



## TEACHING PARAGRAPH WRITING TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

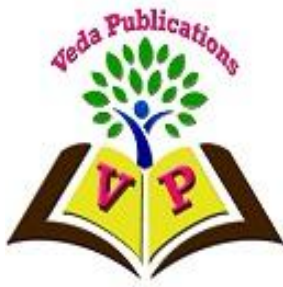
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### ABSTRACT

“Reading maketh a full man, Conference a ready man,  
and Writing an exact man” –Sir Francis Bacon



Paragraph writing is an essential skill. The paragraph is the foundation of great writing. If a student can write an intelligent, well-organized paragraph, they are well on their way to great writing. For any success to be realized, students, as well as teachers, must recognize writing skills as skills which transcend the boundaries of subject matter. All teachers should know and cultivate writing skills. Writing should be an inter-disciplinary skill; it should be as much a part of the social studies or science curricula as of English. Teachers of content as well must make conscious and sincere efforts to improve our students' writing skills. Teachers should expose students to basic “grammatical and rhetorical patterns,” stressing structure initially and content and style later. This paper focuses on the Teaching approaches of Paragraph writing.

**Keywords:** *Paragraph writing, Approaches, Undergraduate Students.*

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**WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?**

Paragraph can be described as a collection of sentences. These sentences combine to express a specific idea, main point, topic and so on. A number of paragraphs are then combined to write a report, an essay, or even a book. In general, the purpose of a paragraph is to express one main point, idea or opinion. Of course, writers may provide multiple examples to support their point. However, any supporting details should support the main idea of a paragraph. This main idea is expressed through three sections of a paragraph:

**TOPIC SENTENCE**

A paragraph begins with a topic sentence.

**A Good Paragraph**

1. Topic Sentence ( One Main Idea)
2. Supporting Sentences
3. Conclusion (Closing Sentence)

The topic sentence states an idea, point, or opinion. This sentence should use a strong verb and make a bold statement.

**SUPPORTING SENTENCES**

Supporting sentences provide explanations and support for the topic sentence of your paragraph. Supporting sentences include facts, statistics and logical reasoning.

**CONCLUDING SENTENCE**

The concluding sentence restates the main idea and reinforces the point or opinion.

**GENERAL RULES**

1. Indent the first word in the paragraph. Start the first word in the paragraph a little to the right of the left hand margin.
2. Begin the sentence with a capital letter and end with a period (.) or a question mark (?) or an exclamation (!).
3. Start each new sentence with a capital letter.
4. Punctuation is very important.
5. Use Signal words, Sequence adverbs, connectors etc.

6. Put a comma after sequence adverbs, signal words and connections.

Among the four Language skills, the writing skill is considered to be the most complex and difficult skill to acquire. Norrish (1983) emphasized that writing is of course, not easy and in some way, more difficult than speaking. Speaking does not have a standard form. But written language has standard form of grammar, syntax and vocabulary, etc. The second language learners have to learn phonology, grammar, vocabulary and idioms of the language besides learning the mechanics of writing. So writing proves to be a challenge to these learners. They have to focus on these aspects while they are writing a text. It needs lot of effort on these learners. As writing is a permanent record of knowledge accessible to any reader, the writer has to be cautious all the time about whatever he writes.

Due to the complexity of writing for the students' cognitive capability, various approaches are adopted to make teaching writing an effective pedagogical practice (Harmer 2006)

**TEACHING WRITING APPROACHES**

The teacher needs to have a better understanding of the rationales and critiques of various approaches. Out of various approaches of teaching writing, two major approaches have been identified as effective. The two popular approaches are Process approach and Product approach. The product approach is the traditional approach, which deals with the production of parallel texts based on the models provided by the teacher.

**THE PROCESS APPROACH**

The process approach focuses mainly on the linguistic skills such as planning and drafting with less emphasis on the grammatical knowledge and the text structure. This stresses on the creativity of the individual writer and pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation models. A typical model of process approach identifies few stages in writing; pre-writing, composing, drafting, revising and editing (Tribble 1996).

This approach is a fluency focused approach in which only towards the end of the process, the written composition is checked for grammatical and syntactical accuracy. Aspects like



content, organizing and style gets priority over less important aspects like grammatical accuracy and mechanics.

The process of writing consists of three main activities; pre writing, while writing, post writing. During the pre writing phase, the writer gives importance to the purpose of the audience for whom they are writing. In the while writing, the writer reads, revises and reviews the written work to get an idea of the post writing stage the writer edits the text. It involves reorganizing and revising the text.

**PRODUCT APPROACH**

The explicit description of the product approach is provided by Pincas (1982a). According to this approach, the process of writing has four stages: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing. The familiarization stage aims to make learners aware of certain features of a particular text. In the controlled and guided writing stage, learners practice the skill with freedom until they are ready for the free writing stage, when they use the writing skill as part of a genuine activity such as a letter, story or essay. In short, product approach describes the writing skill as an effort involving conformity to linguistic rules and organization of ideas on a logical principle. It lays emphasis on the rhetorical functions of scientific writing such as cohesive devices, paragraphs, etc.

**COHESIVE DEVICES**

One of the important principles of paragraph writing is coherence. In order to achieve coherence, appropriate cohesive devices have to be used. In technical writing, such linking devices are used to indicate the logical progression of ideas. The most commonly used connectives and their functions are as follows:

Connectives	Function
Before, prior to, before that, previously, earlier, while, as, just as, during, throughout, at that time, at that moment, as soon as, on that occasion, till then, since then, by the time.	Indicating time relation

If, in case, unless, on condition that, so long as, provided that, supposing	Expressing condition
As, since, because, due to, caused by, hence, thus, As a result, as a consequence, result in, consequently	Expressing cause

**A COHERENT PARAGRAPH**

The teacher who adopts the product approach should teach how paragraphs are structured by presenting the models. Improving the skills of writing paragraphs is essential. Rajatanun (1988) stated that a paragraph is a unit of writing which expresses a central idea and consists of two kinds of sentences, a topic sentence and a number of supporting statements. The topic sentence introduces the paragraph and it will give clear idea about the content of the paragraph. To maintain the unity in a paragraph, supporting ideas should be expressed in a paragraph. According to Reid (1994) the concluding sentence summarizes the material, offers a solution to the problem, predicts a situation, makes a recommendation or states a conclusion.

**CONCLUSION**

It is essential that the teachers follow both process and product approaches in teaching writing. The writing skill of the students could be developed by following the integrated approach. Language teachers have to provide opportunities to the students by designing suitable tasks, and give them lot of practice in their composition classes. They have to offer guidance during the pre – phases of writing and this kind of practice will definitely help the students compose good pieces of writing.

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