***Innovative approaches in teaching writing and speaking skills***

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Zhezkazgan.

* By making writing a communicative activity, you increase students’ interest in writing and your interest in what they write.
* Students need to learn to find and correct their own errors, so it is not necessary or even desirable for you to find and correct every error on each paper.
* The ability to write well entails learning to plan and edit as well as write.
* Large classes in EFL settings make it important for you to learn to respond quickly and efficiently, and to find ways to reduce the paper-making load.

Many ESL textbooks approach writing by teaching students the proper forms of written English (how to write a sentence, paragraph, and so on) and then coming up with topics to give students an opportunity to practice using these forms. Other approaches begin with the message, encouraging students to find something they want to say and moving to the question of what form will best help them communicate their message. There is no conclusive evidence that either of these approaches to teaching writing is the right one. However, the writing course that stresses the message is generally more interesting than one that stresses form and that, by stressing the message, you can use the inherent human desire to communicate as an engine to draw students into writing.

Be forewarned that even if you intend to focus on writing as a communicative activity, it is very easy to become overly concerned with formal accuracy. One reason is that written language is generally expected to be more formally correct than spoken language, so flaws seem to cry out for correction. The relative permanence of written language also means that teachers can scrutinize compositions slowly and carefully, devoting far more time to ferreting out grammar errors than they can with ephemeral spoken language. Finally, obsession with grammar and form is sometimes fueled by a cult of martyrdom among writing teachers, who compete with each other to see who slaves for more hours over each batch of papers. In this competition, well-marked papers are concrete evidence of the teacher’s merit.

The thrust of the argument here is not that you should ignore grammar and form, training in grammatical accuracy and the forms of composition should be an important part of any writing course. However, overemphasis on form can lead to neglect of the message itself. In turn, students may fabricate messages in order to practice grammar or expository form. Students’ tendency to ignore communication is compounded when compositions have no audience other than the teacher, and as Raimes (1983) notes, “Traditionally, the teacher has been not so much the reader as the judge of students’ writing” (p.17). Compositions that come back to students covered with grammar corrections and comments on form serve to confirm the students’ belief that writing is a formal exercise. Unfortunately, most students aren’t very interested in writing formal exercises, and most teachers aren’t very interested in reading them.

We would be kidding ourselves if we thought that students wrote compositions primarily because they wanted to tell us something; students in writing courses are generally all too aware that the primary reason by they are writing any given paper is that the teacher requires it. This, however, does not mean that students cannot become interested in conveying a message if they are given the chance. Below are several general principles that will help you ensure that a writing class is as communicative-and interesting-as possible:

1. Make an effort to generate interest topics before asking students to write. One way to do this –and get in some good speaking practice – is to discuss a topic before writing about it. if students have not considered or discussed an idea, they are less likely to become deeply interested in it. an equally important reason for talking over ideas is to demonstrate that you are genuinely interested in the ideas themselves as well as the composition that they lead to.
2. Use naturally existing information gaps and opportunities for communication. There is a great deal you don’t know about other countries, about its history and culture, and about the people, so compositions are a natural opportunity for the students to educate you. What the students don’t know each other (e.g., stories from childhood) is a second natural information gap. Take advantage of these.
3. Ask students to write their own ideas in their own words as much as possible. Many writing texts are filled with exercises that require students to rearrange sentences or correct flawed compositions. Such exercises can be useful for teaching specific writing skills, but they certainly do not provide students with an opportunity to communicate in writing.
4. See that writers have a real audience for their ideas. If you asked students to write about culture, respond to what they say as well as to how they say it. if you are having them to write themselves, have them share what they write with other members of the class. Students need to experience the interest of others in what they have to say if they are to make an effort to communicate.

**In-class writing activities**

 Normally, a writing course includes a mix of writing activities, including shorter, one-off writing activities done in class and longer assignments that involve writing at home. This section introduces a number of in-class writing activities.

COPYING

Students at very beginning stages of writing need practice that allows them to focus on basic formal features of written English-spelling, capitalization, and punctuation-as well as on grammar and vocabulary. For students who are completely unfamiliar with the Roman alphabet, copying sentences or even short texts from the textbook or blackboard is a way to learn English handwriting.

DICTATION

Dictations provide an opportunity for students to focus on capitalization, punctuation, and spelling without needing to worry about grammar at the same time, and they can be used even at very elementary levels.

DICTOCOMP

As a writing exercise, dictocomp is somewhat more challenging than dictationand is better way to practice basic grammar points.

NOTE-TAKING

Note-taking is a valuable skill to develop in and of itself, and it is a good way to develop listening and writing skills. The writing component can be strengthened if you ask students to use their notes as a basis for writing a summary or response to what they heard.

**Out-of-class writing activities**

Reaching a breakthrough point at which students can write in English well enough to deal with education or work-related tasks – or even social correspondence-involves more than the ability to produce text in English. Generally, people expect a higher degree of organization, clarity, accuracy, and polish in written than in spoken language, so in addition to generating texts, students need to learn to plan and edit them. To this end, much of the work in most writing courses involves students’ producing multiple drafts – working mainly outside class – that help them learn to write texts that are relatively well planned and carefully polished.

The writing process is often described as having three parts: planning, writing, and revising. You need not always insist that students strictly follow this three-step process in their writing because it is not entirely natural; normally some planning and editing occurs during the writing phase, and new plans often emerge during the editing phase. However, especially as students move toward more advanced levels of writing skill, they should begin learning that good writing starts before the first sentence is written and doesn’t end with the last word of the first draft. An important part of teaching writing is thus introducing all three steps, stressing their importance, and providing students with practice in each.

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