Enhancing Performance in Writing: An Action Research Conducted in WP/MT Weediyabandara Navodya Maha Vidyalaya

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Declaration
I certify that this report of the Action Research does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge it does not contain facts from any material published or written by another person without due reference.

..................
Signature


Abstract

Teaching English in Sri Lanka is a continuous process from the colonial era. The methods of teaching have been changing to suit the socio economic and political dynamism in the country. However, many researchers have found that a larger portion of student population has not achieved required English Language proficiency level at the GCE (O/L) examination. The Department of Examinations (2012) states that the GCE O/L certificate of results provides multifaceted avenues not only for local and foreign higher education but also for certain medium level job opportunities. However, the percentage of the national level weak passes in relation to English Language is fifty seven. In the case of Matugama Education zone the figure is larger. Numerically it is fifty nine. Furthermore, student performance is evaluated mainly through their writing skill. This issue should be addressed promptly because the present economy is based mainly on knowledge and the existing labor market requires employers and employees fluent in English. The effort of this study was to find out simple ways to feed back the students with writing difficulties. The purposive sample of students consisted of twenty grade ten students of WP/MT Weediyanbandara Navodya Maha Vidyalaya. The study was proceeded and data were collected by means of three tests, a questionnaire, records of marks of the school, written responses of students and the teacher in charge of grade ten English. The female students covered 60% of the sample. Although eight male students participated in the diagnostic test no male student participated in the final test. Four male students and a female student were present only one day. This research was based on language activities. By and large four girls have achieved the target though they did slight mistakes in writing. However, further feedback is essential as this set will sit for the GCE (O/L) examination in 2014.
Acknowledgement

Though this seems a minute Action Research in comparison to huge researches of this category I have gained an immeasurable support from a number of persons.

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Thirdly, I thank the Zonal Director of Education, Matugama, the principal of WP/MT Weediyabandara Navodya Maha Vidyalaya, the teacher in charge of grade ten English respectively for granting duty leave, providing an opportunity to research and encouraging. Furthermore, I thank the sample of grade ten students for their active participation.

Fourthly, I would like to thank my family members; my husband, mother and sister for their priceless support during the period of research.
Content

Chapter 1    INTRODUCTION
   1.1 Introduction of the problem 7
   1.2 Background of the problem 8
   1.3 Importance of the study 9
   1.4 Key Words 9

Chapter 2    LITERATURE REVIEW
   2.1 The Importance of reducing writing disabilities 10
   2.2 Lack of English Proficiency in Sri Lankan schools 10
   2.3 Means of reducing writing disabilities 10

Chapter 3    METHODOLOGY
   3.1 Objectives of the study 11
   3.2 The Sample 11
   3.3 The Plan of the Research 11

Chapter 4    IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS
   4.1 Planning the Action Research 13
   4.2 Implementation of research 14
   4.3 Analysis 21

Chapter 5    SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 27

References 28

Appendices 29

Content of Tables
Table 1.1 - Creative Writing and Dictation Competitions that have not been deserved a single place by category and grade

Table 1.2 - Percentage of passes at the (GCE O/L) Examination by selected years and core subjects

Table 4.1 - Distribution of ranges of marks of the diagnostic test

Table 4.2 - Distribution of marks of the sample by Question No. 11 and 12

Table 4.3 - The sentence pattern 1 (Subject Verb Adjective)

Table 4.4 - Distribution of the percentage ranges of attendance by student groups
**List of charts**

Chart 3.1 - The plan of the Action Research

Chart 4.1 - Nouns related to Pronouns HE and SHE

Chart 4.2 - Nouns related to Pronouns IT and THEY

Chart 4.3 - Verb formation in the simple present tense

**List of Photographs**

Photograph 4.1 - The first discussion with the principal and the teacher In charge of grade ten English

Photograph 4.2 - Giving Introduction of the Action Research

**List of graphs**

4.1 Sex Composition of the sample
CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the problem

Teaching English in Sri Lanka has a long history and the English Language has been playing a prominent role since the colonial invasion. Karunaratne (2003) stated that teaching English as a second language to all Sri Lankan school children irrespective of their social, economical or geographical background has been a major educational policy of successive governments in Sri Lanka since the early 1950s. Thus, starting from the colonial period it has been practicing by means of various methods in relation to contemporary reforms of education. In the government schools where there is free education English is taught from grade three to grade thirteen formally. Furthermore, at the end of grade eleven General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) examination and at the end of grade thirteen GCE A/L examinations are held at national level annually. The Department of Examinations (2012) states that the GCE O/L certificate of results provides multifaceted avenues not only for local and foreign higher education but also for certain medium level job opportunities. However, the percentage of the national level weak passes in relation to English Language is fifty seven. In the case of Matugama Education Zone the figure is larger. Numerically it is fifty nine. Furthermore, student performance is evaluated mainly through their writing skill although there are other three skills, listening, speaking and reading. Therefore, the writing skill plays a major role in the examinations and the poor English result shows poor performance in writing. However, the result sheet of Matugama Zonal English Day Competitions 2013 too mirrors a poor performance in writing competitions (dictation and creative writing). In fact, 39 places have not been deserved for these competitions due to poor performance of the competitors of the schools of category 1 and category 2. The two categories collectively cover 95% of the schools in the zone.

Table 1.1 Creative Writing and Dictation Competitions that have not been deserved a single place by category and grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category One</th>
<th>Category Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictation</td>
<td>Dictation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade six</td>
<td>Grade six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade seven</td>
<td>Grade seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade twelve</td>
<td>Grade twelve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade thirteen</td>
<td>Grade thirteen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Result Sheet of English Day Competitions, Matugama Zone

Furthermore, the usability of English more or less is a crying need in rapidly developing Sri Lanka and a good English knowledge can be regarded as an enhancing factor that opens avenues for higher education in both local and foreign universities and it is also a marked qualification for reaching higher positions in the existing labour market which is mainly based on knowledge economy. Pandit (2005) has highlighted the fact that the knowledge of English is a precursor to higher education and it is liberating and
empowering as it affords access to global commercial enterprise. So this issue leads to a broader issue directly; that is the issue of unemployment will be increased therefore, this drastic issue is to be studied promptly in order to take appropriate measures to reach the expected national goals for national and global development in this millennium.

1.2 Background of the problem
In the English teaching process English Day Competitions play an important role and they are held annually to enhance the English language skills of the pupils. The competitions are organized in an ascending order (school level, zonal level, provincial level and national level) and only the first places are sent to the upper level competition. Matugama education zone, is one of the eleven education zones in the Western Province and it is in the Kalutara district. This zone consists of one hundred and thirty one schools of various sizes. According to the size of the pupil population these schools have been divided into three categories; the category one, two and three respectively consist of students less than five hundred, between five hundred and one thousand and over one thousand. However, since 2007 I have been working as an In-Service Advisor of English in this zone. Therefore, I have to visit the schools in the zone for supportive teaching and for group supervision divisional and zonal. In such occasions, I have identified students’ poor performance in writing. So I was in a psychological struggle to start a programme to improve their basic writing effectively. Fortunately, I had been selected to do an action research with the initiation of the Ministry of education and I wanted to make use of this opportunity to improve the basic writing of students. However, I selected WP/MT Weediyabandara Navodya Maha Vidyalaya to launch my action research due to a number of reasons. It belongs to the category two and it has won no first place in the English Day Competitions in 2013. In addition, the GCE O/L results of English Language, in comparison to the other core subjects like Sinhala, Mathematics, Science, Buddhism and History is lower. However, it has won the first place among Maha Vidyalayas in the zone according to the results of institutional evaluation programme carried out in 2013. Moreover, the principal of this school too had requested me to start a programme for improving English language skills of the students.

Table 1.2 Percentage of passes at (GCE O/L) by selected years and core subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Relevant result sheets of the school
1.3 The Importance of the Study
This study provides some simple new activities and methods to improve students’ basic writing skills in an interesting manner so that common errors and mistakes done by the students can be reduced when they write about persons, places and things. Moreover, these activities can be used from grade five to grade thirteen as this is a common area of writing though the expected volume of the text is different according to the grade. Thus, the English teachers and the non-English teachers who teach English in rural areas to fill the gap of vacancies of the English teachers will be benefited from this study more or less. This study will be an example for those who like to do simple action researches to develop their day to day work and their professional standard.

1.3 Key Words
Writing, errors, mistakes, activities
In this study a few common errors in student’s written work have been considered and provided simple activities to practice sentence patterns to overcome them due to the limited time of three months.
CHAPTER TWO - Literature Review

The Importance of reducing writing disabilities

According to NCDL editorial team, learning disabilities are real. They are not the same as intellectual disabilities. The hallmark sign of a learning disability is a distinct and unexplained gap between a person’s level of expected achievement and their performance. Like all learning disabilities a writing disability can influence a child’s education immensely; in fact, it can dramatically limit his/her achievement in future. For instance, some signs of grade ten students’ language disabilities like lack of vocabulary, problems of spelling, punctuation, capitalization and grammar can reduce the overall result of the GCE O/L English results next year. Therefore, writing disabilities should be remedied promptly.

Lack of English Proficiency in Sri Lankan schools

Karunaratne (2003) states that many researchers have found out the fact that only a minority of the school population succeeds in achieving the required level of proficiency at the GCE (O/L) examination in relation to the English Language. Moreover, Perera (2010), after a collaborative research which was conducted for the National Education Commission mentions student heterogeneity as a causative factor for this poor performance in English. According to her, the level of exposure to the English Language at home and the experience in the primary classes have become main causes for the student heterogeneity in the secondary classrooms.

Means of reducing writing disabilities

Writing disabilities are natural in every classroom; for instance, in the primary classroom some students incorrectly form letters. It should be remedied promptly in order to reduce incorrect formation of letters. If it is not corrected at the correct time the number of mistakes done by the student will be increased. However, in the secondary classroom this will be an issue which seems difficult to correct. Therefore, there should be an inquisitive eye to identify errors of students promptly. Action research is a good continuous method for reducing written errors.

“Action Research’, which means research ‘while in action’, can play a vital role in teacher empowerment. Reflective practice requires teachers to experiment with and reflect on what went wrong, why that was so and how it/ they can be remedied. Action research helps teachers to find solutions for specific problems try out such solutions and disseminate findings to his/ her colleagues or take follow-up action for further research, which creates a cycle. Action research is, hence, contributory to teaching/ learning improvement, as well as teachers' professional development. Here, the teacher becomes the ‘expert’ who can make independent decisions without bowing to ‘outside experts.’ The findings of this kind of research have a significant impact on pedagogic practice, as well as in macro level planning, if they are taken into consideration.” (Wijesekara, 2011/2012 p 22)
CHAPTER THREE - Methodology

This chapter deals with the objectives of the research, the sample, the techniques for data collection and the plan of the research in brief.

3.1 Objectives of the Action Research

Main objective – The sample of students will be able to write simple sentences about persons and places/things (maximum one or two errors are allowed)

Specific Objectives:–
1. The sample of students will be able to write eight to ten sentences about a person.
2. The sample of students will be able to write eight to ten sentences about a thing or a place.

3.2 The sample

The purposive sample consisted of 20 grade ten students of Weediyabandara Navodya school in the Matugama educational zone. There were eight male students and twelve female students. This sample was ethnically homogeneous because all students were from the Sinhalese families. None of them were from English speaking family backgrounds. Almost all the students of the sample were from nuclear families. However, the time duration for this study was three months. Therefore, I had to do supportive teaching for intervention during the Saturdays because this set of students had no free time during the weekdays. I too had to visit very distant rural schools during the weekdays. Due to my easy access and to offer an additional support to improve writing skills of the students of my former school I selected this set of students. So I got permission from the principal of the school and parents were informed about the project at a class circle.

3.3 Techniques used in the Action Research

To collect primary data a diagnostic test, a middle test, a final test a questionnaire entries in the reflective journal and unstructured interviews were used. The required secondary data were collected from the school records of marks. Thus, at the beginning of the research the questionnaire which was prepared in the mother tongue of the students to collect information of their family backgrounds. The above mentioned three tests were respectively used for diagnosing the language errors and mistakes of the students, understanding the improvement after intervention and for final evaluation of the writing of the sample of students.
Chart 3.1

Concept Map of the Process of Action Research

- Diagnostic Test
- Middle Test
- Intervention
- Final Test

Reflection

Process of Action Research
CHAPTER FOUR - IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Planning the Action Research

Under the guidance of The Ministry of Education this action research was planned by me in order to find solutions to the problems that I came across during my professional life. In fact, I have experienced a number of writing disabilities of many students as an assistant teacher of English, as an In Service Advisor for English and as a marking examiner at the GCE O/L and the GCE A/L examinations. I have discussed with some teachers of English about such disabilities of their students too. They too said that it was very difficult to remedy though they tried to do. Moreover, the principal of my last school where I worked as an assistant English teacher was eagerly waiting for a new project to improve student performance in relation to English. So I visited the school and introduced the would be Action Research to the principal and the teacher in charge of grade ten English.

However, it is important to mention that the teacher showed her will not only with her verbal expressions but also with facial expressions. She said, "Students like you because one day they told me that your teaching was very clear". I thought that I would be able to find the areas to be remedied and this would be a success with the support of the English teacher and the principal.

Photograph 1.1 - The first discussion with the principal and the teacher

After the discussion with the principal and the teacher I got an opportunity to meet some grade ten students and made them aware of the research project. They liked to participate in the additional supportive classes on Saturdays.

Photograph 1.2- Giving introduction of the Action Research
4.2 Implementation of the Action Research
I could implement the process of work of this research by means of three steps; a diagnostic test, a middle test and the final test. Moreover, there were two intervention stages before the middle test and the final test.

Phase one (from the Diagnostic test up to the middle test)
The diagnostic test was held on the 21st of August 2013. This test was constructed for evaluating students' writing; spelling, pronouns, the simple present and the simple past tense. There were twelve questions and the last two questions were based on creative writing. (Refer Appendix A.). That day itself I asked them to complete the questionnaire given in the mother tongue anonymously.

I expected to have a sample of twenty students as I had to complete the research within three months. I thought it was a pleasure to mention that only twenty students had sat for the test.

However, completion of marking of the diagnostic test papers and analysis of marks were done within two days after the test.
I felt how strong intention I had to step into the stage of intervention.

Table 4.1 Distribution of classified marks by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 40</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 60</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 80</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 100</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 3 shows the distribution of marks according to class intervals. Eleven students of the sample have scored below sixty marks. Even though nine students of the sample have scored over sixty marks they have done a number of mistakes in writing about persons and places.

However, their mistakes were analyzed under following sections.
- Difficulty in understanding instructions
- Writing numerical figures in words
- Correct use of articles, pronouns and prepositions
- Use of verbs in the simple present tense
- Formation of “Wh” questions

I thought it would be better to select a limited number of mistakes to be remedied by intervention. I should select the ones related to writing about a person and a place/thing. Therefore, I decided to plan my lessons to promote their existing level in order to achieve the objectives. Therefore, the last two questions in the diagnostic paper should be emphasized
Table 4.2  Distribution of marks of the sample by Question No. 11 and 12

| Code | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T |
| 11   | 00| 02| 07| 06| 05| 05| 04| 00| 00| 00| 03| 06| 02| 03| 02| 04| 05| 08| 08| 02|
| 12   | 02| 03| 07| 06| 10| 04| 04| 00| 00| 00| 04| 04| 02| 02| 03| 04| 08| 09| 06| 02|
| Total| 02| 05| 14| 12| 09| 08| 00| 00| 00| 07| 10| 04| 05| 05| 08| 13| 17| 14| 04|

Table 4.2 displays marks achieved by the students for Q. No. 11 and 12 separately. (Students were corded from A to T on the first day on which the diagnostic test was held.) H, I, and J have scored zero for the both questions whereas C, D, E, Q, R, and S have achieved more than half of the allotted marks.

Below given text is an extract from the diagnostic answer script of student N. It shows the mistakes done by him/her. According to this script the possessive pronouns, spelling, capitalization, articles, punctuation and the use of HAS and HAVE as a main verb should be considered along with the formation of letters.

*Here I have given marks for correct sentences. For vocabulary rarely I gave one mark. I thought it would be better if the marks were given separately for language and content as marks are allotted at the GCE O/L examination. In addition, I wanted to do intervention by preparing the simplest activities to improve the writing abilities of the student with poorer performance.*
To improve writing skill I planned a set of simple activities. Thus, my direct intervention in the classroom was started from the 21st September 2013. I started my work with a guessing game which was related to the sentence pattern that would be introduced. The expected sentence pattern was **Subject Verb Adjective**. I had prepared five laminated cards to work in groups as given below. I introduced the sentence pattern 1 and showed the word order. I did not forget to use mother tongue where I felt it was needed for more clarification. The students were given opportunities to read it individually. Then they were given instructions to do a game. The steps I followed:

1. The students were grouped according to the marks of diagnostic test in order to form two mixed ability groups.
2. The blackboard was divided into two and each part was divided into three for **subject verb and object**.
3. A sentence from the table was read out.
4. A student from each group wrote the sentence on the blackboard. (The spelling, Capitalization and punctuation were considered)
5. Marks were given to two groups separately.
6. Then, they were given opportunities to create new sentences to suit the pattern. (for new sentences more marks were given.

Thus, the sentence pattern was practiced well.

**Table 4.3 The sentence pattern 1 (Subject Verb Adjective)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>clever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>brave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>honest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students participated in the activity happily. The slower ones were pushed forward by the others to earn marks. I felt that they were playing instead of learning grammar. However, I did not appoint group leaders although I had planned to so. There, they automatically played the role of leaders where necessary; they encouraged their group members helping them to writing words correctly before going to write it on the blackboard. Therefore, I decided to proceed this method in my field teaching too.

The day’s next item was to show the use of pronouns meaningfully. Therefore, I made use of the cards that showed that how nouns like father, mother, table and friends can be replaced with relevant pronouns such as he ,she, it and they. Following charts were used for clarifications.
Chart 4.1 Nouns related to pronouns HE and SHE

**He**  
Father  
uncle  
Sunil  
actor  
director  

**She**  
mother  
aunt  
Sunila  
actress  
directress

Chart 4.1 Nouns related to pronouns IT and THEY

**It**  
dog  
cat  
table  
School  
tree  

**They**  
boys  
girls  
teachers  
friends  
trees

Through these four diagrams I could explained the replacement of nouns with pronouns well. Moreover, These pronouns are directly related to achieve the objective; that is to write about persons and places/things. However, for the convenience of the slow learners of the sample only the pronouns used as subject were introduced first. Though it was not mentioned in these charts the pronoun 'YOU' too was introduced before giving the writing activity 1. The students were explained that the pronoun 'YOU' could be used for both singular and plural nouns (for person/ persons in front of you).

To emphasize this point I should have pointed to a particular student and I should have given a simple command. ("You, sit down"). However, I noticed only fourteen students were present. I thought If I did not tell their marks of diagnostic test earlier the number would be increased. The students H, I, J, M, N and P were absent. They had scored lower marks than others.(Refer Appendix F).
This activity was done first in orally in groups of three. For groups marks were given to make the task interesting. At the end it was used as an individual writing activity.

I experienced the ease to handle a class with prior preparation. Moreover, the students worked freely in their groups. There was an objective for their work. That was to earn marks. I played the role of a facilitator here. I did not want to dominate the class.

Karunaratne, (2003) highlights the fact that where there is teacher domination the student become passive learners who control their interaction during lessons.

The last two activities for the day were prepared for improving vocabulary of the students.

1. Completion of words with given starting letters (words starting with ‘p’)

This can be done as a competitive activity. One can follow the steps given.

I. Teacher writes a word starting with ‘p’ on a paper script and hides it.
II. Write the first letter of the word ‘p’ on the blackboard/whiteboard
III. Ask the students to find words starting with the ‘p’ from the groups in turn (students should be grouped before starting the activity.)
IV. One from each group writes words (They use their portion of the board)
V. After one minute, the second letter of the word is given.
VI. Students write their words competitively.
VII. The activity should be continued until the correct word is found.

Activity 1

Fill in the blanks using a suitable pronoun given in the brackets.

( We, You, I, She, He, They, It )

1. I am Nimesh. .... am a pupil of Veediyabandura Navodya Maha Vidyalaya. .... am in grade ten. .... am clever.
2. You are Kalpani. .... are a policewoman. .... are brave.
3. Prasanna is a driver. .... is polite.
4. Nehara is an actress. .... is beautiful.
5. We are Raja and Amal. .... are friends. .... are good.
6. Rex is a dog. .... is short.
7. Piduruthalagala is a mountain. .... is the highest mountain in Sri Lanka.
8. Sri Lanka is an Asian country. .... is beautiful.
9. Kandy is a city. .... is big.
10. Morupitiya is a village. .... is small.
2. Solving a small puzzle

Give instructions to fill boxes with meaningful words. Students can fill in different words.

Competitively and happily the groups to get more marks. I think this type of activities can be used in combined classes when there is a shortage of teachers. These activities can improve thinking ability of students too. However, one group of students from grade ten wanted to join this class. I told them to join in 2014 because the research had been stared. I thought it would be better if I allowed them to join. I decided to call them back.

Furthermore, I decided to make use of the materials prepared for this project in my monthly visits to schools for supportive teaching. Thus, I understood how the researcher too can be developed his/her professional qualities as well as the sample of students. Therefore, unlike other types of researches an Action Research can play a prominent role specially in the field of education.

“Research needs freedom and the closeness of the researcher to the point of impact of his findings. Otherwise research degenerates to a mere academic exercise. It implies deep self examination and introspection. It has the potential of developing both the teacher and the pupil to continuing higher levels of attainment. This we believe is the kind of research that really matter in Education” (Jayathilake, 1999 p:16)

Phase two (from the middle test up to the final test)

The third day of the researching process was the 18th of October 2013. There were five newcomers who had missed the previous set of activities. However, they were given the same placement test. I had planned to hold the middle test which too was based on writing about people and places/things. (Refer Appendix B). From the sample only six students (C, D, E, G, Q and R) were present. With the newcomers the number was eleven. Thus, it was the 2nd of November on which I held the middle test.

However, The day’s work had been divided into two parts; the first was done by doing language activities and games and the second was given for the middle test. There was a special activity at the beginning. It was a brain storming one to improve vocabulary. Within a minute the students had to write a category of words; words ending with “ly”
An extract from the task-sheets of the sample

This is the worksheet of student R. After brainstorming too the students expected marks.

That was their objective of doing the activity. So a teacher can provide activities in order to practice not only vocabulary but also any structure of grammar. Then they learn grammar unknowingly. With regular practice the grammar items can be internalized. Therefore, the classroom should be a place full of various activities.

After marking the middle test papers I could collect a set of mistakes done by the students. Then I constructed a set of sentences for revision. (Refer Appendix C). They had to do this individually on the fifth day. Thereafter, They were introduced a diagram to show the differences of verb formation in the simple present tense. Through the diagram I could easily explained the subject verb agreement in relation to the respective nouns used as the subject of a sentence. I used two colours to show the difference between the addition of  do and does to form the correct form of the verb. However, addition of do, cannot change the appearance of the verb but that of does can change the appearance of the verb showing the 's' ending clearly.

When I gave the chance to explain the difference after me they did it well in the mother tongue. There were only four students present from the sample. No newcomer was present.
Phase three (The final test and reporting)
On the sixth day too I had to divide the time of two hours into two parts; one for revision and the other for the final test. (Refer Appendix D). I could revised what I did during the past five days.

*There were seven students from the sample. They answered the test paper individually sitting separately. They did not communicate with each other. Therefore, I thought that I would be able to evaluate their performance realistically.*
After the test I collected their responses anonymously.

4.3 Analysis of Data
Although I planned to have sessions weekly I had to work once a month due to other programmes related to teaching learning process. For instance, once some students had to participate in an aesthetic competition. One day our subject director called me for a seminar. Thus, proper continuation of the process was very difficult. Therefore, student might have forgotten the previous day's work. However, some students who were regular attendants have improved their writing to some extent. By and large some students made the same mistake at the end too. Therefore, the next cycle, on the basis of findings of this action research is to be started. This is only a small attempt to dive to the bottom of the national issue.
4.3.1 The composition of the Sample
The sample of students was twenty from grade ten of Weediyabandara Navodya Maha Vidyalaya. Each student was the first child, the second child or the only child in a nuclear family according to the data collected through the questionnaire administered by the students themselves. Moreover, they have started learning English formally from the grade three itself.

Graph 4.1 Sex composition of the sample

4.3.2 Attendance of the students
In the process of research six sessions were held. The fist was for diagnosing the sample academically and socially. The last was for revision and the final evaluation. The middle four were reserved for intervention.

Table 4.4 Distribution of the percentage ranges of attendance by student groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Ranges</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 40</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 60</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 – 80</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 100</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 4.4 displays the distribution of the percentage ranges of attendance of the students of the sample. There are six students whose percentage of attendance was below 20. They have participated in the diagnostic test only. They are the students H, I, J, M, N, and P. Among them only P was a female student. There were eight students whose attendance was fluctuating between 61% - 100%. All these eight students were female. They were A, C, D, E, Q, R, S, and T. Among them only E had a percentage of 100. However, for the final test nine students from the sample and two newcomers were present. No male was present.
4.3.3 Performance of the sample

After the diagnostic test there were stages of intervention. The performance of sample was evaluated mainly through the middle test and the final test. Although students are improving some mistakes have become as a habit. For instance, some students tend to write *My mother name* instead of *My mother's name*. This extraction has been taken from the diagnostic paper of student H.

He has tried to write about the topic "My mother". But this shows how poor his performance was. He has not attempted the last question on writing about a place. Actually, my intention was to improve writing skills of this type of students. However, he had come only one day. So this study does not show a success in that sense. However, there are students who are slightly improving in writing.
An extract from the final answer script of student Q

This extract belongs to the student Q and it shows the performance of Q in the final test. Though there are some mistakes there are several good points. They are

1. capitalization
2. Punctuation
3. Clarity

Still there are difficulties in writing about people and places; the problematic areas are:

1. pronouns (She is used instead of Her)
2. articles (a is used in unnecessary places)
3. verb forms (the verb 'love' is used with the subject She)
4. spelling (the word Maths is used instead of Mathematics)

Therefore, feedback is necessary to clarify the use of verb forms and articles.

Among the seven students who participated in the final test student C, D, R and S have achieved the objective about 80%. They have made only slight mistakes; use of unnecessary articles once or twice. Student E too has written grammatically correct sentences but has used no full stop at the end.

4.3.4 The professional development of the researcher

I always appreciate teaching through activities as it is meaningful. For instance, if students can use the target language (the language one needs to teach/learn) when they are playing acquisition of language takes place. In another word language is internalized without an effort. Therefore, I make use of language activities and games in my day to day work by means of prepared cards of sentence patterns. The wonder is that not only students but also teachers like this. For instance, recently I had to do a seminar on
Writing in English

Activity Based Oral English (ABOE) for a set of primary teachers in my division. There too I used some activities. At the end I collected the teachers’ responses anonymously. I asked them to respond in Sinhala, Tamil, or English. One had written “Romba Nallam” in Tamil. Some had wrote in Sinhala and a few in English.

This extract belongs to a non-English teacher who is teaching English from grade 3 -5 due to lack of English teachers in Walallawita division.

A response from a student in the sample
Project was done very well. I am very much grateful to you for your help and support.

Project made very well. The events were very good. Thanks to you.

Thank you teacher.

Have a bright future.
Chapter Five - Suggestions and Recommendations

Male participation in English studies shows a lower rate according to this action research. In 2014, this set of students will sit for the GCE(O/L ) examination. Therefore, it is essential to plan and implement a special English teaching project to help the students of heterogeneity. For this, all the English teachers can do commitment and they can decide areas to be taught according to their will. The project should help not only the male students but also the female students. This issue, however, leads to a national issue in near future unless it is addressed promptly and appropriately. The labour force local and foreign will require employees and employers who are fluent in English.

Teaching English in primary classes should be done more attentively in order to reduce doing mistakes continuously. Students tend to make the same mistake as a habit so that it will be difficult to prevent in later stages. Sometimes non-English teachers are teaching English in the primary classes. Then the result would be worse because students do not like to hear what his/her teacher taught was wrong. Therefore, teaching should be monitored regularly.

In supervision of teaching the performance of the student should be assessed as well as the teacher’s performance. Both should be appreciated where necessary to encourage for future work.

Both the teacher and the student can be awarded for required performance in each grade. In lower grades correction of written exercises should be done before the student. Normally, teacher collects a bundle of books to correct later.

The grade three is a significant class where formal English teaching is started. So, before the end of the year writing difficulties should be identified and be remedied so that handling upper classes will be easier.

Today parents want to teach English to their children before schooling formally. Therefore, the responsible authorities can monitor the teaching in preschools too.
**References**


Appendix A

Diagnostic Test

Grade 10

Name: ........................................

Answer all the questions.  

Time 2 hours

1. Arrange the following names alphabetically.  
(10 marks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>1.</th>
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<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
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<th>6.</th>
<th>7.</th>
<th>8.</th>
<th>9.</th>
<th>10.</th>
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<td>Nirosha</td>
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<td>Harith</td>
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<td>Punsara</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kesara</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Write the following figures in words.  
(09 marks)

a) 3 three
b) 9

c) 13

d) 30

e) 45

f) 50

g) 59

h) 89

i) 97

j) 100

3. Write two sentences using suitable words given in the box.  
(06 marks)

Raja bus to novels

goes We by school newspapers read

1. ........................................................................................................

2. ........................................................................................................
4. Write your best friend’s name and address on the envelope.
(05 marks)

............................................................................................
............................................................................................
............................................................................................
............................................................................................

5. Fill in the form given below using information about yourself.
(10 marks)

i) Full name ............................................................................

ii) Name with initials ..............................................................

iii) Date of birth ....................................................................

iv) Home address ..................................................................

v) School address ..................................................................

vi) Hobby .............................................................................

vii) Favourite subject ..........................................................

viii) Name of the English teacher ...........................................

ix) Date ..............................................................................

x) Signature .........................................................................

6. Rearrange the following jumbled sentences.
(15 marks)

eg: - is / Kumari / beautiful / a / girl → Kumari is a beautiful girl.

i) clever / Manoj / artist / a / is → ............................................

ii) are / kind / they / very → ..................................................

iii) mine / this / pencil / is → ..................................................

iv) studies / in / Gayan / ten / grade → .................................

v) friends / were / they / good → .............................................
7. **Underline the suitable verb given in the bracket.**
   ( 09 marks)
   i) I always (help, helps, helping) my parents.
   ii) We (are, were) in grade nine last year.
   iii) Mr. Perera (goes, go, went) to Kalawana yesterday.

8. **Fill in the blanks with the suitable question words.**
   ( 06 marks)
   eg: What is your favourite drink? Mine is orange juice.
   i) .................. are your names? We are Janakie and Ruvini.
   iii) .................. old is he? He is sixteen years old.

9. **Fill in the blanks with suitable pronouns given below.**
   ( 06 marks)
   He, I, It, They, She,
   I am Nirmal. .................. live in Colombo. .................. is a big city. My parents live in Kautara. .................. are teachers.

10. **Select the grammatically correct sentence and put a √ in the box.**
    ( 04 marks)
    i) I goes to school with my sister.  
        √
    ii) Dilmini likes to play volleyball.  
        √
    iii) I have story book.  

11. **Write five sentences about one of the following.**
    ( 10 marks)
    i) My mother
    ii) My class teacher
    iii) A brave person

12. **Write five sentences about one of the following.**
    ( 10 marks)
    i) My village
    ii) My country
    iii) A beautiful place in Sri Lanka
Appendix B
The Middle Test
Grade 10
Time: one hour
Answer all questions on this paper itself.

(01) Fill in the blanks using suitable words.
1. My father's name ........................................ He is a driver. ..............
................................................................ fifty years old.

2. This ...... my house. It ...... small. ......... has ........... rooms. These rooms
.............. ............. My room ......................

3. I ............................................ I have .......................... My best friend
............................................ She ......................... Matugama. ...... school
......... C.W.W. Kannangara M. M. V. It ...... the biggest school in the Matugama
Education Zone.

4. My village ............................................. It ........................................... There are
............... families in .............................................. Some ........... are ..............

5. Moragala is a small village. It ...... between Meegahatenna ...... Polgampola.
There ...... a school ............... in Moragala. .................................. Primary.

(02) Select three topics and write short paragraphs of ten sentences.
1. My mother
2. My favourite actor
3. My country
4. A beautiful place in Sri Lanka

Appendix C
Revision
Correct these sentences.
1. My mother name is Damayanthi. ..............................................................
2. She is job is Police oFFisa. .................................................................
3. She live in minikandala. .................................................................
4. My country is a Sri Lanka. .................................................................
5. Sri Lanka is a very beautiful. .................................................................
6. Sri lanka is very beautiful place in the world........................................
7. beautiful place is a nuwara Eliya. ......................................................
8. My Mother’s name Kumari. .................................................................
Writing in English

9. Sri Lanka have many water fall, rivers and Mountain. ..........................................................
10. My mothes name is Manjula. ..............................................................................................
11. She teach English. ..............................................................................................................
12. she has a long hear. .............................................................................................................
13. she has a one sister. .............................................................................................................
14. She Don’t like Milk. ............................................................................................................
15. Sri Lanka is fortunate country. ..........................................................................................
16. She is a very kind. ..............................................................................................................
17. To visit Sinharaja came to many tourist. ............................................................................
18. I like to Nuwara Eliya. ........................................................................................................
19. My mother name is Sumanawathie. ....................................................................................
20. She is love to me and my brother. ......................................................................................

Appendix D
The Final Test
Grade 10
Time: One hour
Select at least two topics from each part and write about five topics. (Write eight sentences about each topic.)

Part A
1. My best friend
2. My mother
3. My class teacher
4. My favourite actor
5. My favourite writer

Part B
1. My school
2. My village
3. My favourite tele-drama
4. A beautiful place in Sri Lanka
5. My country

(20 marks for each)
# Writing in English

## Appendix E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>1 splash 2 splash</td>
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<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>1 splash 2 splash/TV 3 splash 4 splash</td>
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<td>03</td>
<td>1 splash 2 splash 3 splash 4 splash</td>
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<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>1 splash 2 splash 3 splash 4 splash</td>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>1 splash 2 splash 3 splash 4 splash</td>
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<td>06</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 splash 2 splash</td>
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</table>
Writing in English

13 13 13 13

14 14 14 14

15 15 15 15

16 16 16 16

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18 18 18 18

19 19 19 19

20 20 20 20

21 21 21 21

22 22 22 22
## Appendix F

**Students’ Marks of the Diagnostic Test by Question**

| 01   | 00    | 10| 10| 10| 10| 10| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 02   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 03   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 04   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 05   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 06   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 07   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 08   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 09   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 10   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 11   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|
| 12   | 00    | 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00| 00|

**Total**

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T |
| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38| 38|

## Appendix G

"A qualitative project

I am very thankful for selecting the students of Weediya Bandara M.V. for your project. The procedure you followed to conduct the project is admirable. I believe, the students gained an extra knowledge in writing through fun and joy. The students rely on you and your teaching methods.

As an English teacher I should appreciate your valuable effort specially for giving your helping hand to my students to improve their writing skill. Finally, I offer my heartiest thank on behalf the principals, the students of grade 10A and 10B the parents and the English section.

K.T.N. Manjula

wp11111 Weediya
Bandara M.V."