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SOME EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS OF LEARNERS

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Several methods can be used to improve students’ writing. We will not bring up every single method there is since that would take too long. In the article we will focus on a few methods that we think will be useful in a classroom, but of course all the methods will be taken from certain sources that we have chosen.

In many cases, the hardest thing for a student concerning writing is to get started with the entire writing process. According to Cowley, there are different reasons why students have trouble with this. One reason could be that the students are afraid of failing and that they are under pressure to perform. The teacher must calm them down and persuade them that if they do make mistakes, it is not a disaster. They will just have to correct them afterwards. There could also be other methods. Cowley mentions warm-up exercises, rewards and challenges for the students to increase their motivation [1,56].

What to write about is a quite common problem. The process of collecting information and coming up with ideas is not easy for everyone. Making mind maps is a recommended option. If you have the topic Christmas, the teacher tells the students to close their eyes and think of all the things they can come up with that are connected with Christmas. This is an efficient method and Hedge maintains that this works with almost any topic [2,89].

Brainstorming is a second alternative where the students gain information by discussing in groups. White and Arndt write that both the teacher and the students have important roles in this session. One example of brainstorming is that every student starts by writing down their own ideas about a certain topic. After a few minutes they join a partner and they discuss their ideas. Some time later the two students become four and they elaborate their ideas. At the end of this activity the discussion stops and each group suggests at least three ideas that are written down on the board by the teacher. It is, according to White and Arndt, crucial that the teacher goes through all these ideas with the students before the writing starts so that everyone understands what the ideas mean. After this session the writing can start, with the students’ minds filled with ideas [3, 18-21].

Besides these different methods for writing, Cowley mentions in her book that the teacher should give students inspiration and create an atmosphere for writing. One idea is that the students could write a letter to their favorite person or to pretend that they are producers of a TV-documentary. In order to create an atmosphere Cowley that if certain students work best when they are listening to music they should be allowed to have a Walkman while writing. Dramatic

sounds like wind or maybe owls howling could be a good inspiration if the students are supposed to write for example ghost stories [3, 8-10].

Rationale of using writing activities to improve speaking

There are three advantages of using writing to promote speaking:

1. Writing is easier to handle for those learners who are not ready to speak up in class either psychologically (because they are too shy) or physically (because of a large class, lack of time, etc.).
2. Writing can reinforce what has been practised orally and vice versa: it can provide practice in forms that are more fully realized in writing (Rivers and Temperly 1978). How can the four skills be used together effectively?
3. The four skills work in tandem when the activities that require their use are designed to support learners in the process of learning, creating and producing a specific product. Four approaches in particular are structured so that the four skills can be used simultaneously. These approaches are: the focal skill approach, content-based instruction, task-based instruction and the project-based approach.

The goal of the focal skill approach is studying in the SL in order to acquire it. This second language curriculum stresses the balanced development of listening, speaking, reading and writing by measuring competency in each skill and then focusing on the development of the weakest skill. Resources like those developed by the International Center for Focal Skills (ICFS) use placement tests to identify weak skill areas.

Rivers, W. M. [22,89] describes approaches to CBI, which include theme-based & adjunct learning. Theme-based CBI focuses on a theme of high interest to students and develops a wide range of language skills around that theme. The learning of the content requires considerable exposure to a variety of forms of information, which, in turn, requires the use of all four modalities. In the adjunct form of CBI, language and content courses are taught separately but are carefully coordinated so that literacy, oral language development and thinking skills are positively enhanced. In this approach, the content teacher presents content to students while the language teacher brings vocabulary, grammar and subskill development to students' attention through typical exercises, all of which focus on the lexicon of the content.

This approach concretizes the integration of not only the four skills but also language, culture, experience and learning strategies (Turnbull, 1999). With the careful selection of a final project that requires learners to demonstrate what they have learned through both oral and written production, the teacher plans backwards to identify what aspects of language, culture, experience and learning strategies are required to complete the end project.

Self-introduction takes the answers to a series of personal questions (name, age, grade level, where you live, members of your family, favourite sports, animals, colours, subjects, etc.) and sequences them into a self introduction. Students are given large visuals to trigger each component of the self introduction. The teacher can point to each picture while modeling a self-introduction (students are listening) and then invite learners to introduce themselves (speaking) to one or two of their peers. Some of the visuals can then be changed and the students can be invited to introduce themselves to others in the class to whom they have never spoken. This activity can be adapted to become a regular (daily, weekly) warm-up activity to get learners talking in the target language. Having covered listening and speaking in the oral self-introduction, a scenario can then be created

where in learners must write a self-introduction to a potential homestay host. The same picture cues can be used, reconfigured to show a salutation, closing and signature. The picture cues provide learners with support without giving them a text to memorize. In multilevel SL classes, graded readers can be excellent springboards for another activity that integrates the four skills- a reading and retell. First, learners select a book or story at their own level and read it. Learners are then given a template to follow to summarize their thoughts about the story (writing). The summary is designed to help learners gauge the amount of detail required in a retell. After additional practice reading the summary silently and aloud several times, learners are asked to select two or three illustrations from the book to help them tell the story. They then practice telling the story by using the pictures and remembering what they wrote in the template. Students find a partner who has not read the same story and retell (speaking) their story to one another using the selected illustrations. Partners not only listen to the retell but also complete a feedback checklist (writing) about the retell. After reading the feedback, partners switch roles.

Why are four skills activities useful? Four skills activities in the language classroom serve many valuable purposes: they give learners scaffolded support, opportunities to create, contexts in which to use the language for exchanges of real information, evidence of their own ability (proof of learning) and, most important, confidence. Writing activities are applicable to a large class if the activities require no teacher response.

In conclusion since writing and speaking have many features in common, by deliberately controlling a number of variables, teachers can make writing closer to speaking. The important thing is that the task itself should not be very difficult when the aim of writing is to improve speaking. In this sense, free-writing techniques and the communicative approach are thought to be appropriate for this purpose. If the students already know the basic skills of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, the task becomes much easier.

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LANGUAGE LEVELS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES: PHONETICS, MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

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Abstract: *In this article, the importance of phonetics, morphology and syndics in teaching foreign languages and the relations between them were covered. In addition, the article contains these three levels and covered how foreign language education is used.*

Key words: *Foreign languages, morphology, phonetics, level, pronunciation, sound system, phenomena, formation.*