

ENGLISH 106I
FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION

WRITER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SECOND DRAFT: STUDENT 1

Eight in the evening. It was raining outside. But a little boy was not paying any attention to that. Because he was at the edge of success, he was just about to make the last letter of English alphabet with three straight lines. Yes, the letter was 'Z' and the boy was I. That was the beginning of my English. Since then, passing many obstacles in my school years, my crusade is still continuing.

I first came in touch with English when I was three. It was only ABC and some kinds of other relevant matters. I loved to read picture books and play with those. My mother was my first teacher. She knows how important English is now days. So she took the initiative to strengthen my base in English. She tried hard in spite of her being only a housewife and I responded accordingly. My father also did his part. In fact he is quite good in English at least in writing. I was pleased with myself as things were going well then.

When I was six I entered into Government Laboratory High School one of the best schools in not only in Dhaka but also in Bangladesh. The admission test was pretty tough, however I was fortunate enough to get admitted there. It was the first challenge in my life thrown by my parents. So they were happy too to have their only son going in such a well-known school.

Before stating my experience in school I like to point out something important about our educational system. There are three major divisions in our school classes- Primary, Junior and Secondary. Primary classes are from class I to V, Junior is from class VI to VIII and Secondary section consists of class IX and X. After that we have to appear in a nation-wide exam called Secondary School Certificate Examination or SSC Examination. Passing this exam students enter

into colleges. In Bangladesh class XI and XII are considered as college level. Completing of this college courses, students take another nation-wide exam called Higher Secondary Certificate Examination or HSC Examination.

In school especially in Bengali medium school like ours either writing or speaking in English is hardly noticeable. Even in English classes teachers are not used to give their lecture in English. So my experience in English in school was really wired. Upto class- V our English mainly focused on grammar. Few textbooks were there. But their standards were not up to the mark. It was like what I had gone through in my pre-school years. With such a little touch in English it seemed to me that I had learned almost nothing. In the Junior level the standard was relatively high but still not convincing one. There were some common types of English Essays such as Rice, Jute, The Rainy Season, Floods in Bangladesh, A journey by Boat, Train and so forth that were mostly accentuated to a specific topic. If one can learn rather I should say memorizes any ten to twelve of these essays he will obviously get one or two common in exam and will eventually get good grades. I was no exception to this system. Naturally I lacked having as much opportunity I to expose myself in creative writing as I got in Bengali. I used to read Bengali classics and novels since boyhood. As ability of writing is closely associated with reading I had been becoming more and more adroit writer in Bengali. I composed some writings for my school-magazines. I took part in some debate and speech competitions in Bengali. Making of the scripts and deliberation of those speeches enhanced my ability in writing and speaking respectively. And above all Bengali is my mother tongue. It comes automatically from the bottom of my heart. Human nature drives me to choose the easiest possible way to express my feelings. So definitely I feel more comfortable in Bengali than English both in writing and speaking since I did not have much practice in English.

After successful completion of school, but not in English, I went to Dhaka College. Again this is a good educational institution, probably the best college in Bangladesh. Naturally my expectation was high. Unfortunately I found it even worse. The system led me to the same direction that I mentioned earlier. The textbooks that I read in college were worthy enough for college. But the problem was memorizing some common answers of questions and essays does not mean that I had learnt good English though answers were of higher order than the textbooks. And the most amazing thing is that we did not make these answers ourselves. Our teachers gave some important questions and their answers. In our country the expertise of a teacher is judged by the answers that he gives to students, not by his real quality. Despite my willingness I couldn't escape from this drift. Had I not memorize the answers, I would not obtain good marks. Because other student would do that and their answers would definitely be better than me.

Outside school there are less usage of English. Only students from English medium schools are used to talk to each other in English. We, who are from Bengali medium schools, are having difficulties in using English since we need to translate it first and then express it. Usually ordinary people in Bangladesh do not use English at all. I too usually did not interact with people in English in fear of that there might be some error. I think there was the mistake. If I had gone for it, no matter right or wrong, I would have been an eloquent speaker by this time. Some of my friends teased me if I was erroneous. That created a panic in me about spoken English. That's why I like to write more than to speak in English. Since I did not go through many English writings, I had not many vocabularies. So I always kept an English to Bengali dictionary with me and I am still doing so. I have also brought Math and Physics books that are in Bengali to Purdue because of my unfamiliarity with many scientific terms as I had to take me science subjects in Bengali earlier.

For coming to United States as an international student I had to take TOEFL and SAT. My English has ameliorated much since I had been preparing for these exams. I have got a bit vocabulary now. I was totally surprised when I got 5.5 out of 6 in TWE. It was a great achievement for me, because I did it myself without memorizing anything provided by my teachers. But I did not score good marks in the verbal section of SAT. But, to be candid, since there was not too much English in math section, my score was perfect, that means 800 in 800.

Now I am in Purdue University, Indiana and most of all I am in USA, a country where native language is English. It will take some time for me to get inured to the education as well as the whole US culture. Through the English courses I am taking here, I wish, I can develop my ability and skill in English. Hopefully now I can feel that I am heading towards some sort of creativity in English that I have been lacking over the years. Back in my country, from my point of view, it's good to have our education in native language. It is necessary for social development and spread of education through out nation. But to catch the drift of the kaleidoscope global advancement, we should practice more English. It will be helpful in contributing for greater welfare of country. Personally I do not want to confront with English, nor to see any disparity between my English and Bengali ability. What I want is to have a complete command on it of my own accord. And I really look forward to get that opportunity right here.

WRITER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SECOND DRAFT: STUDENT 2

My experience of learning writing can be traced to the year when I was three years old. Certainly, it is not the time I really began to write. But I did begin to learn something that was really helpful for my later writing practice in Chinese. Dad is a lover of the Chinese classical literature. At that time, Dad always rode a bicycle to send me to the Child Care Center every

morning. I sat on my little bamboo chair, which was fastened on the frame of his bike. On the road, Dad gave me short lectures about Chinese classical poetry each day. He interpreted poetry with the simple words to help me understand the meaning of every line. As the result, I had already been able to recite much poetry when I went to the elementary school. Then something happened. In a winter morning when I was five years old, I found it was snowing. The outside was so beautiful in the white color. Then I spoke something to depict the snow. The brief meaning is that 'when we were falling asleep last night, we even did not detect it began snowing. Look out of the window in the morning. It is already a white world.' Dad was very happy. He said it is a poem. Perhaps just because I had learned so much about poetry, I could make one by myself easily. Dad wrote down my first poem on the paper. In fact, he still keeps it even today as my first literary creation.

My real writing on paper began in the elementary school. My first composition was to narrate the spring outing after we visited the Summer Palace. I described how beautiful the lake was in the green color, how magnificent and larruping the buildings was. At the end of my paper, I expressed my happy mood not only for the spring but also because I could enjoy the Summer Palace, which was the imperial garden in Qing Dynasty. When I got into the fifth grade, my instructor asked us to write something everyday. She let us to pay attention to everything that happened around us. Two of my works still left me some memory. The first one was a story of catching dragonfly. It happened on my way from the school to home. I found several dragonflies flying in the air. Their wings were so beautiful and just looked like gauze. It lured me in the strongest way to catch one back home. After I paid great effort to get one and stayed her in my hand, I found her pitiful expression in her eyes. I suddenly knew I did wrong, and I should love

beastie just like myself. The second one was a section of sentiment after I heard a story about a Chinese ancient hero YueFei. I expressed my admiration to him in the article. I got full scores for those two papers and was honored to read them on my class. That's why I still remember them till today. I think it is not difficult for me to write if it is about my own experience or my own feeling. But I always got frustrated when I was assigned some topics that I knew nothing. I just could not make the feeling without any facts.

When I got into the high school, what I wrote completely depended on the course. My Chinese Language textbook included excellent works from many outstanding writers. After finishing study of one piece of text, we were asked to imitate the author's style to compose our own work. One of my best works was under the topic of Dad's Face. I expatiated the change of my father's expression going through different events and then got out the summary of my father's personality. My instructor said that I imitated the author's style in both a good and creative way. In the later two years of my high school, most of the time we just wrote around an argument to explain why I agree or disagree with it. Giving examples or citing the words from a man of mark was very helpful for the persuasion. So it was not enough only studying the textbook. Extracurricular reading was also necessary to help me accumulate and enrich my knowledge.

During my college education, the one and the only one paper written by me was my thesis. In the writing process, I learned how to consult information, how to quote the references and how to use my own language to review other's idea.

After my graduation from college, I did not make any serious literary creation for a long time. But it does not mean that I stopped writing. In fact, I always kept writing letters to my parents in the last ten years because they lived in the United States and I was in China. I told them interesting things happened around me in the letter. No doubt, it also improved my capability of writing.

I have to say that I never practiced serious English writing before this paper, except emails to my husband during the year before last year. He was also in the United States at that time. I was in China thousands miles away. It was probably my strong miss of him that motivated me to write email to him each day. For the convenience, we chose English as our communication language in the email. Every morning, my first thing was to receive his e-mail after I got up. In the evening, I wrote to tell him what happened during that day. At the beginning, it spent me much time to write only two or three lines. But just after a while, I could write more and more. I could tell him my thinking in a pretty clear way. That is really an achievement for me.

Now I still cannot write a whole paper exclusively in English. I always first think in Chinese and translate each sentence into English. The Chinese-English dictionary is still not dispensable for me. I think my problem is the shortage of English reading. So I subscribed Discover and New Yorker magazines recently. I hope more practice and more reading can help me improve my English writing quickly. In fact, I believe it, just like the way I walked through with my writing in Chinese.

WRITER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SECOND DRAFT: STUDENT 3

Writing about my writing experiences is tempting to me, because writing is one of my favorite activities. It is a simple activity, and yet often pretty challenging. It only requires a set of a pen and several sheets of paper or just a computer, but at the same time, it requires that all parts of my brain get involved. While writing, either in Japanese or in English and no matter what I am writing about, I really feel I am creating something out of myself. This is what I like very much about writing and the reason I decided to take this course, though as an exchange student, I did not necessarily have to do so.

For me, writing something can be mainly divided into two kinds. One is in Japanese, and the other is in English. As far as I can remember, my first writing experience was keeping a diary, which dates back to my elementary school days, of course, when I knew nothing but Japanese. Although it was actually not my decision but my mother's recommendation, I enjoyed writing what I did and felt in my diary every day. Also, I experienced another type of diary. It is called an "exchange diary". An exchange diary is a diary in which several, usually two to five, people participate. From the viewpoint as a writer, to join in an exchange diary was a kind of chance for me to write things interestingly enough to be able to get the attention and some comments from others. I do not think that was the main reason for me to join in. but it is obvious that I was somewhat aware of that.

Right now, I am not participating in any exchange diary. However, I have been writing in Japanese what the life here is like in my own diary since I had arrived here at Purdue. It is like a long letter for the future myself to convey what I felt, did, and learned in the States. I try to write things in such a way that I would find interesting in the future. I think whether to be able to get attention to my writing from the audience is more or less up to the attention that I pay for them. even if the audience is myself. Always with this in mind, I try to be objective once in a while to

grasp what my writing looks like for others. while writing anything: not only my personal writings like diaries and letters. but also the academic ones like papers and essays.

What is decisively different between personal and academic writings is that academic ones are read and evaluated in terms of Gestalt. which means the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts. Making a number of relevant and meaningful statements in a bad organization does not lead to a good reputation as an academic writing. In this very viewpoint. it can be said that Japanese people are relatively not good at writing academically in Japanese. because they are never taught how to organize writing. Even in the university level where academic writings are absolutely required. we do not have any classes designed to teach students writing skills in Japanese. We are not even taught how to cite references. Therefore. Japanese students have to reach their own writing styles by themselves. Personally. what I did during my freshman year at my home university, was to apply the skills that I learned in the English writing classes to the papers which should be written in Japanese.

The first English writing class that I took at my home university was really basic one. Throughout the entire semester, we learned in that class how to write a good paragraph in English and how to be logical. Then, in the subsequent one in the next semester, we learned how to organize paragraphs and how to write a paper and essay. Organizing things written in English is not so difficult, though the grammar rules and the use of vocabulary and articles are sometimes above my head. I often get some comments from teachers about my inappropriate use of articles. Other than that, however, I think I have got relatively good opinions on my English writings.

When I write in English, I often refer to several kinds of dictionary. They include an English-Japanese, Japanese-English, English-English, etc., and I think all of them are quite helpful. Among the all kinds I often refer to, the one I use the most often is probably a thesaurus.

Since English is a second language for me, it cannot be helped that I have a very limited number of English vocabulary. Therefore, after I refer to a Japanese-English dictionary for some English word, I always see a thesaurus too for a better word. I believe this helps me a lot in terms of both broadening my vocabulary and making my writings better.

Writing something, either in Japanese or in English, does not simply mean writing itself but also means being read by somebody. Being aware of this, I am really pushed to produce the best thing out of the present myself. I think this challenge toward myself is what brushes up my writing skills, motivates me to create a better writing, and above all, keeps me writing both in Japanese and in English.

WRITER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SECOND DRAFT: STUDENT 4

I was 12 years old when I wrote my first composition in English. I remember how it was difficult for me to write a summary of a story. Because I didn't know what to write and I was afraid of getting a low grade. So after I finished writing compositions, I was reading it to my mother and she was checking my mistakes.

In high school we were taught how to write compositions both in Turkish and English. I didn't have any problem writing in Turkish but I have difficulties writing in English at first. I believe that writing in foreign language is not a complicated task if you carry out a plan and have creativity. When someone asks me to write in foreign language, at first I feel very stressed. But when I got used to the idea of writing in English I start to feel more comfortable.

After I pass this first stage, I try to find a beginning sentence. Sometimes it takes more than one hour to start writing the first sentence because I believe that the first sentences will give

an idea about you and your writing skills to the readers. The first sentence should be impressive so that the reader will enjoy your writing and keep reading it.

The other important point in writing is outlining and organizing my ideas. They taught me how to do an outline but I have never used it in any of my papers. Rather than making an outline, I write one or two words which will help me remember the whole sentence.

The other difficulty that I face is expressing my ideas. This is because I cannot find the appropriate word that fits to the sentences. Then I start looking up the dictionaries-sometimes I find the best fitting word but most of the times I can't. Because in Turkish we have many words which their writing is same but their meaning is completely different. I used to refer dictionaries in high school but now I am using it rarely. In high school years I wanted to broaden my vocabulary knowledge so when I look up a word from the dictionary I used to write them in small paper and then post it on my desk to see the new words every time. This method helped me a lot to learn new vocabularies in a short period of time. For my technical vocabulary, I have receiving "The Economist" for the last 2 years. While I am keeping up with the world's events and news, I also have the chance to broaden my technical vocabulary, too.

Reading books in English helps me a lot to improve my writing skills in high school. I read literature books like "Romeo and Juliet", "The Great Gatsby", "Lord of the Flies", "The Pearl", "Of Mice and Men", and "Animal Farm" in my English classes and they want me to write a brief summary of the book. Writing summaries about the books, stating my opinion about specific topics are my favorites in writing in English.

The expectations writing in English and Turkish were completely different for me. I expect to use more vocabulary in the content of the essay and do little mistakes in grammar,

punctuation and organizing my ideas. But when I was writing in Turkish, me and my teacher were expecting more proficiency about the topic and more complicated sentences which express details. What I am suffering in English is that I am not able to write and express details the way I do in Turkish because of the lack of vocabulary in English.

My experiences in university were a little bit different than high school. In university all lessons were taught in English, so they want us to know English close to proficiency. I had to take a TOEFL exam and get a grade higher than 550. I had 2 practice tests before the exam and got 570 in my first entry .So I started my freshman year. I had "Business English" course for 2 semesters, where we taught to write projects or thesis, but generally we were taught about the format. While I was trying to fit in the format, I also had to improve my writing skills, because I was a university student not a high school student anymore. We were asked to write about technical topics in management, economics or recent development in those areas.

When I compare the difficulty level in writing technical topics and daily topics, I think that technical topics are easier to write. Because there are special terms that I use, so I don't worry about finding the best fitting word. But following a plan is more important in technical writing. I try to carry out a plan and then generate my ideas by following the plan.

I think writing in foreign language, organizing the ideas, finding the best fitting word is a long-term process that needs practice very frequently. Besides these I believe that writing should be done by using emotions, otherwise the essay would be an ordinary one. But everybody cannot write with same emotions and express in the same way. Writing may vary from one person to another. What you find interesting in an essay may not sound interesting to me.

Writing really requires intensive study and practice all the time. After completing this writing class, I promise to myself that I will try to update my writing knowledge, skills and vocabulary when I have the chance to do it.

WRITER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SECOND DRAFT: STUDENT 5

I am from Indonesia and English is my second language. Most people rarely use English as mean of communication. I learned English since I was twelve and I had both good and bad experiences in writing in English. I have a lot of difficulties in writing in English. During my junior and senior high school years, I had English grammar courses but every school that I attended did not emphasize on writing essays in English. Since junior high I often made a lot of mistakes in either grammar or spelling in English written essays. Like me, most Indonesian students have problems in writing English essays. I have weakness in sentence structure and I still often make the same mistake over and over again. English and Indonesian have a lot of differences. Moreover, grammar is the main difference between them. In most high schools in Indonesia, students are never used to think in English when writing an essay because most of us learned grammar back in Indonesia. During my study in the United States, I found a few strategies which help me write in English, such as I always write an outline before I start write an English essay.

When I was in high school, I had one experience in writing an article for the school's newspaper. Although I participated to write only one article, I got compliments from a few teachers. I was very happy about that article and since that time, I enjoyed writing essays in

Indonesian. When my high school started to post poetry competitions in English, I lost interest in writing as a whole because I don't have enough experience in writing English poems.

In writing English essays, I usually write either unclear sentences or blur conclusions. After I arrived at the United States, my English improves a lot. Although I think my English essays are good enough, I still try to improve my essay writing skills. With five hundred and ten in my TOEFL score I couldn't do much in writing essays. Besides, I also couldn't get into a famous University such as Purdue University.

I took some ESL (English as a second language) courses when I was in my previous community college and that did not help me much with my writing. I got a lot of friends from Indonesia when I was in Seattle and that slowed my English improvement. One thing that improved my English was living with an American family and having conversation with them. They told me everything that I should do to improve my spoken and written English. One of their advices was try to think in English and set aside my Indonesian~English dictionary when writing an English essay. They gave me Longman's thesaurus that really helped me a lot in improving my English.

Writing in English is very different than writing in Indonesian language. The difference is not only does Indonesian have one to one relationship with English, but also Indonesian does not have plural, past and perfect forms. When I write in Indonesian, ideas related to the topic I want to write about comes up easily although translate them is not an easy job to do in my case. In writing an English essay, I used to think or even write in Indonesian and after that I translated it into English. When I often use the previously stated translation method, it ends up messing up my essays. Recently, I will think very hard in

English before I use Indonesian words for my essays. I sometimes experience lack of words in my English vocabulary.

My experience tells me that writing an outline when writing an essay will improve the quality of my essay. One strategy in making an outline before writing an essay is listing all of the key words which come to my mind that relate to the topic. After that I group them and rearrange them in the right order. The list of topics that I have made also helps me a lot when developing my paragraphs. Even though i made an outline I still have problems with conclusion paragraph in my essays. I already took an ESL course during my study at the community college and most of the time the instructor did not understand clearly what I am trying to say in my conclusion paragraph. .

E-mails help me to improve my writing in English although most of the e- mails I wrote are in informal English. I started writing e-mails in English since I moved to Purdue about a year ago because one of my American friends that I used to hang out with is at Seattle. That is where I started to use English in my e-mails. Sometimes he threw in a couple of jokes in his e-mails and it was hard for me to understand them. Right now at Purdue I have international friends that encourage me to speak good English. They always encourage and correct me when my English is wrong. International friends can help me improve my English and introduce me to slang English which is often used in the United States.

In conclusion, right know I can write in English better than the first time I arrived here. Although my English is better than the first time I arrived in USA, I still work hard on my English either in written or in spoken. My objective in learning English is to improve my grammar and increase my ability to think about my essays in English instead of in Indonesian.

Even though I still have many mistakes in spelling, I try to correct them and try not to repeat the same mistakes again.

WRITER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SECOND DRAFT: STUDENT 6

“Writing is easy, all you have to do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your head.”

-Gene Fowler

Charlie Chaplin

“When Chaplin found a voice to say what was on his mind he was like a child of 8 writing lyrics for Beethoven's ninth.”

-Billy Wilder

Good communication skills, I believe, is more than essential in today's dynamic and fast paced world. To progress in one's professional career, good verbal and writing skills are in disposable.

Possessing knowledge and imparting knowledge are two different things, through this I mean to say that gaining knowledge and expertise is only half the battle won, it is how you utilize this knowledge and convey it to get your point across what matters in the real world.

I remember an incident back in my home country, there was a presentation to be made by Indian scientist .His qualifications, as they were mentioned in the invitation card, were extremely impressive. But when he started to speak it was very disappointing to the audience, they could hardly follow what he was saying or trying to say. The man was absolutely incoherent. Thus, this experience further strengthened my notions on the necessity of articulate and eloquent communication.

I was introduced to the English language at a very incipient stage of my life. British teachers headed the primary school to which I went. Both my parents are well spoken in English, they always encouraged me to speak in English and keep a good balance between my native language Hindi and English so as to maintain a contemporary, cosmopolitan outlook as well as my traditional and cultural values at the same time. Therefore, in this way I received careful and valuable guidance in writing and speaking English both at home and at school .I was constantly encouraged to read English books to improve my vocabulary .

India had been a British colony for more than 150 years, owing to that, English became a very widely spoken language and continues to be so .It is not only the medium of instruction in schools and colleges for educational purposes but also the language through which professionals and businessmen communicate.

I remember the time when I was in grade 6 in school, the summer vacation had just begun and I had a great reason to be happy. T add to my happiness, I had not received any holiday homework. For some reason why, I don't know, I decided to share this good news with my dad which, turned out to be bad idea .He took the opportunity of assigning himself as my English instructor for the summer. He would give me an essay to write every week. That surely brought about the end of my plans of a perfect fun filled summer But now when I reflect back on those days when I really dreaded the work my dad gave me, I feel that it greatly helped me in improving my writing skills.

I shifted to a very reputed school in Delhi in grade 7. The approach and methods in teaching English were very effective. The course in English was formulated by the faculty of our school and was first introduced in the same before being picked up by other schools. It was called

"Interactive English ", This course was quite a change from conventional English course, which had been taught so far. It had a more useful and pragmatic structure and approach to the English language .It stressed on the usage of English in day to day situations such as group discussions, interviews etc.. There was also a practical approach towards English composition and writing, emphasis was laid on writing assignments such as factual descriptions, technical reports etc.

Even though this course was very useful in the field of developing professional writing skills, not much stress was laid on creative and abstract writing, which actually help in improving your proficiency in writing. There were a lot of English creative writing competitions held in and outside school but they were low key and only a few interested students would participate.

My native language is Hindi, but it may come to you as a surprise that I have officially studied English for more years than I have studied Hindi. I am better at writing in English than in Hindi as the latter is usually used for verbal communication. I studied Hindi till grade 8 after which I started studying Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the primitive Indian language which is the mother of all Indian regional languages, Even a few international languages such as Russian and German have been derived from Sanskrit .I studied this language for 2 years, it taught me a lot about Indian culture and mythology

I am a keen reader; I really admire the work of J .R.R. Tolkein .He is a great author who is highly articulate and eloquent in his writing .He is the author of my all time favorite book "The lord of the rings." I am an introspective person and being a Virgo it is natural for me to be a perfectionist, hence I am never completely satisfied with my writing .I do not consider myself very prolific at writing, but maybe I demand too much. I believe that there is a lot of room for

improvement in my writing. One area where I would want to improve in is the organization of ideas and paragraphs and blending them properly.

I am not so well organized because ideas come to my mind very abruptly and haphazardly; I start writing without making any outline in order to proceed in an orderly fashion. Through this English 1011 course I hope to improve my proficiency in English writing. I am sure that there will be gradual improvisation with every writing draft I submit, and with feedback from my instructor, I strongly believe that the course goals will be realized.