

Equalising English Education in Odisha: Teachers Perception of English Textbooks for Developing Writing Skills in Class 10

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Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the prescribed Class 10 English textbooks from the three major educational boards in Odisha, India—the Board of Secondary Education (BSE), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE)—in developing students' writing skills. Recognizing the critical role of textbooks as foundational tools for language proficiency and the observed disparity in English learning outcomes among students from these boards, this research investigates specific constraints in the instructional materials. Employing a descriptive survey methodology, data was collected via a structured questionnaire from 30 experienced English teachers (10 from each board) across Cuttack and Khordha districts. The questionnaire assessed the adequacy of textbooks across 25 dimensions for writing skills. Analysis focused on areas where 30% or more of teacher responses were negative, identifying them as major constraints. Key findings reveal BSE textbooks failed to train students in writing on variety of topics and ICSE textbooks were found deficient in note-taking and paraphrasing exercises. The study concludes that targeted, board-specific revisions to the textbooks are needed. Recommendations include, diversifying writing prompts, and inclusion of better note taking exercises in the textbooks. These reforms will address the writing proficiency development empowering Odisha's Class 10 students with needed writing skills.

Keywords: English Writing skills, Class 10 English Textbooks, Secondary Education, Odisha

Introduction

English has established itself as the modern lingua franca (Jenkins, 2009), dominating international spheres ranging from business and education to science, technology, diplomacy, and aviation. English language education in Indian schools is a critical enabler for student advancement in higher education, employment, and global communication. Class 10, in particular, aims to lay the foundation for university studies and their future. In the state of Odisha, this stage is administered by three principal boards: the state government's Board of Secondary Education (BSE), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). However, a notable disparity exists in the writing competencies of the students despite all three educational boards providing equivalent High School (Class 10) certifications. A major reason for this disparity is the difference in the English textbooks followed by the concerned educational boards for the subject in Class 10. Analysing and fixing problems with existing textbooks provides the basis on which the direction of development of new teaching materials can be presented (Lee, 2013).

The English textbooks ensure quality and consistency across schools, maintaining appropriate difficulty levels while covering all necessary competencies. For developing writing skills, the textbooks provide models of coherent compositions and guided exercises in sentence formation, paragraph structuring, and essay organization. Writing prompts, editing tasks, and sample answers help refine clarity and creativity, while integrated grammar lessons reinforce accuracy in written communication. The English textbooks serve as the foundational tool for comprehensive language development for the secondary level learners. The act of writing forces students to organize their thoughts, analyse concepts, and express them clearly, thereby developing cognitive flexibility of expression. Writing requires the organization, analysis, and clear articulation of ideas, thereby promoting cognitive flexibility in communication. This instrumental role of writing in academic settings is emphasized by Gauder (Dubey & Dubey, 2012) who says that, "Writing has instrumental value in school. It is a means of preserving the knowledge which the pupil has gained, or the judgments he has formed".

Language teachers can teach successfully if they enjoy the materials they are employing, it is essential to take teachers' opinions and experiences into consideration (Hammad, 2014). Hammad et. al. (2012) views that exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of the learning materials can offer insightful information about such materials. EFL teachers have the right to participate in evaluation since they are the real users of school textbooks (Tok, 2010).

Objectives

The study aims to investigate the prescribed English textbooks of the three Education Boards in Odisha – BSE, CBSE and ICSE to find major constraints in developing writing skill encountered by the Class 10 students. In the process of the investigation, the study gathers the following details:

1. Identifying major constraints encountered by Class 10 students studying under BSE, CBSE and ICSE Boards in Odisha through teacher's responses.
2. Recommending measures that can be taken to address these major constraints for better development of English writing skills in Class 10 students in Odisha

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive approach to evaluate the prescribed English textbooks for developing writing skills of Class 10 students across different educational boards in Odisha. Surveys are any procedures used to gather and describe characteristics, attitudes, views opinions and so forth of students, teachers, administrators, or any other people who are important to a study (Brown and Rogers, 2002). A questionnaire for teachers was administered regarding the adequacy of the textbooks for writing skills. The questionnaire is designed to assess how effectively the textbook supports the development of students' writing skills. The statements are structured to evaluate various aspects of writing, from foundational sentence construction to advanced composition techniques. The first set of statements (1-6) examines whether the textbook builds confidence in writing (1), provides practical note-taking exercises (2), and offers useful tips for effective writing (3). It also assesses the textbook's ability to teach sentence-combining (4), diverse topic writing (5), and application of writing concepts through model texts (6). These questions ensure that the textbook lays a strong foundation for writing proficiency. The middle section (7-16) focuses on comprehension-based writing tasks, such as filling in blanks (7), summarizing passages (9), and organizing information logically (16). It also evaluates the role of textbooks in teaching structured writing, including introductions and conclusions (10), definitions (11), comparisons (12), and cause-effect relationships (15). These questions measure whether the textbook helps students transition from basic writing to more analytical and structured compositions. The final section (17-25) targets higher-order writing skills, such as critical thinking (18), essay structuring (19), paraphrasing (20), and drafting techniques (21). It also assesses the textbook's effectiveness in guiding students in referencing (24), vocabulary enhancement (23), and overall writing development (25). By including these advanced skills, the questionnaire ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the

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textbook's ability to nurture proficient and independent writers. The responses were captured through a five-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (UD), 4=Agree (A) and 5=Strongly Agree (SA). The negative responses of the teachers amounting to 30% or more have been considered as a major constraint area of the textbooks.

Sample

This study was conducted with a sample of thirty (30) experienced English teachers from Odisha, each having over ten years of experience teaching Class 10. The participants were evenly drawn from three educational boards—BSE, CBSE, and ICSE—with ten (10) teachers representing each board. These ten teachers per board consisted of five (5) from Cuttack district and five (5) from Khordha district, selected from two (2) schools in each district. In total, six (6) schools were selected for collection of the data. The composition of the sample is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample of the Study

Participants	Secondary Education Boards					
	BSE, Odisha		CBSE, New Delhi		ICSE, New Delhi	
	School	School	School	School	School	School
	1	2	1	2	1	2
English Teachers	5	5	5	5	5	5
	10		10		10	

Data Collection

Survey method is employed to collect the data. The data has been collected by the researcher from the English teachers through a survey with the permission of the Headteachers of Schools belonging to BSE, CBSE and ICSE schools in Odisha.

Limitations of the Study

Though the scope of the study is very vast, due to constraint of time and resources, the researcher has limited his area to two districts (Cuttack and Khordha) of Odisha. The study was conducted only on English teachers of Class 10 regarding the effectiveness of the prescribed textbooks in developing writing skills of the students.

Analysis

Responses of the Class 10 English teachers from BSE, CBSE and ICSE have been presented in the table no. 2 below.

Table 2. Teachers Responses

Sl no.	Statements on Writing Skills	Teacher s	Responses				
			1	2	3	4	5
			SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	The textbooks provide confidence while going through the writing exercises in the textbook.	BSE	0	2	0	8	0
		CBSE	1	1	2	3	3
		ICSE	0	2	1	2	5
2.	The textbooks often provide exercises to take notes on the topic taught from it.	BSE	0	0	1	5	4
		CBSE	0	1	1	4	4
		ICSE	1	3	0	2	4
3.	The tips and advices in the given textbooks on writing effective and practical.	BSE	0	2	2	4	2
		CBSE	0	1	1	4	4
		ICSE	0	2	0	4	4
4.	The textbooks have good exercises on sentence-combining.	BSE	0	0	2	5	3
		CBSE	0	2	2	3	3
		ICSE	0	2	0	4	4
5.	The textbooks train the students to write on a variety of topics.	BSE	0	3	2	3	2
		CBSE	0	2	2	3	3
		ICSE	0	2	3	2	3
6.	The pieces of text, such as essays, articles, and stories illustrate how the writing concepts covered in the book can be applied in practice.	BSE	0	0	1	3	6
		CBSE	0	1	1	4	4
		ICSE	1	1	1	2	5
7.	The textbooks train the students to understand the main information contained in the text by asking them to fill in a blank or answer certain questions.	BSE	0	0	2	3	5
		CBSE	0	0	1	4	5
		ICSE	0	1	1	3	5
8.	The textbooks help the students to understand a passage and make a note of important information.	BSE	0	0	2	3	5
		CBSE	0	0	2	3	5
		ICSE	1	1	0	4	4
9.	The textbooks have exercises to train the students to write a summary of text that has been read by them from the book.	BSE	0	0	0	6	4
		CBSE	0	0	3	4	3
		ICSE	1	1	1	2	5
10.		BSE	0	0	2	7	1
		CBSE	0	0	0	7	3

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	The tips from the textbooks are helpful while writing introduction and conclusion of an idea.	ICSE	0	0	1	4	5
11.	The textbooks are effective in teaching the students to construct a definition of an object, place, things, etc.	BSE	0	0	0	7	3
		CBSE	0	0	1	4	5
		ICSE	0	0	2	5	3
12.	The books include exercises on how to develop a comparison and an argument.	BSE	0	1	1	7	1
		CBSE	0	0	3	6	1
		ICSE	0	2	1	5	2

Table 2. Teachers Responses (Cont/.)

Sl no.	Statements on Writing Skills	Teacher s	Responses				
			1	2	3	4	5
			SD	D	U	A	SA
13	The books include exercises on how to express a student's own idea or thought on a story.	BSE	0	1	0	7	2
		CBSE	0	0	2	6	2
		ICSE	0	2	1	2	5
14	The textbooks are able to help students in creative writing skills while responding to the writing tasks.	BSE	0	0	2	3	5
		CBSE	0	0	3	4	3
		ICSE	1	0	1	3	5
15	The textbooks are able to teach the students to describe cause and effect of an action.	BSE	0	1	0	5	4
		CBSE	0	0	1	8	1
		ICSE	1	0	2	3	4
16	The textbooks help the students to recognize and arrange the information in the passage while writing a response	BSE	0	1	1	7	1
		CBSE	0	0	2	5	3
		ICSE	1	1	1	2	5
17	The textbooks train students to write on variety of themes.	BSE	0	0	0	8	2
		CBSE	0	0	3	3	4
		ICSE	0	1	1	4	4
18	The textbooks indulge the students in critical thinking while answering questions from them.	BSE	1	0	0	6	3
		CBSE	0	1	1	4	4
		ICSE	0	2	1	5	2
19	The English textbooks teach to structure an essay.	BSE	1	0	2	3	4
		CBSE	0	0	2	4	4
		ICSE	0	1	1	5	3
20		BSE	1	0	2	6	1

	The textbooks have exercises to train the students to write paraphrase of the text read from the book.	CBSE	0	1	2	5	2
		ICSE	0	5	1	2	2
21	The textbooks train the students well to draft before composing an answer.	BSE	0	0	4	4	2
		CBSE	0	1	1	5	3
		ICSE	1	2	0	5	2
22	The writing activities in terms of amount of guidance/control, degree of accuracy, and organization in the textbooks are effective.	BSE	0	1	2	5	2
		CBSE	0	0	2	7	1
		ICSE	0	0	1	5	4
23	The textbooks have the ability to enhance the student's writing skills based on the vocabulary of the book.	BSE	0	0	1	7	2
		CBSE	0	0	0	7	3
		ICSE	0	0	1	6	3
24	The textbooks guide students in making quotes and references from the text while constructing their answers.	BSE	1	0	2	5	2
		CBSE	0	0	1	5	4
		ICSE	0	1	1	5	4
25	The textbooks are able to help the students to develop their writing skills.	BSE	0	0	1	4	5
		CBSE	0	0	1	6	3
		ICSE	0	2	1	4	3

Responses of the English teachers, with over 30% expressing negative views, identify the deficiencies in the textbooks for developing writing skills. The percentage of these responses have been presented in bar charts for visual clarity and better comprehension.

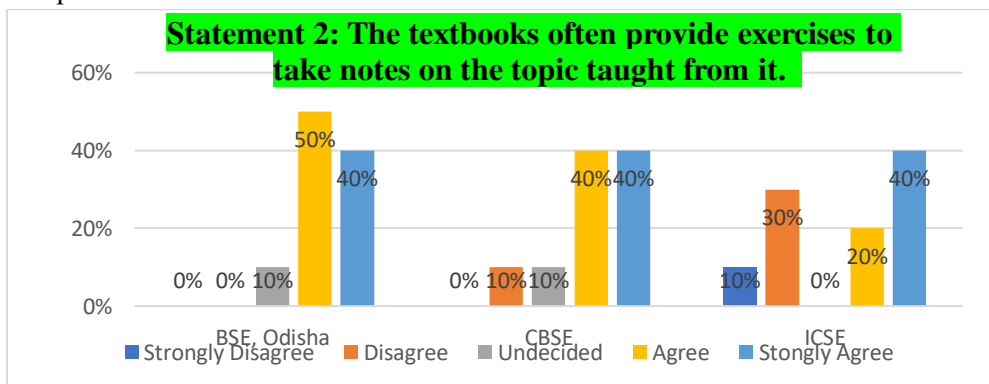


Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates, 90% of BSE, 80% of CBSE and 60% of ICSE teachers agreed for the textbooks often provide exercises to take notes on the topic taught. This result shows that the textbook exercises are helpful to take notes on the lessons taught from it. This view agrees with Rangaraju (2017) that the government prescribed text books have writing exercises on lessons taught from them. However, 40% of ICSE teachers disagreed to the statement indicating this as major constraint.

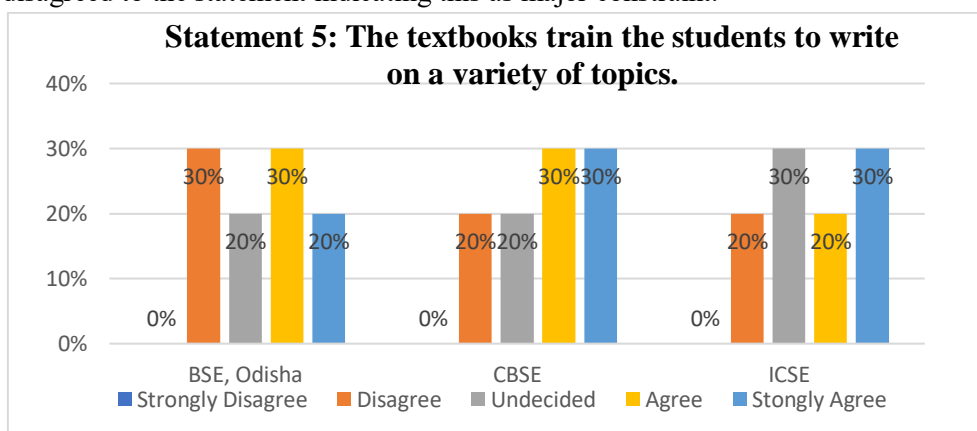


Figure 2.

From the figure 2, it is evident that 60% of CBSE, 50% of BSE and ICSE teachers agreed for the textbooks train the students to write on a variety of topics. The result agrees with the findings of Ahmed (2016). However, a 30% of BSE teachers have disagreed for the statement indicating this to be a major constraint.

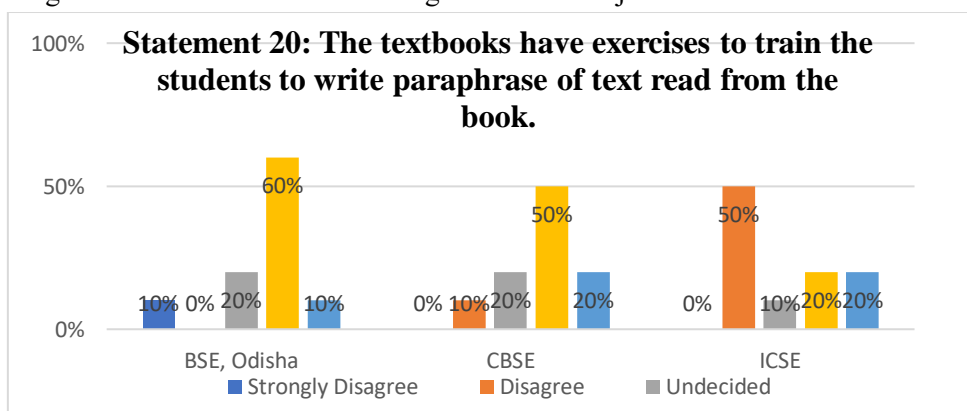


Figure 3

From the figure 3, it is evident that, 70% of BSE and CBSE teachers agreed for the textbooks have exercises to train the students to write paraphrase of text read from the book. Whereas, only 40% of ICSE teachers confirmed for the same. Paraphrasing

fosters deeper comprehension and proves their mastery of a subject. However, 50% of ICSE teachers disagreed for the statement. This result highlights a constraint area in the ICSE textbooks. The ability to paraphrase in own words is advocated in Learning Outcomes at Secondary Stage, NCERT (2019).

Findings

- 50% of the ICSE teachers disagreed for the textbooks have exercises to train the students to write paraphrase of text read from the book.
- 30% of BSE teachers disagreed for the textbook trains the students to write on a variety of topics.
- 40% of ICSE teachers disagreed for the textbook often provides exercises to take notes on the topic taught from it.

Recommendations

- The ICSE board, to create a more integrated language learning experience, writing exercises should be systematically incorporated into the literature textbooks, ensuring a seamless immersion where reading and writing skills reinforce each other.
- The BSE textbooks should be revised to ensure that writing assignments encompass both formal and creative formats—including letters, reports, speeches, articles, and reflective pieces. Thematic relevance should also be expanded to include contemporary issues, local context (specific themes related Odisha), and topics that encourage critical thinking. By broadening the scope and variety of writing tasks, textbooks can better engage students and prepare them for real-world communication, making the learning experience more dynamic and comprehensive.
- Finally, uniformity of syllabi and textbooks at the secondary level certainly would benefit the all the Class 10 students of Odisha.

Conclusion

The analysis, based on teacher feedback, sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the English textbooks prescribed by the BSE, CBSE, and ICSE boards in developing the writing skills of Class 10 students in Odisha. By analysing the perceptions of experienced teachers, the research identified specific, board-specific constraints: a significant gap in paraphrasing and note-taking exercises within ICSE materials, and a lack of variety in writing topics in the BSE textbooks. These findings bring to light that the perceived uniformity of secondary certifications masks critical disparities in the instructional tools provided to students. Addressing these identified gaps through targeted textbook revisions and teacher support is not merely an

administrative task but a necessary step toward educational equity. Ensuring that all learners, regardless of their educational board, have access to comprehensive and skill-focused materials is fundamental to equipping them with the proficient writing abilities essential for academic success and future professional advancement.

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