

COMPOSITION

The word 'composition' has been derived from the word 'compose' which means to 'put together'. Thus, putting together words or sentences is called composing. If this is the meaning of composition, then we can certainly say that the child starts doing composition work at early stages. He is using words like 'to write with', 'to look at', 'to play with', 'to look into', 'to come from' etc. That is all composition work being done at the elementary level. In due course of time, the child starts learning short composition, then he handles big topics and gradually he is able to deal with comprehensive type of composition work. Chapman says in his book 'Teaching English to beginners', "almost any written exercise is in fact composition. When a pupil is asked to supply a missing word, he is completing the composition of a sentence, when he is asked to change a sentence into question; he is composing a new sentence. Composition in the usual sense of the word is, therefore, only a connected form of written exercise". Composition is a collection of sentences spun around one idea.

In the schools, we find the composition work is being taken up for the sake of composition only. There are separate periods meant for composition. The students do composition work just for the sake of examination. Either the students cram certain topics of composition from the books or the teacher's notes, are memorised by them. In the real sense, no composition work is done by the students. This wrong type of practice should be stopped and right approach be followed. The teacher should make the students know that composition work is an integral part of language work. So, it should be taught or learnt as a means to acquire mastery over the language. It is a decided fact that composition should be taught orally first then, it should be taken up in written form.

Why to write composition

1. The basic urge of every human being is the expression of ideas. Whatever is learnt, that is confirmed when a person writes it.
2. The skill of writing once acquired is helpful in trade, industry, higher or technical education etc. it helps in day to day's life and also in the profession one adopts.
3. Learning of a language remains incomplete as long as the four skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing are not acquired.

4. By writing one's thinking ability is improved. One is able to express oneself precisely and accurately.

What is needed for writing composition?

- a) **Mastery of Mechanics:** For composition work, one should have the mastery over the mechanics of reading and writing etc.
- b) **Recall of necessary structures and vocabulary:** when some idea is to be expressed, it will be possible only if the learner has the knowledge of some structures and vocabulary at his command. He must be able to recall to his mind suitable language material required for the purpose.
- c) **Spellings:** if it is a written composition, there is need of spellings. So, the learner must have good knowledge of spellings as far as his expression of ideas is concerned.
- d) **Punctuation;** in written work, punctuation is of great importance, meanings of the written sentences come out clear if punctuation signs are correctly used.
- e) **Imagination:** writing of composition demands imaginative mind. Of course, imaginative mind is developed while learning mother tongue. The same habit is helpful in learning the foreign language.
- f) **Organisation of ideas:** Good composition involves the correct organisation of ideas. The ideas need to be placed in the right order. If the ideas are not independent and related with each other, the subject matter fails to be a good composition work.

Types of Composition

1. Guided composition

2. Free composition

- 1. Guided composition:** In guided composition, pupils are given a lot of guidance regarding idea, vocabulary and structures to be used in a particular piece of composition. They are not given freedom to use words, structures and ideas of their choices. A controlled situation is presented to them. So, guided composition also called as controlled composition because the students have to work in the controlled situation related to the use ideas, vocabulary, structures etc.
- 2. Free Composition:** Free composition means doing composition work freely. Unlike guided/controlled composition, the learners here are free to make use any vocabulary, structure or idea they may like.

Which Type of Composition at the Early Stages?

At the early stages of language learning, controlled/guided composition is of great use because the students are beginners and they cannot write without proper guidance. The more the practice is given in guided/controlled composition at the early stages; the better would be the students in composition work. It is not advisable to introduce the free composition at the early stage of learning the language due to following dangerous effects:

1. The students will compose in the mother tongue and then they start doing literal translation.
2. Structures and vocabulary which are the basis of language are not given any practice.
3. The learners will commit a number of errors and those errors will be fixed up in their minds.
4. The students will memorise a number of topics for composition work in order to qualify the examination.
5. There will be heavy work load of correction work on the part of the teachers.

Thus we find that introduction of free composition at the lower levels of language learning is not useful. Hence, it should be discouraged.

Procedure for Teaching Composition

1. Pre-composition stage

It is a stage before actual composition. Here the students are taught some language items like vocabulary, structures etc. They learn new vocabulary with the help of already learnt structures and new structures with the help of already grasped vocabulary. e.g. the teacher wants to teach the composition 'Our School' to VII class students. Before teaching actual composition, the teacher will teach the words and structures which are to be made use of in their composition. Once the learners are acquainted with vocabulary and structures to be used in composition, there will be no problem.

2. Oral composition stage

Whatever topic is taken up for composition, it should be dealt with orally first. This type of practice is quite useful at early stages. Once the

students are able to think and speak orally, it will not take much time to write those ideas in a clear and precise language.

This stage can be divided into two parts:

- a) Oral development by the teacher: The teacher develops composition orally. He can use some pictures or charts while doing so. That will make his speaking more interesting and learnable for the students. The students are getting listening practice. It is a sort of preparatory stage for the students where after they will find it easy to speak on the same lines.
- b) Oral development by the students: Now the students are enabled to develop composition orally. At this stage, the teacher provides them all type of guidance. The students are given vocabulary, structures, ideas etc. by the teacher. The students develop composition on the lines provided by the teacher.

Oral development by the students enables them to have better command over the subject matter. Unlike the stage where development is made by the teacher, here the students have to be more active.

3. Written composition stage

This stage in composition should come after the first two stages, then, there will be very few problems in the way of a person doing composition work. Whatever variety of writing is taken up, the learner should know it very well for which it is being written and what is the main purpose of writing it?

4. Correction work

Correction work is of great importance in composition work. Usually, this part of composition is either ignored or done half-heartedly by the teacher. Many a time, the teacher being over burdened with teaching periods cannot do justice to correction work. This part needs to be given due importance.

Exercises for Guided Composition

Here are some of the exercises that can be taken up in guided or controlled composition:

1. Transcription
2. Dictation
3. Substitution tables

4. Jumbled sentences
5. Pairing parts of sentences
6. Conversion exercises
7. Completing incomplete sentences
8. Answers to questions
9. Parallel sentences
10. Creating a situation
11. Actions
12. Reproduce a picture description
13. Reproducing a story

Exercises for Free Composition

Here are some of the exercises that can be taken up in free composition:

1. Paragraph writing
2. Essay writing
3. Letter writing
4. Story writing
5. Summarising and note-taking