



# **Technical Writing Difficulties Faced by High School Students in Dzongkha Subject**

**Sigay Phurpa<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Lhuentse Primary School, Ministry of Education, Bhutan.*

## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the technical difficulties and the causes of writing difficulties school students face in writing in Dzongkha. Using social constructivism, 16 participants (ten students and six teachers) were involved. In addition to document analysis, the participants were also interviewed to find the problems of writing in Dzongkha. The findings suggest that application of Dzongkha in its written form was one of the most difficult tasks among the four language skills. The writing difficulties faced by the students were the usage of correct spelling, grammar, vocabulary, word structure, sentence structure, paragraph structure, expression and handwriting. Among these, spelling was one of the most difficult parts while writing in Dzongkha. The causes of writing difficulties in Dzongkha were the poor foundation of Dzongkha writing and reading skills, low prestige of Dzongkha language/subject, time constraint, pronunciation related problems, limited resource/facility and professional support for the Dzongkha teachers, less career scope for Dzongkha background students and poor reading habit. It was also due to lack of additional Dzongkha medium based subject, inadequate modern ways of teaching learning strategies, and also because of minimal parents' support, less personal interest and perseverance to learn and write in Dzongkha. The solutions to the writing problems were to give adequate time for Dzongkha subject, maintain reading and writing portfolios to enhance genres writing, teaching the clear

\*Corresponding author: Email: [sphub@education.gov.bt](mailto:sphub@education.gov.bt), [nedudoz@gmail.com](mailto:nedudoz@gmail.com);

meaning and concept of different words and terminologies having same pronunciation, and adequate teacher written response needs to be emphasized and implemented. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations to different stakeholders are also provided.

*Keywords: Dzongkha; high school writing problem; qualitative study.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1959 the introduction of formal school education was established in the history of Bhutan [1]. Simtokha School was established in the year 1961 under the leadership of DilgoKhyentse. It was a milestone in the development of a traditional education [2]. Asserts that Dzongkha was taught in a school since the inception of schools in Bhutan.

Thinley [3] and Phuntsho [1] define the term Dzongkha as the language used in the Dzong (fortress). Gyatso [4] clearly mentioned that Dzongkha was the principal spoken language of the Dzong when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal established the dual system of government in the 17th century. The term "Dzongkha" is used in various linguistically distinct senses in Bhutan to mean formal, written Dzongkha as used in official documents. According to Van Driem [5], Dzongkha language is spoken in formal situations by high ranking officials. Van Driem and Phuntsho assert Dzongkha is the native language of western Bhutan, comprising eight of the twenty districts of the kingdom, viz. Thimphu, Punakha, Gasa, Wangdiphodrang, Paro, Haa, Dagana and Chukha.

Although Bhutan is a small country, there are eighteen different languages. Including Dzongkha, seventeen languages of Bhutan belong to Tibeto-Barman group [5]. Of all the languages in the country, in the year, 1961, Rinzin and Sacco (n.d.) shared that, under the royal command of late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, Dzongkha language was instituted as the national language of Bhutan.

Bhutan is known to the outside world as a small nation with rich customs, traditions and cultural heritage. These are the strength and identity. If the unique national identity and cultural heritage is to be preserved and promoted, they must be passed down to the younger generations, and no language is as suitable as Dzongkha to pass the rich heritage to future generations [6-9]. Only Dzongkha will be able to act as a medium to transfer Bhutan's present glory to future. Dzongkha as a written language has a very

sacred responsibility and it is the duty of every Bhutanese to make Dzongkha language strong to face the challenges posed by other regional and international languages in this 21st century. Gyatso [4] claims that:

Dzongkha qualifies us to be more Bhutanese. Because we stand as Bhutanese, our presence is felt in the international arenas. According to Vision 2020, A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness, Dzongkha has been a particularly powerful force for unifying the kingdom. It is an instrument for fostering national identity in ways that promote sovereignty and security. (p. 291)

In addition, Phuntsho [1] highlighted that Dzongkha is a language of Bhutanese religion, philosophy, culture and values. No language can better understand and interpret what is unique to Bhutan, its culture, tradition and religion. Dzongkha language is important to represent the identity of the country. It is indeed, considered to be more than a plain subject or a means of communication. It indeed makes students to think and imagine beyond the material world of this present generation. Therefore, like any other subjects, Dzongkha subject too needs recognition, status and application or Dzongkha needs to be treated at par with other subjects at least within the land of its origin [10-13].

In school curriculum, Dzongkha language is the medium of instructions for itself and EVS subject. At present, Dzongkha is also one of the subjects in our school curriculum. Dzongkha is taught not only in the general school system but in the tertiary and training institutes as well. Namgyel [14] says the teaching of Dzongkha usually encompasses two aspects, language and literature. In the lower general academic education system language takes precedence, whereas both language and literature become equally important in the higher education. Especially in the higher education, much of the literature content of Dzongkha is in Choekey language. Van Driem [5] states that the writing of Dzongkha is very similar to Tibetan and so do the script. However, the spoken form is different from Tibetan just only in the use of different sets vocabulary.

Treiman and Kessler (2005) said that without the ability to write, a person could scarcely be called literate. A full understanding of literacy development requires us to consider the development of the writing skill and reading skill. As good writing demands higher-level skills, the ability to spell words easily and automatically provides an important foundation for those skills.

Writing in Dzongkha has been a challenge to Bhutanese students. The study is an attempt to explore writing difficulties in Dzongkha faced by high school students in Trashigang cluster schools.

## 2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Jena [15] mentions Dzongkha has some similarity to Tibetan in speaking. Although Dzongkha alphabets are same as Tibetan, yet use different style of scripts. It is also taught in schools, and students speak Dzongkha and English. Even though, Dzongkha is a major subject in schools, English has taken precedence over Dzongkha in terms of students' interest and their literacy. This is because most of the subjects like mathematics, science, geography, history, economic and information technology are taught in English.

Phuntsho [1] states that because of the difficulties writing in Dzongkha, English has been dominantly used in the administration. For instance, internal communications, reports and other documents are very often written in English. It is also because of the easier availability of word processing facilities in English.

Namgyal [14] reveals a contrast between understanding/speaking and reading/writing skills when English and Dzongkha were considered. Majority of his research respondents reported that it was easier to read and write in English, whereas the reading and writing in Dzongkha was found to be difficult. Reading and writing higher competence in English may be result of greater teacher/student contact time in the English and English medium based subjects. He found that as per the weekly subject time allocation for class X students, the overall time given to Dzongkha was 15% and other English and English medium based subject was 85%. This in turn made Wangyal [16] believe that the nominal attention given to teaching Dzongkha in the education curriculum contribute to the difficulty in learning Dzongkha subject.

A pattern of written language use of educators shows remarkable difference in their writing especially when they write letters to their children more in English than Dzongkha (9% Dzongkha & 78% English). In a similar manner, students also write letters to parents more in the English language than the Dzongkha language (38% Dzongkha, 57% English). Namgyel [14] found that parents, students and majority of his respondents write mostly in English and their negative attitudes attached towards Dzongkha subject were restricted to the language being difficult to write. The respondents expressed their concern and need for standardization of written Dzongkha. Dorji [17] states, while policy and planning to promote Dzongkha even as the medium of instruction exists, the reality appears to be most of the office people also experience difficulty in writing in Dzongkha.

Curriculum and professional support Division (2007) states as in English and Mathematics, Dzongkha is also one of the major subjects and medium of instruction in the school curriculum. Like any other subject in the school curriculum, the Dzongkha subject also demands change in methodology, specifically moving from the teacher-centred classroom to student-centred learning environment. In line with that, major positive steps have been taken, which include the revision of Dzongkha curriculum for classes Pre-Primary to XII, the provision for in-service training for teachers to update their content knowledge and skills on the Dzongkha revised curriculum. The curriculum guide for teachers provides a wide range of strategies that the teachers can use to facilitate students rise to the levels expected at each stage. For class X, among the four skills of language, new Dzongkha curriculum offers adequate instructional time to develop the writing skills [18-19]. The curriculum calls for the teaching of Dzongkha grammar and language in a consistent and interactive manner from grade four to twelve. The objectives specify the details of what students are obliged to learn at each class level in order to make progress towards the attainment of the standards. To support teachers with the implementation of the new curriculum, a new curriculum guide for teachers for each class is prepared in a comprehensive manner.

## 3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The researcher has been teaching Dzongkha for about twelve years in various class levels. When

monitoring Dzongkha written works of the class X students, the researcher noticed that students were facing problems writing in Dzongkha. Similarly, many colleagues who taught class X students said that students find difficulties to cope up with the expected standard writing in Dzongkha.

Gyatso [4] found that 80% of the educated Bhutanese can read, write and speak good English and semi-literacy in Dzongkha. Around 65% of the population speaks Dzongkha. Likewise, about 60% of the population can read and speak basic Dzongkha and about 55% of the population can read, write and speak basic Dzongkha. About 20% of the population can read, write and speak fluently. Only around 5% of the population can read, write and speak professionally.

After passing Middle Secondary School, only few takes Dzongkha as their elective subject in grade XI. Gyatso [4] found that approximately 95% of the school children take English or English related streams and only an insignificant 5% takes Dzongkha as their main mode of study after the tenth grade. Thinley [3] made it clear that students do not take interest in Dzongkha subject thinking that the knowledge that they receive from Dzongkha is traditional and old fashioned. Further, Phuntsho [1] and Tenzin [20] state that despite the government's effort to improve Dzongkha being the national language, there are still lots of work to do.

Likewise, the researcher's over three years' experience of teaching class IX and X students, it was noticed that students face difficulty in reading and writing in Dzongkha. The majority of the students make grammatical and spelling mistakes. In general, students lack ability especially in writing in Dzongkha. Among the four skills in Dzongkha language, application of Dzongkha in its written form is the most difficult part. The finding of Namgyel [14] reveals that in terms of writing, calligraphy and spelling, Dzongkha has been the focus of attention. He also mentions that, when it comes to reading and writing, students prefer English the most. Thereby, especially in terms of writing, after studying Dzongkha for about eleven to twelve years in schools, majority of the students make mistakes.

A survey conducted by Namgay [14] shows that in schools, students prefer to read and write in English than Dzongkha, for instance, when

reading official notices and circulars, writing official reports, articles, and magazine and leave application. Further, Namgyel found that students' written use of English and Dzongkha languages across the domains of writing to parents, writing to friends, writing prayers, writing articles for school magazines, writing leave application, writing shopping list, keeping personal diary, composing songs and poems reflect English as the preferred language for writing.

The aforementioned points are further supported by some research conducted in the past, 'A Study of the Teaching and Learning of Dzongkha in Schools' (Education Division, 1999b as cited in [14] which had involved parents, teachers and students as participants. The study focused on the classroom and curriculum. In general, the competence in all the four language skills was found to be a weak, reading and writing were reported to be the least developed. Students' views received by Krashan [21] found that even in the educational settings there are situations where students practise writing as an end in itself. In other words, students rarely practice writing skills. To explore the Dzongkha writing difficulties, this study asked the following research questions.

#### **4. PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Dzongkha writing difficulties faced by the students in Dzongkha subject has become a growing concern. In fact, it is a matter of concern to any educational leader. Namgyel [14] too, recommended further research to answer the question, "What is it that makes reading and writing Dzongkha difficult?" Further, in general, "Public views and opinions on the quality of education are diverse. Together with public, civil servants in particular have highlighted the poor writing skills of school graduates" [22]. Hence, this study has three main purposes: 1. To find out the types of technical difficulties faced by high school students in writing in Dzongkha. 2. To find out the causes of writing difficulties, and 3. To explore the solutions to the writing problems.

#### **5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What kinds of technical difficulties do students face in writing in Dzongkha?  
What are the causes of writing difficulties?  
How can teachers help the students in writing in Dzongkha?

## 6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of both Dzongkha and English language curriculum is to develop students' competence in the appropriate and efficient use of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. They form essential skills for life situations (Education Division, 1996 as cited in [14] Tashi (2004) tells without competent writing skills, even scholars would appear incomplete.

This research aims to find out necessary measures for students to learn and improve writing skills in Dzongkha subject. This in turn will encourage students in choosing positive attitudes towards learning writing skills in Dzongkha and to safeguard the country's independence at large through national language identity. In brief, this study will be able to suggest some ways to solve the writing difficulties in Dzongkha. A considerable number of research respondents of Namgyel [14] expressed their concern that Dzongkha being the national language, the Bhutanese should learn not only to speak it but write it too.

## 7. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

### 7.1 The key Literature Findings

The purpose of this literature review was to find out the technical types of difficulties faced by high school students in writing in Dzongkha. Dorji [17] Namgyel [14], Gyatso [4] found that the application of Dzongkha in its written form is the most difficult part. In general, Gyeltshen [23], Pour-Mohammadi, Abidin and Fong (2012), and Jena [24] had stated that some common mistakes students make while writing in language subject are spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, structure of complete sentences and the paragraph structure. Similarly, Gonzalez, Chia-Yin and Sanchez' [25] study further revealed that Chinese second language learners make mistake in spelling, linguistic errors, logical sequencing of ideas and proper connection in paragraphing. In Bhutanese context, Namgyel [25] and Wangchuk [23] research findings revealed that, in terms of writing in Dzongkha, calligraphy and spelling has been the focus of attention.

Navsaria and Kathard [26] found that poor foundation in early reading and writing skills lead

to poor performance in writing. There are also several factors that impede writing skills: limited reading and writing opportunities, language barriers, limited training of teachers, and lack of resources in the school. Thinley [3] and Gyatso [4] and Rinzin and Sacco (n.d.) believed that Dzongkha subject alone cannot improve its writing skill especially in Bhutanese school curriculum. Phuntsho [1] and Gyatso [4] observed that one of the factors contributing to a relatively weak Dzongkha writing skill is perhaps the limited time devoted to the Dzongkha subject in the education curriculum. While, Navsaria et al. [26] said that student who does not get support from the teachers, parents, and school, faces unsafe home, and school environment can lead to poor performance in writing.

The researcher also explored for the solution to the writing problems. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2012) stated that teachers should be well prepared with the tactics of modelling students through writing process: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing to communicate thoughts and ideas. Simultaneously, to meet these goals, writers must be made skillful in coordinating their writing process to produce good writing product on the chosen topic. Further, Poindexter and Oliver (1998) said that the writing process can promote the effective writing in a second language. Peha [27] too, supports that process approach seems to be the most influential in tackling writing difficulties as per the past studies' findings. A good number of research studies related to the implementation of the process approach in teaching writing in different primary school classrooms in different parts of the world showed positive results of the effectiveness of process approach [28-31] Poindexter & Oliver, 1998). Similarly, one of the ways to tackle writing difficulties is through guided writing (Gibson, 2008).

Hyland [32] mentioned that despite increasing importance on oral response and the use of peers as sources of feedback, teacher written response continues to play a vital role in most L2 writing classes. Hyland and Hyland [33] found that students materialize to attend to their error corrections done by teachers and in most cases use them to make accurate changes in their texts. Thereby, both in the short term and over time students writing get improvement.

## 8. METHODOLOGY

### 8.1 Research Methods

Creswell [34-35] calls the three different types of research approaches as qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. The distinction between qualitative research and quantitative research is framed in terms of using words qualitative rather than numbers as in quantitative. Mixed methods research resides in between this continuum, because it incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Qualitative research approach applies inductive method through interviews, documents and observations to look for quality result findings. It is interpretive in nature to make sense and understand through inquiries like case studies and interviews [36]. Since, social constructivist holds qualitative characteristics the qualitative approach is anchored for this research.

Creswell [34-35] describes qualitative approach as the basic generation of meaning is arising in and out of interaction with a human community. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field as per the research problems or issues and as per the research topic.

This research approach uses empathy- the ability to place oneself in other's shoes or situation for understanding the problems, challenges, situation, emotions and feelings. In the qualitative research design, the researcher brings personal values into the study and collaborates with the participants [37]. Similarly, Creswell [34-35] states that:

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social or human problem. This approach honours an inductive style and focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation. (p. 4)

Based on the philosophical assumptions and the nature of topic under study, the researcher chose a qualitative approach for the present study.

### 8.2 Research Design

Constructivism manifests phenomenology in which individuals describe their experiences.

Phenomenological research attempts to understand people's perception or perspectives and understanding a particular situation, subject or a topic [36]. Meanwhile, researcher has little prior knowledge with regard to research topic, issue or problem which needs to be explored through others' views or perspectives and experiences.

Phenomenology research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants. Since constructivist manifests phenomenology and it is also one of the strategies of qualitative research, phenomenology is appropriate to be anchored as research design for this study.

### 8.3 Research Site

Bogdan and Biklen [38,36] address their proposal for research site selection with five questions as follow:

1. Why was the site chosen for the study?
2. What activities will occur at the site during the research study?
3. Will study be disruptive?
4. How will the results be reported?
5. What will the gatekeeper gain from the study?

The aforementioned questions guided the researcher for the research site selection. By following those five questions as the research site selection guide, the researcher chose one middle secondary school and two higher secondary schools under Trashigang cluster schools for the current study. These research sites were Middle Secondary School 1 (MSS1), Higher Secondary School 2 (HSS2) and Higher Secondary School 3 (HSS3). All these three schools fall under Trashigang dzongkhag, the eastern part of Bhutan.

Bearing in mind the limited time available for data collection, the researcher chose MSS1, HSS2 and HSS3 as the research sites for the current study. Since class X students were available in all the aforementioned schools, the researcher had adopted those schools the research sites.

At the mentioned research sites, the researcher conducted semi-structured interview for both teachers and students and went through students' notebooks and portfolios. The researcher took permission from the concerned

principals and had to look at their convenience.

### 8.4 Participants Sampling

Purposive sampling is known as non-probability sampling or qualitative sampling [39]. The purposive sampling falls under qualitative research method. A purposive sampling procedure was followed to ensure specific characteristics of individuals [34-35]. The nature of the research topic under study demands purposive sampling techniques which indeed fall directly under qualitative research method. Purposive sampling techniques involve “selecting certain units or cases based on the specific purpose rather than randomly” [39].

Namgay [14] recommended the future researchers to carry out the study on the topic ‘What makes reading and writing in Dzongkha difficult for students. Accordingly, the current researcher chose class X students as researcher’s participants to get their views on this topic. One of the reasons for choosing class X students as participants was to test their abilities and experiences in writing in Dzongkha. After receiving formal education for minimum of eleven years in school, class X students will know at least what are the difficulties or challenges in every subject and will be able to respond respectively. Class X students are also considered to be the appropriate respondents to understand the interview questions and respond accordingly. Hence, in this study, the researcher selected class X students as the focused respondents.

Other participant sampling includes each teacher from HSS2 and HSS3 and four teachers from MSS1. The researcher had selected teacher participants teaching Dzongkha subject and having difference(s) in number of years in teaching profession. This is to explore their perspective and to gain general understanding of their observations and experiences about students’ technical difficulties in writing in

Dzongkha, the causes of writing difficulties and also to gain solution(s) for the writing problems or difficulties. Since there are only three secondary schools under the Trashigang cluster, the researcher included all three secondary schools for the study.

Based on the current research approach, the researcher employed the purposive sampling.

The details of participants sampling for semi-structured interview is presented in the following Table: 1.

### 8.5 Data Collection Tools

A combination of interview method and document data method were used simultaneously in this study to gather rich and substantial amount of relevant data or reliable information. From which, the researcher can validate the data through triangulation of these two tools. Therefore, the researcher had employed interview and document data for this study.

The researcher designed 12 questions for the student participants and 15 for the teacher participants by using the following guiding principles.

The researcher framed the questions for interviewing the teachers on the following themes.

- i. Seek the teachers’ observations on Dzongkha writing difficulties faced by the students
- ii. Seek the opinions of teachers on Dzongkha curriculum.
- iii. Find out the difficulties faced by the teachers while teaching Dzongkha writing
- iv. Find out various strategies used by the teachers in teaching Dzongkha writing
- v. Find out the causes of writing difficulties
- vi. Seek the probable solutions

**Table 1. Details of participants sampling for semi-structured interview**

| Participants | Class X students |        | Dzongkha teacher |        | Total |
|--------------|------------------|--------|------------------|--------|-------|
|              | Male             | Female | Male             | Female |       |
| MSS1         | 3                | 3      | 3                | 1      | 10    |
| HSS2         | 1                | 1      | 1                | Nil    | 3     |
| HSS3         | 1                | 1      | 1                | Nil    | 3     |
| Total        | 5                | 5      | 5                | 1      | 16    |

### 8.5.1 Interview

The researcher chose semi-structured interview knowing that sometime the researcher has to restructure the questions based on the understanding of the participants. The researcher chose open-ended questions in order to let the respondents share what they wanted to share in an explicitly manner. Patton (1990, as cited in best and Kahn, 2007) justified that the main reason or the essence of an interview is to study what is in or on someone else's mind. Similarly, the reason for choosing a face-to-face interview is to collect valid and first hand information from the respondents. Face to face interview is useful when participants cannot be directly observed. In line with this, the researcher conducted two rounds of face to face interview with the ten selected students and six selected teachers of MSS1, HSS2 and HSS3. The researcher spent about two hours with each participant while conducting the interview

The guiding principles for designing questions for the interview for the students were:

- i. Types of writing difficulties faced by the students in Dzongkha
- ii. Causes of writing difficulties in Dzongkha
- iii. Probable solutions

### 8.5.2 Document data

Researcher relied on students' note books and portfolios and derived necessary meanings for the study. The researcher used interviews and documents data to triangulate the data, and to produce valid and reliable research findings [34-35]. The main data-generation tools used in this study were camera, cell phone and laptop. Advances in electronics have made such equipment affordable and user friendly for most people (Pole & Morrison, 2003, as cited in Wangmo, 2014).

### 8.6 Data Collection Procedures

For data collection, researcher visited the identified schools and selected the right participants. The participants were selected on the voluntary basis. The interview venue for both the teachers and students were in the school campus based on the participants' convenience and choice. The researcher administered the interview for all the selected participants (teachers and students) and went through their (students') documents (note books / portfolios)

based on research questions, purposes, objectives and topic.

### 8.7 Data Analysis

To carry out the analysis of the data, the researcher listened carefully to the data recorded in the audio tape, listened again and again till the researcher got the true meaning of the participants' view(s), put those information into words, coded the striking points or information, transcribe it in a meaningful way by keeping in line with the participants perspectives, critically analyzed the transcription and verified the analysis to produce thick rich data description (reliable research findings) and present it in the form of a book. In brief, six generic steps as proposed by Creswell [37] to do data analysis were followed. Creswell's [37] six generic steps are:

Step I. The data was transcribed and organized for analysis after reading all of them.

Step II. Striking information was identified and marked.

Step III. The data were put into categories.

Step IV. Descriptions were generated.

Step V. Presentation and Discussion.

Step VI. Data were interpreted and findings drawn.

The data gathered informed the subsequent analysis, findings and interpretations of the inquiry. Moreover, having interview recordings constantly available for playback and analysis is a good crosscheck for anything missed or misinterpreted. Similarly having document data represents written evidence data. It saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing. This in turn will help the researcher to triangulate the data to produce valid, reliable and true research findings [34-35].

## 9. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In this study the problem identified is the kinds of technical difficulties that students encounter in writing in Dzongkha. The researcher worked hard to earn the faith, trust and confidence of the audience by providing accurate information or findings of the study. In order to get the required amount of information and in-depth understanding of the topic under study, the researcher had visited the research site personally and spent much time in the field by interacting with the respondents. The researcher

had created conducive forum for discussions and sharing of experiences by allowing participants to speak, and at the same time conducted interview in line with the research questions. The researcher had gone through the students' note books and portfolios in detail and derived meanings out of it. Creswell [34-35] asserts that the more experience that a researcher has with the respondents in their normal setting, the more accurate will be the research findings.

The researcher triangulated the results of the interview and document data analysis, and tried to compare and contrast to validate the research findings. This in turn made the research findings more valid and reliable.

The researcher had requested two research experts and two friends who were well versed about research to do proof reading and provide feedback on the researcher's write up. This was done in order to enhance the overall validity of the qualitative study. Creswell [34-35] clearly mentioned the peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the research findings. All in all, the researcher had provided clear, accurate, and rich thick data description of the study. Creswell [34-35] emphasizes to use rich thick description to convey the research findings.

## **10. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **10.1 Types of Technical Difficulties Faced by High School Students in Writing in Dzongkha**

Writing difficulties experienced by the student respondents and observed by the teacher respondents were the usage of correct spelling, grammar, vocabulary, word structure, sentence structure, paragraph structure, pronunciation related spelling, expression, and handwriting. Majority of the writing difficulties mentioned above were also detected in students' document data.

This research has shown that students face difficulties in constructing proper sentences and paragraph structures due to numerous factors such as grammatical mistakes, longer writing time and several rules and restrictions regarding word formation and pronunciation.

In Dzongkha, pronunciation is a serious problem for majority of the students which can be broadly categorized into three areas, namely the

variation in pronunciation from spelling, mismatch between spoken and written language due to root words, prefixes and suffixes, and confusing homophones (Dzongkha has many different words of similar sound, unless studied carefully; it is difficult to differentiate different words of similar sound). These three types of pronunciation problems have led to writing difficulties. That is why Dzongkha spellings have been a major problem and confusing to many learners.

### **10.2 The Causes of Writing Difficulties or Hindrances to Writing in Dzongkha**

The causes of writing difficulties in Dzongkha were the poor foundation of Dzongkha writing and reading skills, low prestige or status of Dzongkha language/subject, time constraint, pronunciation related problems, limited resource facility and professional support for the Dzongkha teachers, limited career scope for Dzongkha background students and poor reading habit [40-43]. It was also due to lack of additional Dzongkha medium based subject, inadequate modern ways of teaching learning strategies, and also because of minimal or lack of parents' support, and less personal interest and perseverance to learn and write in Dzongkha by students themselves.

The research participants revealed that there is failure from curriculum itself of having no other subject to be studied in Dzongkha other than the Dzongkha subject itself. The nominal attention given to Dzongkha subject in the education curriculum contributes to the difficulty in reading and writing in Dzongkha.

This study found that reading materials and other resources for Dzongkha subject is very minimal. If we visit any school library, we would see the plight of limited library books in the Dzongkha language. Online resources in Dzongkha are almost non-existent. The lack of resources could also be a reason why students do not prefer to read Dzongkha books and their reading habit is very poor.

Going by the present trend and as rightly felt by many people and research respondents in particular, the people with Dzongkha background have very less career scope and job opportunity. Therefore, many Bhutanese parents do not support their children to focus in learning Dzongkha subject by looking at the future scope they see in reality. In such a situation, students

devote less time and interest in studying Dzongkha and side by side, writing in Dzongkha is affected too. To this, Gyatso [4] thinks that the bulk of the burden of difficulty could be mitigated and outweighed if tremendous scope and opportunities are attached to it.

### **10.3 The Solutions to the Writing Problems or Strategies to Improve Writing in Dzongkha**

To give emphasis on Dzongkha subject, writing skill, handwriting practice and provide additional Dzongkha medium based subjects. To give adequate time for Dzongkha subject, practice of grammar learning, writing imposition, maintain reading and writing portfolios to enhance genres writing, teaching the clear meaning and concept of different words and terminologies having same pronunciation. Upscale teacher preparedness, modern method based learning activities, utilization of necessary resources and facilities. Adequate teacher written response/feedback, practices of individual, pair and group assessments needed to be emphasized and implemented. All in all, collective responsibility to help students and morale duty of students themselves to take self-initiative to learn writing in Dzongkha has to be initiated.

Many studies' findings revealed the ways that the feedback delivered through the dialogue between a teacher and a student can facilitate the student writer to develop both his/her text and writing abilities [44]. Hyland and Hyland [33] research finding revealed that feedback has long been regarded as essential for the development of L2 writing skills, both for its potential for learning and for student motivation. This significance has also been recognized by those working in the field of L2 writing. Feedback on a draft is likely to serve more immediate pedagogical goals than that given to a final product. Formative assessment is one of the best techniques to improve students writing skills.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Royal Education Counsel (REC) and the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC) must use the skills and expertise of Dzongkha experts to have abundant resources and materials both in online and print form. Thinley [3] recommends a vast amount of literature, much of it is in the classical language or Choke needs to be translated into Dzongkha. Oral literature needs to be written down, printed, and

distributed to enhance reading and writing. This in turn will allow children to get easy access and opportunities to learn Dzongkha skills with interest.

For effective learning, children must be actively involved in the learning process. Numerous activities can be designed by Dzongkha teachers to arouse children's interest in writing as well as other strands. Student and teacher respondents believed that additional activities conducted in school in Dzongkha helped to improve the Dzongkha language skills. Therefore, schools need to develop students' interest in writing by introducing writing culture outside the classroom by organizing writing activity based literary activities.

Parents' support plays a vital role in students' academic performance, especially in writing. Navsaria and Kathard [26] found that teachers have observed the learners who received support from their parents improved academic achievement at school, and conversely, a lack of support from home had a negative effect on learners' written language skills and overall academic performance.

To achieve the goal of process writing, to provide required amount of writing activities regularly as per the level of students' grade is deemed necessary. Aydin's (2010) research confirms that portfolio keeping might be a way to overcome poor writing instruction during teaching leaning process. Portfolio encourages student in writing by using new words and information. Similarly, Nezakatgoo [45] too, supports that portfolio assessment provides a greater degree of student empowerment as students are to continually improve previously written papers and select their best papers for final grading: a significant correlation occurred between the portfolio method of writing and assessment (portfolio-based instruction and evaluation) and their final examination scores.

In all the three sample schools, pair assessment was conducted. Sometimes, spelling dictation, multiple choice questions-answers and short questions-answers corrections can be done in pair or group. It improves the capability of peer reviewers to assess their own work by providing a sense of listeners and a checklist of evaluative questions to apply to their own writing [46]. Since student reviewers perceive that other student experience the same difficulties in writing that they do, peer feedback may also lead to a

decline in writer fear and help them to build up their independence and self-confidence as writers [47,34]. Mutual peer scaffolding is an option where help can go in both directions and both parties are helping to extend each other's writing competence (Ohta, 1995; Lim & Jacobs, 2001, in [33]. In addition, Barbeiro (2011) research finding states that peer review increases pupils' awareness of audience and develop learners' analytical and critical reading and writing skills. It also makes teacher's work easier, saves time, and such assessment strategy is deemed necessary for any subject as per the 21st Transformative Pedagogy.

## **11. RECOMMENDATION**

### **11.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education (MoE)**

Since MoE is the main stakeholder in this regard, the ministry needs to play a leading role in uplifting the standard of Dzongkha in the country. The foremost thing it needs to do is provide adequate time for Dzongkha subject by allocating separate period for literature and language in Dzongkha. It also needs to work closely with other agencies such as the Royal Education Council (REC) and work towards introduction of teaching of other subjects in Dzongkha. Workbooks for handwriting practice needs to be developed for pre-primary level to class VI as per the level of grades, and separate textbooks for grammar above class IV are very much required to learn grammar in detailed and precisely.

The MoE, the Dzongkhag Education Sector (DES) and schools need to provide necessary facilities like LCD projector, computer laboratory with internet connectivity to make learning of Dzongkha meaningful and fun. The MoE in close consultation and collaboration with relevant agencies like the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC), REC, the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC) and other ministries, must also work towards motivating students and teachers with Dzongkha background by creating job or career opportunities, and in particular providing workshops (NBIP, DBIP, CBIP, SBIP), trainings and seminar opportunities to the teachers. Another area of concern is the lack of the usage of Dzongkha in all the official correspondences, which needs to be implemented as per the mandate of the policy by the Royal Government

of Bhutan (RGoB), the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MoHCA), DDC and other relevant stakeholders.

### **11.2 Recommendations to the Dzongkha Development Commission**

One of the reasons for the low standard of Dzongkha is lack of adequate resources. Therefore, DDC, in collaboration with relevant agencies such as MoE and REC, needs to develop adequate resources in Dzongkha, such as publication of books, articles, novels and magazines in Dzongkha or introduce more Bhutanese literature in Dzongkha both in print and online.

### **11.3 Recommendations to the Teachers**

Teachers are directly responsible towards the standard and quality of Dzongkha in the country as they are the ones who deal with students. Teachers need to build adequate foundations in reading and writing skills by developing reading and writing habits right from the lower grades and small age. This must be achieved by implementing child-centered teaching strategy, making teaching and learning of Dzongkha relevant, challenging and interesting as per the need of students. To make the teaching/learning effective, teachers must make or improvise and use relevant teaching/learning materials in Dzongkha lessons. In addition, Dzongkha teachers need to conduct more Dzongkha literary activities in schools for the development of the Dzongkha language skills.

Process writing is an effective strategy for developing writing skills. However, due to numerous reasons, not many teachers, including Dzongkha teachers, use this strategy. Therefore, it is recommended that the process writing in Dzongkha subject right from class IV and above be instituted and used effectively by teachers with strict monitoring by Education Monitoring Support Services Division (EMSSD), DES and school administration. The frequency of students' note book checking should also be improved or increased by the concerned subject teachers. Teacher written response (written feedback) needs to be emphasized and implemented.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

With the advent of modern education in Bhutan, the national language, Dzongkha has been

accorded the top priority. It continues to enjoy the major subject status in the national curriculum. To fulfill the aspirations of this national language, it is taught in all the schools across the country. However, for any language to be taught effectively, the four strands: reading, writing, listening, and speaking must be developed within the curriculum framework of that subject. Dzongkha is no exception. Though the language is faring well, especially, in terms of speaking, writing difficulties faced by the students in Dzongkha subject has become a growing concern in the country in the recent years. In fact, it is a matter of concern to any educational leader.

As with any language, application of Dzongkha in its written form was found to be the most difficult part among the four language skills as per the findings of this study. Writing is the most difficult skill because it requires the writers to have a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as principles of organization in second language (L2) to produce a good writing. For instance, O'Toole [48] considered writing to be the "highest and most complex form of human communication" (p. 9). Furthermore, it is considered to be the most complex because it is said to develop after one's ability to speak and read as a by-product of these abilities. This is also because for many Bhutanese students, Dzongkha is their second language as is English for us. Compared to English, students found writing in Dzongkha much difficult.

The researcher gave importance to Dzongkha subject and did research on the topic 'Dzongkha writing difficulties faced by high school students' because, it is indeed, considered to be more than a plain subject or a means of communication. It indeed makes students to think and imagine beyond the material world of this present generation. Therefore, like any other subjects, Dzongkha subject too needs recognition, status and application or Dzongkha needs to be treated at par with other subjects at least within the land of its origin. If the relevant stake holders, agencies and the general public at large could give importance and more importantly take necessary measures to study Dzongkha, students' learning interest towards Dzongkha-the most pious language of Bhutanese will be definitely developed and learning will take place in reality.

## **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

Research ethics means the moral principles of the researcher. It also means the professional code of conduct that the researcher holds while conducting research. In other words, abiding by the rules of what to do and what not to do makes the researcher ethical. Encarta Encyclopedia Standard (2004) defines ethic as principles or standard of human conduct. Punch [37] cautions that the ethical issues must be considered while discussing about codes of professional conduct for the researchers and in commentaries about ethical dilemmas and their potential solutions. The finding(s) of the research should not be untrue.

Researcher never abused the power towards the research participants, colleagues and students at his school and in the research fields for the purpose of his research to get it done. Bogdam and Biklen [38] state that "the principles of right and wrong that a particular group accepts at a particular time". British Sociological Association [19-50] lays down ethical principles for a social researcher to observe before, during and after research. They are professional integrity, good relations with participants, covert research, and anonymity. As a summary, right from selecting of a research topic till the research is produced in form of written text or during the entire course of the research, the researcher performed the duty in accordance with the research ethics.

## **CONSENT**

Anonymity of the participants should be maintained and their roles in the research should remain confidential.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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