



APPROACHES IN TEACHING WRITING

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Annotation

Writing has traditionally been a neglected area of foreign language teaching, and most probably the least popular skill to acquire among students. However, it has lately emerged as an important element of the communication dyad, which also involves speaking, i.e. the oral manifestation of social interaction and exchange of information. When explaining writing in practical terms, the focus falls on showing that there should be a link between real-life needs and instruction, both from the perspective of the language and from that of the task.

Keywords: written communication, productive skills, language skills, task-related skills, approaches to writing

Introduction

The importance of English as a comprehensive means of communication has gained increased importance in the present social, political, commercial and professional contexts. With the advancements of information technology in diverse spheres of society, English has become the language of the world citizen. Traditionally neglected in the practice of foreign language teaching, writing is probably the least popular skill to acquire among students. However, it has lately emerged as an important element of the communication dyad, which also involves speaking, i.e. the oral manifestation of social interaction and exchange of information.

Materials and Methods

Writing to communicate is a complex skill: it transcends the act of mechanically copying letters and words or even forming simple sentences. It requires learners to create a writing product, by actively and critically using the target language, employing complex cognitive skills, analyzing information and producing original work. Even more so, the communicative event is often typified by interaction with an audience that is characteristically absent.





Results and Discussion

Writing as a Productive Skill

The developing of writing as a productive language skill has always been a challenging and difficult task. The actual process of writing implies teaching students how to write with coherence, how to use the suitable grammar and lexical structures, how to employ acceptable spelling and how to correctly choose the appropriate language register.

Regardless of the level, good writing involves discovery, planning, developing ideas, creativity, and revision. In order to master writing, students need to learn a variety of techniques that help them understand and approach writing tasks in order to address them successfully.

As in the case of all processes, teaching writing requires a systematic approach intended to motivate the students to express themselves in writing and make them aware of the steps involved in effective writing.

There are different theories that substantiate a methodical approach to teaching writing. Walter (2004) proposes modelled writing as a technique that rests mainly on teacher demonstration comprising revising, adding, asking questions, clarifying purpose. The same author introduces shared writing as a method to activate students to get more involved in the process of writing while practicing language patterns and acquiring functional writing strategies.

The Practice of Teaching Writing

Most students need to write paragraphs, compositions, argumentative essays and reports for coursework and for exams. Applying a wide array of writing techniques should help students better understand the mechanisms of writing. A gradual approach to writing should take students on a journey that starts from simple paragraphs, centred on the idea of coherence and cohesion, to more complex productions, such as lengthy argumentations that pivot on personal opinions and demand critical thinking skills. In terms of more practical procedures, teaching writing as a productive skill involves the following steps:

1. Providing a model of the target written product;
2. Working on the model, with specific focus on meaning and form by guiding the learners to analyse the text in order to discover language, organization patterns, and register features;
3. Practising on a similar task, by imitating the form and the language (spelling, structure, vocabulary, layout);
4. Producing an answer to a new task which involves personalizing both the content





and the form.

Furthermore, there are some essential communicative aspects that should be considered when teaching writing:

- The task – it should be contextualized and formulated so as to answer the following questions: who?, what?, to whom?, why?.

E.g.: You (**WHO**) have read an advertisement for a specialized course you have long been interested in. Write a letter of request (**WHAT**) to the institution organizing the course (**TO WHOM**) in order to find out more details (**WHY**).

- The audience – it is an essential element of communicative competence which dictates the manner in which we tailor our language according to status, gender, and age of the recipients. Unless we adjust the vocabulary, grammar, tone, register and style to the audience, communication may not be appropriate and may even be flawed. E.g.: 1) writing an informal letter (the audience/recipient is a friend/relative/colleague/workmate) requires the use of colloquial language and of the informal register;

2) Writing a military report (the audience/recipient is a superior/ members of the professional community)

Involves using formal language, register and style.

- Purpose – it relates directly to the objective of the writing (giving information, making invitations, requesting information, making a complaint, expressing opinion) and entails conventions of style and register. The purpose of writing is correlated with language functions (to narrate, to describe, to explain, to inform, to argue, to convince) and determines the choice of vocabulary and grammar.

E.g.: writing a compare and contrast paragraph – the purpose of such a writing piece is to discuss similarities and differences between people, objects, places or events, by using descriptive language (vocabulary) and the comparative of adjectives (grammar). Regardless of the overall approach taken, it is only natural to conclude that teaching writing is a systematic process that involves going through gradual stages in order to deliver a final (written) product.





WRITING as a **productive** skill

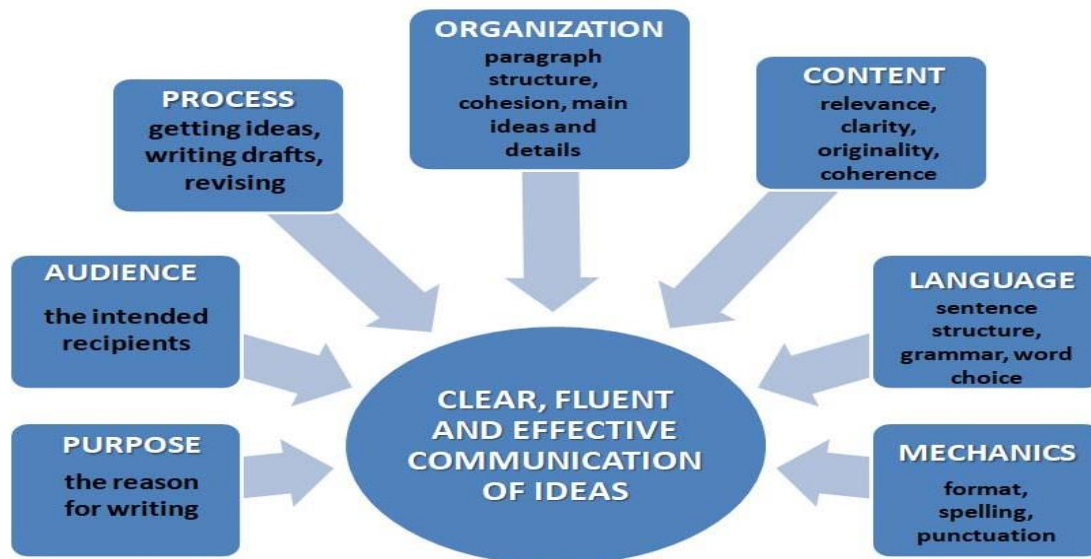


Figure no. 1: Elements of writing

Conclusion

Developing writing skills is a long-term investment. Far from being a mere matter of transcribing language into written form, writing is a thinking process that demands a conscious intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. This article has discussed theoretical approaches to developing writing skills as an intention to offer both students and teachers of English an opportunity to clarify and deepen their theoretical understanding of writing as a productive skill while creating a fertile framework for their future journeys into the intricate realm of written expression.

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