
СУЧАСНІ ПІДХОДИ ТА ІННОВАЦІЙНІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ ФОРМУВАННЯ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ

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TEACHING WRITING TO PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

The article deals with the problem of teaching psychology students writing. It highlights the importance of the development of writing skills in English speaking class and investigates the conceptual understandings of writing distinguishing it as complex activity that involves both composing ability and language. In this research we consider the role of writing in the foreign language curriculum and analyze main principles of designing and teaching writing proposed by scientists. Special attention has been focused on classroom application which has led to understanding of fundamentals of designing a writing course for foreign language learners which includes objectives and assessment, lesson planning, designing writing tasks, and responding to student writing. In this article we explore goals for writing teachers who develop the writing course for psychology students and try to present some recommendations to a written lesson plan which is essential for every class period and which can become a road map for both writing teachers and psychology students.

In terms of writing cycle we distinguish three stages that need to be considered when doing lesson planning: pre-writing, writing and revising. Each of the three stages has been carefully described and supported with possible activities. Among the pre-writing activities which are targeted toward linguistic development, idea generation, building up knowledge about the topic, we distinguish free writing, generating lists of thoughts, mind maps. Among writing tasks which are designed to help psychology students to develop a wide range of writing skills, we differentiate between activities for students with lower and higher proficiencies. Special attention is paid to the last stage which presents feedback, revision and editing and where peer feedback can be very important.

Keywords: psychology students, lesson plan, writing assignments, stages of the writing process, pre-writing activities, writing, teacher feedback.

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НАВЧАННЯ СТУДЕНТІВ-ПСИХОЛОГІВ ПИСЕМНОГО МОВЛЕННЯ

У статті розглядається проблема навчання студентів-психологів писемного мовлення англійською мовою. Підкреслено необхідність розвитку вмінь письма під час опанування курсу англійської мови в університеті і розглянуто концептуальні поняття писемного мовлення, які визначають його як складну діяльність, що включає як вміння складати текст, так і вміння використати відповідні мовні засоби для його оформлення. У цій статті ми намагаємося визначити місце в навчальному плані, аналізуючи представлені науковцями основні принципи його розробки і особливості навчання. У цьому дослідженні ми розглядаємо цілі, які ставлять перед собою викладачі, розробляючи курс писемного мовлення для студентів-психологів і визначаємо рекомендації, які б врахували останні дослідження з даного питання.

В рамках процесу навчання писемного мовлення ми виділяємо три етапи, які варто врахувати при плануванні занять для розвитку вмінь писемного мовлення. Це етап перед написанням письмового твору, власне написання і етап зворотнього зв'язку. На кожному з трьох етапів описано і вказано цілі і види завдань, які можна використовувати. Ціль першого етапу – підготувати студентів-психологів до виконання письмового завдання, заохочуючи до генерування ідей і забезпечуючи їх мовним багажем для роботи на другому етапі. У статті представлено можливі варіанти завдань, які можна використати на першому етапі, так само як і завдань на другому етапі, де ми також вказуємо на можливість диференціювати останні для студентів з нижчим і вищим рівнем комунікативної підготовки. Основна увага на останньому етапі процесу навчання звертається на забезпечення зворотнього зв'язку з залученням студентів і можливістю використання новітніх технологій.

Ключові слова: студенти-психологи, план занять, письмові завдання, етапи письмового процесу, завдання на етапі підготовки до письма, написання твору, зворотній зв'язок.

Introduction. As the world is becoming more interconnected and because writing is the most critical skill, the need for experienced writing teachers who are able to develop writing skills in their students is increasing. Writing is a complex ability involving consideration of an extremely wide range of issues and subskills, thus it needs teachers who should develop expertise in many different areas to become effective at teaching writing. Because of its complexity writing is considered to be the most challenging and time-consuming skill to teach. Writing teachers need to consider a lot of aspects of writing which should be carefully analyzed and taken into account in the process of teaching. New technologies have also a great impact on the role of writing in society which force teachers to evaluate them with the purpose of further effective application when teaching a foreign language.

Understanding writing from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective, having made some investigation in the areas of best practices of writing effectively, we tried to find practical classroom activities that can help prepare psychology students for the writing demands that they will certainly encounter in the future. In this article we are going to investigate how university teachers can prepare their students for writing. Our *goal* is to analyze some conceptual understandings considering the nature of writing skills and abilities and define the fundamentals of designing a writing course for psychology students which in its turn will provide guidance on planning and delivering an effective writing curriculum.

Theoretical background. Writing has always had a place in the foreign language curriculum but the 21 century with its globalization and technological advances has made written communication across languages and cultures essential and very important. Writing, that once was seen only as a skill which was helpful to reinforce other skills such as listening and reading, has appeared at the central place in the curriculum (Reid, 2001). There has been a lot of research on the problem of understanding the needs of those who do writing and their educational and language learning backgrounds which should be taken into account when teachers try to adjust their lessons to accommodate the needs of different learner types (Doolan & Miller, 2012; Harklau, Losey & Siegal, 1999; Matsuda, 2003b; Reid, 1998a; Silva, 1993). Summarizing the results of linguists' investigations, mentioning the variety of English language learners throughout the world, their linguistic and educational backgrounds, their differences in writing needs we can understand that, on the one hand, it is impossible to develop a unique approach to teaching academic writing, because of great dependence of the particulars of the local context. But on the other hand, this experience can be taken into consideration by writing teachers and become very helpful to understand what specific writing problems of English as a second language are likely to be. Some scientists have shown that writing is not a linear process but it involves moving back and forward among planning, writing, rereading and revising (Penuelas, 2008; Sasaki, 2000, Weigle, 2010). Great attention has also been paid to the difference between experienced writers and those who are novices when setting goals in writing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). In addition to the research mentioned above the great importance has the revolution of information technologies which can provide writing teachers and their students with teaching tools for rising their awareness of and control over specific linguistic choices. A lot of research has been made in the area of automated essay feedback programs which are helpful in scoring and providing feedback on writing (Jaschik, 2011; Shermis, Burstein, Higgins & Zechnefr, 2010; Weigle, 2010).

Materials and methods. With the purpose of designing the fundamentals of a writing course for psychology students we should consider objectives and assessment, lesson planning, designing writing tasks and responding student writing. Deep analyses of the research by the scientists mentioned above have led us to the following considerations in designing a writing curriculum. They are the written product, the writing process and adjusting writing to a specific audience and purposes. In our opinion the effective teaching involves a good balance among these three issues.

Trying to develop a list of tasks for writing teachers scientists underline the importance of designing a syllabus, planning of class sessions, providing opportunities for writing and responding to it (Kroll, 2001). We completely agree that university teachers can find it difficult to apply even ready knowledge into practice. Following the tasks, we can explain the importance of implementing the syllabus as it provides a road map for both teachers and students and help clarify expectations. It happens because it offer the opportunity to consider overall goals of the writing course and to make a choice of learning activities. For this reason, when defining a syllabus, it is critical to articulate learning outcomes which should be written in an appropriate way emphasizing observable behaviours and products to be able to understand at the end if these objectives have been met. For instance, in our university writing course for psychology students the learning outcomes can be: to produce organized paragraphs with topic sentences, supporting details and concluding sentences through a process of drafting and revision of the main issues. This example can show that we try to specify at the end both the structure of the product and the process of writing indicating the type of language needed to complete the writing task.

It is important to emphasize that formulating objectives for our writing course and following some research (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004) we try to think of its three components: a description of the performance itself when teachers realize what their students are expected to write (either an annotation, or an abstract); the conditions under which the writing will be done (as classwork or homework with the following feedback or without it); the level of performance that provides students with criteria of evaluation both the structure of the writing piece and the use of appropriate grammar and vocabulary. In the process of teaching it becomes clear what aspects of writing to pay special attention to.

Having mentioned the conceptual understandings of writing, we will try to explain the planning as our main goal to provide guidance on delivering writing curriculum. Firstly, we will describe the writing cycle for each major assignment, which includes three important stages: pre-writing, writing and revising. Following the investigation of Ferris and Hedgcock who have divided the typical writing lesson into five phases, we completely agree that "whatever form of the lesson plan takes, it should be readable, convenient to refer to in class when needed" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004: 92). Having taken into account the importance of activation of prior learning and warm up (a pre-writing stage), we pay special attention to lesson core which consider instructions, procedures and participation (a writing stage) and finish with closure and reflection (a revising stage).

When teaching academic writing to psychology students, our teachers first plan then organize the *pre-writing stage* which starts with setting up the assignment, providing input for learners to work with in the form of texts, videos, visuals or using other content from the internet resources; which is followed by focusing special attention on specific points of grammar and vocabulary without which the completing the assignment can be difficult or impossible; and which finishes with generating ideas after using different activities for brainstorming.

It has been always significant to draw our teachers' attention to pre-writing activities the purpose of which is to be target toward idea generation, linguistic development, building up knowledge about the topic. Following the ideas for pre-writing activities given by researches (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Williams, 2005) our teachers encourage psychology students to practice freewriting for a set period of time without stopping with a purpose to generate the list of ideas associated with the topic, making mind maps, tables, drawings etc., We also make use of suggested by methodologists additional pre-writing activities when encouraging learners to use dictionaries or other reference materials in writing and identifying and analyzing rhetorical structures of texts with the purpose of concentrating on specific aspects of writing.

Because of academic setting where reading is often incorporated as a starting point for writing, psychology students are offered to read written texts of different types before they start writing and our teachers should plan their writing lessons leaving a substantial amount of pre-writing time for reading as well as carefully selecting printed passages. The most important questions discussed by writing teachers if a text for reading can become a challenge for writing and if it can be used to support an argument and can provide learners with good organizational patterns and language structures.

It is worth mentioning that the next *writing stage* is quite time consuming as our teachers have to evaluate if there is enough time for drafting, feedback from peers or teachers who must plan extra time for rewriting and concentration on problematic areas as they appear.

When we do want to help students to develop a great range of academic writing skills they should be invited to deal with variety of tasks either planned or impromptu (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Johns, 1997; McKay, 1994). We completely agree with Jessika Williams that the nature of writing skills depends on the learners' proficiency (Williams, 2005). Therefore, our teachers try to distinguish different levels of proficiencies and select appropriate activities for ones with lower proficiencies. There can be tasks when psychology students are asked to read, make notes and then, using their notes, reconstruct the text. Students with higher proficiencies are able to work in academic contexts quiet more and they are offered to all types of academic writing as summaries, proposals, case studies or annotations and abstracts. It should be noted that in both cases before doing writing learners gather and generate information using their personal experience or observations, interviews or surveys. They are also encouraged to analyze, summarize and sometimes even critique the information they have prepared.

Academic writing is not considered a voluntary process because students are expected to do it following the directions given in the assignment. They can be also under some pressure knowing that their piece of writing will be checked and evaluated by a teacher. Therefore, when teaching writing our teachers understand the importance of designing appropriate tasks, carefully structuring them and making their content accessible to students. What is more, our teachers try to let students know they are allowed for multiple approaches as well as they always make sure they know the deadline and the criteria on which their writing will be evaluated.

Having discussed the first two states, we have come to the last one – the *revising stage* when students should submit their pieces of writing and teachers after analyzing the final products of the writing activity should consider how much time to devote to feedback and what means of dissemination are the most appropriate. Because of what is mentioned above and their great wish to organize the last phase as effectively as possible our writing teachers struggle with answering the following questions: how, when, by whom and what sort of feedback should be given. One of the most popular recommendation (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Williams, 2005) with which we fully agree is to first comment on content then on language issues. It does not mean ignoring accuracy, but the ability of learners to revise on the level of organization which is considered higher than the sentence level, should be a real challenge for both students and teachers. We are inclined to think that detailed comments on language level first can deprive students of understanding their weak points when it goes about content.

Based on the importance of content, our teachers practice using three drafts of a paper with two cycles of feedback and revision with the first one focusing on content and organization and with the second one paying attention to language issues. Both feedback cycles can involve either teacher or peer feedback. Because of its possibility to develop psychology students critical reading skills as well as improving their language skills we try to use peer response especially in groups with higher proficiencies students as much as possible.

Having presented our choices when it goes about how and by whom feedback should be given we try to choose either oral or written way to revise. Providing students with written comments is common practice when they are expected to read teachers' comments and then make a revision of their pieces of writing. But writing comments in our teachers' opinion are time-consuming and are sometimes open to misunderstandings and different interpretations. On the other hand, individual conferencing with psychology students to discuss all weak and strong issues of their writing is not possible because of limited time for writing which is planned. Our teachers try to find a proper way out and use new technologies which are designed to provide feedback to learners. For this reason they record their opinion on the writing piece giving comments on both content and language level. In case some students need extra explanation, it can be done individually during the lesson when others are busy with completing another task.

We completely sure that when planning out their writing lessons our teachers should be able to have a full picture of a three stage process of teaching writing to their psychology students maintaining a healthy balance between all stages and providing enough time for learners to practice as well as providing them with proper understanding of the process itself and the goals that are expected to be achieved.

Conclusion. The future may bring us new ways of teaching writing but the need to teach university students will remain obvious. In our article we tried to deal with conceptual understandings of writing which should be considered by teachers who are open to new strategies to motivate their psychology students to become skilled writers. We focused our attention on special fundamentals of designing a writing course which are required to make the organization of the writing process the most effective. While considering the problem of planning and with the purpose to deliver the best writing curriculum for psychology students we investigate the three phase process of writing distinguishing special types of activities for different stages. Among the three stages of writing process there is a pre-writing one which can include a wide range of pre-writing activities done with the purpose to present a writing assignment and provide input for psychology students to work with; a writing stage where writing tasks are explained and when psychology students can develop their writing skills being asked to respond to a variety of tasks depending on their low or high proficiency level; a revising stage on which learners receive feedback with the object of revising and editing their papers. While investigating the issue

we tried to understand how to prepare our psychology students for the writing demands paying special attention to rapid expansion of technologies.

Further investigation of the problem of developing writing skills draws our attention to automated essay feedback programs which can make scoring and providing feedback on writing and therefore can help save lesson time.

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