

BASICS OF HANDWRITING:
A GUIDE BOOK FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS
ON
THE TEACHING OF HANDWRITING

DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
NONGPOH, RI-BHOI DISTRICT
2014

DIET NONGPOH

FOREWORD

Teaching of handwriting is one of the basic tasks in the teaching of language in the early stages of the child's schooling years. This task demands proper knowledge and understanding on the part of the elementary school teachers who handle the students every day. In this regard the teacher needs to have a deeper understanding of the mechanics of handwriting as well as the psychological and pedagogical implications involved in the writing task that takes place at the different stages of the teaching-learning process.

Due to the non-availability of any kind of help book in this area of teaching, some years back, the District Institute of Education and Training has developed the hand-book in Khasi entitled –'Ki Nongrim Hikai Thoh Dak'. This hand-book has been developed with the intention that it will serve as some kind of a guide book to provide the teachers with some basic knowledge about handwriting and its role in the development of the personality of the child. Few copies of the same have been printed and distributed to most of the vernacular L. P. School teachers in the District. However, not enough copies were available then, and so there were many school teachers who did not receive copies of this material to be used in their respective schools. Again, since the hand-book has been written in Khasi, so only teachers teaching in vernacular schools could have copies and those teaching in other schools where Khasi is not the medium of instruction at the Lower Primary Stage were deprived of the opportunity to do so.

Therefore, in an attempt to have a wider coverage in the use of this hand-book for the benefit of the teachers especially with the implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, this year the institute has come up with the publication of the English edition of the same so that it could be distributed to those teachers teaching in the elementary English medium schools as well as in other schools where Khasi is not the medium of instruction.

It is therefore hoped that this attempt will help improve the capacity of teachers in our elementary schools in the District in this particular area of teaching. And as a consequence, it is also expected that this will go a long way in improving the quality of teaching and learning in our elementary schools in general.

Training

Principal
*District Institute of Education and
Ri-Bhoi District, Nongpoh*

PREFACE

Proper knowledge and understanding of language is the basic necessity for any student in order to be able to comprehend the idea while studying various other subjects. Proper knowledge and understanding of any language in turn demands the ability to master the skills of reading and writing. It is for this reason that any student is expected to master the art of writing especially when it concerns the student's own personal view that he wants to convey to the reader.

The ability to write a clear and legible handwriting attracts the reader. Clean, clear and beautiful handwriting in one way can also have a positive impact on any one who is the paper examiner or the evaluator. There is also the possibility that it may even affect the grading or marking especially when it comes to essay type answers. This is because good handwriting makes it easier for the examiner to go through the answers written by the student.

Our primary schools always serve as the base or the sub-structure for the young children when it comes to the art of writing. For this reason, teachers in these schools should take the responsibility to teach handwriting to the students in the most effective manner. When students are given proper foundation in the lower classes, it will be easier for them when they progress to the higher grades. But if it happens otherwise it will not only hinder their progress as students but it will also be a stumbling block to the teachers teaching them in these higher classes.

Till date, apart from the practical work-book on 'Cursive writing' which is included in the syllabus for primary students, there is no other guide book for the teachers on the teaching of handwriting. It is for this reason that the District Institute of Education and Training, Nongpoh, Ri-Bhoi District, has taken the initiative to publish a hand-book in this particular area of the school syllabus.

This hand-book has been developed to serve as a kind of a help book for the teachers. Attempt has also been made in this hand-book to give an idea to the teachers on the role of handwriting in shaping the personality of the child from his very young age and at the same time as to what teachers can do to help the students develop better personality through handwriting.

In the development of this hand-book we do not claim that it has been designed to be exhaustive and complete in everything but that it is just an attempt to help the teachers to have an insight into what handwriting is and how should it be handled by them. We also know that there is still much room for improving this hand-book. So suggestions, if they are there, are very much welcomed.

Shri.O.Rapsang (Writer)

CONTENT

<i>Foreword</i>		
<i>Preface</i>		
		Page
Chapter 1	: Introduction	5
Chapter 2	: History of the development of the alphabet in the Khasi Language	
6-10		
Chapter 3	: Prevailing understanding on the teaching of handwriting	
11-12		
Chapter 4	: Terms that are used in handwriting	
13-23		
Chapter 5	: The types of script to be used in handwriting	
24-25		
Chapter 6	: The use of the right or the left hand while writing	
26-27		
Chapter 7	: How are the letters shaped?	28-30
Chapter 8	: Letter shapes according to the level of difficulty	
31-32		
Chapter 9	: Stages to be followed in the teaching of handwriting	
33-37		
Chapter 10	: Evaluation of handwriting	38-39
Chapter 11	: Conclusion	40

CHAPTER: I

Introduction

We all know that teaching of handwriting is one of the most important aspects in Language Teaching which needs to be given more emphasis especially in the early schooling years of the child. However, from the students' handwriting observed during the conduct of the National Achievement Survey in recent years in the District, it can be concluded that in most of the elementary schools no proper attention has been given by the teachers while handling it.

One of the reasons that this is happening could be that the teachers teach the students in the very same way they themselves have been taught by their own teachers while they were studying in their schools during their early schooling years.

Another reason could be that the teachers themselves do not understand the hand-in-hand relationship between our handwriting and the personality that we have. Most of us are not aware of the fact that if a teacher is strict and makes sure that the student's handwriting is good, he or she is indeed helping to develop better personality traits in that particular student.

The importance of handwriting is being given great importance in developed countries, where Graphology is being used as a tool to evaluate the personality of any job aspirant or in arriving at correct judgment during court trials. Again, studies have shown that the personality of any person is always revealed by the features of his handwriting. And that if such a person is determined to improve his handwriting, he can also improve his own character and personality.

As a teacher educator of Lower Primary and Upper Primary school teachers for more than two decades, it has been found out that most of the teachers and students are not particular about their own handwriting. Most of them do not take care to ensure that their handwriting is clear and

legible and that a regular slant is maintained while writing. It has also been found that not enough time has been spent either by the teachers or by the students alike in teaching and learning to write a good hand. This has resulted in the development of poor handwriting in the students. And this could also be one of the main reasons that students are not able to perform well in their studies and that they had to struggle while studying in the higher classes.

These findings have made us realise and think that it is high time for us to do something on this matter, so that we can help the students studying in the lower classes in the whole of the District improve their handwriting which in the long run will also help improve their personality and consequently lead to the improvement of their performance in studies.

CHAPTER: II

History of the Development of the Alphabet in the Khasi Language

As teachers, there is the possibility that many times we are not aware as to how it came to happen for us to have 23 letters of the alphabet in our Khasi language. And that in most occasions, our knowledge of the existence of the 23 letters of the alphabet is based on what our teachers have taught us during our early schooling years when we were made to write the letters in Khasi like A, B, K, D up to Y. And from these experiences we have learnt to accept that we have only 23 letters of the alphabet. Again, most of the time, it never comes into our mind to think as to why do we have the letter 'g' in the alphabet, but practically it has never been used as an individual letter in writing the spelling of any word except when written together with 'n' to form the letter 'ng'. Moreover, many times, it has been observed that almost everyone who writes in Khasi is not particular about using the two i-dots for the letter 'i' and instead uses the letter 'i' in place of the letter 'i' in many words. And not only this, but we also regularly fail to practice to place the symbol '~' on top of the letter 'n' in order to form the shape of the letter 'ñ'.

In this chapter therefore, it is being felt that there is the need to write something on the history of the Khasi alphabet, so that our Primary School teachers are given the opportunity to understand some of these basic facts and help them clarify some of the doubts that might have crossed their minds regarding their understanding of the alphabet of our own language.

Due to the lack of available resource materials published in the 19th Century, it is not an easy task to write the history of the alphabet in Khasi. And what has been written here is based only on some sources of information that are accessible to the writer. Thus this write-up on the development of the alphabet in the Khasi language is not an exhaustive one but that it is just an attempt by the writer to give some idea on the history of this development for the benefit of the teachers in our

elementary schools.

As the Khasi community, we do not have any idea if we already had our own alphabet in the remote past. But it would be worth mentioning here that the Khasi word 'thoh' has been derived from the Austric word 'katho' which in English means 'scribble'. This word therefore suggests that there is the possibility that our people must have had some idea of writing in ancient times.

'Puthi' is another word that is thought provoking and makes us wonder whether we had any knowledge about writing before the missionaries came into our hills. 'Puthi' is a kind of a manuscript which was used by the Ahom kings who ruled Assam from 1228 A.D to 1825 A.D. This manuscript was written on the bark of the agar wood or aloe wood. The use of this word 'puthi' by the Khasis implies that they must have learnt of its use as a store house of knowledge. Again, the use of 'ka pule - ka puthi' rhetorically in sentences appears to suggest that the Khasi people must have also learnt how to read it. However, till date, we do not have any evidences to prove that the Khasi people have really used it as a kind of a book for writing or reading.

However it was until the beginning of the nineteenth century when an attempt has been made by the Christian missionaries from Serampore to translate the Bible into Khasi using the Bengalee Script that the process of writing our language using a particular script began. For this reason, when it comes to the history of the development of the alphabet in Khasi language we had to begin from those years when the Christian missionaries set foot in Khasi Hills and started the translation of the Bible into our own language.

Following is the development of the alphabet in Khasi language from the year 1813 till 1899:

1813 - It was in this year that the Christian mission from Serampore in West Bengal started its missionary work at Pandua, a village which is located at the foot-hills of the Khasi Hills (We can locate this village on page 10 of the book entitled, 'The Coinage of Jaintiapur', written by N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose in the year 2010). However, in this year no attempt has been made by this mission to translate the Bible into the Khasi language. So there was no piece of writing in our language in this year and consequently no particular script came to be used in writing our language.

1824- In this year, the Serampore mission translated the New Testament of the Bible into the Khasi language and in doing so it has adopted the Bengalee Script. Thus with the beginning of this translation, the process of writing Khasi language using a particular script also began. This also means that this is the year in which writing in our language started. Till date, some portions of these translations in Khasi using Bengalee script can be found in the book, 'An Introduction to the Khasia Language' written by Rev. William Pryse.

1838 - During this year the missionary work in Pandua started by the Serampore Mission in the year 1813 came to an end. And with this, the process of writing Khasi language in Bengalee script also came to an end and from then on no more attempts have been made to use Bengalee script in writing Khasi language.

1841 – It was in this year that Rev. Thomas Jones I of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church from Wales arrived in Khasi Hills to preach the gospel. However, in this year there was no attempt by him to translate certain parts of the Bible into the Khasi language. So in this year the process of putting Khasi language in the written form using Roman script has yet to take place.

1842 - The use of the Roman script in writing Khasi language was started by Rev. Thomas Jones I in this year. In the book, 'An Introduction to the Khasia Language' written by Rev. William Pryse and published in the year 1855, we can find some pieces of translations of Thomas Jones I in the Khasi language, which he has written in the years 1842, 1845 and 1846. While going through these pieces of translations, it has been found out that in translating some parts of the Bible into the Khasi language in the year 1842, he has used 20 letters of the alphabet and these are: a, b, c, d, e, g, h, i, j, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, w and y. On further analysis it has also been found out that these letters have been used by him in the following manner:

- He used the letter 'c' in place of the letter 'k' in those Khasi words where currently 'k' is being used in the spelling. For example, he spelled 'ci' in place of the spelling 'ki', and this could possibly be because of the fact that there is no letter 'k' in the Welsh language, which is his mother tongue.
- He also used 'oo' instead of using the letter 'u'. For example, he spelled 'boorum' (respect) instead of 'burom'.
- Instead of the letter 'i', he used the letter 'i'. For example: He spelled the word 'ialam' as 'ialam'.
- The way he used the letters 'ng' is similar to the way the English people used these two letters together at the end of certain words, like, 'sing' or 'bring'. This indicates that he did not intend to use 'ng' as an individual letter as we do now.

1846 – From the works of Rev. Thomas Jones I, which are found in the book by Rev William Pryse, mentioned earlier we can find that in this year there was an attempt by him to make some changes in the proper use of certain letters in writing Khasi. Therefore we can see that in this year, he has replaced the letter 'c' used in 1842 translations with the letter 'k'. He however continued to use the letter 'i' instead of 'i'. Again, it would be interesting to note that from his writings we can conclude that he could understand the existence of the sound for the letter 'i' in the language and this made him spell the word 'iing' as 'iing'. He also continued to use the letter 'n' instead of the letter 'ñ'. Therefore, until the year 1846, we still have only 20 letters of the Khasi alphabet as it was in the year 1842.

1848 – From the pieces of translations of the Bible into the Khasi language by Rev. W. Lewis in

the year 1948, which are found in the same book written by Rev. William Pryse, we can find out that till this year we still have only 20 letters of the alphabet, as in 1846. In these translations we can also see that Rev. Lewis used the letter 'g' individually in spelling the word 'gydda' as the translation for the word 'donkey' in English which in modern times would have been spelled as 'kada' which actually is a borrowed word belonging to the Indo-Aryan group of languages.

1850 – From the pieces of translations that are available in this year, we can arrive at the conclusion that in this year also we still have the same number of the letters of the alphabet as it was in the year 1848. But one important finding that needs mentioning is that, from these translations we could understand that the translator realized that in Khasi language we do have a speech sound which linguistically we would call it a 'glottal', where we produce it by contracting the glottis of our voice box which is situated at the top most part of the wind pipe. Thus in these translations our present Khasi word 'lyer' has been spelled as 'ly-er'. Placing a hyphen in between 'ly' and 'er' indicates that the translator must have realized that there is some kind of a slight pause in between the syllables, which is in fact the process of momentary closure of the glottis.

1854 – In the book entitled 'ON THE GEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF PART OF THE KHASI HILLS', by Thomas Oldham which was published in the year 1854, and which was re-published in the year 1984 under the title 'GEOLOGY METEOROLOGY AND ETNOLOGY OF MEGHALAYA', we can clearly see that the author, while trying to write something on the Khasi language preferred to use the Roman script. And in doing so, in the front pages of the book, he has made an effort to give a separate list of the letters of the alphabet in Khasi which altogether comprised of 20 letters. In this list the consonants were b, d, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t and the vowels were a, e, i, o, u, w and y. Therefore, we find that until this year we still have 20 letters of the alphabet in Khasi.

1855 – Rev. William Pryse, in his book mentioned in the previous paragraphs, has written the list of Capital and Small letters in Khasi in the front pages of this book. The number of letters in this list was very much the same as it was in the year 1854, that is the number of letters was still 20. However, on reading the chapter 'A Vocabulary in Khasia and English' which was placed towards the end of the book, we can find out that the writer realized that the letter 'ng' has a certain ring to it when pronounced, although he did not invent any individual letter or symbol for it and continued to use the letter 'ng' as we do now. Eventually, in this particular chapter he has given some Khasi words starting with this letter just like in the dictionary.

1891 – Because of the difficulty in retrieving the books written during the period from 1856 to 1890, we are being compelled to skip some of the developments, if any, that took place in the history of the alphabet during these years and straight away to go to the books written in the year 1891 which are accessible to the writer.

In the book entitled, 'A Grammar of the Khasi language', written by Hugh Roberts and published in the same year, we can find the list of the letters of the Khasi alphabet in the early chapters of this book. In this list, there were 21 letters and these were similar to the letters we use now, except for 'ĩ' and 'ñ'. We can also find out that although the author used the letter 'i' for 'ĩ', in words that are

supposed to be pronounced with the letter 'i', he was however aware that they were supposed to be pronounced differently. Thus at the end of the words he explained that the way 'i' was to be pronounced in certain words like 'iaid', 'iap' and 'iuh' would be the same as the pronunciation of the letter 'y' of the English alphabet in the word 'yard'.

1895 – In this year, C.L. Stephens published his book 'Khasi Primer'. And in this book we can find out that the number of letters was still 21, as in the year 1891.

1896 – In the month of March of this particular year, Mr. Hormu Rai Diengdoh, (a prominent Khasi leader during this period who was always concerned about the welfare of our tribe) through a particular vernacular newspaper suggested that the letters 'ĩ' and 'ñ' should have been included in the list of the letters of the Khasi alphabet. The same suggestion was also made by Mr. R.S. Berry (another prominent Khasi leader of the same period) through the newspaper published in the month of May of the same year.

1899 – It was in the month of April of this year, that Mr. Jeebon Roy Mairom published the Khasi Primer entitled 'Ka Kot Pule Khasi Nyngkong' in the Khasi language. In this book, he had included 'ĩ' and 'ñ' as the letters of the Khasi alphabet. Thus from this year onwards the total number of letters of the alphabet in the Khasi language was 23. And till date these 23 letters are being accepted by the Khasi people as the letters of the alphabet to be used in writing our language.

Other areas of concern:

1. 'g' is one of the letters of the alphabet in Khasi language, but presently we do not use it individually in the spelling of any word either at the beginning or in the middle or at the end of any word. The reason for this, is because, in Khasi language we do not have any speech sound that can be represented by this letter which as a phoneme it would be a 'voiced velar'. However, it had been first used by those Christian missionaries who adopted the Roman Script in translation. As the letter, it has been used in the spelling of those borrowed words belonging to the Indo-Aryan group of languages which we do not have in Khasi language like the word 'gydda' and later on 'gadda' meaning 'a donkey' in English.
2. We do not usually write the two i-dots to make the shape of the letter 'ĩ' or put the symbol '~' on top of 'n' to get the shape of the letter 'ñ' because the type writers during those days and even till date were not designed to contain these kind of letters in them. This is the reason why these letters do not usually have a place in any vernacular books especially in the school vernacular text books and thus the people are not given the opportunity to use them regularly.

Thus in concluding this chapter, we hope that what was written here about how we came to use the Roman Script in the Khasi language, will help us as teachers understand how we finally arrived at the use of 23 letters in the Khasi alphabet, and also understand why we do not regularly use the proper shapes of the letters 'ĩ' and 'ñ' in writing.

DIET NONGPOH

CHAPTER: III

Prevailing Understanding on the Teaching of Handwriting

There is the possibility that most of us are not very clear about what teaching of handwriting is all about. Many of us may still think that whatever that has been learnt by us as students during our school days must have given us sufficient understanding in teaching students the art of forming the letters of the alphabet as well as writing the words, sentences and paragraphs. Again, there may be some other teachers who prefer to write a good hand and so when they become teachers themselves, they feel that their students also should be taught to write a neat and legible handwriting. This happens more often with female teachers rather than with their male counterparts.

Throughout my service as a teacher educator I have made an attempt to collect information from the in-service teacher trainees regarding their opinion and understanding about the teaching of handwriting. On the basis of the information thus collected, the following conclusions have been arrived at:

1. That the process of teaching of handwriting, be it in a four-line exercise book or a single line paper or the use of the work book on Cursive Writing should be stopped after the students have passed Class IV or the 4th Standard.
2. That you will rarely find anyone from among the teachers who is conscious enough to try to measure the width between any two lines in a four-line exercise book. Again, most of the teachers where from information has been collected do not have any idea as to why there has to be a uniform width between any two adjacent lines in the same.
3. That most of the teachers are not aware about the manner in which the exercise book is to be positioned while children are writing over the desk.
4. That many teachers still do not understand the proper use of the two types of script - the Print script and the Cursive script. And many of them are not very much aware of the difference in the shape of the letters in the two scripts.
5. It has also been found out that many teachers are not aware of the fact that the use of the two different scripts in teaching depends on the age and maturity of the learners.
6. The information collected indicates that almost every teacher do not have any idea as to why in Cursive Writing practical work books all the letters have been slanted to the right side. So all the teachers simply accept the sample given and continue to allow the children to follow that particular slant as long as they are using the practical book as the work book. But the moment the children use the ordinary exercise book no one cares to ensure that they follow the same slant as given in that particular practical work book.
7. It has also been found out that most of the teachers do not understand why the 'pre-strokes' and the 'end-strokes' are regularly maintained in the samples given in the Cursive Writing practical book.
8. Most of the teachers are also not aware that the height of the lower-case letters – , and in the Cursive script, is shorter than that of the other letters which fully occupy the upper zone of writing. Thus most of the teachers insist on teaching the children to maintain a full height of these letters which is not supposed to be the case.

9. There are also many teachers who are not aware of the use of the writing surface in the form of a squared exercise book, a four-line exercise book, a two-line exercise book or a single line exercise book according to the mental and physical development of the children and the pedagogical aspect of the teaching-learning process.
10. There are still some teachers who are unable to make a proper decision as to until which class a student will use the pencil for handwriting and from which class he or she will start using a fountain pen or a ball-point pen.
11. That some in-service teachers also do not know that the shape of the letters of the alphabet can differ in the way they are written from one place to another, or from one country to another, as it has happened with the English alphabet.
12. Finally, there are also many teachers who do not know that the person's handwriting is always being affected by the personality of that particular person and that anyone at any age can still improve his handwriting and consequently can bring improvement in his own personality.

The points mentioned above are just a few of the many views and opinions that I have come across during the process of the collection of information from the in-service teacher trainees especially from those teaching in the Lower Primary schools. And I hope that the issues discussed in this chapter will help every reader get some idea on the prevalent trend of understanding of the teachers who are presently working in the elementary schools.

CHAPTER: IV

Terms that are used in Handwriting

Language register is always there in any kind of profession. In the same way, in the teaching of handwriting also we have plenty of vocabulary items or terms that are specifically used and talked

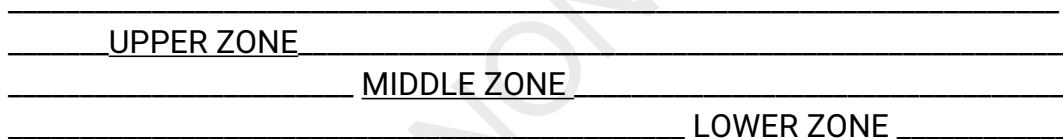
about. Knowing and understanding these terms help us learn things in a more systematic and rational manner. It also makes the task of teaching easier for the teacher as well as for the learner. For the benefit of the teachers, following are some of the English terms used in handwriting with Khasi translation in brackets:

1. Alphabet (Ki dak thoh):

Alphabet means the letters used in writing a language, arranged in order. It is an English word derived from the names of the first two letters of the Greek alphabet namely, 'Alpha' (α), the first one and 'Beta' (β), the second one. This word has further been brought to us the Khasi people by the English when they first taught us the use of the alphabet in the Khasi language. This is also the only word in the English language which consists of two syllables formed by the names of the letters of the alphabet. Out of the 65 lists of the alphabet being used in the world currently, in Cambodia we have the maximum number of letters which stands at 72 and the minimum number of letters is found in the list of the letters of the alphabet belonging to the Rotokas, the tribes inhabiting Bougainville island which belongs to the group of Solomon islands in the South Pacific, where there are only 11 letters of the alphabet.

2. Zone (Ka jaka thoh Dak):

Zone is the writing space occupied by the letters. The zone is further divided into three regions - 'The upper zone', 'the middle zone', and 'the lower zone'. Whenever a four-line exercise book is being used, the four zones can be identified in the following way:



In any four-line exercise book, when measured from the top, the space in between the first line and the third or between the second and the fourth line is usually 6mm-9mm. This width always determines the height of the letters that we write. It has been widely accepted that the letters that are of average height are those whose measure lies in between 6mm to 9mm.

For the benefit of the students, while teaching them on the use of the zones of writing the following points should be kept in mind:

- (a) The students should not be allowed to extend the upper tip of the letter beyond the upper limit of the upper zone. Research works done on handwriting have shown that in grown up people, disproportionate extension in the upper zone might indicate that the person has a superiority complex or that he or she feels himself or herself to be high above the other people. This extension can be prominently seen when such people put in their signature at the end of the letter sent to other people. It can also be seen in those people who are in the habit of bullying others.
- (b) In the middle zone, students should be taught to maintain average-sized letters. If children

prefer to write smaller letters it may indicate that they are shy, timid or not sociable. There is also the possibility that they have an inferiority complex.

- (c) The letters should not go down below the lower limit of the lower zone as they may cause inconveniences when words are written in the next line.
- (d) Using a squared exercise book for beginners does not help in controlling the use of zones but using it is needed because in the initial stage of writing, spacing the letters is more important than controlling the zones. Again, using a four-line exercise book at a later stage helps the children in controlling the use of the three zones of writing. For this reason enough time and opportunities should be given to the children to use this kind of an exercise book until you feel that they have had enough practice in controlling the use of the zones. Again, the use of a single line exercise book, in the later years of schooling helps the children practise only in controlling the base-line.

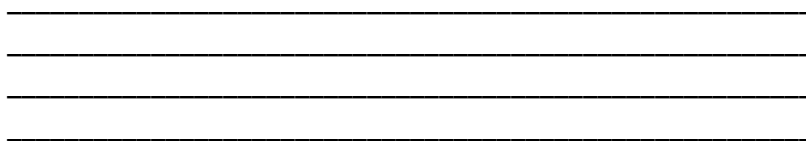
3. Strokes (Ki laiñ ring dak):

Strokes are the lines scribbled to help form the shape of any letter. There are many types of strokes, like the 'pre-stroke', the 'end-stroke', the 'up-stroke', the 'down stroke', the 'connecting stroke', the 'over curve', the 'under curve' and the 'swing curve'.

(a). **The 'pre-stroke':** In the Cursive script, the 'pre-stroke' is the initial line drawn before arriving at the main body of any letter, be it in the shape of the capital letter or the lower case letter. In teaching Cursive script, this stroke is always maintained at the beginning of all the letters. To maintain this stroke in writing every letter, it demands constant concentration and patience on the part of the writer and in the long run it also helps develop in the children a sense of being courteous or polite and at the same time it helps them in the proper organization of ideas and thoughts in the brain.

However, students should not be encouraged to use excessively longer pre-strokes. This is so because excessively longer pre-strokes indicate that the writer would be slower in taking up the task and that he or she may be in the habit of placing more importance on the past or link any inconveniences with any unreasonable excuse. Not only this, but it also reduces the speed of writing of the writer under normal circumstances.

Example:



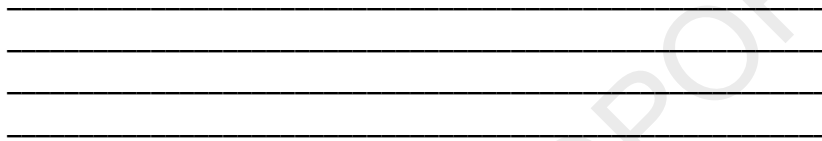
(b). **The 'end-stroke':** The end-stroke is the line that we make at the end of the main body of the letter. This stroke not only helps give attractive shape to the letter but regularity in using it also helps in moulding the character and personality of the student. Regular maintenance of this stroke in the letters occurring at the end of the words demands patience and submission on the part of the

writer. Thus, those students who practise to use the 'end-strokes' are often more meticulous in their task. They are also the ones with more responsibility and are usually the ones who would stay till the end to complete any assigned task. This is the reason that in practical books on cursive writing these strokes are there in every letter at the end in any word.

When the students reach the higher classes, it may happen that it becomes difficult for them to persist on the use of these strokes during regular writing activities, especially when there is the need to increase the speed of writing which may hinder the use of these extra strokes. But when writing at normal pace, the students are always expected to maintain these strokes.

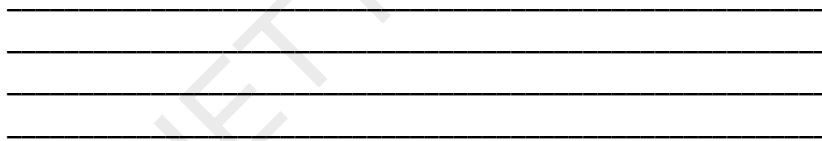
Using both the 'pre-stroke' and the 'end-stroke' indicates that the writer is always well organized in his thoughts, and, in doing anything he or she would prefer to do it in a more logical and systematic manner.

Example:



(c). **The 'up-stroke'**: This is the line that is formed when our hand makes an upward movement during the process of making the shape of any letter. The 'up-stroke' can occur in all the three zones of writing. While the students make the up-stroke in the four-line exercise book, they should be advised not to cross any of the limits exhibited by the lines forming the zones.

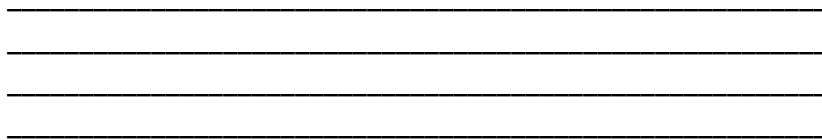
Example:



(d). **The 'down-stroke'**: This is the line formed when the hand makes the downward movement while writing the shape of any letter. The down-stroke can be found in any writing zone. While making the 'down-stroke' in a four-line exercise book, the students should be made to practise not to cross the boundary line of any zone.

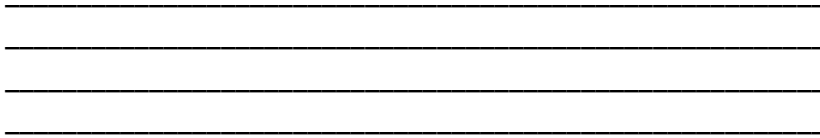
Clear and firm up-strokes and down-strokes indicate that the writer is firm and confident. But if these strokes are crooked it means that the writer lacks courage, confidence and consistency. Therefore the teachers should insist that the students should make firm up-strokes and down-strokes.

Example:



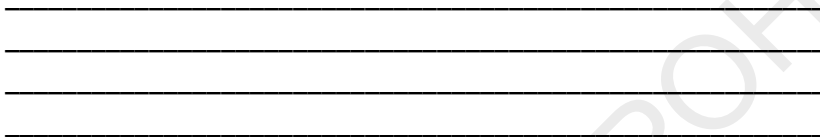
(e). **The 'connecting stroke'**: In the Cursive script, the connecting stroke is the line that is used to join or connect two adjacent letters in any word.

Example:



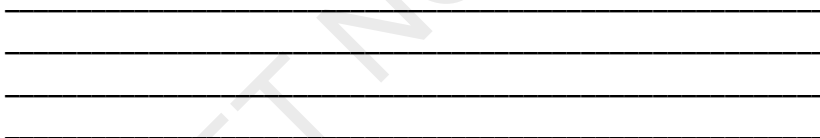
(f). **The 'over curve'**: It is a kind of a stroke that is convex in shape and occurs especially in the upper part of the middle zone lower case letters like 'm' or 'n' in the Print form or ' ' or ' ' in the Cursive form.

Example:



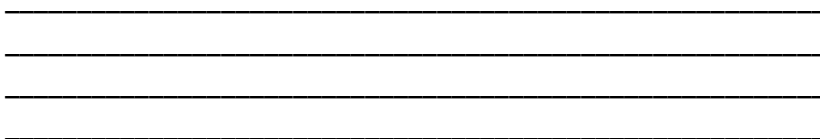
(g). **The 'under curve'**: This stroke is concave in shape and occurs especially in the lower part of the middle zone lower case letters like 'u' or 'w' in the Print form or ' ' or ' ' in the Cursive form.

Example:



(h). **The 'swing stroke'**: This is the type of stroke that is formed when we make extra swing movement of the hand at the beginning or at the end of the Capital letters written in the Cursive Script.

Example:



4. Base Line (U laiñ thoh dak).

In any plain writing surface, the base-line is an imaginary line on which we write the letters, words and sentences. When writing is done on the four-line exercise book, the third line counted from the top serves as the base line and helps guide the students write in a straight horizontal line. But when a ruled exercise book is used, the line drawn on the paper helps the students write in a

straight 'base-line'. However, when writing has to be done on the plain paper, it would not be possible to determine the base-line in advance but instead it could be obtained only by drawing a continuous line under the words that have been written to form the sentences.

The base-line can be of different shapes. It can be horizontal, ascending, descending, concave, convex, irregular, etc. And it may also happen that in any particular shape some degrees of difference could occur. Following are the base-lines in different shapes:

Horizontal:

Ascending:

Descending:

Concave:

Convex:

Irregular:

Studies in graphology have shown that, when someone writes on a plain sheet of paper, it is rather difficult to maintain a regular and horizontal base-line. So there is the possibility that in an attempt to make the base-line horizontal, it tends to ascend towards the end of the line as the person continues to write. Thus an ascending base-line indicates that the writer is always struggling in an attempt to achieve perfection. However, if a person's base-line tends to descend as he writes; it shows that the writer does not have the determination and that he or she is not willing to struggle for something good.

In those cases where the base-line is concave (boat shaped); studies have shown that the writer is a kind of a person who initially is not serious in taking the responsibility but as time progresses he or she becomes interested and enthusiastic and slowly he or she would make an effort to complete the task.

According to studies conducted, a convex (umbrella shaped) base-line on the other hand indicates that the writer is interested and enthusiastic at the beginning and continues to do the task for some time, but as time progresses he or she loses interest in it and put no more effort to

complete it properly.

On the basis of the above discussions therefore it is imperative for the teachers to regularly monitor the base-line in the handwriting of the students so that they can help them in the development of better personality. Therefore it would be advisable for the teachers to continue using the four-line exercise book or the ruled exercise book as long as practicable so that the students are given sufficient practice to write in a horizontal base-line.

5. Slant or Angle of Writing (Ka jingthiah ne jingdem jong ki dak).

The slant or the angle of writing is another important aspect in the teaching of handwriting. One's handwriting may slant to the left (left slant/reclined) or slant to the right (right slant/inclined) and it can also be perpendicular (vertical).

Example:

Left Slant: _____

Vertical: _____

Right Slant: _____

Studies in Graphology have shown that 15% of the people in the world slant their handwriting to the left while 8% of them write vertically and the rest constituting 77% of them slant their handwriting to the right. It can also be seen that even within a particular slant the degree of the slant might differ in different people. It has also been found out that there are also some people in whose handwriting no regular slant is maintained.

When we write we tend to follow the direction which we feel to be the most comfortable. This would also be the direction in which our brain finds it easier to co-ordinate with the hand that handles the writing implement. And for the majority of the people slanting towards the right side is the easiest direction for writing. For this reason there are a high percentage of people using the right slant.

Almost all the elementary school teachers must have experienced that in any Cursive Writing exercise books, the samples of handwriting given are all written in the right slant. Teaching in this slant is based on the fact that this is easier for children to make the shape of the letters and to maintain a horizontal base-line. Moreover, the hand can also swing easily during the process of making connecting strokes especially when one needs to increase the speed of writing. Again, another benefit of using the right slant is that psychologically, it also helps the children become more adaptable and positive towards life and other people and thus they would always make an attempt to adjust with others in different situations.

Writing vertically on the other hand, demands more finger muscle control especially when one attempts to maintain a uniform height of all the letters. Again, writing vertically also demands the will power of the writer to keep writing the letters in the perpendicular position. Thus, only few people would prefer to write vertically and it appears that it would be mostly the women who would prefer to use this kind of a slant. Studies have shown that those who prefer to have vertical handwriting are strong, and are capable of making decisions on their own but at the same time they may also exhibit the tendency of being very rigid, staunch and strictly follow their decision and stand by their own opinion.

Bending the letters towards the left side is another observation made about the people's handwriting. And as has been mentioned in the previous paragraphs, 15% of the people would use this kind of a slant. Studies in graphology have revealed that people using this slant are always not able to make their own decision and they always need mentors to guide them whenever they need to make any decision in their life.

Irregularity of the slant is also a feature that can be observed in some people's handwriting. Irregular slant indicates that the writer is not stable and lacks reasoning. Thus, he or she is always bound to be influenced by other people's opinion. He is no different from the rice plant in the rice field during early autumn, which can swing in any direction when blown by the wind. For this reason it is important for the teachers to insist their students to always maintain regular slant in their handwriting.

6. Loop (Ka jaka ba lait hapteng ki laiñ):

The loop is the space within the body of any letter between two lines or strokes made by curving the lines to form a letter.

Loops can be found in all the three zones of writing. The lower case letters like *h, k, l*, and *m* in the Cursive script, all have a loop in the upper zone. However, the lower case letters *n, o*, and *p*, do not have any loop even though they occupy the upper zone, and *most of the teachers are not aware of this*. It is also important to bear in mind that these letters are shorter in height when compared to other letters that also occupy the upper zone. In this regard, *while making the shape of these letters, the need to retrace the path over the up-stroke while making the down stroke, makes it difficult to raise the height of the letter*.

The lower case letters like *q, g, r*, and *s* in the cursive script, have loops in the lower zone. And the lower case letters like *t, u*, and *v*, have loops in the middle zone. Following are the examples of the types of loops.

Example:

Upper zone:

Middle zone:

Lower zone:

7. Spacing (Ka jingpynlait jaka).

Spacing means making room when we write anything. Spacing may be between letters, words, sentences, lines, paragraphs and so on. Proper spacing should be taught to the students. Sufficient spacing means that the letters can be easily identified and the words and sentences are easier to be read and there is no straining of the eyes while reading. Students that are shy and timid tend to leave lesser spaces between the letters and words. Therefore, it is the teacher's duty to help these kind of students to make more spaces in between the letters and words. It has also been found out that those who tend to leave less space in between the letters or words are psychologically more introvert and lack gregariousness.

When free writing is being done on any plain paper or lined exercise book, the acceptable normal spacing is such that the lower case letters like, , , , , and in the Cursive script could be inserted in between the written words. However, spacing would be considered to be narrow, if the space of writing is such that it would not be possible to insert the letter ' ' in between these words. Again, spacing would be considered to be large if spacing between the words is wider than the normal size of the lower case letter ' ' in the cursive form.

8. Script (Ki jait dak thoh).

In teaching handwriting we basically use two types of scripts – The print script and the cursive script.

In the print script, all the letters of the alphabet are written vertically and individually, and no connecting stroke is used even if they are written very close to each other. Again, in the print script all the letters are made without the pre-strokes or the end-strokes. The letters are always in the simplest form with the minimum number of strokes used.

In the cursive script however, all the different types of strokes are being used, be it for the capital letters or the lower case letters. Again, in this script, any particular letter could be written in slightly different shapes and the number of letters that are connected together may differ. In this regard, if more letters are connected then it implies that the writer has more concentration and patience. However, in case very few letters are regularly connected then it indicates otherwise. It is therefore important for the teachers to insist that students should make an effort to connect as many letters as possible, as this will help the students positively in the long run.

Example: Print Script

Capital Letters

A B C D E F G H I
J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z

Lower case Letters

a b c d e f g h i
j k l m n o p q r
s t u v w x y z

Example: Cursive Script

Capital Letters

A B C D E F G
H I

J K L M N O P
Q R
S T U V W X Y
Z

Lower case Letters

9. Size (Ka jingheh jong ki dak):

In the early stages of schooling, children tend to write bigger sized handwriting. The reason for this is because physically and mentally they are not able to control the finer muscles that are located in the fingers. And because of this inability they tend to exhibit sweep movement whenever they drag their hand in any direction during the process of writing. But as they grow older, they learn how to control the finer muscles and consequently the size of the letters in their handwriting also will gradually be reduced. Following are some of the basic things the teacher should know when it comes to the size of handwriting:

(a). Be it in the print script or the cursive script, the size of anyone's handwriting can be measured by measuring the height of the letters which occupy both the middle zone and the upper zone in the formation of their full shape. For example, in the letters- , , and , the height is measured from the lower boundary of the middle zone to the upper boundary of the upper zone. And for those letters occupying the middle zone and the lower zone like the letters- *g*, and the height is measured from the lower boundary of the lower zone to the top boundary of the middle zone. In such cases, the size would be considered to be medium or average if it lies in the range of 6mm to 9mm. Again, if it is less than that, it would be considered small and if it is more than that, it would be considered to be large. However, in free writing, it has been observed that when older people are required to do a lot of writing, the need to complete the job faster makes them decrease the height of the letters even below 6mm.

(b). We can also measure the height of any handwriting by measuring the height of the lower

case letters or the small letters in the middle zone like the letters- , , , , , , , , and . For average- sized handwriting, the height of these letters while writing freely should be in the range of 1.5mm to 2.5mm.

10. Speed (Ka jingsted thoh dak):

Giving attention to the speed of writing is important for the teachers. The writing speed differs in students from one class to another. It is measured by calculating how many small letters either in the print script or in the cursive script a student can write within a minute. Experiments conducted have shown that the average speed of students in different classes is as follows:

In Class I - 20 letters, Class II - 30 letters, Class III - 40 letters, Class IV - 50 letters, Class V - 60 letters and in Class VI - 70 letters.

For grown up people the average speed was found to be in between 100 to 200 letters per minute. For teachers in Lower Primary and Upper Primary schools, the average speed has to be 70 letters per minute. And with this speed, they can have a clean and clear handwriting while writing on the board and this makes it easier for the students to copy from it. Thus understanding the writing speed of the children can give better idea to the teacher while handling writing activities that are given to the students every day.

11. Pressure (Ka bor ñion halor jong ka sla kot):

The pressure we put on while writing can be seen after writing has been done. Learning how to observe the pressure used and what does it imply about the writer's psychological background is another point that a teacher needs to understand. While the students are young, they don't have the ability to control the finer muscles located in their fingers. So while writing, the whole of the pressure from the hand goes through the tip of the writing implement that they use. For this reason, in olden days, the slate board and the slate pencil are used in writing. This was very practically helpful for the students and the teachers and economically helpful for the parents also because when the children first start writing activities, many times the writing surface would be damaged especially if it was made of paper.

In modern times, we find it difficult to get natural slates. And even though different types of slates are currently available, they are not easily accessible to most of the children especially those coming from economically poorer background. Therefore, we find that the students had to be taught to write in exercise books. In doing so, to decrease the amount of damage to the sheet that he or she writes on, the writing implement should not be very sharp.

Another observation made is, that most of the time, when students use pencils for writing in exercise book, they keep on erasing because they are not yet that good at writing. It is for this reason that any student should always use an HB pencil and that it should not be over-sharpened for regular use. And from the practical and pedagogical aspect of the teaching learning process it would also be advisable to continue using only the pencil as the writing implement till the end of Class IV.

In concluding this chapter, it can be said that whatever that has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs is only an attempt to give the teachers some information about the terms used in the teaching of handwriting. In doing so only some important terms have been included which I feel in one way or the other would give the teachers a kind of a workable knowledge in this regard. Thus I hope that the information given would be sufficient enough to give the teachers the confidence they need in handling this particular area of handwriting.

CHAPTER: V

The Type of Script to be used in Handwriting

As has been mentioned earlier, it is expected that as teachers we should be aware that there are two types of script in writing – the print script and the cursive script. It is also important to know that the shapes of the letters in the two types of script are not identical. Another important thing that the teachers should know is that the process of making the shapes of the letters in the two scripts is also not of the same level of difficulty. This difference in the level of difficulty while making the shapes makes it imperative that naturally the shapes that demand the lower level of difficulty in making them should be first preferred for teaching the children in the initial years of schooling. Based on this therefore, the print script is always used for children in the lower classes up to Class II while the cursive Script is used in the higher classes from Class III onwards.

Following are the merits of using the print script for students in the lower classes:

1. While children are still very young, they lack the ability to control the finer muscles that are

located in the fingers which help give them the strength to make curves in the strokes of the letters. Thus it would be very difficult for them if cursive script is introduced in the early years of schooling; since in this type of script, we use a lot of 'pre-strokes', 'up-strokes', 'down-strokes', 'end-strokes' and many more.

2. Making strokes in the cursive script requires the proper co-ordination of the organs of the body like the brain, the eyes, the hand and the fingers. Smaller children lack proper co-ordination of these organs. Therefore, it is easier for them to use the print script which does not require complex co-ordination while making the shapes of the letters.
3. Strain and fatigue are reduced because the pencil is lifted after every letter.
4. Another reason for preferring to use this type of script for the younger children is because in the print script the shapes of the written letters are similar to that of the printed letters used in their text books. This makes it easier for the children to recognize any letter in any text book especially when they need to find the spelling of any word they have to verify or copy down.
5. In comparison with the cursive script, using the print script also makes it easier for any student to read any piece of writing. This is because in the cursive script many types of strokes are used and this may cause the students to take longer time in recognizing and identifying the letters that are written.
6. Studies done have also shown that in younger children, writing in the print script is faster than in the cursive script.

The use of the cursive script starts in Class III. Once this type of script is used, the children will have to switch over to the use of the shapes of the letters in this script only. So teachers should spend time on this and allow the children to find out the difference in the shape of the letters in the two scripts whether as capital letters or as lower case letters.

In the cursive script letters are connected with one another, and it is important for the teachers to insist the students on connecting as many letters in a word as possible because the more the number of letters is connected the better it would be. If more letters are connected, then it indicates that psychologically, the writer also possesses higher concentration and more patience.

The suggestions given above, on the choice of the type of script to be used for children at different levels is based on the physical, mental as well as on the psychological development of the child. It has also been based on the pedagogical aspect of the teaching-learning process which we feel it suits best for the children. Therefore, it is left to the wisdom of the teachers to ponder upon, if the suggestions given can be put into practice by them.

CHAPTER: VI

The Use of the Right or the Left Hand while Writing

Most of the people in the world prefer to use the right hand while writing. There are also some other people who would prefer to use the left hand instead. Any person who prefers to use the right hand for writing is known as a 'dextral' or 'right-hander' while the person who prefers to use the left hand is known as a 'sinistral' or 'left-hander'. However, there are also some people who can easily use any of their hands in writing. These people are known as 'ambidexters'.

Studies done many years back have shown that 4% of the people in the world are left-handed. But studies in the last few years have shown that 6% of the males and 4% of the females in the world are left-handed.

It is also interesting to know that from many research works conducted it has been found out that while children are under six years of age, 70% of them show signs that they prefer using the right hand when they do anything, and only 5% of them would prefer to use the left hand. Again 25% of them show signs that they can use both their hands in doing their work. Again, at the age of 6, it has been found out that 81% of the children are right-handed, 6% are left-handed and 13% are ambidextral (use both hands). As they grow up, there are signs indicating which hand is dominant for them to do any work with, i.e. whether they prefer to use the right or the left hand.

Years ago attempts have been made to show that there is some kind of a relationship between our choice to use our hand in writing and the functioning of the two lobes of our brain. Researchers have made an attempt to infer that if people always prefer to use the right hand then it would be the left lobe of the brain which controls the activities done. On the other hand when people always prefer to use the left hand then it would be the right lobe of the brain that controls. However, till date, no reliable conclusion could be arrived at about this relationship.

In the early schooling years of the child, there is always the possibility for elementary school teachers to come across children who are completely sinisterly or left-handed. In such cases the teachers may have initially made an attempt to help the child use the right hand. This would be advisable because research studies done in Graphology have shown that while the child is still under 7 years of age, he can still swap from being left to right-handed. However if he still persists in using the left hand, then he should be given the liberty to do so, because compelling him to use his right hand might bring on him repercussions later on in his life.

Sometimes it is also possible that there are children who show signs that they can easily use both their hands for writing. In such cases the teachers should make these children always practise in using the right hand.

Once the student is identified to be a left-hander or a sinistral then the teacher needs to know and understand in which way he or she is to be seated and in which manner the writing implement as well as the writing surface will have to be held and positioned accordingly. In the following lines, few suggestions on the issue have been given for the teachers:

1. Any student who is a left-hander should not be discouraged. Instead he should be inspired and encouraged to improve his handwriting.
2. While writing in the cursive script, any such student should be taught to write in front of the left shoulder and drag any 'down stroke' towards the left so that it is easier to slant the handwriting. In this position it would also be easier to slide the hand towards the right while writing.
3. The position of the exercise book should be in such a way that its right edge will be at an angle between 35° - 45° with the edge of the desk or table towards the body of the student. However, the pencil or pen is supposed to be hold by the fingers in the left hand in the same way as the right-handed people.

4. The student should not be allowed to twist his wrist while writing.
5. Any left-handed student should be seated on the bench towards the left side of the desk or the table, so that while writing, his left elbow will not collide with the right hand of his classmate sitting next to him in the same bench.

Being a left hander is not a disadvantage for any person. In football, the ability to kick the ball with the left foot is advantageous while scoring from the left side of the field. Again, in cricket, being a left hander gives advantage to the batsman especially if the other batsman batting on the other side is a right-hander. This is so because it always gives trouble to anyone who is the bowler. In the same way, in lumbering, the log could be easily sawn by two people if one of them is a right-hander and the other is a left-hander. Therefore, any left-handed person should not be frowned at and discouraged, and the teachers would do well to remember these facts.

DIET NONGPOH

CHAPTER: VII

How Are The Letters Shaped?

Practically, while writing, the letters of the alphabet are not shaped in the same way by every individual even though the basic shape pertaining to any letter is maintained. This individual difference in the process of making these shapes is found to occur both in the print script as well as in the cursive script.

It is important for the teachers to keep in mind that the difference in the shape or even the use of the zones might happen in the Standard script of any language. Again, for any particular script,

even within any particular country shapes may slightly differ from region to another. It is for this reason that no two individuals' handwritings are identical. Again, even for any individual, with age, there is always going to be a difference in the shapes of the letters made by him or her from time to time. Other reasons that could bring the change in an individual's handwriting could also be due to the change in the personality of the person or due to the influence of other physiological, physical, mental and psychological problems the person had to go through. It has also been observed that when children are young, they tend to follow the shapes of the letters given by the teachers but as time progresses, they will always shape the letters according to the influence of their own personality.

Following are some of the different shapes of the letters in the print script and in the cursive script:

PRINT SCRIPT:

(a). **Capital letters:**

A B C D E F G H I
J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z

(b). **Lower case letters:**

a b c d e f g h i
j k l m n o p q r
s t u v w x y z

CURSIVE SCRIPT

(a). **Capital letters:**

(i). **Simple-shaped:**

C

(ii). More cursive:

A B C D E F G H
I
J K L M N O P
Q R
S T U V W X Y
Z

(iii). Highly cursive:

A B C D E F G H
I
J K L M N O P Q
R
S T U V W X Y Z

(b). Lower case letters:

(i). Simple-shaped:

(ii). More cursive:

a b c d e f
g h i
j k l m n o
p q r
s t u v w
x y z

Besides the examples given above, there are a lot of other letter shapes that are used by the

people especially by those involved in calligraphy. But when it comes to the shapes we use in teaching our students we always restrict to simpler ones. Teaching the students to write in simpler shapes helps reduce the time that would be taken in writing the words, sentences and paragraphs, which are the main objectives in any writing activity.

In the above examples we can also see that in the print script the letters are always written vertically, whereas in the cursive script the letters are slanted towards the right. Again, we can also see that in the print script we use minimum number of strokes that are sufficient enough to form the basic shape of the letter but in the cursive script, we use extra curving of the lines or strokes. And it is these extra curves that bring about changes in the overall shape of any letter.

As the children grow older, it would not be possible for teachers to make them strictly follow specific shapes of the letters. But whatever be the changes made, the letters should not have fancy shapes and the main body of any letter should be recognizable and should not unnecessarily contain any extra stroke as this would slow down the speed while writing.

CHAPTER: VIII

Letter Shapes According to the Level of Difficulty

Knowing the shape of the letters according to the level of difficulty is always an important tool in the hand of any teacher teaching the children prior to Class I. One of the principles followed in the teaching learning process is gradation. In gradation an attempt is always made to grade any concept to be taught to the children on the basis of the level of difficulty. And this has been based on the mental, physical and psychological development of the child.

Letters are made of strokes. Some letters contain simple strokes while others contain complex strokes that are not easy for the child to maneuver while scribbling. Letters in the print script are always simpler in shape than those in the cursive script. Again, even in the print script all the letters are not of the same level of difficulty when it comes to the task of making their shapes. Thus these letters are further grouped according to the level of difficulty as follows:

1. Gradation of the letters of the Khasi alphabet:

(a). *Capital letters in the print script.*

- I, Ī, L, T, E, H, J, M, N, Ñ, K.
- O, G, NG.
- D, P, B, R, U, S.
- A, W, Y.

(b). *Lower case letters in the print script.*

- i, ĩ, l, t, j.
- , d, b, g, p, o.
- n, ñ, m, h, u, ng.
- e, r, s.
- k, ω, y.

2. Gradation of the letters of the English alphabet:

(a). *Capital letters in the print script.*

- I, L, T, E, F, H, J, M, N, K.
- O, C, Q, G.
- D, P, B, R, U, S.
- A, V, W, X, Y, Z.

(b). *Lower case letters in the print script.*

- i, l, t, f, j.
- c, , d, b, g, q, p, o.
- n, m, h, u.
- e, r, s.
- k, v, ω, , y, z.

Following are some of the important points that teachers should bear in mind while teaching handwriting:

1. Teachers must have come across the terms like – ‘capital letters’ and ‘block letters’ which are being used every now and then. These types of letters are one and the same. Block letters are bold capital letters written in the print script.
2. While teaching the students, it is important to note that the height of the capital letters should be the same as those lower case or small letters occupying both the middle and the upper zone of writing like the letters - b, h, k and l in the print script or , , and in the cursive script.

Example:

3. Another important thing to be borne in mind is that the height of the letters which are the ascenders like , and as small letters in the cursive script should not be the same as the other ascenders. This means that, while writing in a four-line exercise book, the upper tip of these three letters should not reach the upper boundary of the upper zone.

Example:

4. In *free writing*, the strokes in the lower zone for those cursive letters which are the descenders like *g, y, p, q* and *z* should only be dragged halfway and this will help avoid overlapping with the upper tip of the letters of the words that are going to be written in the next line.

CHAPTER: IX

Stages to be followed in the Teaching of Handwriting

As much as it happens with the teaching of any subject, teaching handwriting also is expected to be done in a systematic manner. Thus, it is expected that every teacher teaching at the elementary stage, should be aware of the different stages that are supposed to be followed in teaching handwriting. This is so, because of the fact that monitoring the quality of the children's handwriting at the elementary stage, is not only the responsibility of the teacher who teaches any language subject, but also the collective responsibility of every teacher in the school who has to regularly evaluate any student's handwriting in the subject that he or she handles. Following are some of the suggestions given on this topic.

Selection of a particular script:

The two scripts that are used in writing by the students are – The print script and the cursive script. Of these two types of script, the print script employs simpler and fewer numbers of strokes in shaping any letter. Thus based on the level of difficulty in shaping the letters, we first need to teach the students the print script in the initial years of schooling. It is then followed by the use of the cursive script after some years. On the basis of the studies that have been carried out in recent years it would therefore be advisable for children to continue using the print script until they reach Class II. And that they may stop using this script a few months before the end of this class or they may continue using it till the end of this class. Then they can start using the cursive script after that, which means towards the end of class II or at the beginning of class III.

Stage I:

In the initial stage, the task of making the shape of any letter will require the child to learn how to sit properly and hold the slate pencil or the pencil in the proper manner. It will also require him to learn how to properly position and use any device used as the writing surface like the slate or the

squared exercise book. Besides these, during the process of writing, the child will also have to properly co-ordinate his brain and his eyes together with his hand movements. For this reason, at the beginning it would not be practicable for the teachers to directly start teaching the children how to write the letters and instead children should be given opportunities to perform certain activities that will help them control the movement of the finer muscles in the fingers and at the same time help them practise their eye-hand co-ordination.

Following are some of the suggested *pre-writing* activities that could be employed by the teachers:

1. Students may be asked to draw any simple figure that requires only simple lines like a circle or a square.
2. Children may be given colouring activities with crayons.
3. They may be given activities like arrangement of big-sized seeds or pebbles in order to form a specific shape.
4. They may also be asked to recap a bottle to exercise in controlling the muscles during circular movement of the fingers.
5. Children may be given tasks like pasting small pieces of coloured paper on the picture that has already been drawn (collage work).
6. Children may also be given the task of threading beads to make a necklace.

In addition to the above suggestions, the teacher can also supplement and use his/her own ideas and imaginations to conduct other similar activities specially those that can be conducted by using locally available materials.

Stage II:

After the students have become familiar with the activities suggested in Stage I, in the next stage they should be taught how to draw different lines and strokes that are basic in making the shape of the letters of the alphabet.

Steps to be followed at this stage are:

1. In teaching the children how to make the strokes, the teacher should do so according to the level of difficulty involved in making the shape of the line as follows:

(a) _____

(b).

(c).

(d).

(e).

(f).

(g).

(h).

(i).

2. At the beginning teachers should teach how to write any letter shape by holding the hand of the child and help him drag the pencil to make the shape of a particular line or stroke one after another.

3. After the child has been taught in the above manner for some days, in the next step he should be asked to draw the same kind of line by himself by dragging the pencil over the broken or dotted lines similar to the ones drawn in the previous days.

Example:

4. After the child has become familiar with the task of drawing the shape of the line by using dots then he should be given the opportunity to freely draw the shape of any line or stroke.

Stage III:

Steps to be followed at this stage are:

1. After the students have learnt how to freely make the strokes or lines, then they can be taught how to make the shape of the letters of the alphabet. And in doing so they should start with the capital letters in the print script according to the level of difficulty in making the shape of the letters as has been suggested in Chapter VIII.
2. After the students have learnt how to make the shapes of the capital letters then the teacher may teach the children how to make the shape of the small letters in the print script. The need to teach writing the small letters after the capital letters is because making the shape of the small letters demands more muscle control than in the case of the capital letters.
3. After the students have learnt how to write both the capital and the small letters, then they can be taught how to write them together side by side.
4. In the next steps students will be taught how to write words that contain two, three, four, five letters and so on.
5. Finally, children can be taught to write sentences and paragraphs in the print script.

Important points that teachers need to be aware of:

1. It would be very helpful for the students if all the teachers teaching from Class A to Class II make it a point to ***use only the print script while writing on the board and to use only the simple shapes of all the letters.***
2. If possible, in Classes I and II, it will help the students if any writing activity is done in a four-line exercise book or a single line exercise book, except those subjects that require the use of a plain exercise book.
3. In Classes I and II, it would be helpful for the students if the teachers draw the lines on the blackboard while giving any writing activity in order to show the examples to the students on the use of the zones of writing.
4. ***While writing in the Print script,*** during any writing activity it would be advisable for the teachers to observe that the students follow the following steps:

- a. The exercise book is positioned in such a way that its lower edge is kept parallel to the lower edge of the desk towards the body of the child.
- b. That the elbows of the students are kept close to their body.
- c. That the letters of the alphabet are written vertically.
- d. That the students' position should be such that both their hands are kept comfortably on top of the desk.
- e. That the pencil is being properly held between the thumb and the middle finger and that the pointing finger is only lightly touching it.
- f. That the students straighten their shoulders and keep a distance of one foot between the exercise book and their eyes.
- g. That the students should never over sharpen the tip of the pencil to avoid damage to the surface of the paper they write on.

5. ***While writing in the Cursive script***, the teachers should be aware of the following :

- a. The cursive script, as mentioned earlier, should be taught before the end of class II or at the beginning of class III.
- b. At the time of transition from the print script to the cursive script, initially the students will find difficulty in remembering and differentiating the shape of the letters in the print script and the cursive script. It may happen that the students will take time in writing the correct type of letters. It will however help them if the teachers take care and make sure that they themselves know the difference while writing the capital letters or small letters in the print script and in the cursive script.
- c. Before switching over to the cursive script, the students should be allowed to compare the formation of the shapes of the letters both capital and small letters in the print script as well as in the cursive script.
- d. In all the cases in which the students use the four-line or the single line exercise book or the Cursive Writing practical book, the teachers should help the students know and recognize the different strokes that we make (pre-stroke, up-stroke, down-stroke, connecting- stroke, end-stroke, under-curve, over-curve, swing-stroke) while writing any letter of the alphabet.

- e. The teachers should remind the students that all the capital letters are always twice the height of the small letters that occupy only the middle zone.
- f. Remind the students that the capital letters , *L* , , , and in the cursive script can never be connected or joined with any other small letter that follows them otherwise, the handwriting will not come out nicely. Therefore these letters are written individually and the small letters that follow them are joined amongst themselves.
- g. The students should also be told that the height of any end stroke should always be less than the height of the small letter occupying the middle zone.
- h. In the cursive script, the exercise book should be kept in such a way that the angle between its lower edge and the edge of the desk towards the body of the student should be between 30° and 40°.
- i. Lastly, students should also position the exercise book directly in front of the right shoulder for right-handers and in front of the left shoulder for left-handers.

CHAPTER: X

Evaluation of Handwriting

Currently in our schools, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is being used in evaluating the performance of any student. In doing so, many tools and techniques have been suggested in Scholastic as well as in Co-Scholastic areas. However in evaluating handwriting, the Check- list would be the most effective technique to be used.

Following is the general Check- list that teachers can employ in evaluating the students' handwriting either in the print script or in the cursive script:

1. Does the student sit on his bench properly?
2. Is the pencil or any other writing tool held in the proper manner?
3. Is the exercise book positioned in the right way by those using the print script or the cursive

script or by the left-handers or the right-handers?

4. Is the exercise book positioned at a distance of one foot from the eyes?
5. Does the student keep his shoulders parallel to each other while writing?
6. Are the letters clearly formed, so that the person who reads them can recognize at a glance of what is being written?
7. Are the letters written in the average height of 6mm to 9mm?
8. Is normal spacing maintained in between the letters or the words or the sentences?
9. Does the student make an attempt to maintain a regular horizontal base-line?
10. Is simplicity in the shape of the letters maintained?
11. Are clear connecting strokes regularly maintained?
12. Does the student try to maintain average speed while writing?
13. Is there any attempt to cross the boundary of the writing zones while writing?
14. Does the student try to maintain regular slant in all the letters?
15. Is uniform and average size of the letters maintained by the student?
16. Are the written strokes firm?
17. Is there any irregularity in the use of the shape of the letters of the cursive script after the switch over in the use of script has been made?
18. Is there any attempt by the student to use any fancy shaped symbol instead of the 'i-dot' or 'tittle' (the dot on top of 'i')?
19. Does the student try to use any fancy shaped symbol instead of the 't-bar' (the line that we cross over the body of the letter to get 't')?
20. Does the student regularly close the letters *h*, *l* and *g*? (Studies have shown that grown-up people who do not regularly close these letters are too open and are not able to keep secrets).

The above discussions therefore indicate that constant monitoring and observation is required from the teachers to ensure that the students do make attempt to write a good hand. This is so because learning to write a good handwriting cannot be learnt in a day or two or in a week, or even a month, but takes many years of constant practice.

It will therefore be in the best interest of the students, if all the teachers in the Lower Primary or the Upper Primary schools take the responsibility to ensure that in every subject, the students try to follow all the basic things needed for maintaining a good handwriting. If that could be done, we hope that by the time our students leave the Upper Primary stage of schooling, they will have a neat and clean handwriting which in turn will help them not only in their further studies but also in developing in them better personality traits.

DIET NONGPOH

CHAPTER: XI

CONCLUSION

This book has been written with the intention that it would serve as some kind of a guide book for our teachers in the teaching of handwriting to our students at the elementary stage. In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to give some idea to the teachers on some of the basic concepts concerning the whole process of teaching handwriting including some of the psychological and pedagogical aspects connected with the teaching processes in this area.

An attempt has been made to clarify and give suggestion on the approaches that have to be followed while teaching handwriting, especially while teaching the young learners. Attempt has also been made to explain the need to understand the relationship between the inner self of the person and his handwriting. Again, some suggestions have also been given on how to deal with the different

levels of difficulty that children encounter in making the shape of the letters especially at the initial stages of writing on the basis of their physical and mental growth.

Finally, we hope that through our small attempt from the institute and through our collective effort and humble dedication as teachers in the elementary schools we would be able to help the students improve themselves in this area of learning and consequently help shape their life in a positive manner.

APPENDIX

References:

1. Alphabet Chart, Good Books Distributors Publishers, H.O.31, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata – 16.
2. Gait, Sir Edward. A History of Assam, 2nd Edition reprint, 1936, Lawyer's Book Stall, Panbazar, Guwahati.
3. Gardener, Ruth. Instant Handwriting Analysis, Pustak Mahal, Delhi – 110006, 1997.
4. Hendrickson, Robert. Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins, 3rd Edition,(1st Indian Edition 2005, Reprinted 2008), Vinod Vasishtha for Viva Books

Private Ltd., 4737/23, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002.

5. Kamat, H.D. and David, A. Primary Education, 2007, Crescent Publishing Co operation 4831/24, Prahlad Street, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi – 110002.
6. McNichol, Andrea. with Nelson, Jeffrey A. Handwriting Analysis Putting It to Work for You, Jaico Publishing House, 121, M. G. Road, Mumbai - 400001.
7. Oldham, Thomas. Geology, Meteorology & Ethnology of Meghalaya, Miltan Publications, Delhi – 110035, 1984.
8. Pryse, Rev.W. An Introduction to the Khasia Language, Printed at the Calcutta School - Book Society 15, Press and Published at their Depository, Circular Road, 1855. (Reprinted by Khasi Authors' Society in 1988).
9. Roberts, H. A Grammar of the Khasi Language, Photographically Reproduced, 1995, Mittal Publications, New Delhi – 110059.
10. Roy, U Jeebon. Ka Kot Pule Khasi Nyngkong, Ri Khasi Press, Shillong. 1990.
11. Sten, H.W. Ka History Ka Ktien Khasi, Revised Edition 2008, Gratus Publication, New Kench's Trace, Shillong –793004.
12. The Diagram Group. The Little Giant Encyclopedia of Handwriting Analysis, Goodwill Publishing House B- 3, Rattan Joyti, 18 Rajendra Place, New Delhi – 110008 (India)