

**REDEFINING CHILD RIGHTS FOR  
THE NEW NORMAL SOCIETY**



**K.M. SAJAD IBRAHIM**

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# **Redefining Child Rights for the New Normal Society**

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**Sajad Ibrahim K.M.**

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# REDEFINING CHILD RIGHTS: ENSURING A SAFE WORLD

**Dr. Mary Sheba Jose**

*Associate Professor*

*Mount Carmel College of Teacher Education for Women, Kottayam*

*E-mail: shebasjose1966@gmail.com*

## Introduction

Children are the potential embodiment of our ideals, aspirations, hopes and dreams. They are the most valuable human resource of the future, but they are vulnerable and need to be cared and protected. Innumerable efforts are now being made to free them from exploitation, abuse and unfair treatment, and to enable them to develop their full potentiality with fair access to food, health, education and respect. Thus the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924, adopted by the Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations, can be seen as the first international body dealing with the major issues related to child rights.

Child rights imply the right to health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and to be protected from abuse and harm. These rights encompass the developmental and age-appropriate needs that undergo change over time as a child grows up.

The collective list of rights for children as well as young people under the age of eighteen is delineated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted in 1989, which seems to be the acceptable standard on children's rights in the world. The Convention stresses that children have the same human rights as adults, but adds that children are entitled to additional rights because of their unique vulnerabilities and attributes.

### Legal Provisions under Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states in Article 19 that children should be cared properly and protected. Parents and caretakers should ensure that children do not experience violence, abuse or neglect. Article 34 of the CTC focuses on protecting children from sexual abuse. There should be a safe environment for both in their home and school where they can exist free from harm. Article 28 of the CRC highlights the right to each child to gain access to education. Article 29 emphasizes the significance of holistic development of each child. Article 29 points out the need to prepare children for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

### Constitutional Laws and Child Rights

The Indian Constitution accords rights to children as citizens of the country, and in keeping with their special status, the State has even enacted special laws. The Constitution promulgated in 1950, encompasses most rights included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and lists the following as the Rights of the Child to ensure their safe living:

#### Right to survival

According to the Convention, the Right to Survival includes the right to life, the attainable standard of health, nutrition and an adequate standard of living.

#### Right to an identity

Children are entitled to a name, legally registered with the government, and a nationality, as well as provision to have legal record of their identity.

#### Right to protection

This right includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse and inhuman or degrading treatment, and to protect vulnerable children from those who would take advantage of them and to safeguard their minds and bodies.

#### Right to education

This right bestows on children the need to get quality education. The disciplinary measures adopted by school authorities should not harm them, but mould them in a way that respects their dignity.

#### Right to development

This includes the right to be educated, to receive support for development and care, as well as the right to leisure and pursue recreational activities.

#### Right to freedom of thought and expression

It accords the child the right to access appropriate information related to ones wellness and to have the freedom of thought and expression.

#### Right to recreation

Every child has the freedom to spend time on recreational pursuits like sports, entertainment and hobbies, so that they can explore their talents and capabilities.

#### Importance of Child Rights education to safeguard children

Propagation of Child rights education is important as children have the right to know their own rights. They need to be aware of the pitfalls surrounding them and to tackle safety issues that crop up. Child right education is necessary for the following reasons:

#### Development of self-esteem and active participation

Once children recognize their importance as human beings, they realize that what they live, think and feel is important and that they can make a positive contribution to their families, friends and community.

#### Reinforcement of positive behaviour

Providing child right education helps to foster critical reflection and a sense of responsibility. Children will then reflect on how they interact with others and how they can change their behaviour to reflect child rights values.

#### Awareness on current safety issues

Millions of children around the world are exploited, abused and discriminated against. These children include child labourers, children affected by armed conflicts, sexually exploited children, children in conflict with the law or in the care of the state, children suffering from disabilities, or suffering from discrimination because of their religion or ethnic minority status.



**Practical measures to be adopted to safeguard the child****Maintaining school connectedness**

School connectedness is defined by the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the social environment of the school. In short, students experiencing a lack of school connectedness have a tendency to engage in risk-taking activities. It helps to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical activities to their full potential.

**Lending a ear to children**

A practical step that can be adopted is to ask children, what makes them feel safe and unsafe and what they expect adults to do. Listening to children is empowering for them and helps adults to see things in a better perspective. Programmes and activities should be planned out so as to help children to develop strategies and approaches to solve safety issues they might face in day to day life.

**Parental support**

Every home should teach children about safety and protection measures. Children should be taught to be assertive in order to protect them from abduction and exploitation. The home should be a place that will support their wards in time of personal crises or difficulties.

**Guidance and support from educators**

Teachers should play their part to protect and care for children and young people in their community by building good relationships with their students and showing that they respect and value them.

**Ensuring online safety**

While dealing with online safety, we should be careful to maintain a proper balance while providing opportunities for right to education, to access information and communicate with each other. We should provide information and education about online safety; have critical discussions regarding visiting pornographic sites and the need to maintain healthy and respectful relationships with their peers.

**Appointing a trained counsellor/social worker in educational institutions**

Schools should appoint trained counsellors or social workers to assist children showing signs of psychological and emotional problems and to provide counselling to students as well as their parents/guardians. Regular follow-up sessions can be arranged to monitor the emotional and psychological well being of these children.

**Conducting regular Parent-teacher meetings**

Meetings between parents and teachers should be arranged intermittently so as to offer a platform for dialogue between the parents and teachers regarding the well-being of the children.

**Provision for sex education/child rights education**

Sex education as well as life skill training should be provided to students so that they can get clarification from qualified individuals. Misconceptions regarding sex should be provided remediation and the need to have a healthy relationship with peers should be stressed.

**Sensitization for the public**

Awareness campaigns should be launched to provide awareness for the community to refrain from harassing children. At work places, employers should be sensitized about child rights and the consequences of corporal punishment to sex offenders.

**Establishing a child protection monitoring system**

Schools should set up a child protection monitoring unit or cell involving children, their cribb parents, and representatives from panchayath or municipal councils. These cells or units should maintain records or documents regarding children who need psychological support and care and to report cases of child abuse to Child line authorities or police authorities. Steps should be adopted to punish those who commit acts against children and to create support centres for victims.

**Arranging theme-based recreational activities**

Activities to keep the students occupied should be arranged like discussions, debates, quizzes, exhibitions, theatre arts, painting, puppet-making, face painting, origami, photography, indoor and outdoor sports, picnics and excursions.

**Starting sponsorship programmes**

The Government authorities should start schemes for the welfare of children and provide sponsorship from humanitarian agencies, bodies or individuals. Tax benefits should be granted to these agencies or individuals so as to encourage sponsorship.

**Strict laws on media**

There have to be strict laws on media which telecast violent, sex and vulgar programmes related to children or minors.

## Conclusion

The safety of children has to be ensured by fostering a child-focussed culture. Service providers like legal advisors, medical personnel, police forces, teaching community, social workers, local government system and parents should be sensitized about ways to deal with cases of abuse or violation of child rights. Legislations related to child rights should be reviewed and restructured in the context of Convention on the Rights of the Child. Whatever action that is implemented should safeguard the interests and welfare of the child.

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## EFFECTIVENESS OF DISCOURSE-ORIENTED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN DEVELOPING FUNCTIONAL WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF KOTTAYAM DISTRICT

Dr Mary Sheba Jose

Associate Professor, Mount Carmel College of Teacher Edu. for Women, Kottayam, Kerala

### Introduction

Language is a tool to transmit information, learn knowledge, express feelings, emotions and ideas, and construct social identity. Learning language is very important for getting a job, for communication between people and for interacting. Language allows one to share information, and to communicate beliefs and speculations, attitude and emotions. The ability to communicate in multiple languages is becoming more and more important in the increasingly global community.

Discourse is one of the four systems of language, the others being vocabulary, grammar and phonology. Discourse has various definitions, but one way of thinking about it is as any piece of extended language, written or spoken, that has unity, meaning and purpose. One possible way of understanding 'extended', is as language that is of more than one sentence. In linguistics, discourse refers to a unit of language longer than a single sentence. More broadly, discourse is the use of spoken or written language in a social context.

Functional skills in English involve the practical skills that provide every individual with linguistic skills that help individuals to function independently and effectively in their day-to-day lives. These skills are essential for further learning and employment, since they are basic skills needed for most jobs. So functional skills should be integrated into the curriculum, so that the learners get the opportunity to apply these skills in real life. The knowledge within the subject has to be linked with the practical skills, helping them to think creatively. Functional skills help build the confidence of an individual while dealing with the four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. It helps effective communication where information can be passed clearly through either speaking or writing and also helps to understand information and to respond appropriately. It helps to make presentations, write reports, take part in group discussions and analyze ideas and information in a logical manner.

'Writing' within functional skills is defined as the independent construction of written text to communicate in a purposeful context. While writing functionally, the learners have to fully understand all of the steps involved in a task before they can write it down, and also need to be able to

review and edit those steps in order to make sure that the directions they have written are complete. It includes the writing activities which resemble those done in real life for practical purposes. This kind of writing practice prepares learners for writing which they must do as part of survival in everyday life. The writing of titles, headlines, advertisements, reports, letters, messages, posters and the like are forms of functional writing, because people write headlines as part of a job, prepare advertisements and posters and scribble messages to accomplish specific purposes and so on.

The lecture method as well as the Grammar-Translation method followed by the teachers in secondary level schools has led to the memorization of factual information alone by the students, while the teacher does not know how to make the teaching-learning process effective and interesting. The result is that the students lack a sense of perception and creativity. They are not able to frame ideas, arrange thoughts logically and coherently, and create their own discourse material with flexibility and originality. It is a major concern for language teachers for locating suitable methods for teaching English. The mode of instruction to be followed should be realistic and practicable in Indian context and should also be learner friendly. More attempts should be made for studying the effect of different approaches and methods on the teaching of English at secondary level.

### Statement of the Problem

The present study is intended to find out the *Effectiveness of Discourse-oriented Instructional Material in Developing Functional Writing Skills in English Among Secondary School Students of Kottayam District*.

### Objectives of the Study

- To compare the pre-test scores of functional writing skills for experimental and control group for the total sample.
- To compare the post-test scores of functional writing skills for experimental and control group for the total sample.
- To find out the effectiveness of Discourse-oriented Instruction on Functional Writing Skills when compared to Existing method of teaching.

### Methodology

The main purpose of the study is to compare the effectiveness of Discourse-oriented Instructional Material in Developing Functional Writing Skills in English of secondary school students. The investigator selected IX Standard students to conduct the study. There were in total 80 students as sample. Out of this, 40 students were in the experimental group and 40 in the

control group. Experimental method is considered to be the most appropriate for the study. The design selected is pre-test post-test non-equivalent group design (Best, 2006). Pre-test will be given to all pupils. The experimental group consisting of forty students will be given the experimental treatment. The control group consisting of forty students will be taught on the basis of the existing method. At the end of the treatment, a post-test will be administered to determine the development of functional writing skills in English of the students.

### Variables in the Study

Variables are the conditions or characteristics that the experimenter manipulates, controls or observes (Best and Kahn, 1999). Variables in the study are categorized as Independent and Dependent variables.

#### i. Independent Variables

Independent variables are the conditions or characteristics that the experimenter manipulates in his attempts to ascertain the relationship to the observed phenomenon (Best and Kahn, 1999). The independent variables are:

- a. Teaching English through Discourse-oriented Instruction
- b. Teaching English through Existing Method

#### ii. Dependent Variables

Dependent variables are the conditions or characteristics that appear, disappear or change as the experimenter introduces, removes or changes the independent variables (Best and Kahn, 1999). The dependent variable of the present study is:

- a. Functional Writing Skills

### Tools and Techniques

The following tools and techniques are employed for the collection of data:

- i. Lesson Transcripts based on Discourse-oriented Instruction
- ii. Lesson Transcripts based on Existing Method of teaching
- iii. Functional Writing Skill Test

### Sample of the Study

The investigator selected boys and girls of Standard IX from selected schools in Kottayam district in order to conduct the study. In the present study, the sample consisted of 40 students each in experimental and control groups.

### Statistical Techniques Used

- ❖ Mean
- ❖ Standard Deviation

- ❖ Critical ratio
- ❖ Analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA)

### Major Findings and Conclusions

The major findings from the analysis of the study can be summarized and presented as given below:

*Findings which emerged from the test of significance of difference between the pre-test scores of experimental and control group*

The result of the test of significance of difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental group and control group showed that there existed a difference in the Functional Writing Skills in English of the students. The obtained t-value is greater than the table value ( $t=8.02, p<0.01$ ). So there exists a difference in the functional writing skills of English in the experimental group and control group in their pre-test scores.

*Findings which emerged from the test of significance of difference between the post-test scores of experimental and control groups*

The result of the test of significance of difference between the post-test scores of the experimental group and control group showed that there existed a significant difference in the Functional Writing Skills in English of the students after the experimental treatment. The obtained t-value is greater than the table value ( $t=9.44, p<0.01$ ). So there exists a significant difference in the Functional Writing Skills of English in the experimental group and control group. The mean post-test score of experimental group students is 30.73 and the mean post-test score of the control group students is 22.10. The higher mean score of experimental group students indicates that they have performed better after the experimental treatment when compared to the control group of students.

*Findings which emerged from the comparison of Functional Writing Skills in English of Experimental and Control Group*

The result of the test of significance of difference between the scores of the experimental group and control group showed that there existed significant difference in the Functional Writing Skills in English of the students of the experimental group after the implementation of Discourse-oriented Instruction.

The mean value of the pre-test scores obtained by the experimental group is 25.70 and that of the control group is 18.33. The standard deviation of the pre-test scores obtained by the experimental group is 4.21 and that of the control group is 4.00. The test of significance of difference between the means of the pre-test scores of experimental and control group revealed that there is significant



difference between the Functional Writing Skills in English of Experimental and Control Group before the experimentation ( $t = 8.02$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

The mean value of the post-test scores of Functional Writing Skills obtained by the experimental group is 30.73 and that of the control group is 22.10. The standard deviation of the post-test scores obtained by the experimental group is 4.37 and that of the control group is 3.54. The test of significance difference between the pre-test scores of experimental and control group shows that there is significant difference between the Functional Writing Skills in English of Experimental and Control Group after the experimentation ( $t = 9.44$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

Therefore it can be concluded that the Discourse-oriented Instruction is significantly better than Existing Method of teaching.

*Findings which emerged from the analysis of pre-test and post-test scores of Functional Writing Skills in English using ANCOVA*

The ANCOVA of pre-test and post-test scores of students in the Experimental and Control groups showed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups ( $F_{(64.32, p0.01)}$ ). There is significant difference between the mean post-test scores of the two groups ( $F_{(89.16, p0.01)}$ ) i.e., the Experimental Group was found to be superior to the Control Group in the post-test.

The ANCOVA of pre-test and post-test scores of students in the Experimental and Control Group showed that there is significant difference between the mean of post-test scores of the two groups ( $F_{(x-22.53, p0.01)}$ ), i.e., the Experimental Group was found to be superior to the Control Group.

When the adjusted mean of post-test of students in the Experimental and Control Group were compared, the difference between them was found to be statistically significant. The adjusted mean of the post-test scores of the Experimental group is 29.02 and that of Control Group is 23.80. The test of significance difference between the mean ( $t=6.41$ ) showed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of the Experimental and Control Group and that the Experimental group was found to be superior to the control group. Thus it is found that Discourse-oriented Instruction was more effective in developing Functional Writing Skills in English among secondary level students.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded that the instructional materials prepared by the investigator based on Discourse-oriented Instruction has a momentous influence on the Functional Writing Skills in English of secondary school students. The investigator was instrumental in arranging workshops for the preparation of

discourse-oriented materials to teach the secondary school students. Training programmes were also arranged, by making use of the prepared discourse materials, so as to enhance the functional writing skills in English of Secondary School students.

Through the study, the investigator could use different types of discourses in which she could make the study more effective and improve the teaching learning process. The investigator hopes, this innovative mode of instruction will be fruitful in facilitating further studies. The study which made use of Discourse-oriented Instructional material motivated the investigator to recommend its credibility and suitability in developing the Functional Writing Skills of secondary school students.

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