation, self-learning and planning level are high.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Satyanarayana & Seshratnam, 2000:19)
3.2. Concept of Open and Distance Learning

Open and distance learning refers to education in which learners are provided with the learning resources without attending formal classroom sessions. This is the key feature of the learning experience (COL, 2003). It indicates distance education stress the openness of teaching-learning process as compared to the closeness of formal classrooms (Peters, 1993). Distance education refers to the physical separation of students from teachers and the ways to communicate to the tutor, institution is through writing letters, sending e-mails, counseling sessions, through telephone. Open learning on the other hand offer resources like print, audio-video materials, study centers, computer-based materials to the learners in a more flexible way in order to achieve the goals (COL, 2003).

Open learning refers to the learning which is free from usual classroom constraints of the traditional format. Open learning provides opportunities for those people who for some reasons were not able to complete their education. Basically distance learning opens wider access to adult population as well as to those learners who are unable to complete their education. It provides opportunities to compensate lost opportunities by acquiring skills and qualification. Open learning system provides equal opportunities for uplifting social and educational inequalities among learners. The term open means that there are no restrictions on the admission requirements, no entrance examination. Openness gives the students freedom to plan their study time, materials, working hours etc. (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000).

Matheswaran (2005:9-10) says ‘Open learning is an imprecise phrase to which a range of meaning can be and is attached. It eludes definition, but as an inscription to be carried in procession on a banner gathering adherence and enthusiasm, it has great potential. For its very imprecision it enables to accommodate any different ideas and aims and the two terms of the phrase carry with them emotional outcomes........’

3.3. Open Universities

Open universities are universities established to provide education to the mass free of ‘age’ ‘bar’, ‘caste’, ‘creed’, ‘sex’. The first Open University was established in United Kingdom as United Kingdom Open University (UKOU) in 1969 which marked a new turning in distance education. Perry (1977) said ‘through multimedia system that
harnessed educational broadcasting to correspondence teaching and others methods’ (cited in Matheswaran, 2005:10; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000).

Open universities incorporated the method of correspondence education by integrating new methods and techniques (electronic media) brought in new innovations to the teaching and print courses (Daniel, 1977 cited in Matheswaran, 2005).

3.3.1. The Global concept of ODL learning

Daniel (1991) ‘defines the term “open university” as a form of instruction in which classroom session are not the primary means of communication, to call an educational offering “open learning” is confusing unless the context indicates the dimensions of openness that is to be understood properly’ (Matheswaran, 2005:41).

Garrison et al., (1987) ‘assert that learners have freedom to make choices. They are also of the opinion that distance learners have the ability and skills to take responsibility for learning and access to resources necessary for learning (Ibid). Hanriet et al., (1985) ‘agree that one of the major tasks of distance/open education is to foster not only the ability to work independently but also to maintain learner autonomy, the exercise of personal choice, etc’ (Ibid). Kaye (1981) ‘outlined the features of autonomous distance teaching institutions, of which the primary component in open universities are:

   a. Teaching, assessment and accreditation functions are integrated.
   b. The institution is totally committed to external students and there is a strong motivation to develop and enhance distance methods free from the constraints and traditions of face to face teaching.
   c. The institution is in principle far free to devise new educational programs for new target groups and to explore to the maximum potential o distance education methods in so doing.
   d. The institution is also free to choose teaching methods and media curricula course structure policies etc. (Matheswaran, 2005:42).

Reddy (1986) said that distance learning will provide great opportunities to the ‘dropouts’ married woman and other who will find ways to educate themselves and also those who are living in remote areas and unable to join formal universities can complete their education through distance learning.
Rumble et al., (1982) have identified the following characteristics of distance teaching universities:

- Integrating media technologies to teach and distribution accordingly.
- There should be a clear division between those who designed course materials and provided on one hand and those who tutored and assess the learner on other hand.
- There should be local learning in corporate with design and production of materials.
- There should be effective contact hours between learners and tutor. The institutions should pay special attention to arrange meeting between learners and students often.
- And very well defined administration areas’ (Matheswaran, 2005:44).

According to Taylor (1983) open universities are welcomed worldwide and have been very successful in their attempt. They are here to stay and have proved their capabilities to ‘cater to the needs of people’ who with many reasons were unable to continue their education in conventional mode. He further adds that media had also played a good role in transforming distance education because earlier correspondence education did not provide effective print materials. But media like T.V education is being used to provide education to remote areas. Hence, visual medium provides better impact on distance learners (Matheswaran, 2005:45).

3.4. Distance Education: Indian Scenario

The Indian constitution provides equal opportunities for education to all Indian citizens. But the system of education in colleges and universities even in school has some fixed criteria for enrolling the students due to limited recourses available. As stated earlier many highly motivated could not afford higher education due to some reasons other than academic i.e. social, economic, environmental, etc. the term distance education incorporates the traditional formal system of education and has the characteristics of flexibility, content mode, media, materials and evaluation of learning, ‘flexibility in admission’, ‘choices of courses’, ‘duration of programs’ and ‘means of communication’ etc. (Matheswaran, 2005:8; Desai, 2010).

In India, the first pioneer step for the establishment of distance education was taken by University of Delhi in 1962. University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1963
established directorates of correspondence courses in universities and appointed Professor D.S. Kothari as chairman. In 1960s some major changes were brought in distance education by establishing four institutes of correspondence education were started only for graduation courses. By the 1970s to 80s, 21 universities started correspondence education. In 1994, 46 universities started correspondence education at all levels. In 1977-78 an increased number of 2.51% and 11.92% students enrolled in correspondence education. Gradually the increased number of enrollment encouraged the institution to upgrade the quality of courses, materials and institution themselves. UGC had taken steps in making distance education available to all who want to be a part of any distance program. The major step in distance education was achieved in 1975 and thereby bringing together 2330 villages of economically backward states. Similarly, Doordarshan’s education television (ETV) program school television (STV), higher education television (HETV). UGC’s countrywide classrooms are some major technological steps to provide distance education (Ibid).

3.5. International Structure and Organizations
The influence of distance education is very strong particularly in Asian countries like China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Israel, Pakistan, Korea, Sri-Lanka, and Thailand. They are making extensive use of technologies and enhancing the quality of distance education. The scenario of distance education in these countries is mentioned below:

3.5.1. China
In 1960s, television Universities were set up in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenyang and in some other part of China to provide education to adult student to improve their higher studies. The National Multimedia Distance Learning Institution of China is called the Central Radio and Television University (CRTUV). Television Universities in Beijing which was established in 1979 presently is one of the largest distance education institutes in the world in which more than million students are enrolled. Television programs are transmitted by the Central China television (CCTV). Television classes also organize courses that are taught by part time tutors who sometimes also use audio or video tapes for teaching social science. However, radio is used mostly because it is the most common medium to deliver the social sciences courses.
3.5.2. Indonesia

In Indonesia, distance education was first started at primary level for school children in 1984. Students are supervised by a tutor and they followed a similar kind of curriculum as followed in formal school curriculum.

3.5.3. Korea

Korea operates distance program both in formal and informal education. The methods that Korea distance education adopts are:

a. Written material: correspondence texts, supplementary materials and the university newspaper.


c. Schooling: compulsory sessions held for testing lectures and practical or experimental work.

d. Special lectures were arranged by professors and other guests to facilitate students and teachers.

The Korea AIR and correspondence University has constantly taking steps in improving the materials and teaching methods to meet the require demands and needs of the learners. Different regional centers are opened at different places to improve the personal contact between tutors and students (Matheswaran, 2005; Satayanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2010).

3.5.4. Pakistan

The AllamaIqbal Open University (AIOU) is the oldest university in South Asia and is modeled on British Open University. Its existence came in 1974 after the act passed by the National assembly in 1974, then named People's Open University. The university is well updated and uses multi-media instruction system. It operates through printed materials, uses radio and T.V programs for instruction, slides audio cassettes, film charts and leaflets, guidance workshop, courses assignments and internal assessments and semester examination (Ibid).

3.5.5. Sri-Lanka

The Open University of Sri-Lanka was established in 1980. Sri-Lanka Government had collaboration with Swedish International Development Agency for their distance educational program.
3.5.6. Thailand

The largest Open University in the world is Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) which is in Bangkok. The university was established in 1978. It is operated by the University Council and Academic Senate. There a series of study centers to reach the students all over the country. The multimedia approach is used for instruction. Apart from print materials, radio and TV broadcast are also used to make students to learn at their own. Audio and video cassettes are available for various courses at study centers. The university offers two types of courses i.e. degree and non-degree. Tutorial and counseling sessions are also arranged at the study centers Matheswaran, 2005; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000)

3.5.7. Canada

Athabasca University was established in 1970 in Alberta, Canada with an aim to provide education to adult Canadian at an undergraduate level. The overall function of the University is divided into three areas; Academic, Finance and Administration &development. The President is the chief Executive officer and VC of the University and reports to the governing council.

The programs run by University are individualized study program and University determined program. In the first program, the needs of students are taken care of, students can plan and implement programs, and in the second one administrating studies are designed to fulfilled the needs of people in education. Students are given counseling session before taking admission and according to the need and level they are given courses, assignments and examinations.

3.5.8. Australia and the South Pacific Region Australia

Australia and the South Pacific External Association (ASPESA) have seen tremendous growth and consistently making developments in the field of distance education in Australia. Various distance education centers are functioning all over the Australia under the same head. Some of them are Deakin, New England, Murdoch Queensland, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education (Matheswaran, 2005).
3.5.9. New Zealand

New Zealand Technical Correspondence Institute (NZTCI) provides training and development of staff and study materials. NZTCI is a national organization which teaches vocational subject at tertiary level. The teacher training program continues for 12 weeks. These trained teachers provide training to students for vocational examinations. NZTCI also encourages adult learning. With the guidance of staff trainers and other experienced teachers students are motivated and supported in preparing teaching materials and evaluating the work of students (Ibid).

3.5.10. Europe

The Fern Universitate was established in 1974. The students who are benefitted from this system at Fern Universitate are:

- Full-time students
- Part-time students
- Guest students

The study centers are well equipped with new technologies such as audio-visual media, projectors, recorders, reference library, and photocopying machines. Students are provided pre counseling sessions before admission. Students’ progress is assessed by using continuous assessment and term-end examinations. Print materials are used as a prime source for studying but tapes, video cassettes, computers, telephones etc are also used as the medium for distance teaching. The universitate attracts the students from several part of the country (Matheswaran, 2005).

3.5.10.1. United Kingdom

With the establishment of Open University in England in 1969, new changes and innovations were brought in distance education. Apart from print media, it introduced audio-video materials and established personal guidance and contact system between student and tutor. Print materials are used as the main source for instruction but radio and television broadcast along with notes are supplemented (Matheswaran, 2005; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000)
3.6. India

3.6.1 Dr. B.R Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU)

In 1982 by an act of Andhra Pradesh Government, Andhra Pradesh Open University was established. It aimed to provide equal opportunities for educating women, including housewives, and adults without any age bar, caste, choice of courses etc. Study centers are well equipped with new technologies and students are provided counseling, audio-video lessons, practical sessions, library facilities and admission guidance etc. continuous assessment, assignments and final examinations are used to assess the students' performance.

3.6.2 Nalanda Open University (Bihar)

Nalanda Open University was established in 1987 with the specific objectives to

- Provide education opportunities to those who were unable to complete their education in formal universities with some reasons and wanted to pursue their education further.
- Provide education to all, free from age restriction, choices of course, methods of teaching, etc.
- Reach remote areas and disadvantaged people in particular.
- Offer variety of courses, degrees and diploma and to make provision for further advanced studies such as research.
- Lay emphasis on vocational and conventional courses, leading to award of degrees and certificates.

3.6.3 Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University

Madhya Pradesh Bhoj University was established in 1991 with the main objectives to promote good quality of education, less costly, to 'reach the unreached', using technologies and communication strategies for better access.

3.6.4 Tamil Nadu Open University

Established in 1920, under the Act no. 27 of Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Specifically the objectives of TNOU are to

- Provide education parallel to formal education system.
- Provide chance to those who left their education and want to continue again.
- Promote easy access to education
- Provide vocational and professional training opportunities for those who are employed and want to upgrade their knowledge and skills.
- Design an innovative study system, flexible and easily approachable to every citizen.

3.7 Distance Education Council (DEC)

The distance education council is 'an apex body of distance education in India'. DEC is established under the IGNOU Act on the recommendation of UGC in 1992. The functions of DEC are as follows:

1. DEC, take care of all the Open/Distance universities and it promotes education, maintained its standard.
2. To establish a network among all the open/distance universities in the country in consultation with the State governments and other concerned bodies.
3. To identify the local areas and places where distance education universities can be established. Identify the needs of different groups and accordingly designed programs to meet their demands, to promote education and encourage learning.
4. To make education flexible and open so that it can be reached to un-reached people and places.
5. To take steps in developing and sharing instructional material prepared by different open universities by maintaining copyright system in order to avoid duplication of material.
6. To maintain payment and prescribe fees of different courses to learners.
7. To appoint review committees from time to time in order to assess the performance of distance/open universities.
8. To prescribe courses and programs with their patterns and structures.
9. To describe in broad terms the admission procedure, evaluation, courses requirements, assignments and credits, awards, certificates, diploma and degrees to the learners.
10. To appoint professionals to provide assistance and advice to DEC for various programs (Matheswaran, 2005).

3.8 Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

IGNOU is considered one of the best and longest Open University in India. The stress of educating all put a great pressure on government which in turn puts more responsibilities and pressure on formal education system. According to National
Policy on education (NPE) of India decided to extend education to non-formal system which would expand the learning teaching facilities in the country. With this aim, in 1985, IGNOU was established. IGNOU has this major responsibility of educating people of country and promoting open and distance learning in the country. IGNOU has been established under an Act of parliament which has very wide and clear objectives of lifelong education, promoting adult education, providing opportunities to those who left their studies because of some personal or other reasons, educating housewives, educating young learners who could not make into main stream education (Matheswaran, 2005).

IGNOU offers a wide range of courses and programs including different diplomas, degree courses and different certificate courses. Ample of choices are given to learners for choosing the course according to their needs and requirement. IGNOU is an established body which is responsible for promoting and coordinating distance education system in the entire country. Under the act of IGNOU, two very important centers are established namely Distance Education Council (DEC) and Staff Training and Research Institute for Distance Education (STRIDE). IGNOU has also received recognition from international agencies like:

1. ‘The Oversea Development Administration (ODA), United Kingdom.

3.8.1 Academic Programs at IGNOU

The most striking feature of courses offered by IGNOU is that IGNOU offers courses for two types of learners. The first category comprises of learners who do not have any qualifications i.e. they have never attended any formal institute. The second category comprises of those learners who have some formal qualification. Another important feature is that the course is prepared in the form of credits. IGNOU offers short term and long term courses in the areas of Graduation, Post-graduation, Research, Diplomas, Training programs, Vocational programs etc.

3.8.2 Instructional Materials

In order to cater the wider needs of students IGNOU makes use of modern communication technologies as well printed materials to impart knowledge. The university therefore is a multi-media university using printed textbooks, radio, and
T.V broadcasting, audio-video and face-to-face teaching method. The course materials are prepared by the team of experts; the audio-video materials are also decided by them. Radio is also used as a medium of instruction in remote areas where other facilities like library, study center, regional centers are not available.

3.9 Strategies of Course Delivery: Introduction to Self-learning Materials (SLM)

Of all the teaching media available in ODL context, printed materials are the main and basic for the distance learning. In ODL, students are away from teachers and SLM plays the role of a teacher. The various sources provided the formal classrooms are in-built in SLM themselves. SLM are totally different from regular materials or textbooks. They possess distinctive features which make them unique and attractive. Table given below will summarize the differences between SLM and textbooks (Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000)

Table 3.3: Some differences between Textbooks and Self-Learning Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks</th>
<th>Self-learning materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumes interest</td>
<td>Arouses interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written for teacher use</td>
<td>Written for learner use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No indication of study time</td>
<td>Gives estimates of study time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed for a wide market</td>
<td>Designed for a particular audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely state aims and objectives</td>
<td>Always gives aims and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually one route through</td>
<td>May be many ways through it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured for specialists</td>
<td>Structured according to the needs of learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or no self-assessment</td>
<td>Major emphasis on self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom anticipates difficulties</td>
<td>Alert to potential difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally offers summaries</td>
<td>Always offers summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal style</td>
<td>Personal style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense content</td>
<td>Content unpacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense layout</td>
<td>More open layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers view seldom sought</td>
<td>Learner evaluation always conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No study skills advice</td>
<td>Provides study skills advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be read passively</td>
<td>Require active response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims at scholarly presentation</td>
<td>Aims at successful teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Lockwood, 1998:11)

Textbooks are usually written for teacher’s use. In contrast, SLM have to be written for learner use. It is a collection of materials which may include published content from which learner is expected to make the best out of it. The language and level must be pitched according to the learner’s requirement. SLM gives clear indication of how long would it take to study, all the supplementary thing in the materials like exercises, self-check exercise, audio tapes, assignments all are indicated by the study time. Another table given below summarizes a comparison between typical ODL materials and a typical textbook.
Table 3.4: Comparison of ODL materials and textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ODL materials</th>
<th>Textbooks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are usually divided into units, and gives learner a plan for study.</td>
<td>Are divided into chapters, based on topics and give no study time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is always a study guide to tell on how to use the materials and how to study.</td>
<td>There is no concept of study guides and study guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include study tips</td>
<td>Do not include study tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include examples</td>
<td>Include examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include diagrams and pictures</td>
<td>Include diagram and pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include numerous activities</td>
<td>Have few or no activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide feedback on answers</td>
<td>Do not provide feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are tightly structured</td>
<td>Are more loosely structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the learner as ‘you’</td>
<td>Use passive language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a generous layout, often including space for learners to write in</td>
<td>Have no space for learners to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to meet all the needs of the learners</td>
<td>Assume that the learner has a teacher who will be able to transact the printed text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: COL, 2005:15)

SLM are designed with specific aims and objectives that are to be achieved by learners at the end of the course. Depending on the needs, interests, abilities and time available to the learners, SLM follow through different routes (Lockwood, 1998).
3.9.1 Features of Self-Learning Materials (SLM)

SLM are designed to provide individualized instruction. It has a focus on individual learner and motivates him/her to study by deciding his/her own pace. There is no fixed time-table or routine to follow. Many learners manage their study time to suits their working hours.

An important feature of SLM is that it provides standardized content. Every learner receives the same material free from personal bias, preferences of teacher trainer. Content is selected on the basis of the prescribed syllabus, moving gradually step by step so that it could match up with the learners' level. Course designer take care of the fact that contents should neither be too lengthy nor too short that might confuse the learner. Contents are divided into sections and sub-sections with stated objectives which have to be achieved by the learners. The content of the SLM are presented in a simple and clear way so that learner cannot search for extra materials. Although there is no restriction for the learners to use remedial materials if require. Contents are self-explanatory, analyzed logically before it is presented. Continuity among the units and paragraphs are maintained because SLM is designed for self-learning.

The kind of teaching that is provided by the SLM is very structured and explicit. Every unit is structured by giving brief introduction and guide to provide the general structure of the course. Self-check exercises are given at the end of every unit for the self-assessment. Learner can monitor his/her performance through these exercises. SLM possess in-built teacher which makes it more interactive. The use of language is more personal to make the learners realized that a teacher is interacting with them through materials.

SLM provides necessary help, guidance, hints, and suggestions at every stage so that a learner should not be feel left out. This directs the entire learning process by motivating and encouraging learners to study more (Lockwood, 1998).

3.9.2 Familiarity with the concept of SLM

The teams of experts are involved in preparing SLM. The course writers go through different strategies to adopt the best suited learning sequence that visualizes in the units of the course. Designing SLM is a process that works more systematically in order to translate learner's needs and goals into successful learning. However, the
learners are the best judges to decide which learning style strategies will suit them best.

Figure 3.1: The SLM design process (source: COL, 2005)

The above figure shows that material design has to identify the goals and needs of the target group and creating the material that enable them to meet the goals of the course. For creating SLM, instructional designers draw insights from the existing learning theories material below:

3.9.3 Theories of Instructional design (SLM)

ODL has mainly drawn upon three theoretical approaches

1. Cognitive theory of learning
2. Constructivist theory of learning

Gagne (1968) stresses that instructional designer should keep in view the needs of particular group for particular type of learning. He advocates the behavioral approach, in which he describes the conditions that students needed for learning things like rules, concepts and problem solving. Another theory which lays emphasis on characteristics of individual is in terms of cognitive theory. More recently, constructivist approach is gaining prominence because it emphasizes the learner’s own activities as the mechanism for learning (Elen and Clarebout, 2001 cited in COL, 2005).

Although many course writers today favor the constructivist approach as the only one to use. But ODL course writers frequently make use of all three approaches. Some constructivist writers also acknowledge that other theories have their own place. Jonassen (et al, 1993) say ‘we believe that the initial knowledge acquisition phase is better served by instructional techniques that are based upon classical instructional design techniques. Classical instructional design is predicated upon predetermined learning outcomes, constrained and sequential instructional interactions, and criterion-
referenced evaluation’ (cited in COL, 2005). The table below summarizes the common use of three theatrical approaches.

Table 3.5: Some uses of Learning Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of theory</th>
<th>Learning tasks to which theory is often applied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Rote memorizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give training on the routine tasks like opening a bank account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning arbitrary information (example, irregular verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning rule systems (example, the rules for assessing a writing an essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning procedures where variation is not acceptable (example, writing a procedure for making tea).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Focus on problem-solving activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concept learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasoning and argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complex situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real-world problem solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: COL, 2005:5)
Learning devices that course designers’ uses for developing learning materials are the following:

**Table 3.6: Learning devices associated with each type of theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of theory</th>
<th>Learning devices used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Behavioral     | States the learning objectives.  
                 | Tasks are broken into small steps.  
                 | Mostly tasks have clear right or wrong answers.  
                 | Learners are assessed according to the stated learning objectives.  
                 | The learning packages describe clearly what is to be learnt. |
| Cognitive      | Learning objectives are stated  
                 | Tasks are broken into small steps  
                 | Learners assessed against the stated learning objectives.  
                 | A wide variety of tasks, but within the scope of the stated objectives.  
                 | Material is ‘chunked’ into small, meaningful pieces.  
                 | Simplification of real-world situations  
                 | The learning packages tend to prescribe what is to be learnt. |
| Constructive   | Learner choice of task or situation  
                 | Authentic, real-world tasks  
                 | Case studies  
                 | Complexity of the real world presented in the tasks |
3.9.4 Developing Self-learning materials

SLM are the basic and most widely used in all the distance teaching institutions. Material designers take care to ensure the course quality and make it more interactive so that a distant learner would be able to bring best out of it without the help of a teacher. There are many aspects which are considered while preparing the SLM. The most common aspects are:

3.9.4.1 The Beginning of the Unit

It involves introduction to the unit and gives the direction to the learner on how to proceed through the unit. It is divided into three parts. The first part is structure of the unit. It involves structuring of contents in a unit. Structure gives content a logical arrangement and divides them into sections and sub-sections. The second part involves objectives of the unit. Every unit has stated objectives which define what is expected from a learner and what he/she would be able to do after completing the unit. Objectives also help the course writers to arrange their contents and assessment questions accordingly. Objectives also guide tutor to comment on learners’ assignments. Though there are no fixed criteria for objectives. Course writers might feels difficulties in selecting objectives of a unit. Too many objectives may create confusions for the learners and too less might not communicate properly.

The third part includes the introduction to the unit. It is a brief summary before the main body. Introduction gives the learners the idea of what they are going to study in the unit. Introduction includes a brief statement of objectives, provides an outline of the course, advices the learners on how to make use of supplementary media and other sources (Satyanarayana and Seshratnam, 2000).
3.9.4.2. Structure of the unit

The main body is divided into sections and sub-sections. These sections introduce new ideas and concepts on the topic on which the particular unit is dealing and relates to the objectives. The self-assessment questions are also the part of sections to check whether the learners have understood the material or not. Therefore, the general design of the main body of the unit comprises explaining a topic, self-assessment questions, exercises or activities.

The units are divided into sub-sections to maintain the interest of the learners. Hence, sections, sub-sections, boxes, examples, sign post, SAQ, help the learners in understanding the nature and structure of the unit. The course writers conceptualize and work out the contents of a unit as a whole. The detailed structuring is termed as ‘concept mapping’ (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000:85; STRIDE, 2005).

After concept mapping, the course writers takes into account the presentation of matter into:

Small steps: the contents are divided into logical and small ‘chunks’, and each chunk is divided into section or sub-sections. Sequencing of content is also important. Sequencing helps the in deciding the nature of the subject matter. Sequencing can be done in chronological order, cause and effect etc. apart from types of sequencing, few things should be taken into considerations:

a. **From known to unknown**: The new knowledge will be meaningful for learners if it is related with their previous experience or to known and familiar situations.

b. **Easy to difficult**: To motivate learns the unit should be started with easy concept and gradually moving to the complex concepts. The level of learner’s understanding should be considered by the course writers while designing the simplicity and complexity of the unit. Course writers should never judge their knowledge with that of learners’ knowledge.

c. **From particular to general**: A particular concept should be generalized. This method is more suitable in social sciences. Examples and illustrations help in making generalization.

d. **From actual to representative**: The learners learn quickly if the events are actually presented before them. If exposure to real world is not possible than use of charts, graphs, pictures, diagrams, etc, can be used to
make the content more presentable and easy for learners to grab the information.

e. **Personalized style:** This is very important that a learner should get involved in the teaching-learning process. Course writers generally address the learners as ‘you’. Materials are the strong medium of conversation between a tutor and a learner. Therefore, materials give the learners the satisfaction of being taught by the teacher, who is not physically presented.

f. **Language:** Distance learners are from different background with different cultures. Course writers try to use simple and clear language which can be easily understood by the learners. When a writer uses difficult term a distance learner fails to understand its meaning.

SLM should encourage learners to read and get involved in the material. Direct language should be used which could communicates directly with the learners. But this not an easy task for course writers to use easy words all the time. There are few questions which usually arise when we say simple and easy. How simple it should be? How to write in simple language? To answer these questions, writers should consider who the learners are? The course writers decide the language based on their earlier experiences with the course, learners, background knowledge, intellectual growth and maturity determine the use of language. Most of the course writers have teaching experiences, which help them in knowing the learner’s expectation from the material (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000; STRIDE, 2005).

3.9.4.3. **Assessment**

In a classroom situation, teacher and learners have plenty of opportunities to assess the learning but in distance mode opportunities of assessment are less. In distance, learners mainly learn on their own, in isolation from teacher and other fellow learners. Therefore, SLM have in-built assessment criteria in the form of questions which give learners chance to monitor their progress. It provides the feedback on how well they have achieved the objectives of the unit. SLM include activities that help the learners to assess their own knowledge and understanding levels. Self-assessment question (SAQ), exercises, assignments are some other types of assessment provided to the distance learners. At the end of the term, the final examination mainly measures learners’ performance.
SAQ should be written keeping in mind the objectives of the unit and should occur frequently in the unit so that learners may get continuous assessment. Activities serve the pedagogic purpose. Activities involve learners to relate the text with practical experience.

3.9.4.4. **End of the unit**

The last part contains the summary, glossary, bibliography. The important points of the unit are summarized and presented at the end of the unit. It helps the learners to re-collects the information. Usually summary is presented in the form of points.

Glossary is an important feature of SLM. It helps learners comprehend the meaning of difficult words that occur in the unit. Suggested bibliography provides the learner to access more materials that should be easily accessible to them. And lastly, the answers of SAQ are provided (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000; STRIDE, 2005).

3.10 **Counseling in Distance education**

One of the most important features of Distance education is counseling sessions. Counseling sessions are important because this is the medium when distance learner get opportunities to meet his/her tutor, discussing problems regarding course, assignments etc. Counseling sessions can be formal or informal depending on the situation. Counseling involved problem solving and learning activity. Although counseling seems to be very complex in terms of learners’ expectations from tutors, helping new learners to adjusting with new learning atmosphere, making learners comfortable with distance atmosphere and course materials. Learners on the other hand feel disconnected with the tutor, classroom, classmates and regular studies makes him more anxious and increases the chance of dropping out from a course of study. The limited face to face interaction between tutor and learners limited the opportunities of learning, motivation top learner therefore, counseling sessions are required to eliminate their problems (Banerjee, 1987).

3.10.1 **Role of a Counselor**

Challenging but a positive role has to be played by a counselor. A counselor’s main purpose is to help the learners to overcome with their problems therefore counseling session should have rapport between learners and the counselor. Counselor needs to be elaborative, encouraging and have positive attitude while handling learners’
problem, enquiries and providing assistance wherever necessary. Counseling should be done in a way that it should help the learners to reach at a meaningful conclusion (Banerjee, 1987).

3.11 Learners’ Assignments

Assignments hold the central position in ODL education. The importance is due to the fact that it is the only way to establish a contact between a tutor and a learner. Individual learning and feedback process is also determined through assignments.

3.11.1 Function and Purpose of Assignments

Assignments are important source to test how effectively learners have understood the course. Learners also assess their own progress through assignments. According to Lewis, assignments on submitting provide a dialogue between a tutor and learners. Learners receive feedback and advice on their work; assignments on the other hand help the tutor to understand the learners’ understanding of course, their problematic areas, strength and weaknesses. Assignments also help the tutor to understand the course as a whole. Assignments also contribute to the final grades in the course of many ODL universities. Assignments constitute up to 30% of final scores. Therefore, distance learners also take writing assignments very seriously and try to complete them on time (Satyanarayana and Sesharainam, 2000; STRIDE, 2003).

According to the surveys conducted by the European correspondence school and the British Open University the following are the main functions and purpose of assignments.

1. Assignments provide effective feedback after which learners can correct their mistakes and can check their progress.
2. Learners get motivated by the tutor’s remark and they can perform better.
3. Through assignments tutor provides individual help to learners.
4. Activate learners’ knowledge by focusing on important learning objectives.
5. Enable learners to go through the materials.
6. Encourage learners to develop regularity of work.
7. Create opportunities for contacts between tutor and learners.
8. Prepares learners for formal examination.
9. Prepares learners how to deal and complete work before deadline.
10. Give measures on how well students have understood the course and how successful their work is.

11. Maintain and develop learner's motivation and commitment to their studies.

3.11.2 Types of Assignments

Assignments are classified into two types

1. Tutor marked assignments (TMAs)
2. Computer marked assignments (CMAs)

Further TMAs are classified into several types. They can be open, unstructured essay, role play essay, description, narration, notes, and paragraph writing, etc. CMAs further are divided into two categories; one category is that in which everything is given, learner is supposed to choose the correct answer like multiple choice, matching, true-false, arranging points in a logical sequence, etc. Second category is that in which learner has to supply one word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc.

ODL universities consider writing assignments as very important tool of learning which should be prepared and written very carefully. Some experienced distance teachers provided guidelines on how to write assignments. Assignments should be related to the objective of the course, questions should be well structured avoiding any ambiguity.

Race provided some criteria for designing assignments

1. Questions should have clear and unambiguous language.
2. Assignment must relate to the stated objectives of the unit.
3. Questions should be prepared according to the level of learners.
4. Prepare learners through assignments for the final examination.
5. Provide assessment criteria to the learners (cited in Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000).

3.11.3 Types of Tutor's comments

Comments or remarks provided by tutor on assignments have great impact on students’ learning as they motivate them for further studies and sustain their interest which is very important in ODL. Assessment is greatly judged by tutor's comments. Learner assesses their progress through comments if provided to them. Therefore, tutor has a responsibility to provide constructive comments on assignments. Tutor's comments therefore should be of teaching type. If they are not they lose the purpose
of teaching-learning at distance. This is the difference between conventional marking and distance marking. In conventional mode, teacher tries out to point out the mistakes but in ODL mode. A tutor also point out mistakes but with proper explanation, write constructive and meaningful comments and thus providing motivation to the learners by suggesting student his learning style, level of performance, and their strength and weaknesses. Tutors' comments can be broadly classified into non-teaching comments and teaching comments. Non-teaching comments have mainly negative impact on learning as they are negative in nature and hollow in their approach. They mislead the students and no motivation is provided to the students whereas teaching comments are mainly positive in nature. They are more individualized in nature as they provide constructive comments.

3.11.4 Tutor's written comments on assignments

Rowntree (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000) provided a list on how tutors written comments should be:

1. Highlights the important points and draw students' attention to the facts if they have not paid to it.
2. Draw students' attention to the gaps in the learning and provide help in explaining and interpreting facts.
3. Suggests how learners can present their ideas more effectively and clearly.
4. Extend help on how learner can further elaborate his/her answer.
5. Ask explanation and clarification for vague answers.
6. Specify on how a piece of work has been improved in terms of content, organization, mechanics etc.
7. Motivate students through comments like well done! Well try, still you can do better! Etc. (Satyanarayana& Sesharatnam, 2000).

3.12 Problems of Distance learners

A number of studies have been conducted in this area to basically understand the needs, problems, motivation to continue the courses etc. of distance learners. Researches and practices of distance learning have shown that SLM and electronic materials are not enough to support independent learning. They fail to solve several problems of ODL learners related to study techniques and learning, isolation, personal
problems which affect the learner’s work. Some major problems of distance learners are:

1. Learners’ isolation from teacher, students, institution, creates frustration among them and the cause of eventual dropouts.
2. No regular feedback and delay in assignment feedback creates tension among learners.
3. Adjusting to the distance atmosphere and SLM delays the learning.
4. Limited library services and other resources due to the geographical constraints (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000; Nellaiyappan, 1999).

In this context, a study was conducted by Chander (1991) which concluded that the rate of dropouts and failures among distance learners are more in high than formal learners. The lack of interaction between learners and teachers fails to provide motivation, encouragement and continuous feedback to the distance learners which create learning problems for them. (Nellaiyappan, 1999).

3.13 Students support services

Students support services form an integral part of distance education system. According to Croft (1991) ‘any services actual than the course material which an institution provides to its students to realize the instructional objectives of the course’ (cited in Gupta and Gupta, 1999: 88).

In distance, students support services are important for distance learners because they are isolated from teacher, students and institution. They come from diverse background i.e. educational, economic, social, occupational, geographical etc. The purpose of students support services is to minimize the effect of isolation and regular contact program (Gupta and Gupta, 1999).

3.13.1. Types of students support services

3.13.1.1. Study centers

Shukla (1994) views ‘study centers as a way to strengthen students support services’ (Matheswaran, 2005:78). For the smooth working of study centers, administration needs to be very effective. Study centers are connected to the regional centers of the areas to maintain the close contacts with the students. To ensure good communication between study centers, regional centers and officers are require to visits centers
regularly. Assignments are also distributed from study centers and tutors are also available at the centers.

3.13.1.2. Library
Libraries contribute tremendous support to both formal and distance education. Devi (1994) discusses the role of library in ODL as a networking for accessing other reference materials, print, audio and video. The main emphasis is on active participation of students. They need help library staff (Matheswaran, 2005).

3.13.1.3. Counseling/ Personal contact program
ODL universities generally provide counseling session. The real purpose of counseling sessions is to meet learners and discuss their problems regarding the course, assignments etc. Generally, the real purpose of counseling session does not achieve to a large extent, even though the students who attended counseling sessions have expressed positive opinion about the counseling session. The attendance of students in counseling sessions remains low because the sessions are optional. Besides, distance learners have other priorities over education and geographical imitations also contribute for low attendance (Ibid).

3.14 Conclusion
The purpose of this review is to find out how far SLM design strategies can accommodate writing tasks effectively in order to enhance learners' performance. Distance education is an alternative system of education growing rapidly developing mode of learning. Open and distance learning is considered as important system of education both in the developed and developing nations. At present, distance education system is playing an important role in imparting of knowledge through non-formal mode by organizing learning activity outside the structure of the formal education to meet the specific learning needs.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the realities and familiarization with ODL system. The concept of distance education and various other sources related to the concept have been addressed in the chapter. The chapter provides insights on how ODL universities operate, the role of SLM, and various students- support services available to ODL learners.
Chapter 4

Review of Literature on Assessing Writing at Formal and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode

This chapter reviews the literature on assessing writing in formal and ODL mode in terms of assessment of different tasks types, testing measures, benchmarks and methods of assessment in ODL.

4.0. Introduction

Assessment is a useful activity which involves purposeful methods of interaction in order to gain the understanding of what learners have achieved. The primary function of assessment is to develop a sense of improvement in the learners rather than simply grading and marking their performance. Grading comes later; the main purpose is to identify the problems of learners and subsequently improving their learning and performance. Erwin in Brown and knight (1994) ‘assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and the development of students……the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analysing, interpreting and using information to increase students’ learning and development’ (cited in Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999:13).

Assessment is not solely for the benefits of learners. Various stakeholders have put pressure on institutions and teachers, for designing effective assessment procedure. According to Nightangle et.al (1990) assessment needs can be divided into the following four groups:

1. Students’ needs: The purpose is to know how well they are progressing in their studies, if they had reached the desired goal and or expected level of satisfaction or not.

2. Teachers and Trainers’ needs: This assesses the students learning outcomes as to know how well teacher’s activities are effective in terms of attaining desirable learning outcomes.

3. Institutions’ needs: The main purpose is to provide the evidence of actions of institutional aims. To know how well program and teaching staff are effective in obtaining their stated aims such as making judgements on admission programs and course evaluation.
4. Community needs: The purpose is to know how well the institution, teachers, students will serve the society’s needs (Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999).

4.1. Assessment and Testing

Assessment and testing are often misunderstood as a same thing but there is a difference between the two. ‘Testing is more formal and standardized; assessment is based on a collection of information about what student knows and what they are able to do’ (Dikli, 2003:13). In testing student knows the procedure of scoring while in assessment the methods differ for collecting information according to different context and time (Law & Eckes, 1995 cited in Ibid).

Deitel, Herman and Knuth (1991) define assessment ‘as any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses’ (online document, cited in Dikli, 2003:13). Testing can be defined as single-occasion, un-dimensional, timed exercise usually in multiple choice or short answer form. For a long time in school, students learning and writing were measured through testing. Testing is just a part of assessment, assessment is used more widely (Kuliek, et al., 1990 cited in Ibid).

4.2. Assessment and Evaluation

Often assessment and evaluation are used interchangeably. But both these terms have different meaning and purposes. Thorpe (1988) says ‘evaluation is not synonymous with assessment, because evaluation is the procedure of assessing values to the learning outcomes during and at the end of a course. Assessment focuses on the learning of students and results (marks/grades) may be used as a source of information for evaluation’ (STRIDE, 2003:27).

Assessment provides feedback on learner’s performance, knowledge skills, and attitudes for better learning outcomes. Evaluation on the other hand ‘determines the level of performance that helps in decision-making policies on high level’ (Bachr, 2010:7). Assessment and evaluation both have significant purpose in education and when used correctly and both add significant value to teaching and learning. Although assessment and evaluation are used for different purpose and reasons but both the process involve similar methods of collecting evidence to observe the performance or the outcome, both requires a performer and a person who collects the information about the performance. Table 4.1 gives the summary of similarities and differences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the purpose?</strong></td>
<td>To improve the future performance</td>
<td>To determine the quality of the present performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who performs?</strong></td>
<td>Assesse</td>
<td>Evaluatee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who set criteria?</strong></td>
<td>Assess and assessor</td>
<td>Evaluator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When can feedback occur?</strong></td>
<td>During or after a performance.</td>
<td>During or after performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On what is feedback is based?</strong></td>
<td>Observations, strongest and weakest points.</td>
<td>Level of quality base on a set standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is included in the report?</strong></td>
<td>What made the quality of the performance strong and how might one improve future performance?</td>
<td>The quality of the performance often compared to set standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who receive the report?</strong></td>
<td>Assesse</td>
<td>Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How is the report used?</strong></td>
<td>To improve performance.</td>
<td>To make judgements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from Baehr, 2010: 8)

Evaluation determines whether a standard was met to the set criteria and assessment provides feedback on performances, strength and weaknesses of students, areas of improvements and insight (*Ibid*). In table 4.2 some more differences are stated.
Table 4.2: Differences between Assessment and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on the learning of the students.</td>
<td>Focuses on the way the various components of a course perform—e.g. the syllabus, the teacher, the resources, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on the performance of the students (grading or marking).</td>
<td>Focuses on the performance of the provider and the provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment results may be used as a source of information for evaluation.</td>
<td>Evaluation results have no direct bearing on students’ assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from STRIDE, 2003:29)

4.3. Traditional Assessment tools

For a long period of time, most widely used traditional assessment tools were multiple-choice test, true/false, short answers and essays.

True/False: It is a more kind of a decision making activity in which student choose the correct answer out of two given options. These tests are easy to score and easy to administer. The drawback with this kind of method is that real knowledge of learners is not tested. Guessing increases the chance of success by 50 percent especially when the test item is false. It becomes hard to understand whether the student really knows the correct answer or he/she is guessing. However, guessing can be avoided if learner is asked to give explanation for the incorrect answer or rewrite the statement correctly but this will affect the scoring (Simonson, et al., 2000 cited in Dikli, 2003).

Multiple-choice tests: Multiple-choice tests are commonly used by teachers, school and institutions and organizations for the following reasons:

1. They are fast, easy and economical to score.
2. Scores are more reliable than subjective questions.
3. They reduce the chances of learners guessing the correct item as in the case of true/false items (Bailey, 1998: 130 cited in ibid).
Simon (2000) and others discuss the disadvantages of multiple-choice tests. They claim that it is difficult to construct good multiple-choice tests since it is very time consuming. Hughes criticizes multiple-choice testing for the following reasons:

1. The multiple-choice test only tests recognition knowledge.
2. Guessing can also be there which affects scoring.
3. A multiple-choice test doesn't test the writing ability of learners.
4. Backwash may be harmful.

Essays: Essays are considered to be more effective assessment tool because they assess the higher order learning skills. Students real understanding of topic is tested and writing skills is also get assessed.

The disadvantage of using essays is that they are not very practical and time consuming to score. Also scoring is not much reliable because of the subjectivity. To maintain the authenticity in scoring, a rubric can be designed to score the essays. A rubric is defined as a scoring criteria scale which allows teacher, institution to mark the students’ performance (Ibid).

Short-answer tests: It is kind of a test where learners are required to write a brief answer on a topic or fill in words, phrase or statement.

4.3.1. Traditional assessment Vs. Alternative assessment

The focus from traditional assessment is now shifting toward alternative assessment. According to Bailey (1998), ‘traditional assessment is indirect and inauthentic’ (cited in Dikli, 2003:15). Law and Eckes (1995) also stated the same issue that traditional assessments are single short test i.e. they can measure student’s progress at a particular period of time, and test score cannot identify the progress, problems of students during a test. Bailey (1998) says that traditional methods do not provide any kind of feedback to the learner which is very important point for assessment. Law and Eckes (1995) say that these tests only measure lower order thinking skills of learners.

Alternative assessment on the other hand measures the higher order thinking skills. Learners get opportunities to display what they have learned and understood. Alternative assessment focuses on the learner’s performance and growth. Alternative assessment is developed with particular aim in a context over a time that gives a teacher a chance to measure the strength and weaknesses of the students in a contexts.
and situations (Law & Eckes, 1995 cited in Dikli, 2003). Simonson (2000) discusses the advantages of alternative assessment— they tend to simulate real-life contexts. Learners have opportunities to practice more authentic activities that they might encounter in real life situations. These real-life based activities give learners chance to transfer and apply their skills to solve the various problems related to real life situations. Alternative assessments give better understanding to the instructor about student learning (Winking, 1997 cited in Ibid).


**Table 4.3: Traditional assessment Vs. Alternative assessment**

<table>
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<th>Traditional assessment</th>
<th>Alternative assessment</th>
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</table>

(Source: Dikli, 2003: 16)

According to Bailey (1998) traditional assessment seems to have all the negative aspects but that is not the case. There are advantages to traditional assessment like there are disadvantages of alternative assessment. Traditional assessment test are more reliable, objective and valid. On the other hand alternative assessment lacks in reliability and validity as they carry more subjectivity. Simonson (2000) also claimed that ‘proponents of alternative assessment suggest that the content validity of “authentic task” is ensured because there is direct link between the expected behaviour and the ultimate goal of skill/ learning transfer’ (Simonson et al., 2000.
cited in Dikli, 2003:16). Law and Ecke (1995) pointed out that alternative assessment can be laborious on the part of teachers because of the diversity of products in portfolios and can be time consuming (cited in Ibid).

4.3.2. Alternative Assessment Tools

According to Simonson (et al., 2000) there are three approaches to alternative assessment, authentic assessment, performance-based assessment and constructivist assessment. Reeves (2000) streamlines three main ways to integrate alternative assessment into online learning settings: cognitive assessment, performance assessment and portfolio assessment. However some researchers and educator have used performance assessment and authentic assessment interchangeably. Wangsatoromtanakhun (1997) says that performance-based assessment includes both authentic and alternative assessment. Performance-based assessment can be described as student’s performance that is evident directly or indirectly and the assessment task should represent ‘real-world’ problems and issues (Elliot, 1995). Authentic assessment means that task should give learners the experience to the real-world i.e. learners should be able to solve real-life problems by applying their cognitive ability through the use of language. In order to have effective performance-based assessment, instructor needs to pay attention to the following points

1. Assessment task should reflect the understanding to what has been taught.
2. Learners should be given the scoring criteria before they start the task.
3. Briefing the learners about the assessment task and kind of performance expected from them before they attempt a task.
4. Self-assessment criteria should also be included for students to assess their own learning and understanding of task.
5. Comparing student’s performance with other students and according to the set criteria of performance (Elliot, 1995 cited in Ibid).

Portfolios and projects are two types of alternative assessment techniques.

Portfolios: It consists of collection of students works that display the level of mastery of skill of the task over a period of time (Kulicke et al., 1990 cited in Ibid). Portfolios are a good way of assessing student’s progress by collecting their work that exhibit their efforts, progress and achievements in particular area. Because of their nature,
portfolios require a lot of hard work from students and time commitment from teachers (Bailey, 1998 cited in Ibid). The advantages of portfolio assessment are

1. Students will get the idea about what they know and what they can do?
2. It will supplement the report cards or standardized tests.
3. It is a good way to show parents their child progress.

One such assessment used at distance is electronic portfolios. An electronic portfolio is a technology-based assessment. The functions of electronic portfolio are as same as the traditional portfolio. The only difference in traditional and electronic portfolio is that it takes little space because the students' records are stored in computer, hard disk. Rubric can also use to assess the quality of work in portfolios (Abrenica, online document cited in Ibid).

Projects: Projects can be done in a group or individually. They are more authentic and mostly based on real-life situations and concepts. Development of plan at work, research proposals, and multimedia presentations etc. all come under projects.

4.4. Purposes of Assessment

There can be various purposes of assessment but Rowntree (1990) identifies two major purposes for assessing students. They are:

1. To provide support and feedback to learners and to improve their ongoing learning.
2. To estimate what they have already achieved through grade or written assessment.

Both these purposes point out the formative and summative assessment procedure. Formative assessment is related to continuous assessment of learner's performance and summative assessment refers to what learner's has achieved at the end of the course i.e. summative. Formative includes all those activities which are meant for motivating, for enhancing the students' learning with clear indication of their progress. In ODL, formative assessment usually takes place in the form of:

1. 'Non-assessable activities and feedback in study materials (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999:15).
2. Self-assessment questions, activities and quizzes
3. Feedback on assignments from tutor.
The main purpose of summative assessment is to record and report the student's achievement at the end of the course. Therefore, summative assessment usually takes place in the form of end-course exams, whereas course work assignment contributes to the final examination marks. In ODL context, continuous assessment is a very beneficial approach as it will structure the learning and breaks down the assessment procedure into steps that will ensure the ongoing interaction between teachers and learners which will bring motivation, encouragement and confidence in students (Morgan and O'Reilly). The continuous assessment in ODL is through tutor marked assignments (TMAs) and computer marked assignments through which learners get an idea of their learning and progress (Stride, 2003).

4.5. Norm Referenced and Criterion Referenced Assessments

There are two grading criteria for assessment which are used in higher education. The discussion is important because they express teaching and learning and learners' achievements.

4.5.1. Norm-referenced assessment

It sets the standard for awarding grades by using the achievement of a group of students. During the initial period, students are ranked between 0-100 scales in a group. Norm-referenced assessment provides a description of where student's achievement lies in relation to other members in a group rather than focusing on individual competencies and qualities. Therefore, it does not give detailed summary of individual student's progress ability (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999; Luftig, 1989; STRIDE, 2003).

4.5.2. Criterion-referenced assessment

It clearly underlines the criteria and performance standard of each student. If these criteria and standards are met then the students achieves the 'corresponding grade irrespective of how others in group have performed or how many have achieved the same grade' (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999:18). The strength of criterion referenced assessment is that it provides clear focus on assessment on learning and gives detailed description of learner's achievement and standard achievements (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999; Luftig, 1989; STRIDE, 2003). However, norm-referenced assessment has less or no place in ODL context and this issue is debatable (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999).
4.6. Writing assessment

Learners and teachers both see assessment as an important process for improving writing. Writing assessment involves teacher's response to the student's written work in the form of comments, grades etc. Writing assessment usually fall under the category of classroom context and standardized testing context.

4.6.1. Types of writing assessment

4.6.1.1. Indirect writing assessment

Indirect assessment is not classroom based assessment as it is applied to a larger sector than a limited classroom number. It is standardized writing assessment which involves multiple-choice test for testing students' grammar, vocabulary and written expressions. About 40 to 50 years ago, standardized tests were used to assess students' potential in writing at the time of admission and placement (Camp 1993, Perkins 1983, White, 1993 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Stiggins, 1982 and Crusan, 2002). The indirect measures for testing writing abilities are vocabulary, sentence grammar and writing usage. For more than 25 years most of the writing assessment in USA used indirect measures of writing ability like multiple choice testing (Crusan, 2002). However, in the past 25 years, the US practice of indirectly assessing writing ability has been criticized from many academic reasons (Bullock, 1991; Conlan,1986; Moss, 1994; Stiggins, 1982; White, 1986, 1990 cited in Crusan, 2002). The problem was with the validity (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), 'ethics' (CCCC Committee on Assessment,1995; Courts & McInerney, 1993; Spolsky, 1997; White, 1994a), 'efficiency'(Williamson, 1994), 'the inability to measure skills that teachers consider important'(Hamp-Lyons, 2001).Some researchers (Hamp-Lyons, 1990;Huot, 1990a) have claimed that indirect assessment of writing by means of a multiple-choice instrument is now a thing of the past (cited in Crusan, 2002:18).

Though they are still being tested but many of these techniques have been replaced by direct measures of writing abilities. The use of standardized indirect assessment to measures the writing ability has been decreased (White, 1995 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

The advantage of indirect assessment is that if a test is carefully developed than it will be highly reliable. To match the current assessment needs of writing abilities, assessment has shifted its focus on composing process. This led the focus away from
indirect measurement of writing (multiple choice-tests, evaluations of mechanics) and
shifted towards direct measurement of writing abilities through eliciting writing
samples (Onore, 1986). Writing assessment attracts more importance to content
validity and constructs validity and these two issues cannot be addressed by indirect
writing assessment. The increasing emphasis on construct and content validity has put
the writing assessment more toward the use of direct writing assessment (Grabe and
Kaplan, 1996).

4.6.1.2. Direct writing assessment

In the beginning of 1970s, writing assessment turned towards the production of
controlled students writing samples. Direct assessment addressed the need for the
assessment of writing in a real context but at the same time it becomes different to
collect and evaluate the writing data as an indicator of overall writing abilities. For
better assessments results, standardized assessment has collaborated with direct
assessment for various validity issues such as to assess the audience impact, task type,
type of topic, nature of rater, training of rater, assessment rubric for grade assignments
and the types of grading scales used. These kinds of issues are also important for
classroom assessment but they are considered in large-scale assessment situations
(Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Greenberg, 1992).

Direct writing is usually considered with the assessment of direct writing samples task
producing greater evidence of reliability and validity (Stiggins, 1982; Crusan, 2002). Dierich (1974:1) stated ‘the reasoning of writing samples based on writing ability as
it is convincing to teachers of English, to prospective employers, and to the public as
actual samples of each students’ writing, especially if the writing is done under test
conditions in which one can be sure that each sample is the student’s own unaided
work. People who uphold the view that essays are the only valid test of writing ability
are found of using the analogy that, whenever we want to find out whether young
people can swim, we have them jump into a pool and swim’ (cited in Breland,
1983:1). Therefore, from Dierich (1974) it can be concluded that if one wants to
know how an individual can perform in any given task, a test of performance in that
task is needed.
4.6.1.2.1. Types of Direct writing task

In this section, a brief summary of various types of direct writing tasks has been discussed. Task types are ‘infinite’ in variety but only those writing task are discussed which are specific to the study. Following are some of well-known types of writing tasks:

1. Letters: There are various types of letters which an examinee can ask to write. For example, formal letter that will include job application letter to editor, complaint a product or service. Or any informal letter like letter to a friend/relative etc.

2. Narrative: Narration can be in the form of letter also, narration can of real or imaginary situation also; autobiographical account, a description of a vacation, and historical description would be some types of narration.

3. Descriptive: Although narration is usually written in descriptive form but involves the description of a series of events. For example, descriptions will include description of an object, it look, how it works etc.

4. Argumentative: it involves writer to take some issue and write persuasively on that issue, using evidence and personal reading experiences.

5. Expressive: Some tasks involve expressing personal opinion on some issue or events (Brelan, 1983).

4.6.1.3. Standardized direct assessment (SDA)

SDA of writing mostly involves assessment of writing abilities on a single topic for a brief period. Essays are good example of this category. A group of trained raters holistically rate the essays. All essays are rated by two raters usually and if any discrepancies are found in the score than they are assessed by third rater.

Test of written English (TWE) is one of the largest direct assessment measures which have exceeded a quarter of a million candidates per year in last five years (ETS, 1992, Test of Written English Guide 1992). The test is based on single topic essay for which writers are given 30 minutes. The test has high reliability and validity and the results have directly contributed to the improvement in task development, task and topic comparison, time for writing, essay rater training and essay scoring (Carlson et al, 1985, Golub-Smith et al.1993, Hale 1992, Henning 1992, Stansfield 1986and Ross, 1988 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Another commonly used direct assessment is
used on holistic scoring in British examination has been developed by International English Language Testing (IELTS). This is a joint product of British Council and the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (ULES). This is a test for second language speakers of English.

Large-scale writing assessment also takes place in other countries for assessing writing abilities for both L1 & L2 English students. The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) is a major exam for testing English language. It was essay as a mode of testing (Ingram, 1990 and Ingram & White, 1984). A similar kind of examination is conducted in Hong Kong annually and around 15,000 students between the age group of 16-18 years appear for Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) (Milanovic, 1987). In USA, two programs are run by Michigan Composition Board and the California State University Composition Board. The Michigan Composition Board, started in 1979 assesses the writing abilities of all incoming undergraduates to the university. 50 minutes essay writing is given to the students where they are placed under three levels of writing programs. Every year approximately 6,000 students appear for the test (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 1993 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). The California State University conducts two hour writing test that consists of single writing test for 40 minutes. The writing samples are than sent to different campuses of the California state College and University. Scoring procedures are carefully controlled and test achieves high reliability measures (Greenberg, 1988 cited in Ibid).

The different type of large scale assessment approach is carried out in the USA by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) program for writing assessment (Appalebee et.al, 1986, 1990a, 1990b). Students who appear for NAEP receive a booklet which consists of sets of background questions and sets of reading and writing tasks for 1 hour. NAEP has increased the time allocation from 1 hour to 1 hour 25 minutes for completing writing tasks. In the past 25 years, around 1,300,00 students have appeared for the test.

A final major international step was taken by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to understand the writing development through direct writing assessment. In IEA, students were assessed through different grades at three different levels in 14 different countries. There are eight different
writing tasks ranging from description to letter writing to essay type (Degenhart 1987; Gorman et al, 1988; Purves et al, 1984; Vahapassi 1988 cited in Ibid).

4.6.1.4. Classroom- based direct assessment

Students' writing abilities are almost determined by the writing samples assessment. Classroom assessment is largely based on providing feedback to student's written drafts for performing better. If assessment is not carried out in a class then the classroom teaching is considered incomplete. There are number of ways in which in-class assessment can be carried out. In a classroom, assessment of writing can be based on a single writing task, series of writing tasks, writing project or a writing portfolio. Assessment can be formative, summative, focussing on formal, rhetorical, content aspects of writing, assessing writing as independent skill or integrated with other skills. Grading can be analytical or holistic depending on the purpose of assessment (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

The most common form of classroom assessment is summative which is often based on single essay writing for relatively limited time. However, this assessment has less validity and to increase the validity in a single essay students are given more time to develop on a topic and multiple writing sessions are fixed for the essay itself. It also involves students into multiple drafting, revision, editing their own draft which in itself a kind of self- assessment of their own writing. When students are involved in writing processes, teachers spends more time in convincing the students regarding the importance of pre-writing, brainstorming, planning, writing, revising. It is important that summative assessment should be done in accordance with the on-going instruction i.e. formative assessment. Formative assessment of writing is carried out in the form of multiple-drafting, revision, editing, etc.

Another kind of writing assessment refers to ability students to write a short series of assignments during the final week of a course and making assessment of series of writing task produced by students. The advantage of such assessment is that student's writing can be assessed on different genres and not on a single task and the disadvantage is that it requires more careful scoring criteria which have to be fair and easily interpreted by the students.

Writing assessment based on classroom context can use different scoring approaches; the most likely chosen options are- analytical scale rating which has always been a
popular way to assign grade to student's written drafts (analytical scoring has been discussed in detail in section 4.8.1.3).

Non-quantitative assessment is adopted by teachers if they are not comfortable with the numerical scoring. Some teachers feel that scoring does not provide purposeful feedback to writing and student's focuses are more toward scores rather than on writing. Non-quantitative method will include feedback on student's essay. The teacher response will be in the form of responses to highlight strong and weak points of the essays, suggesting student ways to improve their writing. A non-quantitative assessment would include the review of process, particular problems that were difficult to solve, strong points of the writing, irrelevant information that to be deleted and focusing issues which require more attention in the next writing stages.

Alternative approaches to assessing writing are relatively uncommon process of assessing writing. Unlike other grading approaches discussed above which provide evaluative feedback at some point of writing process, alternative approaches do not always have such a fixed evaluation criteria (Pierce and O'Malley, 1992 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). One form of alternative assessment which is commonly used is assessment conference. In this form of assessment, student-teacher conferences are set up to assess the student's progress, to discuss the problems, plan future goals, highlight he strong and weak points etc. the use of conferences is to give learner the ownership and responsibility over the assessment process. Teachers who don't allow students to involve in assessment procedure would not favour this process. Before a conference begins, teacher and students should have clear purpose and goals so that maximum time is utilised in assessment.

Self-assessment procedure is another different way of assessing writing which involves students. Teacher provides some guidelines or rubric according to which students check their progress. The guidelines are designed in according to particular genre and criteria which are to be assessed.

Teacher-focused form of non-graded assessment is one of the ways of classroom assessment which is based on teacher observation. It involves records of teacher observation of students' progress and of their weak and strong areas of writing. Teacher prepares notes on student's performance of a writing assignment and keeps records of discussion made on draft. These records and notes make the basis of
student’s assessment. This process is more suitable for those teachers who don’t believe in grading but report the progress to the students in the form of written comments.

Lastly, informal assessment is also a part of assessing students writing which involves teacher observation and it stresses non-grading, negotiation and discussion with students. It is based on the assumption that students will bring self-motivations for working on their writing abilities. From the point of view of language, it is not very feasible since it requires more formal mechanism of assessment procedure (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.6.2. Problems with direct assessment

Largely in most of the assessment situation, making simple assumption about the development of writing test have been replaced by using many variables which may have impacted on students’ performance like students’ background, interests, needs, topic, amount of time given for completing the writing task etc.

The popularity of direct writing assessment and in particular with reference to it use of essay as single prompt on a holistic scored has generated criticism. Earlier problem occurred with the inter-rater reliability scores across essay (Garbe and Kaplan, 1996 and Brelan, 1983).

Recent criticism of direct writing assessment is related with holistic scoring which have raised the question about the content and construct validity of such approaches. The major issues are as follows:

1. Is it possible to assess writing sample on-time in a decontextualized situation?
2. Is it possible that student’s writing sample for a brief period of time can represent student’s ability to write in different situation with different purposes?
3. How can a single general rating reflect a student’s ability to write?
4. How far assessing writing product will provide information on how student carried out writing process?
5. How can single prompt be generalised to other topic?
6. How can a brief writing sample be used to provide feedback and diagnose information of student’s progress in later stages?
7. Are the raters concerned with the holistic score or concentrating on specific part of the essay?


Direct and indirect assessment focuses on different components of writing. Direct assessment measures the actual composition skills of learners. It provides necessary information for making decision regarding learners' writing. On the other hand, indirect assessment tests the ability of using convention of effective writing: grammar, punctuations, organization and so on (Stiggins, 1982).

4.6.3. Portfolio Assessment

A portfolio approach to writing assessment is a recent approach developed in assessment both in large-scale and in-class room contexts. Currently portfolio assessment is being used from primary school to university level to assess the writing abilities of students from L1 to L2 writing in a formal context (Weigle, 2002).

A portfolio can be defined as 'a purposeful collection of student works that exhibits to the student (and/or others) the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in a given area' (Northwest Evaluation Association, 1991:4 in Wolcott, 1998 cited in Weigle, 2002:198).

In case of writing, portfolio is a collection of written texts written for different purpose over a period of time. Portfolio assessment can be applied to different program and settings and there is a variation in terms of how portfolios are assessed and evaluated and used. However, there are certain characteristics which are common in many portfolio assessment programs.

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) outlined nine characteristics of Portfolios:

1. A portfolio is a collection of written samples and not just one writing sample.
2. Over a period of time, a writer can display different writing varieties in different genre for different purpose and readers.
3. Portfolios are rich in context as they are closely related to the learning situation and displays what the writer has achieved within the context.
4. Portfolios provide ample time to the writers for revision and correction of their written draft before the final evaluation.

5. Students generally select the writing pieces with the guidance from instructor.

6. Due to delayed evaluation students can select the best writing piece which fulfil the evaluation criteria and can revise them before putting them into their portfolios.

7. Portfolio also involves self-assessment, in which student’s reflect on their work and can arrange their portfolios accordingly.

8. Portfolios are very good means of measuring the student’s growth along with the abilities achieved in linguistic accuracy, organization, developing ideas.

9. Portfolios provide a means for measuring development over time in a way that neither the teacher nor the student have expected.

From these nine characteristics, the most important components of portfolio are collection, selection and reflection of not a single but number of writing samples, which should provide evidence of student’s writing abilities (Weigle, 2002)

4.6.3.1. Portfolios in large-scale assessment

The best example of portfolio writing assessment is used in USA at the State University of New York at Stony brook. In the English Freshman Composition program students were asked to create a portfolio of their course writing. Portfolio should consisted of three revised essay (narrative, descriptive or expressive essay; an academic essay and the third essay is the critical analysis of another essay), one in class essay, cover sheet for each essay describing the process and purpose of writing each essay (Elbow and Belanoff 1991, cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

Raters were trained to give passing or not passing grades. The program is effective in involving student to write better, the purpose of this program is that students must take writing process seriously and write their draft keeping in view the real audience. The sense is developed that students are being assessed on the real writing production for the course (Elbow and Belanoff, 1991 cited in Ibid)

The problem with this approach is that it teachers are spend more time on evaluating students writing, while students may have more opportunities for cheating. Many universities have developed portfolio assessment program similar to State University of New York with some minor variations.
4.6.3.2. Portfolios of in-class assessment

Portfolios assessment in classroom context has many opportunities for assessing student writing abilities and can be used for both diagnostic and future placement purposes. The benefits of using portfolios in classroom are that it will be more in a controlled form than large-scale assessment. And, there will be larger on-going collection of writing sample that will present the student's writing abilities more successfully.

One of the important characteristics of using portfolio assessment in classroom is that it can be combined with other alternative assessment options for getting good results. Portfolios can be way of connecting students with their writing. It provides the teacher and students to discuss and work on various part of the writing. Portfolios not only accounts the strengths and weaknesses of students but also give account of student’s efforts in writing progress, revision process, editing, re-drafting before the final submission.

In a class of younger students, portfolios become the source of information for the student's writing including informal writing, pre-writing, etc. And at the end of session, portfolio provides handful information on student’s achievement which could be sent to the parents as a proof of achievement.

In colleges/universities or at more advanced level, portfolios become more personal record of student’s development. Writing portfolios become more professional in this context where teachers and students organise materials, student writes his own introduction and explain the importance of each written draft he has produced. The use of portfolios in classroom appears to be more useful way of assessing writing (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.7. Writing as Performance Assessment

The ability to write well has become the important concern for both in second and foreign language writers. The ability to write and speak well in second language is recognised widely as an important skill for educational, business and professionally reasons. The acquisition of a specific language skill is important and to test that skill is equally important and writing is no exception for that. As the role of writing in second language increases, there is even greater demand for valid and reliable ways to test writing ability. The test of writing involves two basic components: one or more
writing tasks with instructions that tell writer how and what to write and secondly, evaluation process (Weigle, 2002)

According to Wiggins (1989), ‘Performance assessment rely on students’ work or judgement about their performance in completing a task that are used in evaluate their thinking skills (cited in Heck and Crislip, 2001: 19).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) conceptualised the notion of performance assessment. The performance assessment is defined as any assessment procedure that involves the ‘observation of behaviour in the real-world or a simulation of a real-world activity’ (Weigle, 2002:46). Because performance assessment engages the learners in real-world problem solving assessment task, therefore, it involves integration of knowledge and explanation of solution. Educational reformer argues that performance assessment can bring positive changes to school curriculum and institution by broadening the teachers’ responsibilities in evaluating the learners’ performance (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Resnick and Resnick, 1992; Smith, 1996 cited in Heck and Crislip, 2001). Performance assessment differs from traditional paper-pencil tests. Writing test that involves actual writing, opposed to completing multiple-choice items that, can be considered a performance test, since the written product represents a performance of writing. In case of writing, performance assessment can be discussed in two contexts: classroom-institutional assessments (including portfolio assessment) and national assessment by the National Assessment of Educational Progress Programme. In both these contexts, scoring is carried out with the help of primary-trait and multiple-trait scoring which is designed to assess the specific writing abilities for specific purpose rather than assessing general writing abilities (Faigley et al, 1995 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Performance assessment is most likely carried out using multiple-trait scoring for assessing specific writing abilities that should be appropriate for placement purpose (Ibid).

McNamara (1996) provides a distinction between a strong and weak sense of performance assessment in language testing. In the strong sense, ‘the focus of a performance assessment is on the successful completion of a given task that requires language use, and not on the language use itself’. For example, if a task aims to write a persuasive essay, than the writer is only successful if the reader is persuaded. In the weak sense of performance assessment, the focus of the assessment is on the language
used and not on the fulfilment of task. The purpose is to focus on the language
development not the ability to persuade (Weigle, 2002).

4.7.1. Test usefulness

Bachman and Palmer (1996:17) state that 'the most important consideration in
designing and developing language test is the use for which it is intended, so that the
most important quality of a test is its usefulness' (Weigle, 2002:48). The test
usefulness is defined on six principles which are also related to the writing
assessment. They are:

4.7.1.1. Reliability

It is defined as consistency of measurement across the different characteristics or
facets of a testing situation. A test is said to be reliable if individual student get same
score from one rater to the next and the same score is achieved on different occasions.
Reliability is considered as one of the important scoring measure and is important for
test validity. If a test score do not show consistency than it will become difficult to
make inferences and decision on the basis of test score. Reliability in a writing test
can is affected by several factors which are related to the writing task such as the
topic, the expected learning outcome and the variables that are related to the scoring
process such as the background and experience of the raters, nature of the rating scale
and the kind of training given to the raters (Weigle, 2002; Greenberg, 1992).

4.7.1.2. Construct validity

It refers to 'the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretation that make on
Construct validation means how well the test measures what it actually intends to
measure. For example, if a test is designed to test business writing skills and writing
task is focusing only on letters and memoranda than the designing of a test is on a
shaky ground. For better results writing test has to generalise other genres such as
reports and minutes, executive summaries. Construct validity is related specifically to
each test and it depends on the definition of the ability of interest for a particular
testing context. The five important evidences that can be used to demonstrate the
construct validity are
4.7.1.2.1. Content analysis

It involves analysis of content and making judgements on subject matter to determine the adequacy and representativeness of the test content i.e. the area to which test results are intended to test (Weigle, 2002; Greenberg, 1992).

4.7.1.2.2. Authenticity

It is defined as ‘the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language use (TLU) task’ (Bachman and Palmer, 1996:23) i.e. a writing task must represent the writing of examinee that he will need in the world beyond the test. However, maintaining authenticity for some writing tasks is problematic. For example, in General English test, if a task is about writing a letter to the editor or job application than the expected results would be easily identified. In such cases test developers need to identify the main purpose of test i.e. less authenticity but high reliability (Weigle, 2002).

4.7.1.2.3. Interactiveness

It involves ‘the extent and type of involvement of the test taker, individual characteristics in accomplishing a test task’ (Bachman and Palmer, 1996:25 cited in Weigle, 2002:53). This means that a test taker must display language knowledge, cognitive ad linguistic resources to complete a task, topic knowledge and affective schemata. All these are characteristics for language testing. If a task involves writer to use all these characteristics than the task is interactive. A highly interactive task will include more than linguistics competence i.e. It will include strategic competence that will include goal setting assessment and planning.

4.7.1.2.4. Impact

This refers to effect of tests on individual (test taker and teacher), educational institutions to society. As Bachman and Palmer (1996) say that ‘tests are never administered in vacuum. Tests reflect the societal concepts, values and the test scores have consequences for individuals and group that must be considered carefully in making decisions regarding the administration and use of tests’ (Weigle, 2002:54). This impact of test on curriculum and instruction is referred as washback effect. Washback can have positive and negative effect on tests. Positive washback effect can
be defined as any effect of testing that encourages teacher to use best current practices in the pedagogy field. For example, recently TOEFL examination has introduced a writing sample as a part of Standard English, it includes 30 minutes writing sample and the scores of which are added to the total score and are also reported as a separate score to the test users. As a result many school who offered TOEFL preparation courses are focusing on writing essay rather than just on grammar only. This test has a positive washback effect.

However, washback is a complex process and results are not always straight forward. The design of test cannot guarantee the positive wasback effect. But beneficial positive washback can occur if a test taker, teacher and administration understand the purpose, goals of the test that should give the informative and reliable results. The test should involve the use of real-world language use with clear assessment procedure (Bailey, 1996 cited in Weigle, 2002)

4.7.1.2.5. Practicality

A writing test is practical only if the resources available for developing test related activities meet the criteria that required for developing or administering the test. Resources can be in the form of ‘human resources’, ‘material resources’, ‘time for designing tasks’, ‘administering the test’ and ‘scoring’ (Weigle, 2002:56).

4.8. Scoring Procedure for Writing Assessment Task

4.8.1. Rating scales

Scales are used in assessing the performance task like writing tests ‘implicitly’ or ‘explicitly’. It represents the theoretical basis upon which the test is framed. Because of this rater develops the scale for the abilities are to be measured by the test describing each scale clearly. The three main types of rating scales are:

4.8.1.1. Primary-trait scoring

This scoring trait is not so common and is not used in a large-scale writing assessment and in class assessment; mostly it is used in experimental studies. The use of primary trait scoring is not very economical because the guidelines of every written task have to be defined and written differently (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

Primary-trait scoring is related closely to the work of Lloyd-Jones (1997) for National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for a large scale assessment
programs for school in the US. The purpose of primary-trait scoring is to understand how well student can write with limited defined range of discourse (example, persuasion and explanation). In primary-trait scoring, the rating scale is defined according to the type of writing assignment. A scoring rubric is created for each writing task. Primary-trait assessment has not been widely used in second language writing assessment and little evidence are available to show how primary scoring can be applied in second language testing (Weigle, 2002).

4.8.1.2. Holistic rating

Holistic scoring is one of the most common forms of scoring for large scale writing assessment. Holistic scoring is based on a numerical scale ranging anywhere from 1-4 to 1-9. These scales are briefly described according to the genre and nature of scoring rubric (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). In a holistic scoring, writing script is read quickly at a glance and then judged against the scoring rubric or rating scale. An example of holistic scoring rubric in ESL is the scale used for the TOEFL writing test (see Weigle, 2002). Holistic rubric is designed to pinpoint reader’s attention toward certain writing aspects, depending on the purpose that is essential to that particular context while providing relevant information on those aspects. Holistic scoring is considered to be more valid than analytical rubric because it reflects more authentic reader’s reaction to a written text and in analytical scoring too much attention is paid to the parts which ‘obscure the meaning of the whole’ (White, 1984:408 cited in Weigle, 2003:114; Greenberg, 1992).

The disadvantages of holistic scoring are that a single score does not provide sufficient information about person’s writing abilities because single score cannot rate the various aspects of writing such as syntax, vocabulary, organization etc. It is difficult to interpret the nature of holistic scoring because different raters might use different criteria for the same score. For example, one rater can give 4 on script because of its linguistic features (grammar, vocabulary) and another rater might give 4 to the same script for its rhetorical features (organization, content, development) (Ibid).

4.8.1.3. Analytical scoring

Analytical scoring includes rating of scripts on several aspects of writing or criteria rather than giving a single score. Depending on the purpose, a writing script might be
rated on features like content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics, language use etc. Therefore, analytical rubric gives much more detailed information about person’s writing abilities in different aspects and for this reason it is more preferable to use analytical scoring.

One of the best and widely used analytical scoring in ESL was created by Jacobs et al. (1981). The scripts are rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. These five aspects are distributed differently to show the emphasis on content first (30 points), next language use (25 points), and organization and vocabulary are given equal weightage (20 points) followed by mechanics with very little emphasis (5 points). Several colleges and institution has adopted for assessing training materials and sample compositions for fair scoring.

Another slightly different analytical scoring procedure for second language writing assessment is developed for the Test in English for Educational Purposes (TEEP) by Weir (1988). Weir’s rubric consists of seven scales; each scale is divided into four levels with scoring ranging from 0 to 3.

A third type of analytical rubric is the Michigan Writing Assessment Coring Guide (Hamp-Lyons, 1990; 1990b cited in Weigle, 2002). It is used for entry-level university writing examination. Michigan Writing Assessment is scored on three rating scales: ideas and arguments, rhetorical features and language control. The scales were developed in consultation with the faculty members of the university (Ibid).

The analytical rubric provides more diagnostic information of the learner’s writing abilities than holistic rubric do. It is easy to understand and inexperienced raters can also easily calculate the score (Francis, 1977 and Adams, 1981 in Weir, 1990 cited in Weigle, 2002). Analytical rubric is quite helpful for second language learners who have different exposures to writing skill. For example, a script is well developed but it has many grammatical mistakes. Analytical rubric can be more reliable than holistic rubric because ‘additional items are added to a discrete-point test, so a scoring scheme in which the multiple scores are given to each scripts. They tend to improve the reliability (Hamp-Lyons, 1991b, Huot, 1996 cited in Weigle, 2002).

The disadvantage of analytical rubric is that it takes longer time than holistic rubric because rater has to make more than one decision on one script.
Another kind of scoring rubric is multi-trait scoring. In this, a rubric is designed with number of aspect of the essays, some rubrics may appear general and some might be more specific. Multiple-trait scoring is used for writing assessment that requires more polished profile of learners mainly for diagnostic purpose. The danger of using multiple-trait scoring us that it is difficult to use and design. Careful scoring is required, in cases where scoring is not done properly than issues can be raised regarding the validity and reliability of the scoring (Canale, et al, 1988; Cumming, 1990a; Hamp-Lyons and Henning, 1991 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.9. Assessment in Open and Distance contexts

Course writers are busy in ODL context producing and writing voluminous study material. ODL universities assumes that their study materials will be driving force and shape the students learning and student will work in a manner as materials will direct them (Morgan &O’Reilly, 1999).

According to the researches into distance learners’ use of study materials (Marland et al, 1990; Parer, 1988) and the use of in-text activities (Lockwood, 1992, 1995; O’Reilly et al, 1997) suggests that there are far more complex ‘behaviours at work’. There are numerous ways in which ODL learners approach, their learning are always on prior importance for assessment decision. Take an example of student ‘Mary’, she is a nurse by profession and had registered in a part-time distance course to upgrade her qualifications. She has a family and children to look after. Her studies are important for her but her job commitment and family priorities give her less time to study. She received her study materials but has not get opportunity to open and read them. When she gets time, she open and quickly scans the units due to scarcity of time and other commitment she turns to assessment part and read it carefully. She closely observed that what is expected out of her? She now focuses on first week assignment; and for the successful completion of assignment and grades she outlined the important part of material that will be included in the assignments and rejected the entire volumes of material supplied to her. She also thought of taking help from her colleagues, internet and some other source of material as well (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983 cited in Morgan &O’Reilly, 1999).

In this example, Mary has largely ignored very well written and designed materials that were intended to provide her knowledge and learning on her subject. She just shaped her earning around the assessment task and planned her studies and
assignments according to that. Mary's approach is more strategic one than pragmatic in which students are more focused on gaining good results in the given time (Morgan & O'Reilly, 1999).

It is important to note that argument here is not to prove that ODL materials are not important or less valuable, on the contrary they are very important indeed and serve as a backbone to ODL universities. However, the efforts of making SLM more readable will be useless if they are not tagged with the carefully designed assessment tasks. However, it is also important that Mary's approach is not appropriate but majority of learners in ODL operate in the similar way. This raises the question of how well assessment tasks are presented in the material with the primary concerns of attaining the objectives of the course.

4.10. Opportunities for assessment in ODL learning

In formal classroom, teachers and students have numerous of opportunities for assessing their learning, problems, interests and motivations which are on the display during their learning encounters. But in ODL mode, learners hardly enjoy all these opportunities. ODL learners have very less chances to get assessed properly in terms of their needs, writing assignments, and learning outcomes. They don't get opportunities to diagnose their own error or mistakes before sending their assignments to the tutor. Face-to-face learners can have follow up work for assignments and can rectify their error before and after submitting the assignments. Moreover they can discuss their problems in the class. While, ODL learners lack all these assessment possibilities and they require such follow up work through tutor checked assignments. Therefore ODL learners require inbuilt writing assessment tasks in terms of well-designed self-assessment criteria. Tutors and SLM also need self-assessment so that learners can have more practice before submitting the assignments. Learners in ODL mode need relevant assessment tasks and timely support marking scheme and follow up work for assessing writing assignments so that tutor's feedback can contribute more to the learners' understanding of SLM and assignments (Morgan & O'Reilly, 1999 and STRIDE, 2003).

Distance learners are more dependent on effective timely supported assessment. They are also dependent on continue 'turnaround' of assignments for getting feedback that will help them to write better and perform well.
4.10.1. Problems of assessment in ODL

ODL has been criticised sometimes for some pedagogical approaches that 'counter' its nature of openness and student-centeredness (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999:24). Peters (1995) listed some of the lapses in ODL assessment. They are:

1. Few choices are available for learners for the assessment.
2. Assignments are not properly paced
3. Over emphasis is on final grade i.e. summative assessment and very less on formative assessment.
4. Very minimal opportunities are available to the learners for the self-assessment (Ibid).

More balanced criticism is provided by Gibss (1995) which includes:

1. Issues regarding marking scheme as openness assessment tend to produce higher average marks.
2. Concerns regarding the reliability in marking as ODL assessment tend to be individualised and difficult to compare.
3. No assessment device for stopping plagiarism, cheating and copying in the writing assignments.
4. Learners themselves do not accept other methods of assessment such as group work, portfolio assessment, peer assessment (Ibid)

There is a need to device proper assessment criteria in ODL framework which should include teachers/tutors, institution, course writers and students.

4.10.2. Key qualities of Open and Distance assessment

Following the work of Gibbs (1995), Rowntree (1977) and Broud (1995) the qualities of open and distance assessment are listed below:

1. A clear rationale and consistent pedagogical approach

From the very beginning, it is important to have clear idea of what is expected to achieve from subject and associated assessment. Gibbs (1995) pointed out that assessment of task should be in according to the course rationale rather than a general commitment to student centred learning. Assessment tasks helps in developing learning abilities of learners therefore they are required to be meaningful task.
Similarly, the pedagogical approach needs to be consistent and closely related to the rationale and assessment task of the unit.

1. Explicit values, aims, criteria and standards

The assessment design and criteria that underline the judgment about students’ achievements should be clearly stated to the learners. When the learners know clearly what is required and expected out of them they are more likely to observe their learning and will drive more towards making their learning purposeful and better.

2. Authentic and Holistic tasks

It is very important to engage ODL learners in tasks which have workplace context and are based on real-life situations and problems. Authentic assessment tasks help to make judgement about whether learners are able to apply their cognitive ability in solving the task. Holistic assessment involves the meaningful and integral ways of assessing wide range of learners’ display of knowledge.

3. Sufficient and timely formative assessment

As there is separation of teachers from learners, therefore there is a less chance of formative assessment in ODL. Both formative and summative assessment should be integrated strategically to provide motivation, structured learning and create a kind of dialogue between tutor and students and help the ODL learners to look into their progress. Tutor can also help learners in identifying their problems and devising solutions for that.

Hence, assessment in ODL context may found in small packages as compared to formal assessment. ODL assessment need to developed in order to promote writing assignments and learning on a well-established ground (Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999; STRIDE, 2003).

4.11. Reliability and Validity of assessment in ODL

Reliability and validity are main assessing measures depending upon the nature of the test. Following is the discussion on validity and reliability.

It refers to what is meant to be measured in accordance with the objective of any given unit or lesson. To achieve validity, the assessment must test learner’s performance on each given objective and the assessment should provide the appropriate situation possible for measuring the specific abilities being measured. For
example, if the objective of the writing assignment is to test learner's composition skills, then the question should not be framed for testing the grammar skills. In this situation the objective and the learning outcome will not match and the validity of this task will fail.

On the other hand, as discussed earlier reliability means the consistency in the assessment items. Reliability or consistency operates at the level of individual assessor and more than one assessor. Reliability is achieved when an assessor gives an identical response/solution to a problem. Every time the grades available must show sign of consistency. Then the test or score is said to be reliable. The key component in determining the reliability of an assessment is consistency in marking. There is always a chance for human error when more than one assessor is assigned to a group of student's assignment responses. If all assessors tend to give similar grade then the reliability is achieved.

4.12. Methods of assessment in ODL

There are various methods of assessment in ODL. Following are the ways that guide students' assessment.

1. Objective questions: This marking is a simple mechanical process of marking the questions. There are various types of objectives question like true false, fill in the blanks, multiple choices, matching and so on. Marking can be done by an individual or by a computer.

2. Short answer questions: Short answer questions consist of different types of questions which consist of one sentence answer, writing a paragraph, completing a table/diagram, preparing a list.

3. Long answer question: Long answer questions consist of long answer type like essay, reports and composition etc.

4. Presentation: To assess the presentation skills, the method has 'high validity if it is assessed by a group' (STRIDE, 2003:19)

5. Formative assessment: This method of assessment helps to monitor and develop student's learning. It provides feedback to learners to improve their on-going learning. It includes all those activities which are designed to assess learner understanding of material and assignment, motivate them and provides indication of their progress. Self-assessment questions (SAQ) of SLM help the
learner to assess his/her understanding and comprehension level of unit. Feedbacks on assignments from tutor/counsellor also come under formative assessment.

6. Summative assessment: It provides total feedback at the end of the course achievements.

4.13. Assessment of SLM for writing tasks in ODL

Assessment of SLM at distance mode is still in struggling phase and assessment strategies need to be developed for effective writing abilities. Assessment of writing tasks in distance is relatively a new topic and not many studies have been conducted in this area. Till date very little has been said and done for assessment of writing skills in ODL context.

Writing courses that are offered in distance mode particularly are more challenging because writing skill itself is a very challenging activity and its development requires effective interaction with teachers, peers and materials in order to command over it. Lack of existing literature in the area of the assessing SLM particular for writing tasks has made it more difficult for students to assess their performance. Assessing the quality of writing assignments and tasks are an important way to assess the quality of SLM. There is a need to improve the assessment method and related strategies in order to enhance the learners performance (Tucker, 2012).

Many distance university faculties and colleges provide feedback to re-design their courses for distance learning but a distance coordinator has this responsibility to assess, evaluate and administer any distance program. If effective assessment strategies are applied to any distance writing course than it could provide benefits to a program and learners (Leverenz, 2008 cited in Ibid).

Old Dominion University offers The IDS-Professional Writing degree undergraduate program that specializes in writing. It provides learners practices in interpersonal organizational skills, composition skills and basic level of understanding in management, marketing and public relations (ODU, 2011, cited in Ibid). This program emphasized promoting writing across the disciplines, therefore an assessment method is needed to assess students' writing ability. Distance writing program is dependent on the learning assessment that takes place in each individual course. There are number of assessment methods, including maintaining electronic portfolios but
these methods are not sufficient in bringing out real quality writing work from distance learners. Distance learning suggests that faculty, materials writers need training to understand the needs and problems of distance learners (Valentine, 2002 cited in *Ibid*).

Any distance institution offering writing course needs to offer clear assessment procedure for students. Assessment of course material and students assignments is two important factors that cannot be ignored. Distance program require valid and reliable methods of assessing students learning outcomes. Mateo (2007) have argued that portfolio method is an important assessment tool that offers students learning records for a period of time and how far developments are evident of students’ performance. However, for better assessment results in distance writing programs portfolio assessment is combined with other forms of assessment is required in order to provide a better evaluation of students understanding and writing competencies (Tucker, 2012).

### 4.14. Assessment issues in Distance education

The contexts of assessment are applicable to any instructional setting institution whether face to face or at distance set-up. However, there are some special credits attached to assessment when it becomes the part of distance program (Simonson et al., 2000 cited in Dikli, 2003). Nouwens and Towers (1997) pointed out that employing assessment strategies are determined by the delivery media, resources and the time available. Some of the assessment strategies used in distance mode are as follows-

1. Writing develops individually and sent by regular mail or by e-mail.
2. Tests (automatically handled by computer program)
3. Term paper (analysed by professor or assistant)
4. Oral or written tests
5. Assignments

There are several issues that must be taken into consideration in designing and implementing assessment in distance mode. Simonson (2000) underline the essential role of fairness of the assessment. He suggests that instructor should have flexible approach with distant learner.
Nouwens and Towers (1997) pointed out effective assessment in distance mode includes the following:

1. Develop the learner's independent study skills.
2. Promote educational dialogue between the tutor and learners.
3. Help, identify and deal with learners' misconceptions.
4. Give directions to learning in key subject area.
5. Relate learning to students' work and experience.
6. Permit students to assess their own performance.
7. Provide fair, valid and reliable assessment.
8. Provide feedback about strengths and weaknesses of the study materials (Dikli, 2003)

Assessment of student's writing is a process which occurs at many times in a class to assess the writing performances of students at different stages throughout the course. Teachers assume different role while assessing the writing scripts of students. They motivate and facilitate written drafts of students. One of the major purposes of assessment is to provide feedback to students. Feedback is very crucial for the development of writing skill (University of Nebraska-Lincoln 2014).

4.15. Suggestions for Assessing Students Writing

Good assessment practice starts with pedagogical aim and sound design of assignments, description and expected learning outcomes for writing tasks. The feedback given on any task is dependent on the kind of expected learning outcomes. While designing writing assignments instructor should have clear purpose of expected learning outcomes. The idea is to devise mechanism to ascertain goals expectation. Therefore the issue is to locate appropriate method in terms of rubric design for various stages and for different types of writing tasks.

It is advisable to the writing teachers to start give early feedback to students' written drafts because it will give them idea about their about their progress. Students should get opportunities to revise their draft. However, it is important that a teacher does not need to provide feedback on each and every draft. Structuring time for peer feedback, self-assessment can be very effective way for students to receive feedback in the class and gradually become to learn to revise and edit their own writing. Providing excessive feedback will also discourage learners for revising and re-writing drafts.
Discussing the purpose of any written discourse will inform the students of the expected outcomes. Student work well when they know the importance of any written assignment. Explicitly related goals of writing assignments and motivate the learners better to achieve the desired goal. Also, teachers should mention the assessment criteria to the students so that they can structure their assignments based on assessment procedure and marking (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2014).

Assessment of writing assignments is the main interaction between the students and tutor. Assessment also makes learners aware about the kind of work required from them in their working schedule, their attempt and efforts in understanding the course materials (Richwood and Goodwin, 2000 cited in COL, 2002).

Tutor need to keep in mind the goals of the course in order to improve the writing abilities of the ODL learners. The process of assessment is intended to enable learners to recognise their strengths and areas that need improvement. For successful completion of writing assignments and improving writing abilities ODL learners should at least have the provision to revise their assignments, re-submit them. The performance of learners should not compare as there is a wide diversity of learner’s needs (COL, 2002).

4.16. Means of Responding

Responding to students writing might occur at different levels of writing proves, from reading response to activities to brainstorming to drafting, revision etc. There are various forms in which teacher can respond to student’s written drafts.

1. Local comments: ‘Local’ means focusing attention to specific kind of criteria. For example, grammatical patterns, vocabulary or sentence construction, mechanics. Local comments happen to call attention to specific moments in the writing by highlighting them and explaining their importance like mechanic of writing. Local comments on written drafts are mostly given in the formative assessment stages.

2. Global: When the focus is more on the overall nature of writing rather than on specific criteria than the comments are global which usually comes at the end of the written piece in detail. It’s a kind of explanation of assigning grades/ marks with the reasons.
3. Rubrics: Charts or grids which are often used to assess student's written scripts against set criteria and scoring patterns. This kind of assessment helps in knowing effectively how well students' have met those criteria and or what exactly they lack. Scoring is relatively fair in such assessment procedure (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2014).

4.17. Features of good Assessment practice

In ODL, assessment practice includes assessing assignments. Mostly course writers are involved in designing the assignments and tutors are not generally considered while designing assignments. But it is very important all tutor should recognise the qualities of a well-designed assignments. Morgan and O'Reilly (1999) identify the following elements as good characteristics of ODL assignments design:

1. Assignments need to possess clear rationale with clear pedagogical implications.
2. Assignments need to have clear aims and objectives with set standard and criteria.
3. Assignments need focus on authentic and holistic tasks.
4. Assignments need to be flexible for learners to complete them.
5. Assignments need to be designed keeping in mind sufficient time for solving them with timely formative assessment.
6. Assignments need to have clear understanding of the learning content and perceptions.

Considering the important features of assignment design and assessment strategies to support learners in achieving the goals of assessment are:

4.17.1. Fairness

It implies that assignments are required to be design keeping in view the course contents and objectives. There should be a balance between SLM and assignments. Appropriate timing for completing the assignments should be given to the learners with proper space for receiving feedback from tutor. Fairness is also applicable for tutor in assessing assignments with fairly marking scheme.

4.17.2. Clarity

It is one of the most important features in designing and assessment of assignments. Clarity in assignments ensures that tasks are easy to understand and are unambiguous.
For assessing learners’ performance assessment strategies, principles and evaluation methods are required to be stated clearly with the assessment task for learners.

4.17.3. Centrality

There should be a significant link between assignments and assessment task. This will help the learners to follow the assignments and test their knowledge and understanding. The focus of assessment should have on how well goals of SLM have been achieved by the learners in completing the assignments.

4.17.4. Appropriately challenging

In assignments the writing task should be designed in a way that even the novice learner can perform well. But it should be helpful enough in developing new skills and knowledge. Assessment should be accommodating to the learners’ expectations in the given content, goal, and level of the course.

4.17.5. Interesting

The assessment task requires to meaningful and related to the real-world purposes. This will benefits the learners to establish the understanding of language use; it will create interest among them by relating it to their own situation or context. Assessment of learners’ task should highlight their efforts in completing the assignments. There should be guidance for next level by each time assignments are completed by the learners.

4.17.6. Effective

The assignments should be design in order to bring out the learners understanding of course. Learners’ writing must reflect how well they have understood the course objectives with proper strengths and weaknesses.

4.17.7. Flexibility

Flexibility is the term which has become synonymous to ODL context. Therefore, assignments are required to be managed by learners with different levels of knowledge and skills complexities. Maintaining flexibility in time for completing assignments.
4.18. Strategies for assessing writing tasks (assignments) at ODL

4.18.1. Face-to-face tutoring

Before any interaction, a tutor gets the copy of a student’s assignment. Hence, it is advisable for tutor to go through the work of every learner and rate him/her in different categories like average, fair, and good without avoiding poor category. After reading the paper, tutor makes the commentary on the margin of the paper. On meeting the students, a tutor must explain them their weak points and strong points. A tutor should allocate 20 minutes for discussion and provide related feedback. A record of the discussion and suggestions given would make things clear to the students (Ferris, 2007).

4.18.2. Video-conferencing

It provides video and audio communication among the group of learners at different sites through phone lines and satellite or both. There is also a scope of Desktop video conferencing which uses computers that brings signal to an individual or a small group of learners. The transmission of video conferencing allows the learner to enter into the discussion by speaking into speaker. The biggest advantage of this procedure is that the learner(s) gets a chance interact with his/her tutor. Video conferencing can be done before the submission and after the submission of assignment. If it is done before the submission, than the motive will be a different one. This time students will play active role. They will share their problems and difficulties with the tutor. If video conferencing is arranged after the submission of assignment than the tutor needs to be active. A tutor must clarify the points for discussion. However, ‘slow loading and bad transmission may hamper synchronization of the video and it may not be very affective’ (COL, 2003: 127).

4.18.3. E-mail

This is one of the best used facilities for assessment in the ODL system. A learner can send his written work to the tutor again and again until he gets the satisfaction and tutor need to keep the patience while assessing the writing. Learners can send any particular topic through mail and there can be a regular follow up work through discussion among a group of tutors of an effective writing course. Tutor can also give tips, some guidelines on how to improve their writing, and point out the areas for
further improvement. Learner can save all these discussion and whenever he/she feels problem, it can be referred back for assistance (Ibid).

4.18.4. Telephonic conversation

Some minor problems can be discussed on phone and this will give learner a feeling that they are connected with the tutor. However, there is a suggestion for both tutor and students that discussions can be planned before getting into any of these strategies discussed above. Planning will help in effective discussion and familiarize the learner with the use of technologies and at the same time good communication will satisfy the students and as well as tutors. While facilitating discussion online with groups, tutor need to remember that

- Who has signed on and follow up with anyone who has not appeared.
- Monitor the comments to make sure whether students are taking them in right spirit and working on the advice given.
- To encourage learner for further discussion and make them speak about their work, their problems and their weakness.
- Facilitate question and answer sessions.

4.19. Learners’ expectations from assessment of assignments

Assessment in ODL is considered very important because this is the only way to answer the questions and anxiety level of learners of about how they are doing. The reason of this reliability on tutors’ written feedback is due to the learners’ distanced from the learning atmosphere and the usual feedback that the learners get in a classroom (Commonwealth of learning, 2003:82). Let’s see some different reactions of learners on getting assessed by their tutors respectively.

Respondent 1: “I always took guidance from the tutors’ comments. I used to write my assignments in the light of their remarks. Their comments and suggestions guided me not only in my assignments but in the examinations as well.” (Samina, quoted in Kanwar, 2002 as cited in Ibid, 2003:90-91). Here, learner takes the comments in a way to improve his writing abilities and to upgrades his skills from lower to higher level.

Respondent 2: “my experience with a different tutor in the previous year had led me to expect an illusion of a conversation within the text itself. Frequent
comments within the text construct the reader as a collaborator and set the pattern for future reactions.....the option to submit drafts.....would have provided more opportunities for two-way conversation to develop than actually transpired”. (Roberts, 2003 cited in Ibid).

This shows that learners do not accept harsh and obscure comment on their work. A recent study at Open University supported the view of learners and instructed the tutors to give feedbacks in a way that should lead to the motivation and encouragement rather than discouraging them. It is embarrassing for a learner to find red mark on the entire draft of writing. Correcting each and every mistake is not a good idea in distance mode. If a learner is looking for encouragement so encouragement is needed with good remarks (Gibbs and Simpsons, 2002, as cited in Ibid). Assessment plays an important role in learners’ progress. Getting feedback on their writing and correcting them make learners more curious about their work. They expect that their writing should be assessed properly so that opportunities for further improvement arise. What they expect can be summed up in the following points:

- A positive attitude from tutor: If a tutor uses harsh or more direct words while commenting on writing this discourages learners from writing. So it is always advisable to the tutor at distance and also at conventional mode to show positive attitude through their comments so that learner can get encouragement.

- Fairness in comment and in marking scheme: Learner can be judged through his work by providing fair and clear comments and instruction on writing.

- Relevance of comments to the issues and goals of the educational program or work project: Without Focus on personal comment. Comments should be related to the topic or the objective of the course.

- Completeness and coherence in the feedback: give very precise and complete feedback is required.

After a proper assessment, learner designs the strategies for further learning and writing and then they can target the expected goals of learning (COL, 2003:80).
4.20. Tutors' expectation from Assessment of assignments

Assessment is not only important for a distant learner but it is equally important for a tutor as well. However both have different motives. In a classroom, a teacher can assess the learner through his/her participation but at distance the only way to assess the learner is through writing. While assessing writing tasks (assignments), a tutor identifies the strength and weakness of the learner and accordingly handles the problems. It is indeed a very difficult task for a tutor to assess learner's writing where there are a lot of dos and don'ts attached with tutors' assessment. Through assessment a tutor at distance wants the following:

- That a learner should identify the pattern of mistakes that he is committing and should work according to the instructions given by the tutor.
- After correcting the draft, learner should go through it and compare it with the previous one and differences should be recognized.
- Learners should send the revised version of the draft to the tutor for further assessment.
- Learners should take the comments in a positive way (COL, 2003:81)

4.21. Assessing different types of writing assignments

In ODL, assessment of assignments is of a great value. Tutor need to consider the range of strategies while assessing and giving the feedback on student's assignments. The table given below outline various strategies for assessing different types of assignments in ODL.
Table 4.4: Assessing different types of writing assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments types</th>
<th>Skills and Knowledge</th>
<th>Marking strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays, reports, journals</td>
<td>Thinking critically and making judgements</td>
<td>Provide feedback on each major topic and on presentation method. Award marks for quality of analysis, clarity, coherence and completeness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual or group work on case studies, scenarios</td>
<td>Solving problems and developing plans</td>
<td>Giving feedback on process and outcome. Award marks for organization, and completeness of analysis and solution, presentation methods and evidence of effective group interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports, journals, essays, summary, composition, letter writing</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>Give feedback on selection of communication methods, award marks on process. Outcome, effective use of skills, appropriateness and effectiveness of application of methods/media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from COL, 2003:101)
Chapter 5

Research Methodology: Results and Discussions

5.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses in detail the research methods adopted for results and discussions. The discussion in this chapter is divided into two sections. Section 1 is based on raters’ assessment of writing tasks which is related to the objective 2 and 3 of the study (see section 5.2). Section 2 is based on survey questionnaire. The purpose of questionnaire is to obtain demographic information and to know the ODL learners’ perception and problems regarding writing tasks in SLM, writing assignments, counselling sessions, which is objective 1 of the study (see section 5.2). This is important to note that both the sections 1 and 2 are based on different samples and are not related. The idea was to obtain certain indirect linkages on two different samples on two different occasions and this also works as a limitation of the study.

5.1. Hypothesis of the study

1. Writing tasks are not planned for ODL learners.
2. Designing a writing task will improve the learner’s performance in writing in ODL.
3. Re-assessment of writing tasks will lead to the better learning outcomes in ODL mode.

5.2. Research Questions

1. What are the issues related to the assessment of Self-learning materials (SLM) for writing tasks in ODL mode?
2. What is the impact of tutor led assignments on assessing writing tasks in ODL mode?
3. How far writing tasks can be modified to suit the concerns of assessing SLM in ODL mode?

5.3. Research Samples

5.3.1. Students and writing assignments

The total number of sample selected for the study is 91. The data for questionnaire was collected during the counselling sessions held at IGNOU study centre of Aligarh region. The subjects for questionnaire were 31 students enrolled in BCA and MCA
program of IGNOU during the academic year 2013. In addition 60 tutors’ marked-written assignments were collected over a period of two years (2011 and 2012). Out of 100, 60 assessment samples were selected. 40 written samples of less skilled writers on ‘paragraph writing’ and 20 samples of ‘letter of complaint’ were selected because it was not possible to assess all the writing genres. Qualitative analysis of 2 written samples of FEG-02 on ‘summary writing’ and ‘composition writing’ has been attempted.

5.4. Research Instruments

5.4.1. Direct Assessment Writing Tasks

Two direct writing assessment tasks i.e. paragraph writing tasks on topical issues and letter of complaint were chosen for the raters’ assessment. The brief description of direct assessment tasks are as follows

5.4.1.1. Paragraph writing tasks

Different written assignments on paragraph writing were selected from IGNOU FEG-02 course of BCA for the assessment of learners’ written samples. Learners were asked to compose their paragraph on different topics given in the question ‘Write a composition’ on any of the following topics in around 100 to 200 words

1. The most cherished childhood experience
2. The increasing role of technology in our day-to-day lives

5.4.1.2. Letter of Complaint

Formal letter of complaint ‘Write a letter complaining about the inefficient bus service which you use every day to get to work. Explain the inconveniences that you and others have to put up with and suggest ways of improving the service’ was selected from MCS-015 for the assessment of learners’ written sample. The direct assessment writing task demand learners to use the real-world language and knowledge addressing the appropriate audience.

5.5. Analytical scoring of direct writing assessment task

An analytical writing assessment rubric was designed to assess the learners’ writing assignments and units of Self-learning material for the same course. It described the quality of writing tasks in SLM and level of learner’s performance in each of the scoring category by separating and weighing the individual on four components:
writing tasks objectives and contents, organization of unit (example, logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.), language use and vocabulary by assigning the numerical values shown in the analytical scoring rubric below.

Table 5.1. Analytical Scoring Rubrics for Assessing Writing Task in SLM and Assignments used in ODL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria I</th>
<th>Excellent (9-8)</th>
<th>Good (7-6)</th>
<th>Moderate (5-4)</th>
<th>Poor (3-2)</th>
<th>Very poor (1-2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing tasks objectives and content</td>
<td>The SLM based assignment completed by learner shows a high level of clarity of contents and objectives.</td>
<td>The SLM based assignment completed by learner shows a moderate level of clarity of contents and objectives.</td>
<td>The SLM based assignment completed by learner shows partial understanding of contents and objectives.</td>
<td>The SLM based assignment completed by learner shows little understanding of contents and objectives.</td>
<td>The SLM based assignment completed by learner shows no understanding of contents and objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. SLM</td>
<td>Writing task is clearly related to the objectives and contents of the unit.</td>
<td>Writing task is related to the objectives and contents of the unit.</td>
<td>Writing task shows partial understanding of objectives and content of the unit.</td>
<td>Writing task shows little understanding of objectives and content in the unit.</td>
<td>Writing task do not relate to the overall objectives and contents of the unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner’s assignment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria II</th>
<th>Organizational unity, Logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.)</th>
<th>The unit is clearly organised and contents help in understanding the writing task.</th>
<th>The unit is partially organised and contents help in understanding the writing task.</th>
<th>The unit is somewhat organised and contents help in understanding the writing task.</th>
<th>The unit is not organised and contents does not help in understanding the writing task.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SLM</td>
<td>The unit is clearly organised and contents help in understanding the writing task.</td>
<td>The unit is partially organised and contents help in understanding the writing task.</td>
<td>The unit is somewhat organised and contents help in understanding the writing task.</td>
<td>The unit is not organised and contents does not help in understanding the writing task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner’s assignments</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria III</th>
<th>Language use</th>
<th>The language of SLM is easy to understand and is pitched at the level of learners.</th>
<th>The language of SLM is made comprehensible with the help of examples.</th>
<th>The language of SLM is difficult and lacks the sense of language use appropriate for learners.</th>
<th>The language of SLM is very difficult for learners to understand it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SLM</td>
<td>Language of SLM is easy to understand and is pitched at the level of learners.</td>
<td>The language of SLM is made comprehensible with the help of examples.</td>
<td>The language of SLM is difficult and lacks the sense of language use appropriate for learners.</td>
<td>The language of SLM is very difficult for learners to understand it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner’s assignments</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria IV</th>
<th>Vocabulary use</th>
<th>The vocabulary of SLM is effective, relevant, and related to the requirement of the work.</th>
<th>The use of language lacks appropriateness. Many errors hamper the meaning.</th>
<th>The work does not meet the required level of comprehensibility, almost all grammatical patterns are inaccurate.</th>
<th>Language is often copied from peers or from some reference book/text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SLM</td>
<td>The vocabulary of SLM is effective, relevant, and related to the requirement of the work.</td>
<td>The use of language lacks appropriateness. Many errors hamper the meaning.</td>
<td>The work does not meet the required level of comprehensibility, almost all grammatical patterns are inaccurate.</td>
<td>Language is often copied from peers or from some reference book/text.</td>
<td>There is a mismatch between the vocabulary, content and WT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner’s assignments</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>task.</td>
<td>Writing Task.</td>
<td>difficulty for learners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner's assignments</td>
<td>Good use of vocabulary. Appropriate words</td>
<td>Vocabulary is just adequate to the task. No attempt is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are used which are related to the task.</td>
<td>made to use variety of expressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate vocabulary. There is no sense of words used in the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>task. Leading to a lack of communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary in assignment is copied from other source/ text or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>some other assignment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An attempt has been made to develop a rubric for measuring the learner’s written assignments based on analytical rubrics provided by Jacobs. *et al* (1981) scoring profile. TEEP attribute writing scales (Weir, 1990) and Michigan writing assessment scoring guide (Hamp- Lyons, 1991 cited in Weigle, 2002). Analytical rubric was based on a total measure of 40 points with each writing component was on writing tasks objectives and contents, organization of unit (example, logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.), language use and vocabulary assigning 10 points to each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing tasks objectives and contents</th>
<th>10 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language use</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring rubrics described levels of performance in each of the scoring categories. The five point scales used are the following:

- Excellent: 9-8
- Good: 7-6
- Moderate: 5-4
- Poor: 3-2
- Very poor: 1-0

Same rubrics is used for assessing both the writing assignment task i.e. paragraph writing and letter of complaint. For discussion of the results, the rubric has been merged into the 3 points scale i.e. Excellent, Good and Poor.
5.5.1. Construct Validity of the Writing Tasks

The paragraph writing tasks based on topical issues and formal letter of complaint were assessed. In ODL framework the assignments are assessed on direct writing tasks, therefore this format is used. The task assesses the writing quality in terms of what it claims to measure (generation of ideas, contents and its objectives, organization, supporting ideas with examples etc.). Even for novice ODL writers, writing a paragraph are easy for generating information and as for letter of complaint there was easy predictability of framing the answer. Here the purpose of the writing task is based on real-life situation.

5.5.1.1. Authenticity of Direct Writing Tasks

In order to maintain the authenticity of direct writing tasks the objectives were set to give learners opportunities to frame their answers by using their background knowledge on the topics in order to address the real-world demands.

5.5.1.2. Interactivity of Direct Writing Tasks

The direct writing tasks were chosen to see how well learners display their language knowledge, topic knowledge and use of other resources (organization, vocabulary, examples) based on real-life interaction.

5.5.1.3. Impact of Direct Writing Tasks

Assessment of the scripts was done with a view to estimating the efficacy of writing task operationalized in SLM (ODL mode).

5.5.1.4. Practicality of Direct Writing Tasks

The writing task was part of the SLM based assignment done by the learners. The learners completed the tasks at their own pace, time and convenience in non-classroom settings, most likely in home settings.

5.5.1.5. Inter-Rater Reliability of Direct Assessment Writing Tasks

In this case, the reliability of rating was done on an analytical rubric by two experienced raters. This was simply calculated on the mean score. Photocopies of assignments were distributed to the raters independently without letting the scores known to each of the rater. The idea was to make assessment as authentic as possible.
5.6. Raters

Only two experienced trained raters and tutors of IGNOU Aligarh region were selected for rating the learners' assignments. One of the raters had experience of doing the ODL as well as the online course. Analytical assessing rating rubric (see table 5.1) with scoring sheet (see annexure 1) was provided to the raters.

5.7. Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire selected for the research study was a close ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to identify the ODL learners' needs, problems and difficulties regarding writing assignments, counselling sessions and rating of the writing tasks. The questionnaire is divided into four sections:

Section 1: It is based on personal information of the students. The purpose of this section is to obtain the demographic information, their exposure to English language and their educational background etc.

Section 2: It consisted of 4 objective types of items. These questions are based on writing assignments. The purpose is to identify the needs and difficulties of distance learners while writing assignments.

Section 3: It contained 8 items, out of which 7 items are based on counselling sessions. The purpose is to identify the usefulness of counselling sessions, the expectations of students from counselling sessions, and whether tutor provides feedback to the assignments or not. And, item 8 is based on rating of the writing tasks based on the course (FEG-02 and MCS-015).

Section 4: It consisted of writing tasks from each unit of FEG 02 (BCA-Block 1, 2, 3, 4) and MCS-015 (MCA- Block 1 and 2). This covered the different writing tasks in the units and students have to rate the tasks in terms of numerical values from relevant to extremely irrelevant and from easy to most difficult scale (See annexure 3 and 4).

5.7.1. Sampling

In order to derive a representative sample, researcher distributed the questionnaire during the counselling sessions but few students turned up for the counselling due to some physical and other constraints related to their remote location. Therefore, total numbers of samples in this section are 31 students from BCA and MCA. The
questionnaire was administered at IGNOU study centre 2713 of Aligarh region during the first week of November 2013. Before administering the questionnaire, instructions were made clear to the students. A brief introduction to the study was also made and the purpose of conducting survey was stated. Also students were provided assistance as and when they faced any problem.

5.8. Section 1: Results and discussions based on Raters' Assessment of SLM

Table 5.2. Rater 1: Assessment of SLM for Paragraph writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLM</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 1 Writing tasks objectives and content</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2 Organization of unit (ex. Logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3 Language use</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4 Vocabulary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2.1. Rater 2: Assessment of SLM for Paragraph writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria 1: Writing tasks objectives and content</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2: Organization of unit (ex. Logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3: Language use</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4: Vocabulary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1. Results and Discussions

Raters 1 and rater 2 rated the criteria on the scale of good. Both the raters found that the objectives and contents of the unit are related to the assignments.

Rater 1 has rated the criteria 2 on the scale of excellent. According to rater 1, the unit is clearly organised and contents will be helpful to learners in understanding the assignments.

Rater 2 has rated the criteria 2 on the scale of good. According to rater 2, the unit is partially organized and contents might prove helpful to the learners in understanding the assignments.

Rater 1 has rated the criteria 3 on the scale of good. According to rater 1, the language of the unit is made comprehensible with the help of examples.

Rater 2 has rated the criteria 3 on the scale of excellent. According to rater 2, the language of unit is easy to understand and is pitched according to the level of learners.

Rater 1 has rated criteria 4 on the scale of excellent. According to rater 1, there is very effective use of vocabulary, wide range of expressions is used which will helpful to learners in understanding the assignments. Rater 2 has rated the unit on the scale of
good. According to rater 2, there is a good use of vocabulary in the unit might proof helpful to the learners.

Table 5.3: Rater 1: Assessment of SLM for Letter of complaint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria 1</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing tasks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objectives and contents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of unit (ex. Logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language use</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3.1: Rater 2: Assessment of SLM for Letter of complaint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria 1</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing tasks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objectives and contents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of unit (ex. Logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language use</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.2. Results and Discussions

Rater 1 and rater 2 rated the criteria 1 on the scale of poor. Both the raters found that there was a mismatch between the stated objectives, contents and assignments given to the learners.
later 1 and rater 2 rated the criteria 2 on the scale of poor because the unit is not
organised and contents does not helps the learner to organize his/her assignment.

later 1 and rater 2 rated criteria 3 on the scale of good. This indicates that the
language used in SLM is simple and comprehensible to the learners.

later 1 and rater 2 rated criteria 4 on the scale of good. This shows that the
vocabulary used in the unit is simple and can be used as input by learners for
completing the assignments.

8.3. RATERS’ ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS: PARAGRAPH
WRITING

8.3.1. Criteria 1: Writing tasks objectives and contents

Table 5.4: Raters’ score of criteria 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (7.5%)</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9 (22.5%)</td>
<td>15 (37.5%)</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 has been merged into 5.4.1, 5.5.1, 5.6.1 and 5.7.1 for discussion purpose. The
dale of 3 point has been changed into 3 point scale i.e. Excellent, Good (Good + Moderate) and Poor (Poor +
ry poor).

8.3.1.1. Results and Discussions

ater 1
able 5.4.1 shows that according to rater 1, 52.5% of learners’ assignments show
od clarity of contents and objectives of the writing tasks whereas 47.5% scripts
ow little understanding of contents and objectives, and it seems that learners have
ied the text from each other or have plagiarised (see section 5.8.5 for written
ple). None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.
Rater 2

According to rater 2, 60% of assignments show good clarity of contents and objectives of the writing tasks while, 40% scripts show little understanding of contents and objectives, and it seems that learners have copied the text from each other or have plagiarised. None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 1 is 4.2 (see annexure 2).

5.8.3.2. Criteria 2: Organization of unit

Table 5.5: Raters’ score of criteria 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>13 (32.5%)</td>
<td>19 (47.5%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>17 (42.5%)</td>
<td>15 (37.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.3.2.1. Results and Discussions

Rater 1

Table 5.5.1 shows that according to rater 1 37.5% assignments show that they are partially organised and expresses some ideas on the topic. While 62.5% of assignments show that they are not very well organised and ideas are poorly expressed. None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.

Rater 2

According to rater 2, 57.5% assignments show that they are partially organised and expressed some ideas on the topic. While 42.5% of assignments show that they are not very well organised and ideas are poorly expressed. None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 2 is 4.0 (see annexure 2).
8.3.3. Criteria 3: Language use

Table 5.6: Raters’ score of criteria 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13(32.5%)</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>9(22.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>11(27.5%)</td>
<td>2(5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3.3.1. Results and Discussions

Rater 1

Table 5.6.1 shows that according to rater 1, only 32.5% of assignments have clear language but frequent grammatical errors that sometimes hamper the meaning. While 7.5% of assignments do not reach the required level of comprehensibility, most of the grammatical patterns are inaccurate and language is often copied from peers or from some reference book/text. None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.

Rater 2

According to rater 2, 67.5% of assignments have clear language but frequent grammatical errors that sometimes hamper the meaning. While 32.5% of assignments do not reach the required level of comprehensibility most of the grammatical patterns are inaccurate and language is often copied from peers or from some reference book/text. None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.

The mean scores of both the raters for criteria 3 is 4 (see annexure 2).
5.8.3.4. Criteria 4: Vocabulary

Table 5.7: Raters’ score of criteria 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.3.4.1. Results and Discussions

Rater 1

Table 5.7.1 shows that according to rater 1, 40% of students have used good vocabulary, appropriate words are used which are related to the task. While 60% of assignments show poor use of vocabulary, there is no sense of words used in the task. There is lack of communication and it seems that vocabulary has been copied from source or from some other assignment. None of the scripts fall under the excellent category.

Rater 2

According to rater 2, 72.5% of students have used good vocabulary; appropriate words are used and are related to the task. While 27.5% of assignments show poor use of vocabulary, there is no sense of words used in the task. There of lack of communication and it seems that vocabulary has been copied from source or from some other assignment. None of the scripts were rated under the excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 4 is 4.1 (see annexure 2).
5.8.4. RATERS’ ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS: LETTER OF COMPLAINT

5.8.4.1. Criteria 1: Writing tasks objectives and content

Table 5.8: Raters’ score of criteria 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Table 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 has been merged into 5.8.1; 5.9.1, 5.10.1 and 5.11.1 for discussion purpose. The scale of 5 point has been changed into 3 point scale i.e. Excellent, Good (Good + Moderate) and Poor (Poor + Very poor).*

5.8.4.1.1. Results and Discussions

Rater 1

Table 5.8.1 show the scores of rater 1 and 2 of criteria 1 under the categories of excellent, good and poor. According to rater 1, 30% of assignments completed by learners shows good level of clarity of contents and objectives and 70% of assignments show little understanding of contents and objectives and it appears that they have copied from peers or have plagiarised from the other sources (see section 5.8.5 for written samples). None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

Rater 2

According to rater 2, 60% of assignments completed by learners show good level of clarity of contents and objectives and 40% assignments completed by learners show little understanding of contents and objectives and it appears as they have copied from peers or have plagiarised from the other sources. None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 1 is 4 (see annexure 2).
5.8.4.2. Criteria 2: Organization of unit

Table 5.9: Raters’ score of criteria 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.9.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.4.2.1. Results and Discussions

Rater 1

Table 5.9.1 show the scores of raters 1 and 2 of criteria 2. According to rater 1, 20% of assignments completed by learners are partially organised and expresses little knowledge on the topic. While 80% of assignments are not very well organised, ideas are poorly expressed. None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

Rater 2

According to rater 2, 55% of assignments completed by learners are partially organised and expresses on the topic. While 40% of assignments are not very well organised, ideas are poorly expressed. And, 5% of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 2 is 3.7 (see annexure 2).
5.8.4.3. Criteria 3: Language use

Table 5.10: Raters’ score of criteria 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.4.3.1. Results and Discussions

Rater 1

Table 5.10.1 show the scores of raters 1 and 2 of criteria 2. According to rater 1, 15% of assignments show that language is clear but frequent grammatical errors that might hamper the meaning. While 85% of assignments do not reach the required level of comprehensibility. Almost all grammatical patterns are wrong and it seems that language is often copied from peers or from some reference or text book. None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

Rater 2

According to rater 2, 60% of assignments completed by learners show that language is clear but frequent grammatical errors that might hamper the meaning. While 40% of assignments do not reach the required level of comprehensibility, almost all grammatical patterns are wrong and it seems that language is often copied from peers or from some reference or text book. None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 3 is 3 (see annexure 2):
5.8.4.4: Criteria 4: Vocabulary

Table 5.11: Raters' score of criteria 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.4.4.1. Results and Discussions

Table 5.11.1 show the scores of rater 1 and 2 of criteria 4. According to rater 1, 15% of assignments have used good vocabulary. Appropriate words are used which are related to the task. While 85% of assignments have inadequate vocabulary. There is no sense of words used in the task, leading to a lack of communication and it seems that vocabulary is copied from other source/text or from some other assignments. None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

According to rater 2, 55% of assignments completed by learners have used good vocabulary. Appropriate words are used which are related to the task. While 45% of assignments have inadequate vocabulary, leading to a lack of communication and it seems that vocabulary is copied from other source/text or from some other assignments. None of the scripts were rated under excellent category.

The mean score of both the raters for criteria 4 is 3.5 (see annexure 2).

5.8.5. Selected samples of written assignments based on copying

Following are the selected samples taken from the data of assignments on which raters have given their score. The samples provide evidence on malfunctioning of writing that prevails in ODL. In all the samples given below copying is the most common problem occurs but it is not clear who has copied from whom.
MSC 015: Write a letter complaining about the inefficient bus service which you use every day to get to work. Explain the inconveniences that you and others have to put up with and suggest ways of improving the service.

Script 1 and script 2 are the result of copying each other’s work.

SCRIPT 1

Any one who regularly leaves to work the know that the bus service can turn a lengthy commute into a far smoother ride. Commuters bank on its regular service, e.g., Yadav is one such rider. She and her husband share the responsibility of bringing their seven-year-old son to and from school five days a week. To this busy couple, the bus service has been a life-saver, a bus that gets them where they are going quickly and comfortably. Without the auto, their commute means train and bus transfers to get where they are going. C.K. Yadav said her husband and son used to enjoy getting to the previously scheduled early morning bus.

SCRIPT 2

Anyone who regularly leaves to work the know that the bus service can turn a lengthy commute into a far smoother ride. Commuters bank on its regular service, e.g., Yadav is one such rider. She and her husband share the responsibility of bringing their seven-year-old son to and from school five days a week. To this busy couple, the bus service has been a life-saver, a bus that gets them where they are going quickly and comfortably. Without the auto, their commute means train and bus transfers to get where they are going. C.K. Yadav said her husband and son used to enjoy getting to the previously scheduled early morning bus.
Script 3 and script 4 are the result of copying each other's work

**SCRIPT 3**

To:  
Bus Controller  
Roadways State Transport  
Noida (U.P.)

Subject: Irregular service of 8 am state transport.

Respected Sir/Madam,

The employees and workers of DSL, Noida are facing a lot of inconvenience due to poor bus service of the state roads on NH-23 Road. There is a shortage of state transport bus on this route. This shortage is felt more acutely in morning hours. There are only a few buses which run on this route in the morning. The 8 'O' Clock transport bus is usually late most of the time and does not stop at DSL. The erratic service of 8 'O' Clock bus has put a large...
Script 5 and script 6 are the result of copying each other's work.

**SCRIPT 5**

Sir/Madam,

It is to bring to your kind notice that I always get late for the school because the bus I use never turns up on right time. Sometimes the bus breaks down on the way. We suggest you to improve the service of bus. The bus should have take out first those staff members on the right time who is far compare than others and then who is near of all and after returning it should be opposite to the takeout process.

**SCRIPT 6**

Sub: Complain against inefficient bus service.

Sir/Madam,

It is to bring to your kind notice that I always get late for the school because which bus I am using for up down never turns up on right time. Sometimes the bus breaks down on the way, we suggest you to improve the service of bus.
FEG-02: Write a composition on any of the following topics

1. The most cherished childhood experience
2. The increasing role of technology in our day-to-day lives

Script 7 and script 8 are the result of copying each other's work.

SCRIPT 7

Write a composition on any of the following topics:

The Most Cherished Childhood Experience

Experience is the child of thought, and thought is the child of action.

School, work, time, fortune. There are four bonds known to me. By my teacher, and father, making my coming years. She told me patiently.

SCRIPT 8

The Most Cherished Childhood Experience

Experience is the child of thought, and thought is the child of action.

Silent, work, slow, unfortunate. There are the英勇的 heroes at me by my father. In childhood, during my nursery years, the teacher, my parents that I had.

The way of passing, and getting into a good school and school attending. And, I could ever still, widely remember that should, have round face, small eyes, and that voice, anxious looking, and shouting at me. Indeed, I had a distinguished and an ill-fated child. But through my parents love and support, surely continued to encourage me to study harder, and prove everyone wrong that I was not to be stopped. Eventually, I would do well in my studies.
Kamala Das gratefully opens her life’s recollection by paying rich tributes to my father P Lal at the very outset of a Sabitri Academy documentary film on her life saying, “If not for P Lal, publishing me would have never have become a serious writer in English. I am eternally grateful to this great man himself a poet.”

This list of gifted Indo-English writers discovered and published when they were struggling unknown to the public includes Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, Shashi Despande, Raja Rao, Shadip Roy, Cunnimhoy Keulier, etc. Few of these many writers went on to reach international glory. Some of them expressed their gratitude to my father many did not. But I am P Lal daughter, hail on
Script 11 and script 12 are the result of copying of each other's work.

**SCRIPT 11**

THE INCREASE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES

Today technology significantly affects human relations and adapt to their natural environments. One way is through advances in technology and affecting people all around the world. It has changed people's lifestyle and the way they live.

The biggest example is Internet. Now it is possible to watch TV or Internet watch programs, music, or TV programs and their playback in the world because of this technology, a person could know what is happening on the other side of the world. We can now say that, "The world is a global village." Today.

**SCRIPT 12**

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IS INCREASING IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

Today technologies significantly affect human or all other animals' capacity to control and adapt to their natural environments. One way is through advancements in technology and affecting people all around the world.

The biggest example is Internet. Now it is possible to watch Internet on TV, watch programs, music, or TV programs and their playback on the other side of the world. Because of this technology, a person could know what is happening on the other side of the world with others about different matters and even talk.

5.8.5.1. Qualitative analysis of Assignments

The context of evaluating writing task here refers to the collection of data related to less-skilled writers shown below as part of assignments of IGNOU, FEG-02. Analysis of these features will be discussed in chapter 6 by way of suggestions.
Writing Task 1: Carefully read the following passage which contains about 400 words. Then, using your own words as far as possible, write a summary of it in not more than 120 words. Finally, supply a title for your summary. 5 marks.

The manager must depend to a greater or lesser extent, on one or more of the staff to take supervisory roles and observe the day to day working by the section. Clearly there must be as good relationship as possible between the manager and supervisor and, while this can be an excellent opportunity to create and maintain effective communication, there are some times problems. The supervisor from above pressure and from below, and has to keep contact with other supervisor, perhaps in other departments, and thus has a sideways’ pressure also. In addition to the delegation duties, the manager has the problem of having to assess just how much of the information he possesses should be passed on to the supervisor. Some managers, alas try to bolster up their own position by a secrecy which they support add to their status. Other relies on a telephone conversation or at least a memo, which they naively believe will be fully understood. It is not always easy for the manager to decide what information is essential to the supervisor; on the whole it may be better to give too much information than too little, but the manager also has to ensure that what is passed on is understood. Somehow or other, the manager must try to find an opportunity to discuss with the supervisor (s) just what is required for a particular day or week. Some organizations have set up a daily or weekly ‘briefing session’ during which not only can up-to-the-minute information as it affects the supervisor be given, but the supervisor has the opportunity to question or comment, so that the manager has a better idea of the difficulties which any individual may feel or anticipate.

*Student response 1:*

'this title depend of a company started with managing and supervisory. The manger and supervisor rule depend to a greater or lesser extent. And work complete for day by day section. Manager and supervision make a relationship as possible. While this can be an excellent opportunity to create and maintain effective communication, there aresometimes problems. the supervisor is sometimes known as an assistant manager which. In many ways parallels that of the manager like the manager he is often under pressure from above and from below, and has to keep contact with other supervisor. More than anything else, the supervisor has to have such information as will enable him to carry out the duties effectively. He needs to feel that he is in the manager's
confident and that he has been given all the relevant information together with an opportunity to discuss aspects of the work with manager. There are manager fail to recognize fully the importance of information sharing.

Writing Task 2: Write a composition in about 300 words on one of the topics given below: 10 marks

1. Changing role of communication in the 21st century
2. Although we communicate more, we are moving away from each other.
3. The increasing role of technology in our day-to-day lives.
4. Contributing of each individual in saving our planet

Student response 2: “The increasing role of technology in our day to day lives”

'Work this time is complete. The people are not very work,but manager centre on plople in computer office .the manager must depend to a greater or lesser extent, on one or more of the staff to take supervisory roles and observe the day to day working by the section. Clearly there must be as good relationship as possible between the manage and supervisor and, while this can be an excellent opportunity to create and maintain effective communication, there are some times problems. The supervisor from above pressure and from below, and has to keep contact with other supervisor, perhaps in other departments, and thus has a sideways’ pressure also. In addition to the delegation duties, the manager has the problem of having to assess just how much of the information he possesses should be passed on to the supervisor. Some managers, alas try to bolster up their own position by a secrecy which they support add to their status. Other rely on a telephone conversation or at least a memo, which they naively believe will be fully understood. It is not always easy for the manager to decide what information is essential to the supervisor; on the whole it may be better to give too much information than too little, but the manager also has to ensure that what is passed on is understood. Somehow or other, the manager must try to find an opportunity to discuss with the supervisor (s) just what is required for a particular day or week. Some organizations have set up a daily or weekly 'briefing session' during which not only can up-to-the-minute information as it affects the supervisor be given, but the supervisor has the opportunity to question or comment, so that the manager has a better idea of the difficulties which any individual may feel or anticipate.'
5.9. Section 2: Results and Discussions based on Survey Questionnaire

5.9.1. Demographic profile of the students

The personal data of the respondents in the survey questionnaire is described in table given below.

Table 5.12: Demographic profile of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.CA</td>
<td>17 (54.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M.CA</td>
<td>14 (45.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native place</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aligarh</td>
<td>17 (54.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasni</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwarsi</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iglas</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dariyapur</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11 (35.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20 (64.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age category</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>8 (25.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-25</td>
<td>21 (67.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 25</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>7 (22.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>24 (77.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi/Urdu</td>
<td>30 (96.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>28 (90.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>1 (3.22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2 (6.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior secondary</td>
<td>10 (32.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>21 (67.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduation</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational board</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>7 (22.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Board (UP, Rajasthan, any other)</td>
<td>17 (54.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madarsa Board</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMU</td>
<td>7 (22.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.9.2. Students responses on writing assignments

5.9.2.1. Assignments related to the course material

The first item of the section was 'whether the assignments were related to the course material or not?' 38.7% stated that it is fully related, 41.9% students found related, 19.3% students found it related to some extent.

5.9.2.2. Nature of assignments

The response to the second item about the extent of task difficulty, 64.5% found that the assignments given to them are difficult. 19.3% students found assignments very
difficult, only 16.1% students found them to be easy while none of the students rated them as very easy.

### 5.9.2.3. Difficulties in writing assignments

In response to the third item ‘what do you do while facing difficulties in writing assignments?’ the students came up with varied responses, as the students were asked to select more than one option. Most of the students (32.2% students) stated that they took help from their tutors none of the student stated that they took the help either from their classmates, reference book, internet, and friends or from previous assignments other responses are given in table 5.13.

#### Table 5.13: Difficulties in writing assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Total percentage of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take help from their materials</td>
<td>16.1% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from their classmates</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from their tutor</td>
<td>32.2% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from reference book</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from internet</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from their friends</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from previous assignments</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave the difficult question</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take help from materials and tutors</td>
<td>9.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and internet</td>
<td>3.22 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and reference book</td>
<td>3.22 % (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference book and internet</td>
<td>3.22% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference book, internet and previous</td>
<td>9.67% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and classmates</td>
<td>6.45 % (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials, classmates and tutor</td>
<td>3.22 % (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet, friends and leave the difficult question</td>
<td>3.22 % (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From classmates, tutor and internet</td>
<td>3.22 % (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials, classmates and internet</td>
<td>3.22 % (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials, classmates, tutor reference book and internet</td>
<td>3.22 % (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.9.2.4. Time allotted for completing assignments

The fourth item of the section was whether the time given for completing assignments was sufficient or not sufficient. 48.3% students’ responses were positive and 51.6% students’ responses were negative.

### 5.9.3. Relating assignments to the course materials

#### 5.9.3.1. Students’ responses of counselor

The first item of the section is ‘whether the tutor comes regularly for counseling session’. Majority of students 96.7% favored the idea of attending the counseling sessions. Only 3.2% responses were negative.

#### 5.9.3.2. Usefulness of counseling session

In response to the second item of the section 96.7% students responded that counseling sessions are useful to them whereas only 3.2% students came up with negative response.

#### 5.9.3.3. Expectation from counseling sessions

In the third item of the section students were free to choose more than one option. 51.6% students wanted tutor to provide lectures on their material only 2.5% students
wanted tutor to help them in solving their assignments. And, 45.1% students wanted tutor to help them in identifying the problematic area in the material.

5.9.3.4. Time allotted for counseling sessions

In the fourth item of the section, 51.6% responses were in favor of having more than 7 classes for counseling sessions while 25.8% students favored the idea of 7 minimum classes in the counseling sessions 16.1% responses wanted 6 classes, and only 3.2% students’ responses less than 6 classes.

5.9.3.5. Contact with the tutor

In the fifth item of the section, 67.7% students wanted to contact the tutor after counseling sessions in order to understand the materials. While 32.2% student responses that they do not want to contact the tutor after counseling sessions.

5.9.3.6. Feedback on writing assignments

The sixth item was related to the possibility of tutor providing feedback on writing assignments. 80% of students responded positively. While 22.5% students responded negatively.

5.9.3.7. Nature of feedback

The seventh item was related to the nature of feedback provided by the tutor, again for this item student chooses more than one option. 54.8% students responded positively. While 51.6% students responded that they receive supportive feedback on their assignment, none of the students responded in any other categories.

5.9.3.8. Change in course material

The eighth item was based on the writing task in the syllabus that students want to change. The purpose of this item was to know whether students wanted a change in the course material or not. The responses of the students are given in the table 5.14
Table 5.14: Students responses on course material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEG-02</th>
<th>Student responses</th>
<th>MCS-105</th>
<th>Student responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing paragraphs</td>
<td>47% students favored writing in their course, while 52.9% students say no to paragraph writing.</td>
<td>Writing reports</td>
<td>92.8% students favored report writing in the course, only 7.1% students say no to report writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing composition</td>
<td>41.1% students favored writing composition in their course. While 58.8% students say no to writing composition</td>
<td>Writing CV</td>
<td>71.4% students favored CV writing in their course, whereas 28.5% students say no to CV writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td>29.4% favored note taking while 70.5% students say no to it.</td>
<td>Writing letters (job application)</td>
<td>85.7% students favored writing job application in their course, whereas 14.2% want to change it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing reports</td>
<td>41.1% students favored writing report in their course. While 58.8% students say no to writing report</td>
<td>Writing memo</td>
<td>71.4% favored writing memo in their course, while 28.5% students want to change it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>29.4% favored</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descriptive composition</td>
<td>writing descriptive composition in their course. While 70.5% students say no to it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing summary</td>
<td>70.5% favored writing summary and 29.4% say no to it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.9.4. Writing tasks Rating

5.9.4.1. Item 1 of section 4 is based on the rating of writing tasks in terms of most relevant to extremely irrelevant. Separate discussions have been done FEG-02 and MCS-015.

Table 5.15: MCA (MCS-015) Students’ rating of writing task from Most relevant to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most relevant</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WR= 21.3%</td>
<td>WR= 43%</td>
<td>WR= 35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV= 50%</td>
<td>CV= 35.6%</td>
<td>CV= 14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WM= 28.4%</td>
<td>WM= 14.2%</td>
<td>WM= 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1= 78.4%</td>
<td>L1= 14.2%</td>
<td>L1= 7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2= 21.4%</td>
<td>L2= 78.5%</td>
<td>L2= 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3= 0</td>
<td>L3= 14.2%</td>
<td>L3= 85.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irrelevant

Note: WR= writing report, CV= Curriculum vitae, WM= writing memo, L1= letter asking for references in a job application, L2= letter of appointment, L3= negotiating the deal.

Note: Table 5.15 and 5.17 has been merged into 3 point scale from 6 point scale for the discussion purpose (see annexure5).
5.9.4.1.1. Results and Discussions

In table 5.15, 78.4% of students considered L1 as most relevant writing task, 14.2% considered it as relevant and 7.1% of students considered L1 as irrelevant writing task in their course. 50% of students considered CV writing as most relevant task, 35.6% considered it as relevant and 14.2% considered it as irrelevant. 43% of students considered report writing as relevant task, 35.6% of students considered it as irrelevant and only 21.3% students considered it as most relevant. 57% of students considered writing memo as irrelevant writing task, 14.2% considered it relevant and 28.4% considered it most relevant. 78.5% considered letter of appointment as relevant, 21.4% considered it most relevant and none of the student considered it as irrelevant writing task. 85.6% students considered letter for negotiation as irrelevant writing task and only 14.2% considered it as relevant while none of the students mark it as most relevant.

Table 5.16: BCA (FEG-02) Students' rating of writing task from Most relevant to Irrelevant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most relevant</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP1 = 76.1%</td>
<td>WP1 = 23.6%</td>
<td>WP1 = 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP2 = 52.7%</td>
<td>WP2 = 29.3%</td>
<td>WP2 = 17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WR1 = 41%</td>
<td>WR1 = 41.1%</td>
<td>WR1 = 17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WR2 = 23.6%</td>
<td>WR2 = 52.9%</td>
<td>WR2 = 23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC = 41.2%</td>
<td>WC = 35.3%</td>
<td>WC = 23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCD = 17.6%</td>
<td>WCD = 47%</td>
<td>WCD = 35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT = 17.7%</td>
<td>NT = 47.1%</td>
<td>NT = 35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS = 29.5%</td>
<td>WS = 23.6%</td>
<td>WS = 47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: WP1 & 2 = writing paragraph, WR 1 & 2 = writing report, WC = writing composition, WCD, composition description, NT = note taking, WS = writing summary

Note: The table 5.16 and 5.18 has been merged from 8 point scale to 3 point scale for discussion purpose (see annexure 5)
5.9.4.1.2. Results and Discussions

In table 5.16, 76.1% of students rated writing paragraph 1 under most relevant category, 23.6% rated it relevant and none rated it under irrelevant category. 52.7% rated writing paragraph 2 under most relevant category, 29.3% rated it as relevant writing task and 17.6 students rated it as irrelevant writing task. 41% of students rated writing report 1 as most relevant writing task, and 41.1% of students rated it relevant and only 17.6 students rated it as irrelevant writing task. Whereas, 52.9% students rated writing report 2 as relevant writing task and for relevant and irrelevant category students rated it equally i.e. 23.6%.41.2% students rated writing composition as most relevant writing task, 35.3% student rated it as relevant and the rest 23.5% rated it as irrelevant writing task. 47% of students rated writing composition description as relevant task, 35.4% considered it as irrelevant writing task and 17.6% considered it as relevant task. 47.1% rated note taking as relevant writing task, 35.2% rated it as irrelevant task and 17.7% rated it as relevant. While, 47% of students rated writing summary as irrelevant task, 29.5% rated it most relevant and 23.6% rated it as relevant writing task.

5.9.4.2. Item 2 of section 4 is based on the rating of writing tasks in terms of easy to difficult. For both the courses FEG-02 and MCS-015 separate discussions has been done.

Table 5.17: MCA (MCS-015) Students' rating of writing task from Easy to Difficult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WR</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>WR 71.3%</td>
<td>WR 14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>CV 0%</td>
<td>CV 35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WM</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>WM 0%</td>
<td>WM 71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>L1 21.3%</td>
<td>L1 7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>L2 57.1%</td>
<td>L2 21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>L3 50%</td>
<td>L3 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.9.4.2.1. Results and Discussions

In table 5.17, 71.3% students rated writing report as moderate task, 14.2% of students rated it as easy and difficult writing task simultaneously. 64% considered CV writing as easy writing task and rest 35.6% of students rated it as difficult task and none of the students rated CV under moderate category. 71.4% of students rated writing memo as difficult writing task and only 28.4% rated it as easy writing task while none of the students rated it under moderate category. 71.3% of students rated L1 under easy category, 21.3% under moderate and 7.1% rated it under difficult category. 57.1% rated L2 as moderate task, and 21.3% rated it as easy and difficult writing task simultaneously. 50% students rated L3 as moderate and 50% rated it difficult writing task. None of the students rated L3 under easy category.

Table 5.18: BCA (FEG-02) Students’ rating of writing task from Easy to Difficult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP1= 88.3%</td>
<td>WP1= 12%</td>
<td>WP1= 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP2= 47%</td>
<td>WP2= 35.4%</td>
<td>WP2=17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WR1= 35.1%</td>
<td>WR1= 64.6%</td>
<td>WR1= 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WR2= 11.7%</td>
<td>WR2= 52.8%</td>
<td>WR2= 35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC= 29.2%</td>
<td>WC= 41.2%</td>
<td>WC= 29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCD= 29.6</td>
<td>WCD= 41.2%</td>
<td>WCD= 29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT= 35.2%</td>
<td>NT= 29.5%</td>
<td>NT= 35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS= 23.6%</td>
<td>WS= 23.7%</td>
<td>WS= 52.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.9.4.2.2. Results and Discussions

In table 5.18, 88.3% students rated writing paragraph 1 as easy task, 12% of students rated it as moderate, none of the students rated it in difficult category. 47% students rated writing paragraph 2 as easy task, 35.4% rated it as moderate and 17.6% rated it as difficult writing task. 64.6% students rated writing report 1 as moderate writing task, and 35.1% students rated it under easy category. While none of the student rated
it as difficult writing task, 52.8% considered writing report 2 as moderate writing task. 35.2% rated it as difficult and only 11.7% rated it as easy. 41.2% students rated composition writing as moderate writing task, 29.5% rated it as difficult writing task and 29.2% rated it as easy writing task. 41.2% rated writing descriptive composition as moderate writing task, 29.6% rated it as easy task and equally 29.4% rated it as difficult writing task. 35.4% rated note taking as difficult writing task, 35.2% rated it as easy and 29.5% considered it as moderate writing task. 52.8% rated writing summary as difficult writing task, 23.7% rated it as moderate and 23.6% rated it as easy writing task.

5.10. Summary of Findings

1. The table given below shows that not much variation was found in the mean scores of rater 1 and rater 2 in all the four criteria. This indicates very poor performance of learners in written assignments. This is more evident if we look at samples of written assignments in section 5.8.5 in chapter 5. All the scripts shown in pairs are copied work and it is not clear who has copied from whom. The difficulty of writing assignments becomes very obvious when two important evidences are noticeable. The total means scores of rater 1 and rater 2 for paragraph writing is 4.7 and that of letter of complaint is 3.6. In another survey on a separate group of 31 samples we find that they are not aware of their own difficulties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Paragraph writing</th>
<th>Letter of complaint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total mean</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. The mean scores for both the writing task in criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4 (see annexure 2) shows that ODL students' writing abilities are not very developed. If we look at the criteria wise rating, written assignments don't show much clarity in objectives and contents of the task. This is followed by lack of coherence in organization and even if few assignments show some sign of organization they appeared to be copied from each (see for evidence section 5.8.5 in chapter 5). The language used in the assignments also clearly state that students are not using their own language instead they are might be plagiarising the text unknowingly unintentionally. At the level of vocabulary, not much effort has been made by students to use good or sensible vocabulary. If proper vocabulary has been used then again it is the case of cheating/copying or plagiarism.

3. This is also confirmed by Jumani (et al, 2011) that distance learners copy the assignments of other distance learners, they make shortcut in writing assignments and make malpractices in writing assignments through plagiarism (see the detailed findings in section 6.2 in chapter 6).

4. Qualitative analysis of two written samples of less skilled writers along with the model on obtaining suggested feedback has been attempted as part of the suggestions given in section 6.3.3 of chapter 6.

5. Most of the students considered the fact that assignments are related to the course material but on the other hand they also pointed out that assignments are very difficult to do. Because of difficulty level, most of the students stated that they took help from their tutor in doing these assignments and also they rely on friends and internet resources.

6. 96.7% students stated the fact that tutors comes regularly for counselling sessions. And equal number of students stated that counselling sessions are very useful for them. They expected that the tutor should provide lectures on course materials and helps them in understanding the problematic and difficult areas of the materials. Therefore, majority of students wanted to have more than 7 classes for counselling sessions. Even majority of students stated that they tried to contact tutor on having problems after counselling sessions.

7. Most of the students were satisfied with the kind of feedback they receive from the tutors on their assignments.
8. It was also found that students were satisfied with the course content and they did not want to change it.

9. In case of MCS-015 (MCA students), students rated those writing tasks as most relevant and relevant which were based on real-life context and would help them in developing their professional skills. 78% rated ‘job application’ as most relevant, followed by ‘letter of appointment’ and ‘CV’ writing as 78.4 and 50% fall under relevant and most relevant category respectively. Because of their relevance most of the students rated these three tasks under easy and moderate category i.e. 71.3% rated job application under easy category, 64.2% and 57.1% rated CV and letter of appointment as moderate writing tasks.

10. In case of FEG-02, 77.1% learners rated ‘writing paragraphs’ as the most relevant writing task, followed by ‘writing reports’ 52.9% and ‘writing compositions’ 47% and 47% learners rated summary writing as irrelevant writing task. 88.3% of learners rated writing paragraph as easy writing tasks, 64.6% rated writing reports as moderate task. 52.8% rated writing summary and 35.4% rated note taking as the difficult writing task.
Chapter 6

Conclusion: Suggestions and Recommendations

6.0. Introduction

Responding to learners’ writing especially in conventional programs is not an easy task to perform. However, this even becomes more challenging in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. This is directly linked to the assessment of writing task in ODL delivery mechanism.

Assessment of writing in traditional mode encounters several difficulties, ranging from ‘handling the needs of large heterogeneous group’ (Carpenter and Hunter, 1981:425). Providing feedback on their writing is very challenging because of diverse needs and background, learning styles and mixed ability levels, medium of instruction differences and the kind of writing that the learner want to master (Cowie and Heaton, 1997 as cited in Ibid). Even in conventional delivery system assessing and providing feedback on writing is very difficult, unavailability of feedback in large class size affects the writing outcomes. Assessment in conventional delivery system is heavily dependent on learning outcomes in examinations. ODL assessments are largely routed through written assignments as a byproduct of accessing the ODL self-learning materials whereas in the conventional system it is assessment based on classroom interaction. Assessing writing in distance mode is enormously a challenging job particularly for the tutor. This is because there are anticipated anxieties of providing feedback on the presumption that it would not help but only confuse the student more because learner is at distance and possibilities are there that he/she might interpret the remarks/comment in a wrong way (Ferris, 2006). Tutor sometimes get frustrated while responding to the writing as students demands are at variance with their tutors.

ODL takes a different approach to writing, requiring writing as an offshoot of knowledge/skill comprehension activities, many of which either make use of the students’ application skills. The benefits of ODL are many; one among them is learning to use writing skill that results in a higher quality of course comprehension. That would not be found in the classroom or confined to a single, local institution. This also will result in producing learning materials of a very high standard which can be used in conventional systems as well. In face-to-face teaching, students with poor writing skills can do quite well provided s/he gets an opportunity to interact with the
teacher. Unlike the constrained classroom learning contexts, ODL offers flexibility of place and time of study. However, assessing writing task even in ODL mode is a complex process as it poses a great deal of challenge. Teachers in ODL have much less contact with students so learners' progress is much more dependent on their own writing efforts.

Assessment plays a significant role in the learning process since learner gets an opportunity to get feedback on his/her writing. Assessment through ODL mode can bring greater flexibility to the learner as to the way they are coping with the demands of writing assignment and their writing capabilities. Assessment is basically a proper networking between learner, tutor, and study material which is a crucial part of ODL delivery system. Sometimes high failure rate reflects poor mismatch between assessment procedures, study materials and learner’s engagement with the demands of the assignment. We will take up some of the important issues in assessing writing tasks at ODL from the perspective of both learners and tutor followed by brief discussion on related strategies underlining the accomplishment of writing task.

By contrast, the scope and function of writing skills in ODL mode is greater, provided the self-learning materials (SLM) in ODL mode specifically caters to teaching of writing. Subsequently, the paper looks at the possibility of in-service teacher training for teaching writing in ODL mode. Tutors and Material producers in ODL mode need specialized training on how to respond to the writing and also how to provide sufficient feedback on their students writing. At distance, tutor should make the learners to identify the pattern of mistakes they are committing. Learners should revise the drafts by incorporating the corrections suggested by the tutor and compare it with the previous one for recognising the differences.

It is important to note that the argument here is not to prove that ODL materials are not important or less valuable, on the contrary they are very important indeed and serve as a backbone to ODL universities. However, the efforts of making SLM more accessible will be useless if they are not tagged with the careful designed assessment task. In formal classroom, teachers and students have numbers of opportunities for assessing their learning, problems, interests and motivations are on the display of learning encounters. But in ODL mode, learners hardly enjoy all these opportunities.
ODL learners have very less chance to get assessed properly in terms of their needs, writing assignments and learning outcomes.

Assignments are not properly paced with the learners’ time. ODL assessment is more concern with the final grades and there is hardly any formative assessment. There is no assessment device for checking copying and plagiarism in the writing assignments.

6.1. Strategies

The first thing that the students may require is of enormous support and assistance from the assigned tutor. These instructors can provide sufficient feedback on students’ writing and their comments can further motivate the learners to rewrite. Students can send their written work to the tutor through postal or email (if there is an access to the computers). It can also be coordinated on telephone. Remedial or supplementary SLM are needed to cater to low skilled learners as well. These strategies used in ODL mode could even benefit the learners in Conventional mode. We will not discuss how conventional institutions will utilize the ODL SLMs, since this will require a separate full-fledged discussion.

6.1.1. Cognitive strategies: cognitive strategies are activated in terms of structuring and restructuring, revising and editing the text which finally leads to the writing enhancement. Writing involves a lot of thinking which enable learners to become more strategic, flexible and more productive writer (Scheild, 1993 cited in Edutechwiki.year.n.d http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/cognitive_strategy_instruction). A conventional program offers this benefit when students interact with their peers and teachers but a distant learner has to locate such interactive advantage. SLM can be designed to locate such advantage.

Individualized instructional instruction and strategies is only possible through SLM. To improve the quality of teaching writing the instructional design with the help of systematic knowledge of subject and cognitive skills provide the foundation of professional expertise in particular skill (Braden, 1996 as cited in Taylor 1998). ‘The growth in instructional design has promoted a shift from an approach wherein a single teacher is responsible for the teaching, design, development, and delivery, evaluation of education and training programs’ (Taylor 1998:61). Students can dispatch their work to the assigned teacher through various channels such as postal, through email
(if there is access to the computers), through teleconferencing, video conferencing, and computer conferencing or even through personal contact programs or counseling.

6.1.2. Using Multi-Media: Teaching of writing at distance can become more challenging and problematic for those students who have taken only classroom based writing instruction. They will find more difficult to process writing in the absence of other students and teacher. These students need some special attention and need to taught how to write independently, how to organize their writing, how to make a piece of writing more coherent and logical, etc. To overcome these problems there should be contact and counseling program from the beginning so that they can establish relation with students and teachers (Tooth, 2000). Media can serve different purposes like if students want to discuss the problems like accuracy, grammatical errors etc. while writing he/she can discuss this with tutor/instructor through videoconferencing or computer based course ware. Students want or need regular feedback or follow up work, which they can do through email, audio conferencing or even video conferencing can be helpful. These mediums are used in training to improve quality of the learning process for students. However these medium have their restriction depending on students (their background, geographical area, their learning style and skills) for example: ‘If a learner is living in an isolated area than telephonic communication will break the barrier between him/her and teacher or if the rate of literacy is low, audio or video resources will be useful’. Teachers also need training for applying these resources according to the needs of the learners. A good teacher seeks as many ways as possible to stimulate their thinking (Ibid: 140-41). Teachers should use only a few strategies and support their use over a prolonged period of time (UNL, 2006. Available at: http://www.unl.edu/esi/teachingstrategy.shtml).

6.1.3. Activities: Activities are the key components to improve writing in a distance program. Self-instructional distance teaching materials are integrated with writing activities, which helps the learner in solving their practical problems for example, self-assessment questions (SAQs), unit and exercises, etc. (IGNOU, 1997:8-9 cited in Mishra and Gaba, 2000). Writing activities need to be designed according to the learner’s interest and need and should be able to grab the learner interest and maintain the enthusiasm so that a learner must complete them. This can be done by presenting a variety of activities and in doing this, learner will also get exposed to the different
kinds of writing activities and will be able to achieve the satisfaction and autonomy (Lockwood, 1992 as cited in Ibid). Research in this area reveals that the role of activities has been taken differently by learners. Some use them as instructed in the course, other try to skip them and go directly to the model answers. To improve the quality it is important that there should be relationship between activities and assignments, the space provided for writing descriptive answers is not sufficient, so practice questions should be given in the blocks. More descriptive questions with model answers may be added (Ibid).

6.2. Findings

1. Distance learners copy the assignments of other distance learners (see section 5.8.5 in chapter 5).
2. Distance learners make short cut in writing assignments.
3. Distance learners make malpractices in writing assignments through plagiarism (see section 5.8.5 in chapter 5).
4. Learners do not participate in counselling sessions.
5. Tutors superficially skim over the assignments without judging the quality of learners' responses in writing assignments and academically poor students get high marks from their tutors.
6. Casual attitude of tutor is responsible for not creating interest and hard work in distance learners.
7. Distance learners find difficulties to understand the study materials of the university due to poor learning skills in English.
8. Learners need in-built scaffolded writing tasks support for writing assignments.
9. Tutor should guide learners about how to write and search answers of the question asked in assignment.
10. Tutor should provide guidance to the learners to produce quality assignments in their own.
11. Distance learners often ignore the instructions for writing assignments.
12. Hardworking distance learners whose assignments are not properly evaluated try to adopt the norms of those who used malpractices in writing assignments (Jumani, et al., 2011: 9).
6.3. Suggestions

6.3.1. Writing task - module

Keeping in mind the complexities of materials, learners and tutors, a module on genre specific writing task of job application has been designed in order to mentor ODL learners as to how to execute the task in action.

The subject matter of job application dictates the form organization and sequence of language used in writing a job application. In this genre, form follows the content and the demand of writing task get fulfilled because language is organized around the topic of interest in a generic event of job application. Therefore, by using activities and techniques, required languages is delivered to the target learners of second language and make the content accessible to them (Murray, 2011). SLM is the key factor in bridging the gap between difficulties of writing and learner’s problems, so, materials need strategic support in terms of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Tsui, 2011). Therefore, to support the learners, module is outlined which reflects a possible teaching plan in terms of writing task objectives, rationale, pre-writing stage to feedback procedure and appropriate action required for it.

Module for doing writing task job application

Topic: job application

Level: First/second year FEG-02/ MCS-015.

Objective of the task: To give students practice in:

- Using request function for writing job application
- Developing organization in the text
- Using correct format of job application

About the Task

The task chosen here is a job advertisement which is a real-world task in nature. Real-world tasks are based on the real life situations. In order to implement the task in a ODL context, some pedagogical tasks are designed to enable learners to undertake the process of writing job application by breaking into different sections. The purpose is to get the learners understand the process of writing job application, which blends into generic features and has been broken into different sets of activities central around planning, drafting and revision. The purpose is to get the learners discover and generate ideas by developing procedural knowledge based on brainstorming, use of
language related to open and closing the letter, related vocabulary, linkers, grammar and organization.

Rationale for the task

- To encourage students to discover and generate ideas
- To develop strategies for pre-writing, writing, drafting, revising, and editing skills.
- To discover a purpose for writing so that writing can be used as a tool for communication.
- To activate and develop students own language resources.

Writing Task

Writing task: write an application for the job of sales representative keeping in mind the requirements given in the following job advertisement

✓ Advertising Sales Representative

About the Job

Multi Media Sales Representative

The Daily Star, Central New York's premiere daily newspaper company, is seeking motivated individuals to satisfy the marketing and promotional needs of area businesses. The successful candidate should possess strong communication skills, sales experience and willingness to match multiple media platforms to the individual needs of their customers.

The ability to identify new clients and grow new business partnerships will be key to achievement.

A competitive compensation plan including base salary, commissions, bonuses and a full benefits package is available to the right candidate. Valid driver's license required.

For consideration, please submit your letter to Sean Lewis, Advertising Director atslewis@thedailystar.com or via fax to 607.432.5847.

THE DAILY STAR

www.thedailystar.com

This job listing brought to you by The Daily Star

(Source: Advertising sales representative, 2012. Available at: jobsofferlist.com/Binghamton/sales_biz_den/advertising_sales_representatives_2600.html#.ULxBNuRt nXK)
Procedure

Brainstorming activity:

Instruction: Tutor will inform the students that they are going to complete the space by filling it with job requirement.

Tutor’s note: In order to start the task, the tutor is required to take up few brainstorming activities to establish the ground for the task. Brainstorming activity is being designed to enable/motivate the learners for executing the task.

Instruction: Tutor will announce the activity in the counseling sessions to prepare the learners for the target task.

1. Learner’s based activity

Instruction: Fill in the blanks to make it a complete tree of job application.

2. Learner’s based activity on salutation and complimentary close

Tutor’s note: This activity will provide inputs to the learners as to how to use salutation and complimentary close under different conditions. Tutor can ask students to work individually, within the time limit of 5 minutes.

a. If you don’t have a contact name:
   Dear Sir (s)          yours faithfully
   Dear Madam (s)        yours truly

b. If you know the name:
   Dear Mr. John (men)   yours sincerely
   Dear Miss Jones (unmarried)   yours truly
   Dear Mrs. Jones (married)  yours truly
   Dear Ms Jones (married or unmarried) yours truly.

Instruction: Fill in the blanks with correct complimentary close:

1. Dear Miss Marple
   Yours ____________ (truly, sincerely)

2. Dear Sir,
   Yours ____________ (faithfully, truly)
3. Dear Madam,
   Yours ___________ (sincerely, faithfully)

4. Dear Mr. Mehta
   Yours ___________ (sincerely, truly)
   (Source: http://www.literacytools.ie/files/pdfs/Writing%20application%20letter.pdf)

3. Learner’s based activity on Vocabulary (specific vocabulary for job application)

   Tutor’s note: The purpose here is to teach the students the specific vocabulary used in the job applications.

   Instruction: Here are some sentences from formal letters, choose the appropriate word to complete the sentence.
   1. I am writing in ___________ (response, connection) to your advertisement in the Daily Star.
   2. I should like to ___________ (file, apply) for the position of sales representative.
   3. I would be ___________ (available, ready) to come for interview at any convenient to you.
   4. I should be ___________ (grateful, happy) to you if you could send me further information.
   5. I ___________ (pin, enclose) a stamped addressed envelope with this letter.
   6. I shall be sure to reply by ___________ (for, return) of post.
   7. I would be grateful for a reply at your earliest ___________ (time, convenience).

4. Learner’s based activity on linkers

   Tutor’s note: This activity gives the learners an idea about how the sentences are linked in the paragraphs in the context of writing a job application.

   Instruction: Given below is an incomplete body of a letter. Fill in the blanks in appropriate linkers/connectors. Choose the linkers from the box given below:

   as, however, and, if, therefore, hence, moreover, while, so that, since, yet.

   Dear Sir

   I am writing in response to your advertisement for the post of Multi Media Sales Representative published in ‘THE DAILY STAR’, dated 4 October 2012.

   I have an experience in meeting the promotional ______ marketing needs of business firms. ______ I have developed a business needs
I am ______ enclosing details of my educational qualification and experience. I wish to apply for the same ___ I am confident of my candidature. I would appreciate you can inform me the date ______ time for interview__ I can make travel arrangement. Thanking you

xyz

5. a. Learner' based grammar activity[verb]
   Tutor's note: The idea behind this activity is to give students practice about the kind of appropriate verbs used in a letter. Teacher can ask students to work individually.
   Instruction: Out of the given choices identify the suitable action word to complete the given sentences:
   1. I am ______ in response to your advertisement published in 'Times of India', on 2 October, 2012.
      a. apply      b. writing      c. write      d. applied
   2. While at work I can ______ new challenges.
      a. encourage      b. maintain      c. enjoy      d. take
   3. I can ______ difficult customers without losing my patience.
      a. handle      b. expedite      c. look after      d. cope
   4. I ______ several important company functions and events.
      a. created      b. controlled      c. have organized      d. organized
   5. I can be ______ most easily on the mobile phone number given above
      a. called      b. contacted      c. available      d. deal

b. Learner' based grammar activity[tense]
   Tutor’s note: The activity is based on tenses that are used in job applications.
   Out of the given choices identify the suitable tense to complete the given sentences:
   1. I ______ my graduation from Rajput College, Nainital.
      a. have completed      b. complete
   2. I ______ 3 years' experience of working as a trainee in a Multinational company.
      a. have      b. am
   3. I ______ as a salesman for three years.
      a. had worked      b. have been working
4. If you consider my application, **shall/should you** inform me for interview that suits your convenience.

6. Learner's based activity on Organization

Tutor's note: This activity gives learners an idea about how to organize a letter through the proper arrangements of paragraphs.

Instruction: Match each section of the letter of job with appropriate gap on the blank below:

A  
B  
C  
D  
E  
F  
G  
H  
I  
J  


(1) Dear Mr. Chan
(2) Room 354, Block 6
   Model Village
   North Point
   Hong Kong

(3) I am writing to apply for the post of Management Trainee, which was advertised on the Student Affairs Office notice board of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on 26 August 2012.

(4) My final year project is entitled Knowledge Management Practices in HK. Carrying out this project has improved my communication skills, my leadership skills
and my ability to lead and supervise subordinates effectively. I have also learned how to run a project from the planning stage to its completion.

(5) During my studies I have held the post of Executive in the Management Society. While leading and organising Management Society activities I have improved my ability to lead and supervise subordinates effectively, ability to work under pressure and ability to work in a team environment.

(6) I am available for interview at any time. I can be contacted most easily on the mobile phone number given above. I look forward to meeting you.

(7) Yours sincerely
(8) Wong Wai Man Wilfred

(9) My working experience at Lucky Star Garment Manufactory Limited improved my leadership skills, communication skills and ability to work in a team environment. I have fluent spoken and written English. I also have fluent spoken and written Mandarin, and can therefore work in mainland China.

(10) Phone: 24862893
     Mobile: 95427415
     E-mail: wwm654@hkinternet.com
     26 August 2012

(11) Mr William Chan
     Personnel Manager
     Wong And Lim Consulting
     PO Box 583
     Kwai Chung
     Kowloon

(12) Working for Wong And Lim Consulting appeals to me because it has a good reputation and it provides excellent training. Your organization produces a high-quality service, and I can contribute to this with my leadership skills and my ability to work under pressure.

(Source: Available at:http://www.scribd.com/doc/91646650/Example-Job-Application-Letter)

Writing stage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First draft</th>
<th>Corrected draft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Feedback procedure
Peer-feedback form

Look at a letter written by another pair. Make some comments on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content: How clear is it? Is there anything you found unclear or unnecessary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriacy of language: Is the language appropriate for the job application letter?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Format and organization: Is the format appropriate for job application? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment on anything that could be improved. Are the paragraphs well organized? If not, how can it become better?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language accuracy: Is there language you think is not correct (grammatical errors, spelling, etc?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher feedback:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from British Council, 2006)
Learner’s feedback form

Ideas and content:
- How clearly I write the content of a letter?
- I choose clear details to help the reader understand my message.
- I clearly stated main idea, leaving out all unnecessary details.

Organization:
- My introduction clearly tells the reader, what it is all about.
- I tell things in an order that make sense.
- Every detail is arranged properly.
- My paragraph begins in the right spot.
- My sentences make sense, they are clear.
- Sentences are well structured into paragraphs.

Mechanics:
- My punctuations are correct.
- I use capital letters on names of people, places, or things.
- My spelling is correct.
- I have proof read my paper.

6.3.2. Portfolio assessment

Distance learning theorists have emphasised on team assessment in the form of group discussions, peer reviews, group projects and presentations. However, the scope of collaborative assessment is less isn’t occurring in the courses FEG-02 and MCS-015. Both these courses are heavily relying on TMAs. Another area of improvement in distance is the assessment of assignments. Almost all the courses including FEG-02 and MCS-015 are dependent on TMAs. The assessment does not provide adequate emphasis on the development of writing abilities. Most of the written assignments are copied version. For developing the writing abilities in ODL learners and checking the measures of copying and plagiarism e-portfolios could be adopted for assessment in these programs. Portfolios are commonly used to test the learners’ development as a writer over a period of time. Through portfolios, distance learners will get opportunities to interact with their tutor. This will develop the skills of revision, re-writing and editing skills. Portfolio will engage the learners in continuous assessment. Learners can receive the formative assessment which is a missing link in ODL assessment. E-portfolios are not a new term in ODL assessment and are widely used in distance programs to assess how learners progress gradually.
Establishing a requirement of E-portfolios will be determined by distance administrative programs. Distance writing program must continuously assess their programs for areas of possible improvements. It would be beneficial to construct an effective method for assessing the writing tasks in SLM to sustain the reliability methods of assessing a distance writing programs.

### 6.3.3. Possible Feedback Analysis

Suggested feedback is based on qualitative analysis of two written sample attempted in section 5.8.5.1.

**Table 6.1: Suggestions for Tutor’s Feedback procedure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Possible problems</th>
<th>Media used</th>
<th>Tutor’s responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There can be frequent questions from a learner</td>
<td>A learner may face problems due to poor comprehension and eventually poor writing skills.</td>
<td>A learner is required to contact the administration to get tutor’s information or even in counseling session a learner can contact the tutor. After obtaining the information, a learner can contact a tutor and they can fix up a time for discussing the problems whether on a phone or through online and even a face to face session can be conducted.</td>
<td>Tutor plans to respond to learner as soon as problems become evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about the course content, assignments or about the procedure that are answered in the course content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a learner asks questions this indicate unfamiliarity with the basic concept. As in the case of first assignment (write a summary) a learner might have questions on</td>
<td>Lack of background knowledge, writing skills and focus</td>
<td>Online discussions are possible as learner want immediate feedback from the tutor and also want to discuss the problems he is facing in writing a summary. For this</td>
<td>Learner responds to the tutor and crosschecks that where exactly is the problem area. Is it with the instruction, materials or the level of writing task?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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how to summarize a given passage or he may not be confident about the summary that he has written. This may be due to the unfamiliarity with the concept of writing summary.

Lack of coherenc in writing skills, problem in understanding the instruction (as in the case of second assignment)

Difficulty with language use and problems in understanding questions.

A tutor can send an email to a learner regarding his work. As in the case of summary writing and composition, a tutor can guide him by giving some examples on both and can ask him to refer back to study materials so as to rewrite the answer and send back to tutor for further assessment. But before that a tutor must highlight the grey areas in the answer sheet at the same time profiling learner’s responses would strengthen effective tutoring.

Tutor locates the problem area; whether a learner is able to understand the question as in the case of second assignment. A learner instead of writing a composition has copied the passage from different question on communication. Many inexperienced or novice student writers may confuse writing with memorising the data and so fail to actively engage with their course materials.

(Source: COL, 2003)

6.4. Recommendations

1. There is a need to design special writing tasks according to the needs of ODL learners.

2. SLM needs modification for simpler writing tasks following the concept of TBLT methodology that will give novice ODL learners practice of writing in different stages leading to improvement in low ability of writing skill.
3. SLM also need to be incorporated with proper self-assessment criteria for learners, so that they can assess their progress and can perform better in assignments without cheating/copying each other work.

4. The design of the writing task actually should conform to the test measures.

5. Positive washback effect of assessment of writing task must find significant space in ODL curriculum and SLM (Weigle, 2002).

6.4.1. In-service teacher training at distance

1. Mostly training programs and seminars are hypothetical and they are quite distanced from the learner; there is a need for regular follow-up and training programs.

2. Teachers in conventional mode too need training to facilitate the regular learning and they can get this training through ODL mode and vice versa.

3. Trainers also need training in terms of catering to the need of teachers where writing is an area which requires more attention.

4. In training programs teacher must be given training in almost all the areas of writing so that they can overcome with the fear of writing.

5. While designing the SLM, tutor/teacher/instructor need to be put at the centre of decision making process.

6. There should be effective communication between learner and the tutor through various configurations available through multimedia.

7. Training should also be given to teachers in terms of given feedbacks on writing anticipating their problems (Verma, 2008)

SLMs can be used in conventional universities as well in the form of textbook because this will provide the students of conventional universities with self-study tools and direction for better writing and practicing and also they can minimize their mistakes through self-checking questions and review sections. Utilization of SLM in conventional mode will open the new method of transformation of learning writing from traditional textbooks and study materials (Rozenblit, 1990)).

6.4.2. Implications for Monitoring Writing and assessment procedures

Many ODL students are not well prepared for writing. Their experience is that of copying out teacher-supplied notes. This leaves them with no capacity to take their own initiative in writing. SLM should provide built in follow-up writing activities and
tutor marked assignments would further strengthen the writing process. Assessing writing tasks in ODL mode is not a simple process. It is not simply putting a check mark and providing generalized comments on the writing. It demands tutor and learner-based strategies as this happens to be the major connection between the learner and the tutor. Training is also necessary because through training tutors it is possible to consolidate and strengthen the tutor assessment techniques and procedures. Training tutors and course writers are an important step for improving the quality of writing assessment in ODL mode. Tutors need to encourage the learners to maintain the portfolio. Learner’s profile will help the tutor in identifying the problem area and also a tutor can refer back to previous assignment any time if there is any difficulty in correcting and giving feedback on the assignments of learners. This will also help the tutor to check gradual progress in writing. Tutors need to be further trained on providing sensitive feedback to the learners (Commonwealth of learning, 2003).

Which is needed most are the trained tutor and course writers in ODL assessment techniques that should be monitored and supported by experienced staff (Commonwealth of learning, 2004). To sum up, the training procedures related to the writing task-assessments must be able to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is the writing task? Does it need revision?
2. Are there enough writing activities or remedial writing activities?
3. What strategies can be introduced to make students writing effective?
4. How effective is the assessment system? Does it require any change?
5. Do the writing activities match the learning outcomes?
6. How effective is the tutor support system? Does it require any change?
7. Is there enough scope of feedback on the written assignments in ODL mode?
8. How effective are the training procedures for course writers and tutorial system?
9. Is there any mechanism to provide different topics/task to different learners?
10. Is there any training given to tutors to check malpractices in ODL system while assessing the writing tasks?
11. How counselling sessions can be used to generate better and effective writing skills?
12. How tutors can introduce the assessment of writing tasks on the basis of differentiating learning and varied writing abilities?
Notes

1. The term composition writing used in IGNOU assignments refers to, in fact paragraph writing. The term paragraph writing is used since 'composition' becomes the blanket term for genre in writing.

2. The activities ranging from 1 to 6 do not presume to be completed in one short session rather they can be broken down into different counseling sessions, depending upon the needs of the learners and instructional time allocated to the tutors. This can be structured into process-based framework:

   Pre-writing
   Writing
   Re-writing
   Editing and feedback

3. Students and Learners are used interchangeably in the study.
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Annexure 1

Scoring Sheet

Instruction: Four criteria are divided to measure the Self Learning Materials and assignment (paragraph Writing and letter of complaint) submitted by the learners in ODL mode. Kindly read the dimensions and their ratings carefully in the rubric. Choose which one of the following five possible ratings best reflects the assignments and materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria I: Writing tasks objectives and content</th>
<th>Excellent (9-8)</th>
<th>Good (7-6)</th>
<th>Moderate (5-4)</th>
<th>Poor (3-2)</th>
<th>Very poor (1-0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Criteria II: Organization of units (Logical arrangements of ideas, cohesion, proper examples etc.)</td>
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### Annexure 2

#### Tables of means score

Criteria 1: Writing tasks objective and contents

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<th>Letter of complaint</th>
<th>Mean score (R1+R2/20)</th>
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<td>(R1 + R2/40)</td>
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Appendices
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<th>(R1+R2)/20</th>
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<td>(R1 + R2/20)</td>
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<td>(R1 + R2/40)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 3

Dear respondent,

I shall be grateful for your responses to this questionnaire. The information given will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. THANKS in anticipation for your cooperation.

Please provide the information about yourself:

Section 1: Personal Information

Name...........................................

Gender  male .......................... female ...........................

Age category below 20........20-22 yrs ..........23-25yrs ..........Above 25............

Native Place ..........................

You belong to  Rural area............... Urban area............... 

Mother Tongue  Urdu............... English............... Hindi............... Other ...............

Present status:

a. Student
b. Employed
c. Unemployed
d. Any other

Qualification

a. Senior Secondary
b. Graduation
c. Post graduation

Educational Board

a. CBSE
b. ICSE
c. State Board (UP, Rajasthan, )
d. Madarsa Board
e. AMU board
Section 2: Writing assignments

2. Are the counseling sessions useful to you
   Yes   No

3. Do you benefit from counseling sessions
   a. Tutor will give lectures on materials
   b. Tutor will help you in doing the assignments
   c. Tutor will identify the problematic area
   There should be more time for counseling sessions
   a. 2 sessions
   b. 3 sessions
   c. 5 sessions
   d. 6 sessions
   e. More than at least 0

5. Do you contact your tutor after counseling sessions on having difficulties in writing assignments or understanding materials
   Yes   No

   Do you think that tutor provide appropriate feedback to your writing assignments
   Yes   No

   a. Positive
   b. Negative
   c. Uterative
   d. Discouraging
c. constructive
f. No remarks
which aspect of the materials you would like to change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O UMN I</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
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<tr>
<td>writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. writing a composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Note taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. writing a Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describing yourself, friends, and house, countries, towns, and villages a day a journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing summary</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Section 4: understanding of the Course (Foundation course in English FEG-2 Block 1, 2, 3, 4 IGNOU)

Read the items carefully.

1. Given below are the lists of topics selected from Self-check exercises from B.C.A (FEG-02)/ Rate the level of tasks in terms of relevant to irrelevant and from Easy to difficult scale in the tables given after the tasks.

Writing paragraph (WPI)

Block 1 (FEG 2): Page no: 13
Self-check Exercise 7

In the following exercise we have given you a topic sentence, the title, as well as some notes which might help you develop a paragraph. As you develop your paragraph, use only those points which will support the topic sentence and leave out the rest. Your paragraph should not be more than 100 words.

The Secret of the Cockroach's Survival

Topic Sentence: The cockroach is one of the earth's oldest creatures, older than even the dinosaurs.

- survived because it can live anywhere ...........
  from coldest to warmest climate ...........
  city as well as forest ............
- cockroach is a clean insect
- can eat anything, including flowerbuds, paint, soap, wood ...........
- some species can live on...

(WP2)

Block 1 (FEG 2) Page no: 27

Exercise 5

You have just read and analysed a paragraph which lists the causes of erosion. It follows a sequence where the least important causes are mentioned first, followed by the most important cause. Now, think of your own life. For instance, what were the reasons which led you to join IGNOU? Jot down your reasons.

Writing Composition (WC): Block 1 (FEG2) page:45

Exercise 1

After going through the sample given above, construct an outline of the model composition 'Growing up to be a Monkey' given in Section 3.2.
New look at the picture below. Let's estimate the man as fully as we can, using suitable words to describe his size, age, face, clothes and expression. Let's call him 'Nanana'.

Note taking (NT): Block 1 (FEG 2) Page : 75

Read the passage carefully and take notes from it, keeping in mind the heading and the subordinate points. Some help is provided for you. Note how the relationship of the subordinate points here is different from that in Notes (3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes (4)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(heading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetation growing in swamps (over 250m. yrs ago).</td>
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<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it decomposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>decomposition→</td>
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<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peat bogs formed</td>
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<td>(v)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Appendices
Exercise 1

Write a letter to your father or some other near relative, giving a brief report on your studies, your hostel life, and your friends. (about 100 words.)

...and of even consistency, is concerned with the function of earthworms. Each point that is being made up to this stage consists of a statement of yet another function of the earthworms, so no further connecting words are required.

However, the sentence 'Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil' is concerned not with the function of worms but with the needs of these worms. It is therefore necessary to indicate that a different kind of idea is being brought in. A line from the original passage can be used in order to connect this sentence with the rest of the summary. Let us see how the summary will read with this addition:

'... Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms offer all these benefits, yet they make few demands: they need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil.'

Notice that the addition of this line indicates very clearly what the passage has dealt with so far and the contrast with what it is going to deal with next.

What about the last sentence of the summary? Does it fit in at that point in the summary? There is actually no connection between that and the sentence before it. It may perhaps be preferable to drop the mention of the Worm Growers' Association.

Notice that the summary does not necessarily follow the sequence of ideas of the original passage. It may follow the same sequence or it may not. What is important is that a clear line of argument develops, even though in the original passage the line of argument is not so clear.

Now rewrite the final version of the summary here. Check your answer with that given at the end.
Others topics are not listed

Instruction Using the code list given below put these codes in the boxes ranging from *Most relevant to Extremely irrelevant*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code list</th>
<th>WP1</th>
<th>WP2</th>
<th>WC</th>
<th>WC-D</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>WR1</th>
<th>WR2</th>
<th>WS</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Instruction Using the code list given below put these codes in the boxes ranging from *Easiest to extremely difficult*.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>WP2</th>
<th>WC</th>
<th>WC-D</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>WR1</th>
<th>WR2</th>
<th>WS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

|            | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   |
| EXREMELY DIFFICULT |     |     |     |      |    |     |     |    |
Dear respondent,

I shall be grateful for your responses to this questionnaire. The information given will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. THANKS in anticipation for your cooperation.

Please provide the information about yourself:

Section 1: Personal Information

Name........................................ ....

Gender  male ................................ female ...........................

Age category below 20 ........ 20-22 yrs ........ 23-25 yrs ........ Above 25 .........

Native Place .................................

You belong to  Rural area....... Urban area..............

Mother Tongue  Urdu.................English..............Hindi..............Other ............

Present status:

a. Student

b. Employed

c. Unemployed

d. Any other

Qualification

a. Senior Secondary

b. Graduation

c. Post graduation

Educational Board

a. CBSE

b. ICSE

c. State Board (UP, Rajasthan, )

d. Madarsa Board
Section 2: Writing assignments

1. Are the assignments related to the course material
   a. Related
   b. Related to some extent
   c. Not related

2. What is the nature of assignments
   a. Easy
   b. Very easy
   c. Difficult
   d. Very difficult

3. While facing difficulties in writing assignments, what do you do
   a. Take help from materials
   b. Take help from your classmates
   c. Take help from your tutor
   d. Take help from other reference books
   e. Take help from internet
   f. Only the assignment from your friend
   g. Take help from previous year assignments
   h. Any other
   i. The time given for completing
   j. Insufficient

Section 3: Counseling sessions

1. The tutor comes for the tutorials counseling sessions regularly
   Yes No

2. Are the counseling sessions useful to you
   Yes No

3. What do you expect from counseling sessions
   a. Tutor will give lectures on materials.
   b. Tutor will help you in doing the assignments
   c. Tutor will identify the problematic area

4. There should be more time for counseling sessions
   a. Sessions
   b. Sessions
   c. 5 sessions
   d. More than
   e. At least

5. Do you contact your tutor after counseling sessions on having difficulties in writing assignments or understanding materials
   Yes No

   a. Do you think that tutor provides appropriate feedback to your writing assignments
   Yes No

   a. Positive
h. Negative
i. u ortive
. iscouraging
. onstructive
l. No remar s
. hich as ect of the materials you would li e to change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
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<td>MCS-015</td>
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<td>Writing reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing letters (job application, complaint, negotiating, appointment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Memo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 4: understanding of the course (MCS – 015 communication Skills: Skills Needed at the Workplace I&II)

Read the items carefully

1. Given below are the lists of topics selected from Self-check exercises from MCS 15. Rate the level of tasks in terms of relevant to irrelevant and from Easy to difficult scale in the tables given after the tasks.

(MCS-015 Block 1: Page No. 25) WR

5.7 WRITING: REPORTS

Check Your Progress 7

Imagine that your Director has asked you to find out the precautions and preparations needed to arrange for the disaster management provision in your company.

These are the notes you’ve make. Draft a report to your director by expanding the notes into paragraphs.

Identified Dangers

1. Fire particularly in areas where a lot of paper is stored.
2. Earthquake – cracks due to previous earthquake.
3. Lightening – inadequate safety measures

Proposals

1. Fire frightening equipment to be maintained regularly.
2. Fire fighting training to the support staff.
3. Display of safety regulations in the area.
4. Hooters to be installed – signal warning
5. Exit outlets to be highlighted.
6. Important telephone numbers: Hospital, Fire Brigade, Doctors, officials.
7. Action committees to be formed.

Begin your report as follows:

To: Mr. Sunil Sen, Director
From: (Your name) Date:

Writing CV: (MCS-015 Block 1: Page No.: 47) W-CV

Check Your Progress 4

No write out your own CV by substituting the information given under different heads with information about yourself? If you have only just completed your studies, use the first sample and substitute the given information with your own bio-data. In case you have more than five years of job experience we would advise you to use the second format.

Writing letters: (MCS-015 Block I: Page No. 52) WL1

Check Your Progress 8

Asking for Reference

Write a letter to a professor asking him / her if you can mention him / her as a referee in your CV and whether he / she will be willing to provide a reference for you when needed. Include the following points:

- a reminder of who you are (professors teach hundreds of students and should be able to place you).

WL2

Check Your Progress 9

Repting to Letter of Appointment

Here is an appointment letter from a company where you appeared for a job interview. Write a reply.

Maurya Travels

256 Nehru Nagar

New Delhi – 110019

Tel.: 91 011 26018563

Email: maurya.travels@sancharnet.in

8 September 2003
Dear Ms. Dhara Taneja

Thank you for attending the interview on 3 September 2003. I am pleased to offer you the post of Sales Executive in our Marketing Division at a starting salary of Rs. 15000 per month. You will be required to join duty on 1 October 2003.

As discussed with you, the office hours are from 9:30 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday. You will be entitled to 2 weeks of annual paid holiday.

Please confirm acceptance of this appointment in writing and that you can take up this duty from 1 October.

Yours Truly,

Ashwinder Singh

G.M. HRD

(MCS-015 Block I: Page No.: 53)

(MCS-015 Block II: Page No.: 16: WM)

### 6.9 WRITING: MEMOS

A very important customer is going to visit your city for a weekend. You need to prepare for his visit. He is visiting your city for the first time. Imagine that a meeting has been held to discuss the issue on the basis of the agenda given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENDA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Hotels**  
  - Which hotel should you reserve? Why? Who should make the reservation? How can you make sure that his stay is comfortable? |
| **2. Airport**  
  - Who should meet the visitor at the airport? |
| **3. Lunches and dinners**  
  - Where should you take your visitor for lunch and dinner? Should you check first to see what kind of food he likes? |
| **4. Entertainment**  
  - Where should you take him in the evenings? |
| **5. Gift**  
  - What kind of gift should you buy him? When should you give it to him? |
| **6. Welcome letter**  
  - What advice would you give him about your city and visit by way of helping him to prepare for his visit. |
| **7. AOB – Any Other Business** |
Check Your Progress 11

Now write a memo to your boss with your suggestions. After you have written the memo, compare it with the one provided as a sample memo in the Answer Key.

(MSC - 015 Block II: Page no.: 76) WL 3

Check your Progress 7

Refer to task 1 of 10.7 You have successfully negotiated the deal with your buyer, Write a letter to him confirming the agreement reached at the end of the negotiation.

Instruction: Using the code list given below, put these codes in the boxes ranging from Most relevant to extremely irrelevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code list</th>
<th>WR</th>
<th>W-CV</th>
<th>WL-1</th>
<th>WL-2</th>
<th>WM</th>
<th>WL-3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOST RELEVANT</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instruction: Using the code list given below, put these codes in the boxes ranging from Easiest to extremely difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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EXTREMELY DIFFICULT
### Annexure 4

**MCS-015 (Questionnaire Section 2 and 3)**

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**TOTAL**

- Fully related: 6
- Relatively related: 7
- Some extent: 4
- Not related: 0

**Questions & Responses**

Take help from:
- a) materials
- b) classmates
- c) tutors
- d) reference book
- e) Internet
- f) friends
- g) previous assignments
- h) leave the difficult question
- i) any other

- Sufficient: 7
- Insufficient: 11
- Y = 16
- N = 1

A. Lectures on materials:
   - a. 7 = 1
   - b. 6 = 5
   - c. 5 = 1
   - d. 4 = 0
   - e. more than 7 = 10

Response:
- Yes = 9
- No = 8

A. Positive:
- a. 8 = 9
- b. Negative:
- c. Supportive:
- d. Discouraging:
- e. Constructive:
- f. No remarks:
- g. Passed:

Response:
- Yes = 8
- No = 10

Choice:
- Yes = 7
- No = 8

Frequency:
- Y = 5
- N = 12

Note:
- N = 7
Annexure 5

Students' rating of writing tasks from Most relevant to Extremely irrelevant (MCS-01.5)

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Students’ rating of writing tasks from Easiest to Extremely difficult (MCS-015)

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Easiest: WR = 7.1%, CV = 50%, WM = 14.2%, L1 = 57.1%, L2 = 7.1%, L3 = 0

Extremely difficult: WR = 14.2%, CV = 3, WM = 21.4%, L1 = 7.1%, L2 = 14.2%, L3 = 3
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Students’ rating of writing tasks (FEG-02) from Most relevant to Extremely irrelevant

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Students' rating of writing tasks (FEG-02) from Easiest to Extremely difficult

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### Easiest Rating of Writing Tasks (FEG-02) from Easiest to Extremely Difficult

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Students' rating of writing tasks (FEG-02) from Easiest to Extremely difficult

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