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## TEACHING FREE WRITING

**Streszczenie:** Przy nauczaniu języków obcych wiele uwagi poświęca się nauczaniu pisania. W artykule opisano główne rodzaje pisma, których opanowanie sprzyja rozwojowi logicznego wyrażania swoich myśli w formie pisemnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** język, pisanie, lekcje, model, esej, rozwój

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Writing has become an indispensable component of modern society. As civilization becomes more complex and greater quantities of information have to be stored and transmitted, the written word is even more significant. Thus, writing is an important form of communication.

In teaching a foreign language, writing is an important means of instruction; it serves to reinforce and consolidate the other language skills: speaking, listening and reading. Underestimation of writing leads to poor results in other skills. It is important to teach writing as a skill in its own right from an early stage in language learning. As writing was for a long time a neglected area in language teaching, the process of mastering the skills of writing needs separate and special attention.

Proficiency in expressing one's thoughts in written form promotes proficiency in the use of spoken language.

One should bear in mind, however, that written and spoken languages are different forms of communication, each having its recognized area of functioning and specific features:

- in speech there is mutual human contact: you are continuously being influenced by your partner; when writing you are on your own: there is no interaction, no reactions from others;

- when speaking one is directly addressing one or more of the people present; when writing one is addressing people who are absent, and often an unknown audience;
- the speech situation permits a larger variety of means of expression (gestures, facial expression, intonation, pauses, laughter, etc.); in writing we have to search for the exact word, phrase, idiom, definite structure of a sentence or a paragraph to express our thoughts;
- speaking is at least five times faster than writing; speech is spontaneous, writing is not; the writer has more time to choose his words, to edit and check what he has written.

It is generally recognized that the ability to write is the most difficult of the language abilities to acquire. As well as any other ability, it can be learnt in many different ways. For example, to learn to swim you may be thrown into the water, and then you either begin to sink or swim on your own. On the other hand, you can learn to swim by taking a series of lessons from an instructor and by practicing. Writing can also be learnt through lessons and practice in a step-by-step process embracing several stages.

The reasons for teaching writing to students include reinforcement, language development, learning style and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right. In this article we will look first of all at writing as a basic language skill which is just as important as speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write letters, how to put written reports together, how to reply to advertisements – and increasingly, how to write using electronic media. They need to know some of writing's special conventions (punctuation, paragraph construction etc.) just as they need to know how to pronounce spoken English appropriately. Part of the teacher's job is to give them that skill.

Writing always ends with a finished product. At first single words are linked together – resulting in a simple sentence. Simple sentences are then joined into compound and complex ones, which form a paragraph.

Besides paragraph writing students should be able to write post-cards, letters of various kinds, fill in different application forms, job applications among them, write narrative compositions, reports, newspaper and magazine articles, dialogues, playscripts and other well-organized essays, in other words: free writing.

This article presents ideas for showing teachers how to prepare students for free writing activities, how to ease students into the writing process, motivate them to want to write, and provide ways to improve their writing skills.

Traditionally it is proposed three stages in the writing process: prewriting, writing and re-writing. (Rohman (1965), Barnett (1989)). Barnett has suggested a plan for incorporating the writing process approach into a typical four-skill foreign language course [1]. This model features the following stages:

**I. Pre-writing stage:** students brainstorm and organize ideas. Pre-writing activities help students start their papers: they involve students with a composition topic, let them realize what might be included in their papers, help them work out rhetorical problems, or review or provide useful vocabulary. For example, students brainstorm a list of all possible ideas, perhaps in small groups as well as individually. Then they organize those ideas into meaningful sequences or groups of ideas. Staton (1983) suggests the use of journals for dialogue between students and teachers as a way to respond to tentative organization patterns [2].

**II. Writing stage:** students write their first drafts on the basis of their ideas from the pre-writing stage. Instructors give students a direction sheet that guides them through the writing of the first draft. Helpful ideas such as how to organize the composition, how to use punctuation, and what to look for in reviewing the text can be included on the sheet.

When teaching free writing (i.e. paragraph, essay writing, etc.) in class on this stage after reading the instructions, planning out the time and selecting a title it's a good idea to take the following steps. These

steps will help students not to go wrong while writing their paragraphs or essay:

1. Read the title, underline the key words identify what form of writing is required.
2. What is the purpose of the piece of writing? Who is it for? What style is appropriate, formal/informal?
3. List possible main points – note form.
4. List necessary subsidiary points – to back up the main points, examples, opinion, etc.
5. Express (to yourself or in written form) each main point in full, as simply and clearly as you can.
6. Jot down any useful words, phrases, structures, idioms you think you might forget when actually writing.
7. Select and organize relevant main points into a plan, with relevant subsidiary points – note form – (try different ways of arranging if the first plan does not seem clear). Do not include any information that is not asked for.
8. Add link words, phrases, discourse markers to plan (trying to say the whole thing through to yourself in your head).
9. Write it, clearly and simply.
10. Check it through, once for relevance, again for accuracy (subject/verb agreement, tenses, spelling, punctuation, etc.).

It is a good thing when students get into habits to follow these steps. It will help them to avoid mistakes and make the task less frustrating and difficult [4].

**III. Re-writing stage:** after the teacher reads the first drafts and makes comments, the students write the final drafts, or next drafts if there are more than two drafts. In making comments on the first drafts the teacher should concentrate on what the student is trying to say, respond positively wherever possible, point out grammatical problems and confusing sections. Then the teacher should suggest improvements, responding to elements such as clarity of the message, structural accuracy, vocabulary appropriateness, effectiveness of the organization, and mechanics.

The following checklist will serve as a guide for revision:

1. Does your introduction contain a clear statement of purpose?
2. Does each paragraph have only one main idea?
3. Are the main ideas developed by a variety of factual details, concrete details, examples, reasons?
4. Do you use transitions to bridge gaps between paragraphs?
5. Is each main idea in the essay related to the topic as a whole?
6. Does your essay follow a logical order of development?
7. Is your final draft free from errors in capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling, word choice, and grammar? [3]

The teacher can also give some helpful bits of advice for the students to follow when they are eager to become a better writer. For example:

Your ability to write will improve with practice. At the same time you can help yourself by:

- reading as much English as possible
- studying the way model essays are organized
- learning to check your own work quickly and efficiently
- building up a stock of useful phrases
- trying to write within a strict time limit.

This process-oriented approach to writing gives students the guidance and encouragement they need in order to become good writers. Teachers benefit also as they spend less time grading errors, respond more to meaning and receive a better written product in the end.

Writing has got immense educational value because it provides the students with numerous possibilities for reflection and analysis. Different types of writing encourage the students to raise questions such as: "What else, besides spelling, grammar and vocabulary, do we need to know to become successful writers?" In a sense every type of writing can be characterized by certain features of creativity as the writer's produced piece of writing usually has a distinguishing personal touch. But generally speaking, the final judgement about the type of writing depends on the purpose of the writing. Different writing tasks should receive attention in the classroom teaching practice.

**References**

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