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O. O. Kotlyarova

MODERN TENDENCIES IN TEACHING WRITING TO ESL STUDENTS

In our fast-moving world of mobile phones and the Internet people do less and less writing, and a great deal of what we actually write becomes quite short – postcards, answers in question forms, brief notes to friends, application forms, etc. This is obviously reflected in many classrooms where speaking, listening and reading activities are found more often than those of writing. Despite this, there are still some good reasons why it is absolutely necessary to work on writing during your English classes.

This problem has been studied by many prominent methodologists among whom we can single out Raimes A., Tompkins G., Taberski Sh., Simic M., Scrivener J., Kenny S. and others.

The aim of the article is to single out and analyze modern tendencies in teaching writing to ESL students.

First of all, writing involves a different kind of mental process. There is more time to think, to reflect, to prepare, to make mistakes and find alternative and better solutions. Another reason is that many students who intend to continue their education abroad and want to apply for exchange programs need to formulate in writing the grounds for granting them a scholarship in an intelligent, correct and coherent way. Business English and examination preparation are the two areas where good writing skills remain very important. Taking into consideration the reasons mentioned, in a writing class students need to be taught both how to use the process to their advantage as language learners and writers, and also how to produce an acceptable product upon demand [1, p. 153].

Analyzing writing work in class we may say that it falls on a continuum from copying to free writing.

At one end of the continuum the student is practicing forming letter shapes in a handwriting book or copying examples from a textbook.

The second stage involves doing exercises which make students pay attention to the form rather than the content. For example, they are given a paragraph and asked to make changes in it: the paragraph may be given in the first person and the students are asked to change it into the third person.

Guided writing is the next very important stage of teaching a) being actively encouraged to follow through a series of preparatory steps before the final text is produced, and b) becoming more aware of that preparation process, so that it can be done more independently and transparently in future. You may give help in thinking through ideas, ordering them, considering vocabulary and grammar, co-operatively preparing notes and draft copies, and in other ways of making preparations to write. This often seems to be a preferable alternative to simply giving students an essay title and leaving them to get on with it [2, p. 57]. The following are the steps of producing a written work:

1. choosing a subject and limiting it to a topic; group discussion; consideration of the purpose and audience of writing; consideration of likely difficulties;
2. individual or group brainstorming of ideas and approaches;
3. selection and rejection of ideas;
4. sorting and ordering of ideas – note-making;
5. focus on useful language models – in other articles given as examples;

6. preparing draft text;
7. evaluating draft text;
8. individuals or groups prepare final text.

At the other end of the continuum the student himself chooses both subject matter and form producing a piece of written work.

Thus, based on the above information researcher single out the following approaches to teaching writing:

1. The Controlled-to-Free Approach

The controlled-to-free approach is sequential to the audio-lingual method which dominated in the 1950s and early 1960: students are first given sentence exercises, then paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically by changing questions to statements, present to past, or plural to singular. They might also change words to clauses or combine sentences. With these controlled compositions, it is relatively easy for students to write and yet avoid errors, which makes error correction easy. Students are allowed to try some free composition after they have reached an intermediate level of proficiency. As such, this approach stresses on grammar, syntax, and mechanics. It emphasizes accuracy rather than fluency or originality [1].

2. The Free-Writing Approach

This approach stresses writing quantity rather than quality. Teachers who use this approach assign vast amounts of free writing on given topics with only minimal correction. The emphasis in this approach is on content and fluency rather than on accuracy and form. Once ideas are down on the page, grammatical accuracy and organization follow. Thus, teachers may begin their classes by asking students to write freely on any topic without worrying about grammar and spelling for five or ten minutes. The teachers do not correct these pieces of free writing. They simply read them and may comment on the ideas the writer expressed. Alternatively, some students may volunteer to read their own writing aloud to the class. Concern for „audience” and „content” are seen as important in this approach.

3. The Paragraph-Pattern Approach

Instead of accuracy of grammar or fluency of content, the Paragraph-Pattern-Approach stresses on organization. Students copy paragraphs and imitate model passages. They put scrambled sentences into paragraph order. They identify general and specific statements and choose to invent an appropriate topic sentence or insert or delete sentences. This approach is based on the principle that in different cultures people construct and organize communication with each other in different ways [1].

4. The Grammar-Syntax-Organization Approach

This approach stresses on simultaneous work on more than one composition feature. Teachers who follow this approach maintain that writing can not be seen as composed of separate skills which are learned sequentially. Therefore, students should be trained to pay attention to organization while they also work on the necessary grammar and syntax. This approach links the purpose of writing to the forms that are needed to convey the message.

5. The Communicative Approach

This approach stresses the purpose of writing and the audience for it. Student writers are encouraged to behave like writers in real life and ask themselves the crucial questions about the purpose and the audience: *Why am I writing this? Who will read it?*

Traditionally, the teacher alone has been the audience for student writing. But some feel that writers do their best when writing is truly a communicative act,

with a writer writing for a real reader. As such, the readership may be extended to classmate and pen pals [1].

6. The Process Approach

Recently, the teaching of writing has moved away from a concentration on written product to an emphasis on the process of writing. Thus, writers ask themselves: *How do I write this? How do I get started?* In this approach, students are trained to generate ideas for writing, think of the purpose and audience, write multiple drafts in order to present written products that communicate their own ideas. Teachers who use this approach give students time to try ideas and feedback on the content of what they write in their drafts. As such, writing becomes a process of discovery for the students as they discover new ideas and new language forms to express them. Furthermore, learning to write is seen as a developmental process that helps students to write as professional authors do, choosing their own topics and genres, and writing from their own experiences or observations. A writing process approach requires that teachers give students greater responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning. Students make decisions about genre and choice of topics, and collaborate as they write [1].

The following are some examples of tasks for different stages of writing instruction:

- students are given a list of statements and copy only the true ones;
- students are given a message and told that they must send it by telegram; they are also told about the cost of each word and the amount of money that they can spend on the message; the idea is to send the message in the fewest words possible;
- the main information about the characters of the story (names, age, nationality, profession, etc.) are given; the task is to unite them in a story; you either specify the genre or let the students choose;
- the topic or the final sentence of the story is given; the task is to write this story;
- finishing a story: several parts of the story (the beginning and the end, the main events, etc.) are given; the task is to finish the story;
- students may be asked to write letters to their group-mates, teachers, fan clubs, etc., send them, get replies and write back;
- long-term projects are an excellent way of integrating writing with other work; the final product may be a class magazine, questionnaires, drama (write and produce a short play or video), etc.

In contemporary methodology of teaching foreign language writing the so-called „creative writing” method is widely spread. A definition of creative writing could include many things, but the major distinction is that a piece of work will express thoughts, ideas and feelings in an imaginative way. Whereas poems, short stories and screenplays would be considered as creative writing: academic writing, textbooks, and most forms of journalism would not. Using all the five senses in order to create imaginative and creative work is what creative writing is all about, and linking disparate information and ideas that can be used together in one piece of work is of central importance to creative writers [3].

The other major consideration is that creative writing is guided by the author’s own need to express rather than a set structure that typifies expository writing, and almost all kinds of academic writing. Especially within academic fields, writing is ruled by conventions that stipulate how a writer should put forward arguments, considerations and viewpoints, and these are heavily codified and leave very little room for individual expression. Creative writing is an intelligent exercise rather than an intellectual one, it is driven by actions,

intentions, dispositions and influences rather than reasoning. Creative writing embraces the individuals' need to move beyond boundaries and consider new ways of thinking. It is exploratory in nature, and self-affirming in the sense that the author is the major driving force in the creative quest.

There are some very good reasons for using creative writing in the classroom, among which the following are believed to be important:

- freedom of expression
- the use of the imagination
- emotional response
- connecting the known to the unknown

Creative writing is a valuable tool for students. It is fun, and can stimulate their imagination. It utilizes both past experience and future ideas, and can aid in promoting artistic expression and self-growth. Students can gain a better idea of their own skills and talents from being given the chance to write creatively. Creative writing has a strong link to developing individuality and a sense of worth in oneself [3].

Thus, modern tendencies in teaching writing to ESL students are characterized by a mixture of different approaches, among which the process approach and the method of creative writing prevail.

In the conclusion it should be mentioned that while teaching students speaking, listening and reading skills, we must not underestimate the importance of developing writing skills, which they will certainly find useful throughout their professional and personal lives.

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Котлярова О. О. Сучасні тенденції в навчанні письму студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну

В статті детально розглянуто сучасні підходи до навчання письму студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну, серед яких превалює процесуальний підхід, який стає дедалі популярнішим серед викладачів іноземних мов. Особливо було виділено так зване „творче письмо”, - метод навчання письму, що якнайкраще дозволяє розвивати не лише мовленеві навички, а й уяву та творчі здібності студентів. Крім цього в статті наведено низку прикладів інтерактивних письмових завдань, які можуть бути використані при навчанні письму студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну.

Ключові слова: навчання, види мовленєвої діяльності, письмо, інтерактивні завдання.

Котлярова О. А. Современные тенденции в обучении письму студентов изучающих английский язык как иностранный

В статье детально рассматриваются современные подходы к обучению письму студентов изучающих английский язык как иностранный, среди которых на передний план выходит процессуальный подход, который становится все более популярным на занятиях иностранных языков.

Особенно было выделено так называемое „творческое письмо”, – метод обучения письму, который позволяет развивать не только речевые навыки, а также воображение и творческие способности студентов. Кроме этого в статье представлено несколько примеров интерактивных письменных заданий, которые могут быть использованы на занятиях иностранных языков.

Ключевые слова: обучение, виды речевой деятельности, письмо, интерактивные задания.

Kotlyarova O. O. Modern Tendencies in Teaching Writing to ESL Students

In the article modern approaches to teaching writing to ESL students are analyzed. The process approach prevails among the mentioned above, becoming more and more popular among foreign language teachers. In this approach, students are trained to generate ideas for writing, think of the purpose and audience, write multiple drafts in order to present written products that communicate their own ideas. Teachers who use this approach give students time to try ideas and feedback on the content of what they write in their drafts. As such, writing becomes a process of discovery for the students as they discover new ideas and new language forms to express them. Special emphasis was made on the so-called „creative writing” method which is widely used in the modern classroom. A definition of creative writing could include many things, but the major distinction is that a piece of work will express thoughts, ideas and feelings in an imaginative way. Creative writing is a valuable tool for students. It is fun, and can stimulate their imagination. It utilizes both past experience and future ideas, and can aid in promoting artistic expression and self-growth. Besides, several examples of interactive writing tasks that can be used while teaching English to ESL students are presented. While teaching students speaking, listening and reading skills, we must not underestimate the importance of developing writing skills, which they will certainly find useful throughout their professional and personal lives.

Key words: teaching, types of speech activity, writing, interactive tasks.

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