

Complexities of Writing Skill at the Secondary Level in Bangladesh Education System: A Quantitative Case Study Analysis

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to examine difficulties in and outside the classrooms which are the real obstacles to the writability of teaching and learning in the secondary level Bangladesh system. The secondary level tests writing skills by summary, paragraph, letter, application, story, conversation, composition, report, e-mail etc. Students who study at the high school level face serious writing complexities. The major problems in the examination are the vocabulary and grammar complexities. In this study, the reasons for the complexities of writing skills were examined. This study was conducted at Jahangirnagar School & College, Savar, Dhaka to find out the strategies for writing skills. Important questions of research have been developed to identify writing skill complexities. Data were taken from teachers, students and parents based on questionnaire survey. Teachers and students were encouraged to participate actively in the survey. Following collection of data, the practical advice for students and teachers was analyzed. While skills at secondary schools have been evaluated, most teachers are not taking any action to evaluate the abilities of students. Students are also less interested in writing skill in practice. The aim of the study is therefore to show a new image to the writing skill at the secondary level Bangladesh education system.

Keywords: writing skill, learners, secondary level, teachers, strategies

1. Introduction

This study deals with the writing skill development of Bangladeshi high school students. Writing is one of the most important skills, but one of the most complex skills to master for educational success. By posing their well-known cognitive model of writing processes, Flower and Hayes (1980) emphasize on the map of the complication of writing. Many students at high school in Bangladesh are very weak in writing. In fact, the examinees cut down a sorry figure. Due to the unsatisfactory level of English subjects, the entire results of public examination have a negative impact on their academic and professional lives. Less qualified secondary students face real-life challenges and socio-economic obstacles. Writing skill has grown to a major concern for secondary school students in Bangladesh. Most students do not understand the significance of the text and answer the questions properly. Teachers are highly responsible for this situation because they do not motivate their students to take part. Many students do not have concentration.

Inexperienced professors, problems in drawing up the language, fluent problems in pronunciation, problems in sentence structure, hesitation due to lack of concentration, title and selection difficulty in a subtle subject, consistent and cohesive sentence difficulty, problems with memory working, unwillingness to speak English in a class or undergraduates, are the reasons for a lack of knowledge of the vocabulary or grammar. The study discusses all these complexities so that secondary students can identify skills in writing so that their English skills are better recognized in the English examination. This study therefore examines written skill strategies, including editing, forecasting, clarification, activating, inferring, surveillance clarification, questioning, search selection, summary and visualization organization. As noted above, surveys have been carried out at Jahangirnagar University School & College, Savar, Dhaka to help students, teachers and parents provide a real panorama of writing skill problems. For this purpose, the current researcher tried to recommend the development of writing skill strategies on the basis of a questionnaire inquiry to students and teachers.

2. Literature Review

Though writing has been established, Widdowson points to the fact that writing uses the visual media to illustrate the graphical and grammar system of the voice, it means that it is writing, which is the generation of sentences as examples of uses. Writing is one of the four comprehensive competencies. His argument is undermined by the teaching of English. The teachings of grammar and language structures have often been considered equal. (Richards, 1990) Various surveys have shown how complex and complicated the composition of a language is. In addition to complexity, writing is an extremely active process that enables teachers to realize words, phrases, and sentences. Zamel (1992) develops this idea by considering writing as “a purposeful and exploratory process for the creation of meanings” (p. 473). The way to compose a topic can be seen as a process of development.

According to Coffin et al. (2003), students compose writing for several reasons, such as evaluation, the development of their critical thinking skills, understanding and memory, the expansion of their education in the classes, the enhancement of their communication skills, and preparation as future professionals in various areas of knowledge. Hedge (2005) says that successful writing produces not only clear and correct phrases; it is also a creative writing that is precise and concise for their writing skill development. The purpose of teachers is to create and stimulate the writing process so that students feel comfortable writing. They seek to clarify the links between writing and other skills (White and Arndt, 1991). Williams (2003) argues that planning is one of the most effective features of the writing process but can be one of the challenging ones; and he goes back to defining planning as reflecting on the prewritten material to produce a plan for the academic concern.

Kirby and Crovitz (2013) point out that the teaching of writing is challenging; it may be one of the toughest tasks facing the teacher, but it can be worthwhile. Pincas (1982b) explains how to write in the four-stage product approach. It begins with the stage of familiarizing students with different textual features. Then they move to a controlled stage of writing where they practice the skills to be prepared before continuing with guided writing and free writing. Writing is often considered to be the most complex skill to master. Hapsari (2011) argues that the most complicated of the four skills is written. It is difficult to generate and organize ideas and to master different aspects of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, choice of words, punctuation, etc. “The ability of learners is to use a better and more elaborate language” is defined by Skehan and Foster (1997) as the complicated writing process (p. 230). Skehan (1998) states that complexity is the stage and development of the underlying interlanguage system, which uses complex and structured language interlinks.

Skehan (1996) also defines accuracy as the “capacity of a learner to handle any level of the cross-lingual complexity that he/she has achieved” (p. 46), i.e., the similarity between the manufactured language and the target language. Muhammad et al. (2016) comment that writing is the most difficult field in second language learning. The language with structural precision and communicative possibility is based on an appropriate and strategic use (Dar & Khan, 2015). Kellogg (2001) considers that writing is a cognitive process that tests the memory, thinking ability, and verbal command of expressing ideas successfully because the knowledgeable composition of a text indicates that second language is a successful learning process.

3. Theoretical Framework

Writing as a skill is a complex method consisting of various steps to arrive at the final form. Although different kinds exist in writing, they share the same process, their content, and their purposes. The growing interest in writing has developed entirely to become a distinguished discipline on its own, particularly at higher levels. Many researchers have different perspectives on the concept of writing, because according to a specific field of study, everyone seeks to define it from a different angle. For Nunan (1989), writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity for all of which the author is required to simultaneously demonstrate control of multiple variables. This demonstrates the complexity of the task of writing and the exact link to the cognitive aspect that learners often create difficulty. The idea of Nunan’s writing gives us more information about writing skills than what is openly seen. In addition, writing is defined as a process requiring extensive self-regulation and attention control. Writers must transform ideas into text, organization, and mechanics of repair, and track their success, while trying to formulate a coherent message. (Singleton Jackson, 2003)

Raimes (1983) points out that it is not merely an extension of speaking a language to learn to write. In her view, she differentiated between speaking that is learned without any systematic instruction at an early age, and writing that has to be taught at school. Raimes presents differences between the two skills in this sense, such as the nature of speech when using graphic symbols in writing, relying on voices and body language. In the discussion, the variations of spoken language found in dialects, the pronunciation of intonation, and face-to-face interaction

were found. While writing relies more on standard forms such as grammar, vocabulary, and style, writing is a scheduled method, and the writer needs to accurately convey the message to the readers.

It is worth mentioning the cognitive process of writing and composing when describing the characteristics of EFL writers. Flower and Hayes (1981) have studied these processes and are recognized as distinctive processes of thinking that writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing. In addition, these procedures are not the only aspect on which to concentrate during the composition in the writing process, when it comes to formulating a message, linguistic skills and knowledge become prominent. (Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & Gelderen, 2009) Williams (2003) argues that planning is one of the most effective features of the writing process although it can be one of the most difficult, and then returns to defining planning as “reflecting on the material produced during prewriting in order to develop a plan to achieve the paper’s objective” (p. 106).

Donohue (2009) refers to drafting as the stage in which the learners can create their own writing (p. 12). Therefore, writers need to put everything they see relevant to the writing skill they are composing in the drafting phase, regardless of spelling errors, grammar errors, and others. The purpose behind the drafting is, therefore, to collect as much information, ideas, and arguments as will be used in writing later on. Throughout the writing process, some drafts may exist until we reach the final version. (Harmer, 2004)

Teachers follow this approach to enable learners to learn the language, vocabulary, and text structures needed to write for a variety of purposes (*NSW Department of Education and Training, 2007, p. 29*). Real-world texts students read models used in this strategy. They vary depending on the selection of the teacher, from newspaper articles to literary works. The execution of this approach starts by introducing students to the type of text while explaining the audience and the purpose behind writing the text. The teacher then points out the type and characteristics of the language used by the author and its impact on the readers, and he ends up offering students the opportunity to practice the writing skills they have acquired while studying these models.

4. Objectives of the Study

The main purposes of this study are as follows:

- To evaluate the organizational structure of EFL secondary school students and to format elements of writing skills.
- Formative and summative evaluation to be evaluated.
- To identify and analyze complexities in the writing skill of the EFL secondary-level learners’ organizational structure and format elements.
- To assess the reasons for the complexities of writing skills.
- To propose a number of corrective recommendations based on findings and appropriate solutions to writing problems.

5. Significance of the Study

The study focuses on secondary school teachers as well as English learners at Jahangirnagar University School & College, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh, considering writing skills as an important tool of academic performance. Students need a high demand for skills in writing to do various tasks, including homework and classes. This study is an effective way of exploring students’ major writing complexities at Jahangirnagar University School & College. Furthermore, English students, especially those from the high school educational system in Bangladesh, will learn more about the various phases involved in compiling, writing essays, letters, applications, paragraphs, reports, dialogues, storytelling, etc. and will try to gain a better knowledge of writing skills. More importantly, this study provides an open perception of the ability to write for teachers and learners in writing pedagogy as well as for future researchers who want to study the problem of secondary level students’ writing skill.

6. Research Questions

This study would like to follow a quantitative method to find out the complexities of writing skill that hinder the growth of writing, and recommendations to improve the writing skills among the secondary level learners. So, the researcher has tried to answer the following research questions in the study:

1. What are the major complexities among the secondary level learners regarding writing skill?
2. How can the secondary level learners improve their writing skill strategies?

7. Reasons for Writing Skill Complexities

Written language is grammatically more complex than spoken language. It has more subordinate clauses, more complement clauses, more long sequences of prepositional phrases, more attributive adjectives, and more passives than spoken language. Written texts are shorter and have longer, more complex words and phrases. Written texts are lexically dense compared to spoken language; they have proportionately more lexical words than grammatical words. Lado (1964) points out writing is a partial representation of units of language expression. In academic work, in order to show their tutors that they understand these terms clearly, learners are often expected to give definitions of keywords and phrases. Academic writers define terms so that while key terms are used, readers understand exactly what is meant.

As students at the secondary level learn to write inside or outside the classroom environment, they encounter difficulties that hinder their writing skills. Complexities in writing are shared between native speakers of English, and even those learning English as a second or foreign language (Aragón, Baires, & Rodriguez, 2013). Al-Khasawneh points out that EFL learners have shown that when writing in English, they have many issues in English, they rarely write. Writing is considered one of McIntyre and Gardner's most challenging skills to master. (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013)

This issue can be traced back to the writing, planning, drafting, editing, and publishing of a good piece of writing (Harmer, 2004) and the components (Raimes, 1983) that students need to take into account when composing in English. Besides, students do not write very often, and classroom-bound is most of what they write (Adas & Bakir, 2013, p. 254). Complexities in writing are grammar, syntax, cohesion, and others, and these problems are usually faced by the learners.

7.1 Grammar

Neuleib (Hartwell, 1985) defined grammar as the internalized system shared by native speakers of a language. Harmer (2001) proposes a definition as the description of how words can change their forms and can be combined in that language into sentences. The grammar rules, which are fundamental elements in every language and are also inseparable from writing, are called these ways. (Hartwell, 1985) The primary complications of writing that students find about grammar are the common understanding of grammar, leading to difficulties in arranging good writing. (Bahri & Sugeng, 2010)

7.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary, as argued by Nation (Mehring, 2005), is an essential aspect of writing skills. Cambridge Dictionary defines vocabulary as all words that a person knows and uses. Complexities associated with vocabulary include: learners fail to remember essential words to use, fail to use the appropriate words, and have a poor vocabulary. More importantly, knowing words means understanding their meanings, fundamental forms (Shejbalová, 2006), and their distribution (Lado, 1955), making it confusing on various occasions for learners. The acquisition of vocabulary is an ongoing process requiring the constant repetition and use of words by students to be effectively achieved in long-term memory. It is not sufficient to develop vocabulary by memorizing words from a list; for learners to acquire vocabulary, words must be learned as part of the context in which they occur. This method is proven to be useful for "it helps the student to understand the correct use of the word" (Mehring, 2005, p. 4).

In addition, the acquisition of vocabulary is a learner-centered activity with the effectiveness of the strategies of the learner depending on his/her attitude and motivation for new vocabulary acquisition. As a result, vocabulary can have a significant impact on the importance and contribution to the value of writing ability for students writing. Therefore, learners are expected to have a positive attitude towards learning new vocabulary, and while trying to identify their meanings, recognize new words as part of their occurrence.

7.3 Spelling and Punctuation

Spelling and punctuation among learners are two commonly shared complexities of writing. It is anticipated that learning to spell words correctly will occur in the earliest phases of language teaching, but it is not the case that spelling may become problematic. In addition, spelling is said to be closely linked to reading; Frith (1980) points out that learning to read should mean learning to spell, and learning to spell should mean learning to read. Writing problems of relevance to spelling primarily include the misspelling of words resulting from the English spelling system's irregularities (Banacha, 2013). This is linked, for example, to the similarities of vowels that can be decoded in different spellings. Banacha argues that when students are less focused because of fatigue or carelessness about the correctness of words, spelling errors may occur. While Harmer (2001) explains that it is not always obvious the correspondence between a word's sound and the way it is spelled. He also says that not all varieties of English spell the same words, in the same way, is the reason spelling is hard for students. For

example, the manner in which American English pronounces the word behavior differs from the behavior of the British English.

For learners linked to punctuation, Carroll and Wilson (1993) define three complexities. The first is that the rules of punctuation are not precise, that punctuation is complex, and that the meaning is determined by the style. Since each punctuation mark is a distinctive way of interpreting meaning, the way learners punctuate writing can alter the meaning. Therefore, secondary learners need to pay attention to how they punctuate, which is actually the complexity for them.

7.4 Strategies for Writing Skill

This study would like to examine how writing skill techniques can be improved for the secondary level teachers and students.

Every day, writing anything will allow both teachers and learners to develop the discipline and dedication needed to ensure that teachers can produce a full manuscript in whatever genre they choose. (Ramet, "Preface", 2007, p. 1) He will need to make many choices as a writing teacher. There are many options, ranging from a book-centered approach to a writing workshop in which students sit on couches and write freely to the exclusion of teaching, depending on direct instruction. Teachers are also becoming aware of the need to differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teachers will need to find ways to teach different abilities to learners with different learning styles and abilities in various ways.

Chambers Dictionary defines creativity as having the power to create, that generates, shows, about, imagination, originality, and writing as the act of one who writes, that which is written, literary production or composition. The term 'creative writing' can be defined as having the power to create an imaginative, original literary production or composition and can be applied to a literary production or composition. Of course, knowing the terms is just one aspect of using the names of teachers' techniques and knowing the best practices. In using them to teach learners, they take the first massive step. (Sundem, 2006, p. 6)

Researchers have investigated that good design does not happen accidentally, and the priority should be the needs of the students when classroom designs are in the planning phases (Rogers, 2005, p. 1). Many teachers allow time for in-class completion instead of asking students to complete work at home. (Hong, Milgram, & Rowell, 2004) This implies that learners will have to transport their materials home, and in the classroom, teachers can organize the writing folders of students. Teachers should not let the materials of their learners out of their sights, avoid lost tasks, misplaced drafts, and the dreaded dog of homework-eating. They need a system for storing these writing folders if teachers choose to go this route. An appropriate method is to use a storage box per class, in which the folders are filed alphabetically by teachers. Either they need to decorate the boxes or encourage artistically talented students to decorate their class boxes; the second method helps students take ownership of their classroom environment by getting them out of some preparation. (Sundem, 2006, p. 18)

While teachers want learners to discover writing techniques that work for their personal learning style through experimentation, there is undoubtedly a need for direct instruction. Teachers do not need to force learners to reinvent the wheel or write without first teaching them the skills that may prove effective over the years. Direct instruction looks like the standard secondary level lecture in its unmodified form, in which a teacher talks and learners listen. During this time, students may take notes and discuss the learning with the teacher or as a class. There is a defined skill or pool of knowledge at the end of direct instruction for which learners will be responsible. Through a quick end-of-period discussion, quiz, or take-home assignment, educators want to evaluate student learning. Direct instruction can also be the simplest format to teach the maximum amount of information in the least amount of time (Kameenui, 1995), allowing teachers to compartmentalize learning. They teach a period-long lesson on grammar elements, for instance, which students can understand independently of their application for writing. Direct instruction relies on creative lesson design, as teachers can see. They need to locate, organize, learn, and design exciting and engaging lessons for days spent at school if they focus on the technique. According to Lucy McCormick Calkins (1986): "If students are going to become deeply invested in their writing, and if they are going to draft and revise, share their texts as they write, they need the luxury of time (p. 23)."

The writing workshop is one format that enables this time, and a discovery-based approach to writing instruction. Teachers need to move the focus from teaching to writing in this approach. However, by using it to teach mini-lessons during the first five to 15 minutes of class time, a writing workshop incorporates direct instruction elements. Learners work on their writing projects for the remainder of the time, emphasizing the writing process.

To create an environment of diligent and independent student work, a writing workshop depends on the routine. Calkins (1986) argues that setting aside a predictable time for writing that allows children to take control of their writing process. The format of the workshop relies on well-planned scaffolding. Teachers can begin with directed assignments and reliable due dates and release their control gradually move towards authentic writing and make students responsible for a certain amount of portfolio work, but without due dates for project-by-project.

8. Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Bangladesh through quantitative research and survey questionnaires on secondary students. Books, newspapers, articles, theses and internet resources have been taken. Theoretical approach concentrates on objectives and arguments regarding writing skill development being conducted at Jahangirnagar University School & College in Savar, Dhaka to reduce the writing skill complexities of the secondary school students. The current researcher has followed the APA style (6th edition) strictly in writing this research project.

Research Design: Participants, timeline, setting and analysis approaches were included in this research design.

Participants: She selected 20 participants to carry out the project, including five teachers, ten students, and five parents.

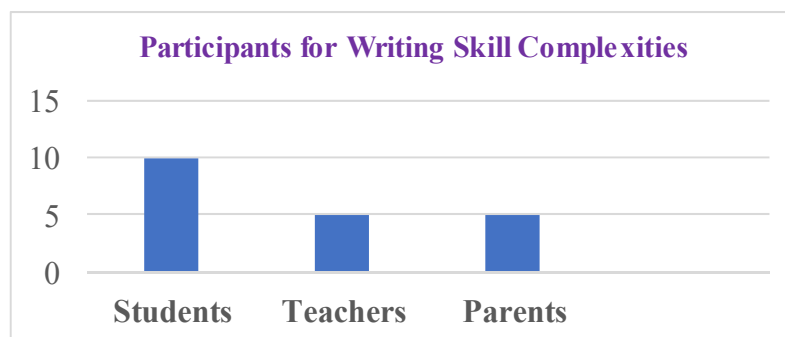
Setting: Teachers, students and parents were given a questionnaire survey on complexity of writing skill. In view of the terrifying coronavirus worldwide, including Bangladesh, they were asked to choose the right option from four alternatives inside and outside class. Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and closure of educational institutions, classroom observations were not possible.

Timeline: It took the researcher seven days to collect information from Jahangirnagar University School & College.

Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been employed to promote skills and techniques in writing. For the current study, a questionnaire survey was carried out, which was attended by students, teachers and parents. The researcher was able to advise students, teachers and parents for the development of writing techniques, based on a questionnaire survey.

Data Analysis



This diagram shows that there were 20 participants, including 10 students, 5 teachers and 5 parents. They were asked to participate in the questionnaire survey to investigate the writing skill complexities among the secondary level learners and teachers.



The graph shows that the survey involved twenty participants. Teachers and parents commented on the complexity of writing skills in various ways. The survey of questionnaires revealed that inexperienced teachers without training, first language interference, failure to understand a title-selection, letter writing, report writing, essays and story writing, etc., were found in the case of writing problems, grammar difficulties, design of syllabuses, copying/unfair methods in an exam hall. The results of the survey showed that students blamed their inexperienced teachers of English for the failure of their English test.

On the other hand, the writing skill techniques, dictionary, critical thinking, freehand writing, clarification, synthesis and generalization of questions have been identified. During the survey, some participants found that they didn't understand the meaning of questions and a, b, c, d options as it was written in the English version. Most of them said that they have grammatical problems, like the tense, the verb, the voice, the story writing, transformation of sentence, rights forms of verbs, marks of punctuation and vocabulary difficulty. The survey also showed that the vocabulary and writing skills of both teachers and students were not satisfactory.

9. Conclusion

Improving secondary-level learners' writing skill is a challenging task, especially in the case of second language learners. The complexity of writing as a cognitive approach requires the rules to be deeply considered, and the target language to be used carefully. Students generally hesitate to write during writing composition, letter,

application, report, dialogue, because they strive to find the correct words, struggle with the grammar of the language, or they may find the punctuation difficult. The current study focuses on identifying the writing complexities of Bangladeshi learners and the common mistakes they commit. This is done through a questionnaire administered at Jahangirnagar University School & College among the secondary level learners, which reported the documentation of several writing problems.

Furthermore, the analysis of essays by students confirmed that students make mistakes during composition and application writing. The results of this study show that students studying at the school have different complexities of writing. They seem to have major difficulties concerning vocabulary, grammar, and academic style, according to the results obtained from the questionnaire. Whereas, the study of written productions by students reveals that the majority of errors found were spelling, sentence-structure, correct use of verbs, tense, capitalization, punctuation, and vocabulary. Teachers are, therefore, advised to use these results in the future for effective writing teaching, whereas students are encouraged to use the findings to develop their writing skills.

10. Suggestions

- ❖ Apply new written skills to teaching techniques;
- ❖ Arrange learners' discussion group;
- ❖ Exercise more and more vocabulary and grammar;
- ❖ Encourage parents to improve learners' writing skills at home;
- ❖ Listen attentively how to pronounce at home or in class;
- ❖ Re-modify the curriculum based on public examination;
- ❖ Set written objectives;
- ❖ Take note of the text structure;
- ❖ Create notes and summaries of the mind;
- ❖ Predict and evaluate, as needed, what is going to happen;
- ❖ Motivate students to write a topic sentence or subtitle.

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Questionnaire

- 1. Students face difficulties of writing skill-**
 - a) Grammar
 - b) Vocabulary
 - c) Punctuation
 - d) Parts of Speech
- 2. The difficulties of writing strategies include-**
 - a) Syllabus complexity
 - b) Poor English teacher
 - c) Concentration difficulty
 - d) English is an international language
- 3. A learner can develop writing skill through**
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Punctuation mark
 - c. Writing practice
 - d. Grammar
- 4. Writing skill at the secondary level should be emphasized-**
 - a. No, I never support.
 - b. Yes, I support it.
 - c. Questions need to be revised
 - d. No change is needed
- 5. “Copying in the examination is a big problem”. Do you think so?**
 - a. Yes. I agree.
 - b. No. I do not agree.
 - c. Copying in the examination is a curse.
 - d. Copying helps learners do well in the test.
- 6. “Teachers are not very expert in English in Bangladesh**
 - a. I think so.
 - b. I do not support it.
 - c. Some teachers are professional, but others do not follow.
 - d. Teachers need training course.
- 7. Do you consider English language interferes with writing skill?**
 - a. No. It is not.
 - b. Yes. It is.
 - c. English language hinders writing skill improvement.
 - d. Both b & c.
- 8. Students get a poor grade in writing due to**
 - a. Lack of attention
 - b. Familial problems
 - c. Lack of good teachers
 - d. All are not wrong.

9. Learners fail to understand the passage's meanings due to,

- a. Dictionary.
- b. Cramming system.
- c. Lack of dictionary.
- d. Lack of English teachers.

10. "To write a topic sentence from the comprehension, practice is a must."

- a. I never support it.
- b. I do support it.
- c. Teachers should help students how to write a topic sentence.
- d. Learners need to practice themselves.

11. Do you write regularly at home?

- a. I write every day at home.
- b. I sometimes write at home.
- c. I don't try for writing skill development.
- d. None of the above.

12. Clarification means-

- a. Clarification helps students understand the text.
- b. Clarification helps students read the passage.
- c. Clarification helps learners write fairly.
- d. All are correct.

13. Writing a Summary

- a. Helps students to cut a good figure in the examination.
- b. Means writing a passage within several sentences.
- c. Helps students write fairly.
- d. All are accepted.

14. Since students are not expert in writing,

- a. they get poor grade.
- b. they get better grade.
- c. they copy in the exam hall.
- d. Both a & b.

15. Activating, searching-selecting, and summarizing

- a. the writing skill tips.
- b. are helpful for writing skill.
- c. are very useful for four skills.
- d. all are right.

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