

Quality Analysis of English Writing Skills Competency among Grade Four Students

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Abstract

Writing is one of the most important strands of the English curriculum generally a pre-conceived difficulty even among the language teachers in Bhutan. Although no action research (AR) has been done to validate this topic with writing difficulties in the research school, this AR seeks to find out particularly the standard of English of grade four children and to analyze the factors affecting quality writing. Writing is considered the most important skill for language production. However, students face many challenges in quality writing due to the consideration of language difficulty. Therefore, this AR analyzes the writing quality of grade four children through error analysis (EA) and to study effective methods to improve quality writing. For this purpose, two sections

comprising of 30 students each from four sections were chosen for analyzing the quality writing through EA. Writing samples were collected from 60 students to investigate the major problems in their writing through a diagnostic test. After the analysis of EA, the intervention program was designed with different strategies to improve quality writing. Furthermore, the target groups were evaluated on intervention effectiveness through the post-test. The findings exhibited that the major problems among grade four students were appropriate command over the use of tenses, word order, vocabulary, spellings, capitalization, and lack of ideas in the writing process. Besides, the study analyzed the factors affecting quality writing through focus group discussions and free form questionnaire provided to language teachers as the informants.

Keywords: Quality Writing, Error Analysis, writing competency

1. Introduction

English is the lingua franca in Bhutan. It is taught as a second language that conquers most of the instructional courses and subjects taught in the school. English is considered to be the dominating instructional language of the Bhutanese curriculum than Dzongkha although the latter is the national language of our country. The four basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the integral strands taught in the English curriculum to develop language competency. English is considered as the international link language that is genuinely important for the developmental process of our country. However, English is one of the main subjects that the students lack the required skills, especially in writing (Dorji, 2005).

English as the second language is a major concern in the education department to raise quality since it was one of the major subjects as our national language, Dzongkha. The recent Academic Learning Scorecard (ALS) of the research school was evaluated and rated below the required target and standard of the curriculum. The students writing

quality of English was questionable, since, the majority of students performed below average. This may be due to teaching and learning approaches that do not meet the required standard of the grade level. In general, the second language knowledge is limited and it requires attention and measures for improvement. It has been found in the study of Bhutan Council for School Examination and Assessment (BCSEA, 2013), that the students faced major challenges in writing and speaking than listening and reading.

Quality writing is crucial for students' academic success since it is one of the basic requirements in every professional developmental progress (Rietdijk, Janssen, Van Weijen, Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 2017). Writing in the upper primary in the research school genuinely needed certain interventions to perform better in every subject the children undertake. Some of the confrontational issues of the students due to poor quality writing include poor performance in the exam; failing to complete class works and homework; cannot answer questions logically; hindrance in academic progression; and lack of motivation to learn. To rectify these issues, teachers need to be very much concerned with language errors such as grammar, content, and structure. Otherwise, learners' quality writing is sure to deteriorate and fail to motivate (Dorji, 2005).

The grade four students are victims of writing anxiety due to lack of some probable reasons like unimportance placed by the educators and due to practicing outmoded teaching methods. Since students experience the most challenging curriculum of literature, children face a lot of difficulties in quality writing. This study analyzes the way forward methods to improve quality writing after analyzing their errors and analyzing the factors that hinder quality writing. Through the interventions program, the researchers analyze their development progress of quality writing. Quality writing here justifies the possession of techniques of writing, properly organizing ideas with grammatical accuracy, and using appropriate vocabulary without spelling errors. According to Wee and Jusoff (2010), the common errors made by most ESL students

were disordering, omission, addition, and malformation of words and sentences. Therefore, it leads to this action research (AR), which is to identify the errors committed by students in writing and provide the necessary intervention strategy.

1.1 Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the writing quality of grade four children through error analysis.
2. To analyze the reasons that hinder the writing quality of the grade four children.
3. To study the effective methods to improve the quality writing of the grade four children.

1.2 Action research Question

1. What errors are commonly experienced by the grade four students in writing?
2. What are the reasons behind that hinder the English writing skills competency of the grade four children?
3. Are the methods and strategies used to improve the quality writing of the children effective?

2. Reconnaissance

Grundy (1995) has pointed out, “Reconnaissance often consists of going backward and forwards for a while between reflections and collecting evidence” (p13). Moreover, Maxwell (2003) explained that reconnaissance generally consists of three parts, situational analysis that analyze the situation in terms of a range of factors such as resources and practices; competences that describes the profile and competences of the researcher; and Literature review that links with the previous work in this field and their findings. These three components of reconnaissance are discussed below.

2.1 Situational Analysis

The research school, Wangdue Primary School (WPS) is located in the western part of the country. The school provides education to the pre-primary until the sixth-grade students, following the nationally prescribed curriculum. Quality Writing skills of learners, especially in the upper primary of WPS are found declining and it has become questionable towards students' academic achievement. A growing number of students with poor writing skills in their academic performances have become concerned against the goal of providing quality education. The nature of subjects in the upper primary (grade 4) students is maximum in English (Mathematics, Science, Social Studies) which requires sufficient English background for sound academic achievement.

As per the Academic Learning Scorecard (ALS) of the grade four Mid-Term Examination English of the target school, the average score in written exam is 37.94% less than the required pass percentage of the standard set by the government, 40%. In the school, the ALS target set for the academic year 2019 is 58% that is too far achievable by the grade four students. Students were found difficulty in constructing simple sentences correctly on the familiar topics provided. The question, 'Why are they facing writing difficulties?' even though they are provided writing practices since pre-primary. There should be certain factors determining the writing difficulties faced by them. Thus, the study is focused on analyzing students' quality writing skills through experiences in the school's teaching-learning system and to explore deeper in the system to find reasons behind students' poor-quality writing.

2.2 Competence

More than decades in teaching services made the researchers aware of the English curriculum and standards that the children should be competent. We gained skills to undergo certain studies during our master's degree program through a research module and through producing a research thesis. Although we are a novice to the classroom

action research, we have a basic research skill to study and analyze the problems to enhance students learning atmosphere.

After analyzing the midterm exam result of the school, the researchers found that there is a need to study on why students are lacking quality writing skills. Students in grade four were found performing poorly in written works especially in essay writing and sentence construction. There is a genuine need to study their quality writing standards to provide certain interventions for improvement. Therefore, the researchers wanted to find certain errors that students stumble through critically reflecting and studying that will guide in the successful teaching-learning process.

3. Literature Review

3.1 English Literacy

English literacy is taught in the form of four strands across the English curriculum: Reading and literature, writing, listening and speaking, and language (Royal Education Council [REC], 2014). In the curriculum, the inclusion of reading and writing is purposefully significant, since writing is critical to general literacy skills that promote successful learning in the school (Tandika, 2016). In general, literacy refers to effectively read and write in a variety of context. However, defining literacy changes through the developmental progress of the 21st century standards as the world revolves around advanced technology. The 21st-century literacy skills are survival skills such as collaboration skills, communication skills, adaptations, and the ability to analyze and use information effectively in the practical world (Okogbaa, 2017). Now the English literacy expands towards the effectiveness of communication skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing competency determines how effectively graduates communicate in today's knowledge economy.

3.2 Defining writing

According to Byrne (1996), writing is the process of encoding messages, translating our thoughts into languages using graphic symbols; letters, or words in a systematic way carefully constructed and organized to form a text. He also explained that the writing should include creating notes, drafting, and revising. Furthermore, White and Arndt (1991) defined writing as “A form of problem-solving which involves such process as generating ideas, discovering a voice with which to write, planning, goal setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written, and searching with language with which to express exact meanings” (p3). Writing is putting ideas and thoughts into symbols, letters, and words to convey the required meaning to the world of readers. Similarly, the researcher Al-Khasawneh (2015) defined writing as a mental process to generate ideas, write in the form of constructive sentences for evaluation purposes. Communication is transmitted more through writing than any other type of media. Therefore, the current study defines writing as a process of ordering thoughts and ideas into words and sentences following the knowledge of grammatical structures with logical connections including vocabularies and spellings.

3.3 Quality Analysis of Writing

The concern around the quality writing is defined by the current status of writing demonstrated by the primary school students after the midterm examination conducted in target school. The quality analysis of writing is determined by the error analysis (EA), as EA contributes to language development interventions. The research conducted by Hasyim (2002) stated that EA analyzes how well children are using the target language and helps to obtain common difficulties faced by the children while writing. Al-Khasawneh (2015) described EA as the process to study, analyze, identify the types of errors, and find various approaches to intervene for the learners to improve. According to Ridha (2012), EA is “the process to observe, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by learner” (p 26).

There is a need to document the nature of children's writing skills across the grades when children are learning to write. There must also be comprehensive and a validated assessment method to elicit and analyze children's writing products, so as to play a vital role in generating methods and ideas to guide them quality writing. Therefore, the study analyzed quality writing through EA, resorting to certain strategies and methods to improve their flaws while writing.

3.4 Sampling

The two sections comprising of 60 grade four students were selected from four sections totaling to 130 students. The cluster random sampling is used to select the target group for the purpose of the study. The participants' age ranges from 8 to 10 years old. All selected groups are used for experimenting on analyzing the quality writing and to provide necessary interventions for improvement. Most of the children came from a working-class family and few from backward family. Therefore, the mixed family backgrounds often hindered second language learning especially with the backward family to guide children at home. The selected groups of sections are of 'mixed ability grouping'.

3.5 Time Frame

This study was carried out from the first week of September 2019 to the last week of November 2019. It was designed after the midterm exam, after analyzing the written answer scripts, finding the need of the children in grade four children.

4. Methodology

Classroom action research is one of the practical studies to create a school better performer through the collaboration of researchers, students, teachers, and other related stakeholders. In this study, researchers used a qualitative method to find the quality

writing competency of grade four children. The researchers used this design to bring out the methods and strategies to improve the quality of writing after analyzing their standards. Writing is an important skill in language production. However, it is considered a difficult skill, particularly in English as the second language (ESL) contexts where students face many challenges in writing.

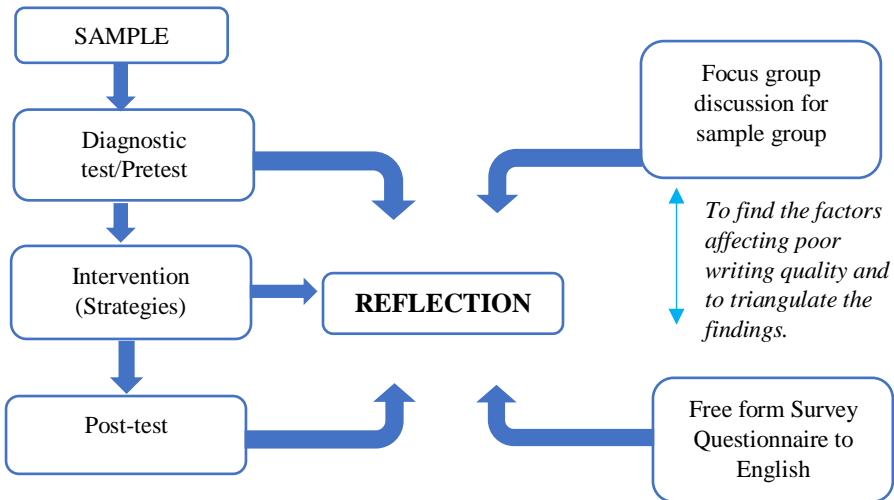


Figure 1. Concept map of the process of Action research

4.1 Data Collection

The instruments used to collect relevant data in this study are Diagnostic test and posttest of essay writing to analyze the errors for intervention purposes. The researcher used a free-form survey questionnaire with open-ended questions for English teachers and focus group discussions with the students in groups of eight members. The lesson plans are used as the instructional instruments to intervene practically in two classrooms comprising 30 students each. The student's written notes, the researcher's discussion, and teachers' open-ended questions are used for triangulating the findings of the study.

Firstly, the Pretest as the diagnostic test and posttest to examine the quality writing of the children are conducted with the essay question, 'Write about 100 words

on how did you spend your summer vacation'. They were assessed on the following criteria: 1) spellings (vocabulary), 2) punctuation marks, 3) capitalization, 4) tenses, and 5) other grammatical errors. After analyzing the standards of writing standards through EA, the researcher came up with the intervention strategies. Finally, a posttest was conducted to find out children's writing competency. Pretest and posttest identified the current level of quality writing of the students and their improvement after the intervention program.

Secondly, the Free-form survey questionnaire is a qualitative data collection method with open-ended questions to study on "*Quality Analysis of English Writing skills Competency among grade four students.*" The study focused on investigating factors that challenge the quality writing in the school. It also investigates the writing strategies used in the teaching and learning process. The freeform survey questionnaire supports through triangulating the findings from the study.

Finally, the focus group the discussion (FGD) consists of 5 groups of 8 members in each section. In this discussion the researcher posed open-ended questions to guide discussion, taking notes of their response, so that the information provided is analyzed. Therefore, the FGD informed the factors an affecting poor quality writing and provides researchers a clear picture to intervene for effective writing process. This data triangulates the children's reason that hinders writing quality.

4.2 Action Programs

Based on researchers' personal experiences with a thorough analysis of the classroom problem, and through the error analysis of their written work, certain intervention strategies were implemented to answer the AR question: Are the methods and strategies used to improve the quality writing of the children effective? The intervention program was scheduled daily in the fall semester from 1st week of September till the last week of September 2019. The lesson plans and interventions were based on the findings of the pretest conducted.

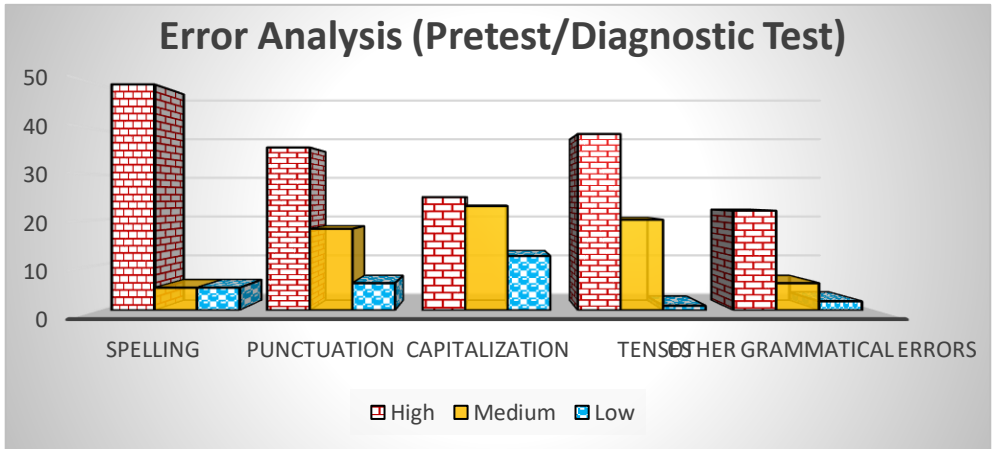


Figure 2. Error Analysis of Diagnostic Test

As per the EA, figure 2 shows the maximum students fall under a high error group in all the five areas of standards (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, tenses, and other grammatical errors). Their errors are classified into 1) high spelling errors, 2) high punctuation errors, 3) high capitalization errors, 4) high tenses errors, and 5) high other grammatical errors like subject-verb agreement. Therefore, the following strategies are intervened:

4.2.1 Vocabulary development (Dictation)

To develop vocabulary, the activity was designed to test the spellings and words through dictation. The spelling test of the words defines the knowledge of the words, pronunciation, and spellings. It was designed for 100 minutes per week to help them learn the spellings of the learned vocabularies. Every day, 20 minutes are allotted for the dictation and vocabulary development providing the list of words as per their standard.

4.2.2 S S strategy (Sentence builder)

Moving from word spellings to the sentence construction, this strategy was intervened to build sentences using 2S and a light bulb strategy. The 2S refers to the setting and subject of the sentence, and a light bulb refers to the idea or a reason for the sentence. The sentences are constructed using this strategy using the setting (Where and when), Subject (who and what), and light bulb (reasons or why). For instance, the students were asked to write about ‘Help the earth, reuse and recycle’, they write ‘At any time and everywhere, wise people recycle and reuse the trash to help the earth to be clean and healthy’. Here, the first S (setting) is ‘At any time and everywhere’; second S (Subject) is formed using adjective, noun, and verb, ‘Wise people recycle and reuse the trash’; and finally, the reason ‘To help the earth to be clean and healthy’. This strategy helped in constructing the sentence giving us a clear idea of what exactly the paragraph means.

4.2.3 Four Square writing strategy (paragraph writing)

This is the method teach basic writing skills applicable across the grade level for all the different types of writing such as narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive (Gould & Gould, 1999). This visual organizer helps students to conceptualize, understand, and structure a piece of written documents successfully. The four-square writing method guide students to elaborate or add more sentences in a paragraph as shown below. It was intervened for 100 minutes a week. This method guided them to write sentences in paragraphs effectively.

4.2.4 Writing process

The writing process was taught and practiced for 200 minutes a week within the stipulated time scheduled for the intervention. It took four sessions of 50 minutes to guide them throughout the writing process. It develops their skills in quality writing

through planning and organizing, drafting, reviewing, editing, and publishing. This process needed time and patience to publish the piece of writing.

4.2.5 Teaching Grammar/tenses

To guide them in constructing sentences correctly, the researcher taught them the grammar rules including subject-verb agreement, tenses, punctuation marks, and capitalization. The written quality deteriorates, if not followed grammatical rules correctly in writing. They were made to practice and understand the grammatical concepts to write effectively.

5. Findings and Result Analysis

The findings are based on the AR questions: 1) What errors are commonly experienced by the grade four students in writing? 2) What are the reasons behind that hinders the English writing skills competency of the grade four children? 3) Are the methods and strategies used to improve the quality writing of the children effective?

5.1 Diagnostic test (pretest)

As per the reflection of the diagnostic test, EA determined the following weaknesses of the children that affect quality writing. To facilitate the strategies for quality writing, the researchers conducted a pretest after reflecting on the ALS of the English writing that demonstrates that children of grade four need to improve. The following are the findings from the diagnostic test.

5.1.1 Spelling error

The vocabulary development in terms of spelling competency is found major problems among grade four students. There was a maximum number of students who were incompetent in vocabulary and spellings of the words to form quality sentences.



Figure 3. Spelling error analysis

The finding in Figure 3 shows that the majority of the students cannot spell the words correctly. In writing, vocabulary and spellings are considered one of the key areas to assess quality. The students who lack vocabulary competency are vulnerable in deteriorating quality writing.

5.1.2 Punctuation marks

The students should be able to punctuate the following punctuation marks effectively in the sentences as per the standard set in the national curriculum: 1) full stop, 2) comma, 3) inverted commas, 4) question mark, and 5) exclamation marks correctly.

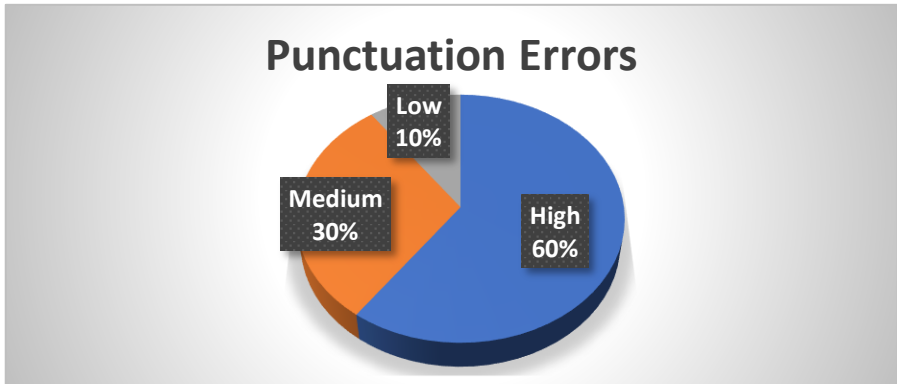


Figure 4. Punctuation Error Analysis

However, it was diagnosed that the target students were facing difficulty in punctuating sentences correctly. Therefore, the need to intervene on punctuation marks is found genuine. Figure 4 clearly depicts that the maximum number of students falls under the high category of errors determining their weaknesses in punctuating correctly.

5.1.3 Capitalization

As per the standards, capitalization in writing refers to start a sentence with its first letter in upper case, capitalizing proper nouns, and writing in upper case to write the letter 'I'. There are rules to capitalize on the sentences.

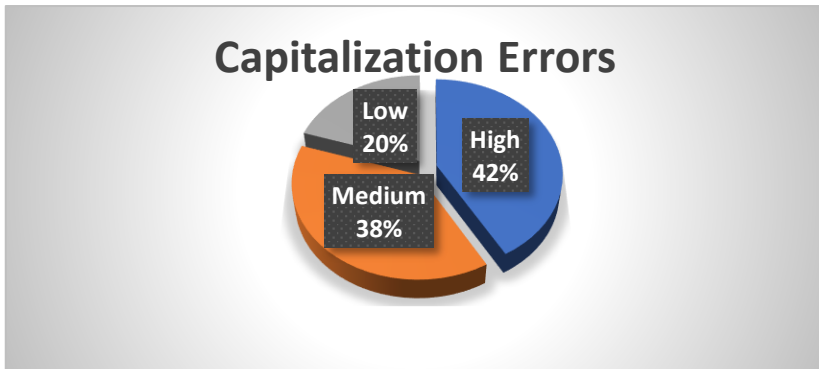


Figure 5. Capitalization Error Analysis

Figure 5 resembles that most of the students of grade four students are falling under the high and medium error category. It shows that students face challenges in capitalizing words and sentences correctly.

5.1.4 Tenses

The informants in the given data strongly recommended that the writing quality should be the major focus in the school. Since the sample group was found poor in tenses, the quality of writing is problematic. Figure 8.4 strongly recommends that the target groups are facing a serious challenge in categorizing tenses: present tense, past tense and future tense. This recommends that teachers need to focus more on practicing tenses to reduce tenses errors.

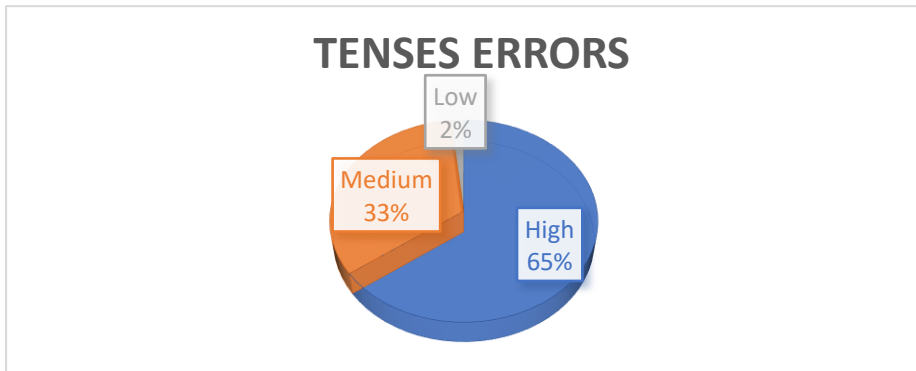


Figure 6. Tenses Error Analysis

5.1.5 Other Grammatical errors

As per the standards of grade four students, other grammatical competencies are to effectively use subject-verb agreement rules correctly in constructing the sentences; to use articles and prepositions correctly and to use conjunctions to form compound and complex sentences. The findings revealed that there are a majority of students who are having problems using grammatical rules correctly. The students are experiencing high grammatical errors in their writing process. Knowledge of grammar is not just about mastering by expressing the rules and memorizing but the students have to be aware of the errors or mistakes they make as well. Brown (2007) asserts that the process of human learning is closely related to the frequency of making errors and this led to error analysis as linguists have realized how errors can provide clues to problems in writing effectively.

Therefore, the errors commonly experienced by the grade four students were words and spellings, tenses (present tense, past tense, future tense) usage, usage of punctuation marks, capitalization, and other grammatical usages like subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions. The need to intervene for the above-mentioned errors is found one of the major priorities in the teaching and learning process.

5.2 Analysis of Posttest

After the diagnostic test (pretest), researchers implemented the intervention program using writing strategies and grammar builder activities. To find the effectiveness of intervened strategies, a posttest was conducted to survey the standards of writing. The posttest analyzes the AR question: Are the methods and strategies intervened to improve the writing quality of the children effectively? The findings are compared with a diagnostic test to analyze the effectiveness of the intervened methods.

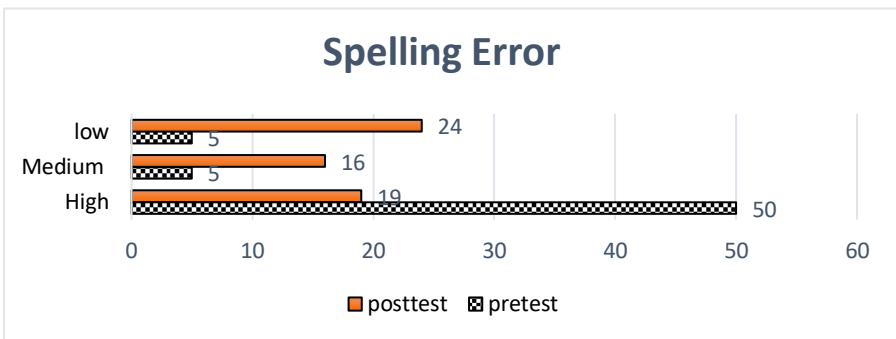


Figure 7. Comparing Post and Pretest on spelling errors

After the intervention, Figure 7 shows the spelling errors drastically reduced and found that the intervention program- the dictation helped children to advance their vocabulary and spelling competency.

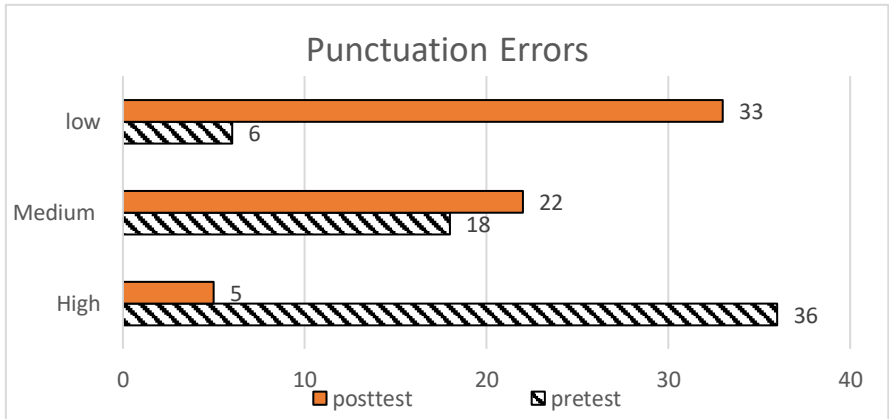


Figure 8. Pretest and post-test Punctuation Errors

Similarly, the punctuation errors showed in Figure 8 are dramatically reduced. To focus on punctuation, it was found that the teachers should teach practically the punctuation marks and provide practices to apply the punctuation rules correctly.

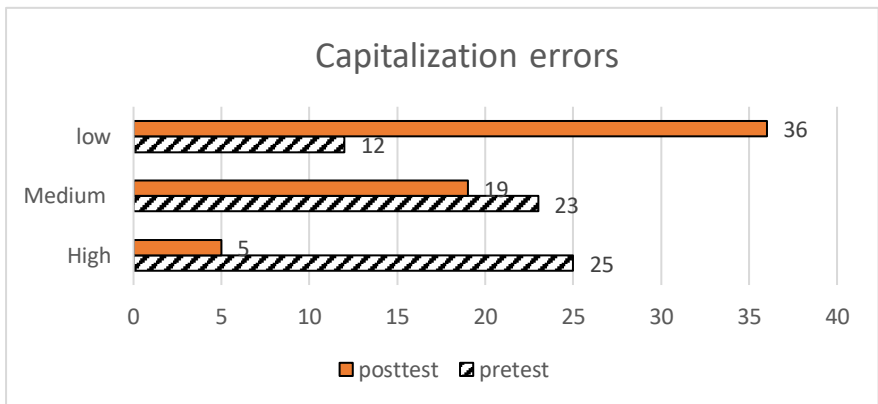


Figure 9. Pretest and post-test Capitalization Errors

In comparison to the pretest, posttest was drastically skyrocketed in terms of reducing capitalization errors. It was found that the basic rules of capitalization should be taught separately to put into practice.

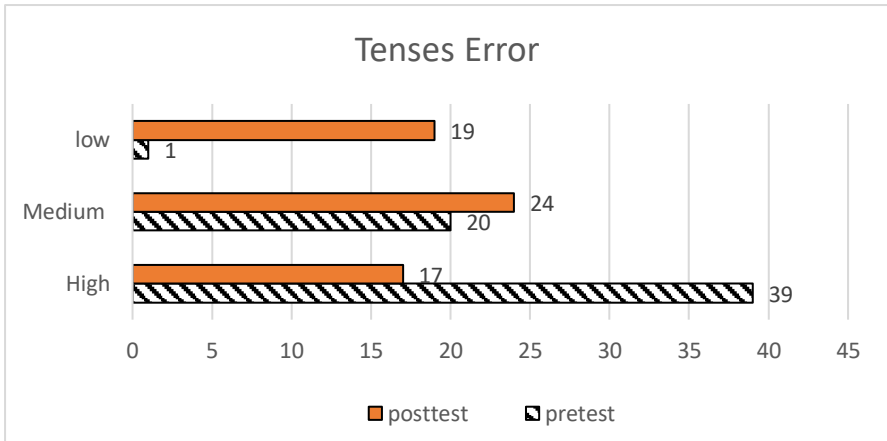


Figure 10. Pretest and post-test Tenses Errors

The major problem reflected as per the diagnostic test was tenses error. Nevertheless, Figure 10 represented on tenses error has a greater impact on reducing errors through the intervention program. The maximum students land up in the medium level of tenses error. Therefore, the subject teachers should focus more on tenses providing maximum practical activities.

During the intervention program, other grammatical zones like subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and conjunctions were taught practically. Grammar errors can be dropped by providing maximum practice and activities. It was analyzed that grammatical errors decreased after the intervention program.

5.3 Analysis of English Teachers' Free form Survey Questionnaire

To investigate the current status of English curriculum in the school, competency of the English curriculum in general, assessment practices, factors that challenge the

quality writing and writing strategies commonly used in the school, the free form survey questionnaire was used in this study. This analysis answers the AR questions, 1) What are the reasons behind that hinders the English writing skills competency of the grade four children? and supports the findings of 2) Are the methods and strategies used to improve the quality writing of the children effective? Following are the responses of the questions asked in the free form questionnaire.

1. Do you feel that students need improvement in their second language (English)?

Ten teaching faculty members responded to the need for improvement in the second language (English) among students in the school. The said improvement refers to overall language competency in four basic skills, 1) listening, 2) speaking, 3) reading, and 4) writing. Out of 10 English teachers, all felt that the need for improvement is strongly required.

Despite most of teaching instructions is English based, it is still felt that overall language competency needs greater attention.

2. From the following language skills, which area should be given more focus to ensure learners' academic achievement?

The informants clearly state that reading; writing and speaking should be focused more rather than listening skills. Although speaking and reading skills need maximum attention, it is through writing skills that generalize the real academic achievement. Therefore, the teachers felt that through reading skills, quality writing can be maximized, as some of the teachers commented:

“A good reader can speak and write fluently and correctly”.

“More focus should be given on reading skills to develop other skills”.

“Reading and writing are solely responsible for academic achievement”.

Moreover, some teachers felt that all the skills are important, but speaking should be emphasized more improve other skills. As commented:

“Improved speech will eventually result in improved writing, but it takes time and some students need language scaffolds to be able to speak aloud”.

“Though English is the second language, we got to focus on speaking and writing, as the strands have great reach and influence all over the world”.

3. If you are going to rate on the student’s present quality of writing, where would they fall?

Teachers expressed that the children in the school, in general, are mostly below average in terms of quality writing where 6 teachers found students in below average and 4 respondents on average. The quality writing here refers to students writing capabilities based on competence in vocabulary (spelling), use of punctuation marks correctly, capitalization, tenses, and other grammatical errors as per the standards set in the curriculum. The students are placed under below average and average after analyzing the written quality. However, the teachers found students neither in not competent at all nor incompetent. This shows that teachers need to focus more on writing strategies to place them incompetent category.

4. How is the learner’s ability in expressing their responses in all written assignments?

The analysis shows the learners writing ability lacks logical presentation with lose structure. 9 informants felt that students lack logic with improper usage of grammar, vocabulary, and sequence of ideas. There is none who supported well-structured with the least error since almost all the teachers assessed their works with lots of grammatical errors without any logic and sequence. Nevertheless, the students

were found not directly copying from the text, suggesting that they are trying their best to at least complete their tasks by themselves.

5. Do you consider and assess learner's language errors while evaluating their written assignments, answer scripts, and student's notebooks?

Analyzing the teacher's perspectives on evaluating students' written assignments, 7 informants assessed the assigned works thoroughly and 3 partially. The analysis determined that although the informants assessed students' work thoroughly, they lack the competency in quality writing. From the informants, the researcher could determine that there should be certain factors where teachers should study in order to create an environment for them to improve quality writing.

6. While teaching, do you guide and provide valuable comments on students' writing skills in assignments and in-class works and homework?

The teachers' guidance and support with relevant comments verified the students' writing progress and provide them the ways forward to clarify their competency. The valuable comments should be the most important tool for the guiders to support their writing quality.

The informants expressed that they always provide valuable comments for children to understand their progress, strengths, and weaknesses. 10 teachers expressed that they provide valuable comments and guidance accordingly to their performances. Some of the valuable comments are:

"Provide comments on the specific error/grammatical errors".

"Yes, you are doing great, but need to improve in spellings, grammar, or punctuation marks."

"Copy/write the spellings correctly, improve your handwriting, or read properly before answering."

"Providing reinforcements, correct their spellings and grammatical errors."

“Guide in draft process choosing more exciting or specific words, adding interesting details, choosing or maintaining focus, removing irrelevant focus, and revising clarity and focus.”

The comments and guidance provided by the teachers are mostly focused on grammar, spellings, punctuation, relevancy contents, and clarity of focus on students’ process of writing.

7. Provide some comments on what could be the possible reasons for poor quality writing.

The factors affecting the poor-quality writing in the target groups are generally discussed under the following themes as expressed by the teacher-informants.

- **Reading:** the lack of reading habit is the major factor that results in poor quality writing. The teachers felt that students are not reading regularly and teachers lack encouragement to read.
- **Practice:** quality writing needs practice; the lack of practice provided to the children deprives writing effectively.
- **Vocabulary:** the lack of enough and varied vocabulary deteriorates the interest in writing.
- **Motivation:** teachers’ motivation, parents’ motivation, and other stakeholders’ motivation are needed for their academic excellence. The lack of motivation from various sources deprives their writing interest.
- **Handwriting/letter formation:** quality writing depends on their skill in writing and formation of letters. Due to poor writing quality, their interest in writing decreased. The students who are experiencing poor handwriting don’t practice writing and left most of the works undone.
- **Language ability:** poor vocabulary, lack of spelling and grammar competence, students face difficulty in expressing their ideas. They land up

with the lack of originality of their expression in writing resorting to duplicating others' work.

Although there are many factors that affect quality writing, the informants who are always dealing with the students found the above factors that cannot motivate them to write effectively.

8. What are the writing strategies/ methods used in your daily writing?

In general, the respondents, they used certain strategies for the written activities as listed below:

- **Freewriting:** students are given free choice of selecting their own topics to write as per their interest using the varied vocabulary learned in the class.
- **Modeling:** teachers model how to write providing those clear guidelines on paragraphing, coherence, word choices, and organizing the ideas in logical and sequential.
- **Guided writing:** teachers provide writing framework and accordingly children follow what to write choosing the appropriate vocabulary and phrases. In this method, they are provided with certain guiding questions for proper organization of the ideas to have quality writing.
- **Writing process:** teach them the writing process as per their standards starting from planning and organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- **Storytelling:** teachers tell them the story and children write the story again after proper listening of the story.
- **Comprehension:** Read the given story, poem, or an essay and comprehend the genre through answering questions or summarizing. Provide them the comprehending skills to comprehend the text carefully.
- **Vocabulary building:** provide them the words daily to create sentences or to find meanings and conduct dictation.

- **Daily journal:** writing journal is one method to provide them to express what they have learned in the class and to analyze the lesson to apply practically in our daily life.
- **Describing pictures/scenes:** especially in the lower primary classes, students are provided with photos, pictures, or a scene to describe using the vocabulary developed.

The mentioned strategies and methods were applied in the classroom by the teacher informants to develop students' writing quality. This information provides a clear picture of how teachers guide them in developing writing skills; however, incompetency of quality writing prevails in the target school. Nevertheless, the academic excellence at the end of the term is graded through quality writing practices as they have to attend compulsorily to the summative form of assessment – exam.

9. If you are going to improve students writing quality, what areas or strategies should be your highest priority to implementing in the classroom?

Finally, the teacher informants were asked to suggest some of the solutions to the lack of quality writing of students. This information proves that there are certain strategies and areas that most teachers prioritize that are to provide practice to write, grammar building strategies, letter formation for the lower classes, and mostly reinforce them to read more books. The informants shared their concern to focus more on the writing strand seriously scrutinizing the grammatical errors.

5.4 Focus Group Discussions Analysis

This discussion helped the researchers to triangulate the findings of the AR question: What are the reasons that hinder the English writing skills competency of the grade four children? From the learners' point of view, there is a number of factors that affect their quality writing as discussed under the following themes.

1. **Boredom to write:** most of the students felt that writing English is boring to them since they faced difficulty to build the sentences; they cannot express their knowledge and feelings in English due to less vocabulary, and they don't have good handwriting. Some of the students shared,

“I don't enjoy writing, because it is boring, difficult, and lack of legible handwriting”.

“I don't feel like to write since I am weak in spellings and grammar rules”.

Therefore, they consider writing English as the boring part of learning and consider themselves below satisfactory in terms of writing competency.

2. **Difficulty in writing:** almost all the participants expressed that writing English is the most difficult because of the following reasons expressed by them.

“I feel English is difficult to write because I am weak in spelling and grammar”.

“I am weak in spelling and making sentences”.

“I am weak in handwriting, that's why I feel writing English is difficult”.

“It is very hard to write because I don't actually feel like to write”.

When the researcher analyzed their feelings, the weaknesses are termed as difficulty in writing. They are vulnerable in deteriorating their standards of writing quality due to infirmity in particular subjects and areas that they think should master.

3. **External forces:** some of the external forces that they consider for poor in quality writing are the lack of guidance and support from teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Some they shared of their economic scarcity and problems faced in family matters that they do not get enough time to write and ultimately deprive of interest in studying. Some of the feelings shared are:

“I do not get enough time to write at home”.

“My parents are not supporting me to study”

Students need support and guidance from external society to prop their learning and experience to become an efficient adult. Without which, how much teachers try

their best to teach and guide, the vigorous hard work is just in vain. That's why the student's quality writing emasculate.

Nevertheless, out of all the factors that affect their quality writing, they expressed their gratitude for having their English teachers by rating them in level four. The level four refers to the concern English teacher is excellent in teaching writing. Although they know that they are lacking the skills to show their quality writing, they have the heart to excel in their skills by knowing their weaknesses and strengths. Some of them stated, "I am bad in spelling but good in handwriting, so I need to improve the spelling of the words".

6. Practical Implications of the study

The implications of this study offered suggestive evidence for employing different strategies in ESL grade four classrooms to improve quality writing and to increase language proficiency. The study appeared to support the writing approaches that create a positive environment for writing development of the students. Mostly, the approaches used in this study benefitted the students in the development of planning, organizing, and structuring the sentences. The continuous process and sufficient writing activities for the students incorporating various approaches will reduce the level of errors. Students while given the opportunity to practice more in writing helps them develop the technical elements of language: vocabulary, spellings, and grammatical competencies.

7. Limitations

This study was investigated to analyze the quality writing of grade four students in Wangdue Primary School and to study the effectiveness of intervened approaches to improve their writing competency. It also emphasized on studying the factors that hinder

quality writing. The results and findings were positive with the successful treatment sessions and data collections process. However, there were some important points to be noted to further strengthen the implications of the study:

1) The time constraint: The study was limited to only a month-long for intervention processes and it was observed that for the written activities to investigate the quality level of writing, the duration should be longer than this for the better impact.

2) Sample Participants: The number of participants in this research is limited to 60 students of grade four due to time constraints. This finding cannot be generalized to all the grade four students in the school. The need of major participants should be given priority for better impact.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Recommendations for implementation

- 1) Since the findings of the study were positive, English language teachers are recommended to use the certain strategies used in this investigation to develop the writing standards of the students.
- 2) The language teachers should study the existence of problems and weaknesses through EA and should take appropriate measures for reducing errors.
- 3) Teachers are recommended to provide the maximum of writing time to practice so as to improve their quality writing.

8.2 Recommendations for future research

To conduct further research on this field, the researcher would like to recommend the teachers and future researchers:

- 1) This study was limited to only grade four students and studied for only a month-long period. Similar research can be conducted with a larger sample population group in a longer research period to get a general consensus that can have greater implications for the majority of the students.

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