

Testing Writing Skills:

The writing test aims at measuring students writing skill.i.e their ability to organize information and express it in their own words in a clear and coherent manner .This skill is an essential for real – life communication.It is considered a valid direct and integrative test , but the **reliability** of it tend to be **limited** to many factors as :

- 1- Command of the target language.
- 2- Length of the test .
- 3- Vagueness of subject.
- 4- Subjective scoring .
- 5- Limited samples .

For further details see page ((144)) from the book ((A language Teacher s Guide To Assessment)) for Professor Najat Al- Joboury .

Stages of Testing Writing:

Testing the writing skill at earlier levels includes two stages :

The basic one which concerns with the mechanics of writing and the more complex one which deals with more direct and extended writing tasks of different types.

A – Testing Mechanics of Writing:

Mechanics of writing includes :

1-Handwriting.

Handwriting tests assess control of the alphabet or characters of the target language.The testees are given some printed words or sentences to copy in script, and their writing is assessed according to the following features:

A- Proper spacing :

Spacing is the distance between between the letters of one word or between words in sentences. Spaces should be even ; otherwise meaning will be affected. Unequal spacing results in confusion in meaning as in ahead , a head .

B- Correct size of the letters.

English letters have two forms : capital and small .All capital letters have two sizes upwards like D, M, Z , Small letters are divided into three categories:

- 1- One size upwards as in : a, c, e , m , n, o ,....
- 2- Two sizes upwards as in : b, d, h, f, t,.....
- 3- Two sizes downwards as in : g, j, p, q, and y .

C- Proper alignment:

It means that writing should be on a base line not between the lines whether the line is imaginary or real .

D- Legibility.

It refers to writing clearly and keeping the distinctive features of each letter so that writing can be read easily and the reader can tell the difference between the letters, e.g the pairs (a and o) and (n and u) or (m and w) .The testees should avoid ornamenting his writing or decorating letters and the lines should not be crowded.

E- Cleanliness

Students handwriting should be kept clean and tidy.

2- Spelling.

It is an important activity which has to be mastered by EFL students. In designing the spelling test ,and at the elementary level , single words are chosen from the students textbooks and tested by : MCQ , Completion and Error recognition (MCQ) . The examples of these techniques are illustrated on pages ((147- 148)) of the same aforementioned book)) . So , try to read them with their instructions .

Testing Spelling by Dictation.

At a slightly higher level, dictation is commonly given to test spelling. Dictation is a popular testing technique which provides a measure of overall language proficiency including listening comprehension, the auditory memory span , spelling, recognition of sound segments and knowledge of the grammatical and lexical patterning of the language.Dictation can be in two types:

A- Partial Dictation.

Students are given a printed passage with some words or phrases deleted and replaced by blank spaces .As the passage is read , the students fill in the blanks with one , two or more words. This type is preferable because it takes less time to administer and the teacher focuses on the chosen words .

B- Full Dictation.

This test requires the students to write out the whole passage .It is longer to administer and score but it provides a more valid measure of overall language ability.

It should be noted that dictations, which are given to test mastery of the writing skill are usually based on prepared selections chosen from the students textbooks .Dictation that are used to evaluate general proficiency are taken from texts that are unfamiliar to the students.