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TEACHING WRITING AS A MAJOR PART OF PRODUCTIVE SKILLS IN MIXED ABILITY CLASSES

Teshaboyeva Nafisa Zubaydulla qizi

Jizzakh branch of National University of Uzbekistan

Annotation: The article deals with investigating the significance of writing in mixed ability classes using modern innovative technologies while teaching a foreign language. Since learners should be able to learn English fluently and appropriately they should develop their reading, listening, writing and speaking skills. Namely, the aim of teaching a foreign language is a communicative activity of learners. Hence, the appropriate use of modern innovative technologies and strategies associated with fostering writing proficiency among students with varying skill levels.

Key words: Reinforcement, Preparation Activity writings; Teaching punctuation, Creative writing, contribution of grammar, sentence combining and sentence generating; syntactic elements.

Teaching writing as a major part of productive skills in mixed-ability classes presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for educators. In such classes, students may have varying levels of proficiency in writing, which requires teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to ensure that all students can make progress. Here's some information on how to effectively teach writing in mixed-ability classes:

1. Differentiated Instruction:

Recognize that students in mixed-ability classes have different needs and abilities. Differentiated instruction involves tailoring your teaching methods to meet these diverse needs. Provide a range of writing tasks with varying levels of complexity to cater to different skill levels.

2. Pre-Assessment:

Start by assessing your students' writing abilities. This can be done through diagnostic writing tasks or previous writing samples. Understanding their starting points will help you design appropriate instructional plans.

3. Clear Objectives:

Clearly define your writing objectives and communicate them to your students. Let them know what skills and knowledge they are expected to gain by the end of the course or specific writing assignment.

4. Scaffolded Writing Tasks:

Break down writing assignments into smaller, manageable steps. Provide clear guidelines and support for each step, such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. This scaffolding approach helps students build their writing skills progressively.

In writing for learning students write predominantly to spread their learning of grammar and vocabulary of the language.

Further Harmer divides writing for learning into:

1. Reinforcement writing

2. Preparation writing

3. Activity writing

1. Reinforcement writing

It is a simple form where students are asked to write sentences using grammar they have recently learnt, write paragraphs or longer compositions to practice recently focused-on aspects of language. Students also can be asked to write a story about something that happened in the past (to practice past tenses), or to write a description of someone they know to use the character and physical description vocabulary.

The aim of this phase is to give students opportunity to practice and remember new language they have learnt better. The act of writing these exercises makes them think about the new vocabulary or grammar.

2. Preparation writing

When learning second language sometimes it is more useful to use writing as preparation for some other activities. J. Harmer suggests using preparation writing for example when students are asked to prepare discussion. Writing sentences “gives the students time to think up ideas rather than having to come up with instant fluent opinions, something that many, especially at lower level, find difficult and awkward.”

Another technique that Harmer suggests to use is for students to talk in groups to prepare their arguments. It is effective for students to make notes which they can use during their discussion.

Here we can state that this is a good way how to teach writing in mixed ability classes. Preparation writing can be a vital help for weaker or shy students who are not so confident to speak immediately.

3. Activity writing

Writing is frequently used with activities that focus on something else such as language practice, acting out or speaking. Activity writing is used with activities in which students are asked to write their dialogue before they act it out. It is helpful for students to plan and write the dialogue before they act it out. Other types are questionnaire-type activities. Groups of students design a questionnaire and then they circulate around the class asking their colleagues the questions they have prepared. They write down the answers and later students report what they have found out. The aim of activity writing is to use writing to help students to perform other activity but “students need to be able to write to do these activities, but the activities do not teach students to write.” Also there are certain types of teaching writing below:

Teaching punctuation:

To be able to write with correct punctuation is an important skill. We are judged by the quality of what is written. If capital letters, commas, paragraphs boundaries, full stops are not used correctly in our writing, we can make a negative impression and our writing can be easily misunderstood.

Making notes

During studies students write notes for many reasons. Because note taking involves copying it is a good activity for improving writing. Harmer suggests getting students to read encyclopedia about a country and write accurately as many places names as possible, or to read an extract about history and write down the names of people mentioned there. It is essential to check these activities by the teacher and indicate where the problem is.

Whisper writing

In this activity students are given a written sentence. A student can read the sentence for a short time. He/she is told that the spelling matters. The sentence is taken away and the student has to write the sentence from memory and pass it to another student.

Finally we can state, that writing is a difficult skill to learn. We expect the learner to be able to spell correctly and to use punctuation correctly too. To make the learning as easy as possible and to make learners successful, confident and willing to write the teacher should provide the students with:

Information – it means that students have to be given clear and logical instruction what the teacher wants them to do and to be clear about the topic details

Language – if students need any specific language they should be given it before the activity so they will not be stuck

Ideas – teachers need to be able to suggest ideas to help students when they do not know how to start or continue. “One of the skills of a good writing teacher is to be able to throw out suggestions without crowding out the individual students with too much oppressive detail.”

Letters - Get your students to make complaints, thank, ask for and give information or advice, prepare job applications.

Creative writing - you can use pictures or begin a story and ask students to finish it. Or you can use a personal situation where the student was happy, sad, surprised, shocked, etc. The content of this document remains the © copyright of its owner, all rights reserved.

Diary - Ask your students to keep a diary.

Discursive essays - Students need to present an argument, state points ‘for’ and ‘against’ in a logical way, and write a conclusive paragraph. (This is often required by Exam Boards.)

Instructions - It might be a recipe, directions, changing a wheel, cooking a meal, making a cup of tea, repairing something or applying for a visa.

Dictation - A dictation can have a calming effect on young learners. It is also useful for teachers who have limited resources and need to dictate a text for a reading skills lesson. Alternatively, you could ask your students to dictate to each other and to focus also on pronunciation and listening skills. Dictations are good for spelling as

there is no direct link in English between the way words are written and the way they sound. Here are some extra ideas for different levels of learner:

Beginners/elementary

1. Descriptions (home, family members and friends, your job, a place etc.);
2. Short biography of self, family member or famous person;
3. Emails to a pen friend.

Intermediate (ideas from the previous list can be used as well)

1. Problem pages;
2. Horoscopes;
3. Magazine interviews;
4. Advertisements;
5. Quizzes and puzzles;
6. Film and book reviews

Advanced (ideas from the previous lists can be used as well)

1. Letters to the editor;
2. Essays/Articles arguing and defending a point of view.

Moreover, contribution of grammar helps to improve writing skill. Grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language. All languages have grammar, and each language has its own grammar. People who speak the same language are able to communicate because they intuitively know the grammar system of that language - that is, the rules of making meaning. Students who are native speakers of English already know English grammar. They recognize the sounds of English words, the meanings of those words, and the different ways of putting words together to make meaningful sentences.

Weaver proposes a similar approach to teaching grammar in the context of writing. She writes, "What all students need is guidance in understanding and applying those aspects of grammar that are most relevant to writing." Weaver proposes five grammatical concepts that enable writers to show improvement in sentence revision, style, and editing:

1. Teaching concepts on subject, verb, sentence, clause, phrase, and related concepts for editing;
2. Teaching style through sentence combining and sentence generating;
3. Teaching sentence sense through the manipulation of syntactic elements;
4. Teaching both the power of dialects and the dialects of power;
5. Teaching punctuation and mechanics for convention, clarity, and style.

Sentence combining is the strategy of joining short sentences into longer, more complex sentences. As students engage in sentence-combining activities, they learn how to vary sentence structure in order to change meaning and style. Numerous studies show that the use of sentence combining is an effective method for improving students' writing. The value of sentence combining is most evident as students recognize the effect of sentence variety (beginnings, lengths, complexities) in their own writing. Besides that, given Noguchi's analysis that grammar choices affect writing style, sentence combining is an effective method for helping students develop fluency and variety in their own writing style. Students can explore sentence variety, length, parallelism, and other syntactic devices by comparing their sentences with sentences

from other writers. They also discover the decisions writers make in revising for style and effect.

In conclusion, the goal is to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students can improve their writing skills at their own pace in mixed-ability classes. With the right strategies and a focus on individual growth, you can help students of varying abilities become more proficient writers. It is worth emphasizing that helping students to develop their writing skills can be challenging. Writing in class may be considered quite boring and some teachers prefer to get their students to do written work at home. Besides that, in a classroom consisting of undergraduate students where we take classes, we follow the following process in teaching basic grammar skills to enhance writing skills. We make the students understand writing strategies and apply those by using basic and advanced concepts of grammar where ever it is necessary.

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