

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Applying to any foreign educational institution includes correct submitting and filling out the list of required documents, such as filling out forms, writing a motivation letter, providing several letters of recommendation and other, depending on the university. "Academic transcripts from previous study including grade scale and English translation if originals are in another language, Proof of English language proficiency. This can be a TOEFL, IELTS, IELTS Indicator, Pearson PTE, Kaplan IBT, Kaplan Test of English, or Duolingo DET result, completion of a previous degree taught in English, or proof that you are from an English-speaking country. Personal statement – a personal essay, statement of purpose or similar writing sample is required by all master's and many bachelor's programs. Curriculum Vitae (CV) or résumé. Required for master's degree applicants; recommended by some universities for bachelor's applicants" [1].

It is clear from the requirements that it is very important to have excellent writing skills. In addition to writing a motivation letter, it is also necessary to provide a certificate of knowledge of the language with a certain number of points. The language test also includes a test of the ability to write various types of essays.

When studying any foreign language, writing is considered as one of the most difficult stages, especially academic writing. "Teaching writing has become difficult because of the challenges faced by the students in learning writing skills. Some of the challenges that are faced by the ESL students are lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor spelling, students' readiness and lack of exposure to books and reading materials" [2].

In general, writing is considered as one of the most interesting activities where the student can show creativity. In this article, we would like to share our experience of teaching academic writing to students of the language major "Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages" (the first foreign language is English). Students of this major study at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and the educational program includes a course of Academic Writing. After successfully completing the course, students can confidently fill out the required documents, write a motivation letter, respond to official letters, etc.

As it has been said before, in the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), writing skills are considered as a critical component of language acquisition and proficiency. Scientists and researchers in applied linguistics, education, and psychology have extensively studied the role of writing in FLT and its impact on learners' overall language development. Below we would like to show some key perspectives and opinions from scientists about writing skills in FLT:

1. Writing as a Complex Cognitive Skill

Writing is seen as a higher-order cognitive skill that requires learners to organize thoughts, use language creatively, and engage in metacognitive processes. Lev Vygotsky's theories emphasize the role of writing in developing abstract thinking and self-regulation [3].

Cognitive Load Theory: Writing in a foreign language imposes a significant cognitive load, as learners must manage grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and audience awareness simultaneously. Scientists suggest scaffolding and gradual complexity to support learners.

2. Writing for Language Development

Merrill Swain, Ph.D, professor at university of Toronto argues that producing language (speaking and writing) is essential for language acquisition. Writing allows learners to practice and internalize grammatical structures, vocabulary, and discourse patterns [4].

3. Writing as a Social Practice

Sociocultural Theory: Writing is not just an individual activity but a social practice. Scientists emphasize the importance of collaborative writing, peer feedback, and interaction in developing writing skills.

Genre-Based Approaches: Researchers like John Swales and Ken Hyland highlight the importance of teaching genre-specific writing (e.g., academic, professional, or creative writing) to help learners communicate effectively in real-world contexts [5].

4. Challenges in FLT Writing

Interference from L1: Scientists note that learners often transfer writing styles, structures, and conventions from their first language (L1) to the foreign language (FL), which can lead to errors or misunderstandings.

Cultural Differences: Writing conventions vary across cultures, and learners may struggle with audience expectations, tone, and rhetorical structures in the FL.

5. Technology and Writing in FLT

Digital Tools: Researchers advocate for the use of technology, such as automated writing evaluation (AWE) tools, collaborative platforms (e.g., Google Docs), and AI-based feedback systems, to enhance writing instruction.

Multimodal Writing: Scientists emphasize the importance of integrating multimodal elements (e.g., images, videos, hyperlinks) into writing tasks to reflect modern communication practices.

6. Assessment and Feedback

Formative Assessment: Scientists stress the importance of providing constructive, timely feedback to help learners improve their writing skills. Formative assessment is preferred over summative assessment in FLT writing.

Rubrics and Criteria: Clear assessment criteria and rubrics are essential for guiding learners and ensuring fairness in evaluating writing tasks.

7. Motivation and Autonomy

Self-Determination Theory: Researchers highlight the role of intrinsic motivation in developing writing skills. Tasks that are meaningful, relevant, and autonomy-supportive are more likely to engage learners.

Process Writing Approach: Scientists advocate for a process-oriented approach that encourages drafting, revising, and editing, rather than focusing solely on the final product.

8. Interdisciplinary Insights

Psychology of Writing: Studies in psychology reveal that writing can enhance memory, critical thinking, and emotional expression, which are beneficial for FL learners.

Neuroscience: Research on brain activity during writing tasks shows that FL writing activates multiple regions of the brain, reinforcing language learning and cognitive development.

Scientists generally agree that writing is a vital skill in FLT, contributing to linguistic, cognitive, and social development. Effective writing instruction should be learner-centered, context-aware, and supported by appropriate tools and feedback mechanisms. By integrating writing into FLT curricula, educators can help learners achieve greater proficiency and confidence in using the target language.

Different strategies are used by us to overcome writing challenges:

1. **Scaffolded Practice:** Breaking writing tasks into smaller, manageable steps (e.g., brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising).
2. **Model Texts:** Providing examples of well-written texts to help learners understand structure, style, and vocabulary use.
3. **Peer Review:** Encouraging collaborative writing and peer feedback to build confidence and improve accuracy.
4. **Frequent Practice:** Incorporating regular writing activities, such as journals, essays, or creative writing, to build fluency and comfort.
5. **Focusing on Process, Not Just Product:** Emphasizing the importance of drafting and revising rather than expecting perfection in the first attempt.

6. **Using Technology:** Tools like grammar checkers, spell checkers, and translation apps can support learners in identifying and correcting errors.

While writing is undoubtedly challenging, it is also a crucial skill for effective communication and academic success. With consistent practice, targeted instruction, and supportive feedback, learners can gradually develop their writing abilities in a foreign language.

There is no doubt that everything depends on the level of language. For example, motivating elementary students to develop writing skills can be both fun and rewarding. Some effective strategies can be used to inspire learners: praising and encouragement: focusing on their effort and creativity rather than just correctness, displaying their work (creating a "Writing Wall" or class book to showcase their stories and essays), rewarding (offering small rewards or certificates for completing writing tasks), providing a supportive environment and encouraging students to express themselves without fear of judgment.

By making writing engaging, relevant, and supportive it is possible to teach students to develop a lifelong love for writing.

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