

SPECIFICS OF TEACHING WRITING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive methodology for teaching writing in a foreign language at the secondary school level, addressing the need for effective pedagogical practices in enhancing students' writing proficiency. By integrating various approaches, the proposed methodology offers educators practical strategies to create engaging and interactive learning experiences, fostering students' confidence and competence in writing in a foreign language.

During the study, we surveyed English teachers in secondary schools in order to identify the most effective methodology for writing texts in a foreign language. The results of this survey focus on teachers' strategies in teaching English that improve students' writing skills.

After reviewing the data collected during the survey, we found out what strategies foreign language teachers use at the stage of basic general education to teach writing: discussion groups, a dictionary, keeping a diary. The study will also evaluate the effectiveness of each technique and compare their results. Recommendations will then be offered for teachers to select the best methods depending on the needs and characteristics of their students.

Conducting such a study will help teachers and researchers gain a better understanding of how to effectively teach foreign language writing to students in secondary schools. This will improve current practices and develop new methods that will promote the effective development of writing skills in a foreign language among schoolchildren.

Writing proficiency is a crucial component of language acquisition, enabling students to effectively communicate and convey their thoughts and ideas. Therefore, the development of a systematic teaching methodology is essential to equip secondary school students with competent writing skills. This study proposes an interdisciplinary approach, combining theory and practice, to foster a holistic learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of students.

Keywords: foreign language, teaching, student, writing, strategies, methods.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing, as mentioned above, is a complex communicative activity. It helps you communicate in writing using graphic symbols. Writing is a type of speech activity as “the communication skill of encoding, storing and sending messages using written symbols.” The product of this type of speech activity is a reading text. Methods of writing and acting can be described as controlled, guided and free (Rhalmi, 2018).

Controlled Writing suggests the following activities: coping, gap-filling, word order, substitution, fact correction, and dictation. Writing includes content, organization, style, syntax, mechanics, grammar, and spelling. It has been noted that if teachers limit their feedback to pointing out errors or correcting them, students will focus on writing without errors, neglecting the interest or even the meaning of the content (Shcherba, 1977, p.22). Thus, it is necessary to provide feedback with a fair balance of content feedback and form feedback.

1.1 Types of Foreign Language Writing Skills

There are different types of foreign language writing skills that should be assessed (Harmer, 2004).

1.1.1 Imitative

At this stage, form is paramount in assessing the student's skills in the fundamental tasks of writing letters, words, punctuation, and very short sentences. This category also includes the ability to write correctly and perceive phoneme-grapheme correspondences in a foreign orthographic system.

1.1.2 Intensive

It refers to creating appropriate vocabulary in context, collocations and idioms, and correcting grammatical features down to sentence length.

1.1.3 Receptive

Assessment tasks here require students to perform at a limited level of discourse, connecting sentences into a paragraph and creating a logically coherent sequence of two or three paragraphs. Attention focused on form is mainly focused on the level of discourse, with a strong emphasis on context and meaning (Harmer, 2004, p.58). Extensive writing involves successfully managing all writing processes and strategies for any purpose, up to the length of an essay, term paper, report on a major research project, or even a dissertation. Students focus on achieving a goal, organizing and developing ideas logically, using details to support or illustrate ideas, demonstrating syntactic and lexical diversity, and in many cases engaging in a process of multiple drafts to arrive at a final product.

1.2 Dealing with Language Errors

Experienced teachers believe that their colleagues should ignore language errors that do not interfere with learning, so teachers can only correct errors that are very simple and that affect meaning.

While helping students focus on specific aspects of language, teachers can tell them that part of the work will only be corrected on one point, such as the use of tenses. By doing this, teachers ensure that students' work is not red-flagged, and teachers encourage them to focus on specific aspects of written language. Teachers can individualize language work by identifying several types of errors for each student and focusing their attention on them (Nordquist, 2019, p. 129).

If a text contains a number of common errors, teachers can make a photocopy of the work (erasing the author's name) and show it to the whole class, asking them to identify the problems. In this way, the class's attention can be drawn to common errors, and a photocopy of the document can serve as a basis for correction work. Teachers learn about students' mistakes if they give them the opportunity to make them, correct them, and discuss them. Teachers can ask students to discuss where they think their mistakes come from and why they make them. This will help teachers understand which mistakes students can admit and which they cannot. Asking students to discuss their errors can provide extensive information about interference, common errors, skill use, and provide clear evidence of language learning (Met, 2023, p.169).

2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

A written piece (e.g. an essay) as a final work at an advanced level can be assessed based on the criteria

(Yusupova, 2017):

- 1) Achieving the objective: relevance and appropriateness of ideas and examples, scope, variety, suitability of text, type and length, awareness of target reader, accuracy;
- 2) Organization: coherence, sequence of presentation, paragraphing, layout and punctuation, sentence length/complexity, text fluency;
- 3) Range: structures, vocabulary, relevance, flexibility, detail, avoidance of repetition;
- 4) Accuracy: grammar, vocabulary, spelling.

During the study, we interviewed English teachers of two secondary schools in order to identify a methodology for writing texts in a foreign language. The results of this survey focus on teachers' strategies in teaching English that improve students' writing skills.

2.1 Strategies used by Foreign Language Teachers

After reviewing the data collected during the survey, we found out what strategies foreign language teachers use to teach writing at the stage of basic general education. Before teaching, the teacher prepares lesson plans, especially strategy (Rhalmi, 2018, p.24). The strategies used by the teacher are as follows:

- Discussion groups.
- Dictionary.
- Keeping a diary.

2.1.1 Discussion groups

In this strategy, the teacher instructs the students to create discussion groups, and then the teacher explains the material about expository text to the students, the teacher explains to the class the definition of expository text, general structure, characteristics, and provides examples of expository text. After completing the explanation, the teacher assigns students to write a descriptive text for group discussion.

In group discussions, students understand what a descriptive text is, with all the rules and characteristics of writing a descriptive text with a general structure. In group discussions, students work together and help each other, if one student does not understand yet, the other tries to explain, and the teacher gives instructions to the students. In group discussions, students are more active and enthusiastic, they feel that assignments are easier because they are done together and it is easier for them to understand the lesson.

Sometimes some students are embarrassed to ask the teacher, they do not understand what the teacher is explaining, but they are embarrassed to ask questions, and students will not find it difficult to ask questions to their classmates. Group discussions make students more active and engaged because the atmosphere created is comfortable, and working together will increase their motivation (Rhalmi, 2018).

2.1.2 Dictionary

In this strategy, every student should take a dictionary with them, the teacher always advises the students to take a dictionary with them because he wants the students to be active, look for unknown meanings and look in the dictionary more often.

2.1.3 Keeping a diary

In the last strategy, the teacher asks the students to prepare a special notebook, and it should be designed in such a way that the students can write in the notebook in English about what activities they went through during each lesson (Rhalmi, 2018).

Also, during the survey of teachers, we identified what writing skills students should have at the stage of basic general education:

- 5th grade (11 years old). Students should be able to write short letters of congratulations, fill out personal information, and write short personal emails of up to 50 words.
- 6th grade (12 years old). Students in 6th grade should be able to write personal emails of up to 65 words and create short written statements based on an outline, picture, or sample of up to 65 words.

- 7th grade (13 years old). Students in 7th grade should be able to write personal emails of up to 80 words and create written statements based on a sample, outline, picture, or table of up to 80 words.
- 8th grade (14 y.o.). 8th grade students should be able to write personal electronic messages of up to 100 words, create written statements based on a sample, plan, picture or table, create a short written statement based on a text they read or listened to with verbal or visual supports of up to 100 words.
- 9th grade (15 y.o.). 9th grade students should be able to write personal electronic messages of up to 120 words, create written statements based on a sample, plan, picture or table, create a short written statement based on a text read or listened to with verbal or visual supports of up to 120 words, fill out the table, briefly recording the content of the text read or listened to or supplementing the information in the table, present the results of the completed project work in up to 120 words.

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