

# Development of Diary Writing

Winit Pharcharuen

School of Administrative Studies, Maejo University, Thailand.

Email: winit.phacharuen@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to develop the diary writing. This study discusses some relevant theories related to writing skills. In this discussion, seven important points are presented. They are the definition of writing, the characteristics of written language, micro-and macro skills of writing, the process of writing, types of writing performance, tasks of teacher in teaching writing, and teaching writing in senior high school.

**Keywords:** Diary Writing; Written Language; Teacher Education

## Introduction

This section discusses some relevant theories related to writing skills. In this discussion, seven important points are presented. They are the definition of writing, the characteristics of written language, micro-and macro skills of writing, the process of writing, types of writing performance, tasks of teacher in teaching writing, and teaching writing in senior high school.

### 1. The Definition of Writing

Writing is considered as a productive skill along with speaking (Harmer, 2007). When students deal with language production, it means that they should use their knowledge to produce the language to achieve a communicative purpose either in the form of spoken or written language.

According to a psycholinguist, Eric Lenneberg, (as cited in Brown, 2001), he says that different from speaking in which people learn language through a natural process or human behavior as learning to „walk“, writing is a learned behavior as learning to „swim“, people need someone to teach them. It means that people learn to write if they are members of a literate society and usually if someone teaches them.

Among the four language skills, “writing is the most difficult skill for second or foreign learners to master” (Richards & Renandya, 2002). It is because writing is considered as a complex process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thoughts into words (Brown, 2001: 336).



Since the idea or thought is an abstract thing which comes from our mind, it is not easy to transform it into understandable or readable form. The similar definition also stated by Rohman (as cited in McDonald & McDonald, 2002). He points out that writing is usefully described as a process of putting thoughts into words and words into papers.

Writing can be seen as two different views. They are the product of that writing and the process of writing (Harmer, 2001 & 2007 & Brown, 2001). When writing is seen as the product, the attention is placed on the final product of writing such as the essay, the report, the story or what the product should 'look' like (Brown, 2001). It means that the writing should (a) meet certain standard of prescribed English rhetorical style, (b) reflect accurate grammar, and (c) be organized in conformity with what the audience would be conventional. In other words, the value of the end product is the main thing to be focused on rather than the process of writing itself (Harmer, 2007).

On the other hand, when writing is seen as a process, it focuses on the various stages that any process of writing goes through, such as putting ideas down on paper to transform thoughts into words (Brown, 2001). It means that the process of writing is more valuable than the end of the product.

Since writing is a way to communicate with others in the written form, everything should be clear. Unlike speaking that the message of the communication can be grasped through non-verbal language, such as gestures, body languages or facial expressions, in writing the message is conveyed through the written form. Therefore, the writer should be able to make his or her reader understand the message conveyed (Hayes & Chang, 2012).

Making a good piece of writing is a complex process. It requires the ability to write grammatically correct sentences and organize them logically into paragraphs or essays (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). McCarthy (2000) and Harmer (2007) point out that there are two important aspects in writing. In order to make writing to be successful, it has to be both coherent and cohesive.

Coherent is the feeling that the elements of texts are bound together in which the reader can follow the sequence of ideas or points. While cohesive is the surface links between the clauses and sentences of a text. It is a more technical matter since it deals with the various linguistic ways of connecting ideas across phrases and sentences, such as using pronoun and connector.

## 2. The Characteristics of Written Language

Brown (2001) points out several characteristics of written language which distinguish them from spoken language. The characteristics are as follows:

### a. Permanence

Writing is permanent. Once the writers finish their writing, they cannot reedit their writing. So, a thorough refinement and revision are needed before the final draft is submitted.

#### b. Production time

Time limitation is one of the important issues in writing, especially in an educational context. A sufficient length of time will affect the production of a good writing, and vice versa. When the time given is not sufficient, the writers may produce a messy text. Therefore, a sufficient training in the process of writing will help the students to make the best possible use of such time limitation.

#### c. Distance

A good writer is the one who can deliver the message of his or her writing clearly to the target reader. Distance, here, may mean a range between the writer and the target audience. In order to shorten the distance, the writer should be able to predict the audience's general knowledge and write from the perspective of the target audience.

#### d. Orthography

Many different writing systems have evolved around the world (Harmer, 2004). Therefore, being able to use such writing system is not an easy matter, especially in a language which has different orthography from the writer's native writing system.

#### e. Complexity

Different from spoken language which tends to have shorter clauses and forms, the written language tends to have larger clauses with more complex forms. Therefore, the writer should write clearly, cohesively, and coherently in delivering the message to the readers.

#### f. Vocabulary

The written English has a greater variety of lexical items than in spoken conversational English. The lexical items used in the text may have different meaning depend on the context embedded. Therefore, the writer should learn and take benefits from the extensive number of English words.

#### g. Formality

Formality refers to the convention of rules that a certain written message is meant to be. Different purposes of writing have different forms of language that must be followed.

Since writing is a way to communicate in the written form, everything should be clear. It means that before the writers come to the end of their writing, they should make sure that their writing has already met the purpose of their writing so that the target readers could get the message clearly.

### 3. Micro- and Macro skills of Writing

Brown (2003: 220-221) points out some micro- and macro skills of writing. The micro skills refer to producing the basic skills of writing, such as forming letters, words, or simple sentences. The micro skills are as follows.

a) Producing graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.

b) Producing writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.

c) Producing an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.



d) Using acceptable grammatical system (e.g. tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, and rules.

e) Expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.

f) Using cohesive devices in written discourse.

Besides, the macro skills refer to producing a text at or beyond the discourse level that is producing a meaningful text. The macro skills of writing are as follows.

a) Using the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.

b) Appropriately accomplishing the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose.

c) Conveying links and connections between events, and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.

d) Distinguishing between literal and implied meanings when writing.

e) Correctly conveying culturally specific references in the context of the written text.

f) Developing and using a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first draft, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.

Teaching writing means teaching the micro and macro skills of writing as well. Therefore, the teacher should provide activities and materials which cover those micro and macro skills in order to make the students come to the productive stage, producing a text, without finding great difficulties.

### 3. The Process of Writing

Rohman (as cited in McDonald & McDonald, 2002) proposes the process of writing into three stages. They are pre-writing, writing, and re-writing. Pre-writing is defined as the stage of discovery the writing process when a person assimilates his "subject" to himself. In other words, the pre-writing stage is a stage when the process of thinking is happened, such as developing ideas and designing the ideas. Writing is a stage in which the writers put their ideas into words on papers. It means that the writers write down of what they are going to say or write. The next is re-writing. This stage is defined as a process of making revisions or changes of what they have written. In line with the above concept, Richards & Renandya (2002), Harmer (2004), and Langan (2008) propose that there are four basic writing stages. They are planning, drafting, revising, and editing. The first element is planning, that is thinking of what comes on the writers' mind, what they are going to say or write (Rattanawong, 2023). The second is drafting. In this stage, the writers are focused on the fluency of writing and are not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy. Writers can refer this as their first draft which may have several changes later. The next is reflecting or revising. Revising is a process of reading through what the writers had written. In other words, the writers review their text on the basis of given feedback and make a global check to make sure

that their writing can be understood by the readers. The last stage is editing. It is a stage in which the writers have edited and made revisions or changes to their draft into their final version.

Nation (2009) points out that there are seven sub processes of writing. They are considering the goals of the writer, having a model of the reader, gathering ideas, organizing ideas, turning ideas into written text, reviewing what has been written, and editing.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that writing, as it is seen as a process, is a product of turning out the ideas into words in a piece of paper which faces several processes. They are planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

#### 4. The Tasks of Teacher in Teaching Writing

Harmer (2004) points out that there are a number of tasks that the teachers should do to help their students become better writers. They are as follows.

##### a. Demonstrating

Teachers have to be able to draw the features of the genre of the written texts, so that the students are aware of the differences among the types of written texts.

##### b. Motivating and provoking

Students often find themselves lost for words when they are writing. In this case teachers can help them by provoking them into having ideas, enthusing them with the value of the task and persuading them what fun it can be.

##### c. Supporting

Students need a lot of help and reassurance once they get going, both with ideas and with the mean to carry them out.

##### d. Responding

Teachers react to the content and construction of a piece supportively and often (but not always) make suggestion for its improvement.

##### e. Evaluating

Teachers make a correction of the students' writing. It can be a note which indicates where they wrote well and where they made mistakes. It is a kind of giving feedback towards the students' writing.

The explanation above shows that the teachers take an important role in the development of the students' writing skills. Good teachers are they who can perform those tasks while teaching writing. They can facilitate the students in their learning so that the students could develop their writing strategies.

#### 5. Types of Writing Performance

Brown (2001) proposes five major categories of classroom writing performance. They are as follows.

##### a. Imitative

This type of writing is usually for the beginners, in which they simply write down English letters, words, and possibly sentences in order to learn the conventions of the orthographic code.

b. Intensive

Students produce language to display their competence in grammar, vocabulary, or sentence formation.

c. Self-writing

Self-writing is a writing with only the self in mind as an audience. Diary or journal writing and note taking can be categorized in this kind of writing in which they take a note for something for the purpose of later recall.

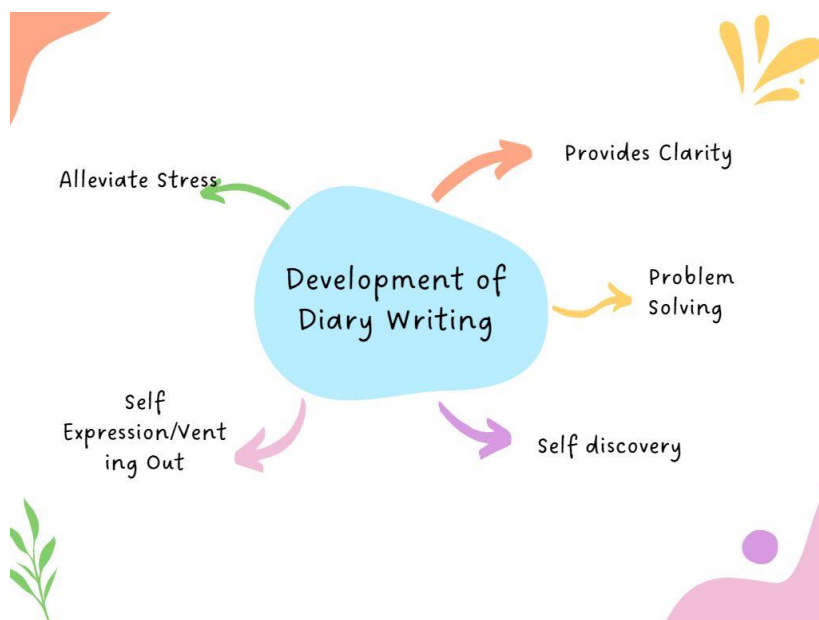
d. Display writing

This type of writing is more focused on task based responses in which students are responding to a prompt or assignment.

e. Real writing

The purpose of this type of writing is to exchange useful information. Since the different writing may have different purposes, the teacher should be able to give the students a clear understanding of the types of writing performance so that the students could differentiate and recognize which types their writing belongs to.

**Knowledge from the Study**



Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank, a record of her personal life amidst the Holocaust, is the most famous diary and a renowned book, read widely across the world.

Keeping a diary is a habit of a lot of people but the fundamental question here is why do we feel the need to pen down our thoughts, memories, dreams, worries, and joys on paper? Is it

because of the need of leaving behind something that captures the highlights of our existence or that we need a tangible record to be remembered by?

A diary is akin to a written photograph or a hardbound repository of our experiences.

If we go back to the history of writing, keeping journals dates back to the 10th century Japan although they don't have diurnal records. Many famous people had the habit of keeping diaries including Presidents and authors. Oscar Wilde, a 19th-century playwright, said: "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train."

Provides Clarity – Penning down our thoughts brings structure to the vast inner world of fragmented emotions and thoughts that go on in our hearts and minds. When our thoughts are laid down in front of us, we are able to discern and untangle the intricate web of our musings, hopes, secrets and fears.

Problem Solving – When we write we are able to take ourselves out of the current situation, look at the big picture, and have a holistic outlook towards our present concerns. It also helps to connect dots backwards and sometimes even seemingly unrelated incidents, ideas or thoughts which might not have made sense earlier. It might help us to even gain recognition of the patterns of our thought process that we might not notice otherwise.

Self-discovery – Journaling helps us to introspect, to gain great insights into ourselves- our strengths, weakness, ambitions, and obstacles which is a step towards personal growth and development. It is one of the roads to self-discovery.

Self Expression/Venting Out – When voice fails us, we can express ourselves through written words. While writing down our emotions and thoughts, boundaries of topic, structure, punctuation, grammar and syntax can be transcended to the free-flowing expression of ourselves. When we write, our thoughts fly from the cage of our restless minds and are clearly displayed on the paper in front of us.

Alleviate Stress – Expressing our anger, frustration or sadness on paper reduces the intensity of our emotions and makes us feel calmer hence helping us to gain more clarity and make rational decisions. It lets loose the negativity that we have festering inside us and reduces its deleterious effects. Psychologist and researcher James Pennebaker believe that writing about stressful events helps us come to terms with them, thus reducing the impact of these stressors on our physical health.

Now one might wonder how it is different from talking to a close family member, friend or a confidante.

It's not always easy to discern and express our emotions especially when we are going through dark storms in our lives. At that time we might have a cornucopia of turbulent thoughts and emotions which might not be easy to voice.

While writing, we don't have to fear that the paper or diary will have any bias or prejudice towards us or we have to make sense in order to clearly express ourselves.



Writing a diary has been proven to be a form of therapy and is advised to overcome negative experiences including negative experiences like trauma. Researcher Joshua Smyth emphasizes that to tap writing's healing power, people must use it to better understand and learn from their emotions rather than solely venting out.

## Conclusion

A diary is a private place where you can keep your thoughts, feelings and opinions on everything from work to school and everywhere in between. There are all different types of diaries, like food diaries, health diaries or academic diaries. But your diary doesn't have to be specific if you don't want it to be, it can also just be a place where you write about whatever you want. If you're just getting started, maybe you haven't decided what you want to write about, and that's fine. That is what we are here for – to help you with all those moments of writer's block you may be having. Our tips can help guide you and inspire you. Let's begin!

To start a diary, all you need is a willingness to write. Start by figuring out what you want to write in your journal. If you aren't sure, simply start writing and see where that leads. It can also be useful to set a time limit in your early writing sessions. Set an alarm for 10 to 20 minutes and start writing. Keeping a diary is a great way to record your growth and personal development. More entries will allow you to look back and see what has changed over time. The earlier you start, the more grateful you will be later on.

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