



DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS OF ESL LEARNERS THROUGH TASK-BASED TEACHING

DR. KOTTACHERUVU NAGENDRA

Assistant Professor

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU)
Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana State INDIA

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to develop writing skills of ESL learners through task-based teaching. The classroom becomes a writing intensive course if group work is initiated. Learners would work together in small groups on the given task. There would be interaction among the learners at every stage of the activity. It is also fact that task-based teaching challenges the learners, creates interest, provides an opportunity think innovatively and motivate them practice and involve them in task. It is also well known fact that, writing is thought to be very complex task. This is because too many aspects are involved in it. Hence this paper would discuss different skills and tasks essential for developing writing skills effectively among the ESL learners.

Key Words: coherence, cohesion, curriculum prewriting, composing, task-based teaching

INTRODUCTION

“Reading maketh a full man; Conference a ready man; and Writing an exact man”

-----Francis Bacon

Significance of Writing:

The significance of writing in the real life of an individual and the consequent need to teach writing skills need no emphasis. We need to write in order or communicate in English in our social, educational and professional areas. In real life situations we may have to apply for to take leave, write minutes of a meeting, plan a programme, report a happening, give a press release etc. Therefore writing occupies an significant place in the curriculum of schools and colleges. In view of its need and importance, it is necessary for a teacher of English to acquire both theoretical knowledge of the process of writing and the practical procedures involved in teaching.



It is also evident that the teaching of writing is a difficult process involving many activities such as initial probing into experience, the analysis of it, the organization of ideas into a meaningful sequence, and finally their expression in language. In order to write with confidence and ease, the students should be provided repetitive opportunities to write.

Writing as a Process:

It is true that, writing is an extremely personal process. It reveals writer's ability to express the meaning and the mood, and finally her total personality with coherence, cohesion and scholarship. Thus each writer has her own way and the best writer discovers many areas of expression. But let us look into a commonly accepted model of the writing process.

The process-approach to composition suggested by Antonia Chandrasegaran(1989:2) is worth considering. The model suggested by Antonia is again based on the model of expository writing by Hayes and Flower (1980). This approach is based on the view that writing is the result of employing identifiable four strategies of thinking to manage the composing processes. First one is *idea generation* which includes memory search, brainstorming, task analysis and heuristics. Second one is *planning* which comprises decide intention and theme, analyse audience, select information and organize information. Third one is *translating* i.e. selecting words and structures to give tangible form of ideas. This includes select structure and grammatical devices, select vocabulary and selecting support detail. Finally, this model ends with *reviewing* which includes review intentions; reconsider goals, review selection of structure, reselect vocabulary and reconsider choice of supporting detail. Each process is recursive and proceeds along with other processes (p; 141-142).

Basics of Good Writing:

When we look into skills of writing, we comprehend that our plan in teaching and improving writing skills to our target learners is to enable them to write a good short story, a good paragraph or an essay. Therefore, a good piece of writing should essentially follow the unity of ideas, grammatically correct sentences, and use of appropriate vocabulary, a well balanced structure, unity of ideas finally, a beginning, middle and an end.

Teaching Writing:

The modern approach to the teaching of writing involves a combination of the communicative approach and process approach. It is based on three assumptions (Chan, 1986): They are as follows; Firstly, people write to communicate with readers. Secondly, they write to accomplish specific purposes. Thirdly, writing is a complex process.

Thus, writing is seen as a communicative act. Students are asked to think of their audience, the reader, and their purpose for writing. Meaning is stressed, rather than 'form'. Writing is seen as a process which can be divided into three stages: prewriting, composing and revision.

Tasks for Developing Writing Skills:

Brainstorming a topic in group discussion lots of ideas from which students can select the most effective and appropriate. Skills of organization and logical sequencing come into play as the group decide on the overall structure of the piece of writing. While writing, there would be a discussion on the choice of words, structure of sentences, and the best way to link ideas. Therefore there would be a spontaneous process of revision throughout the process of writing, if communicative tasks are chosen. Here is an example of task for you which illustrate some of these principles in practice.

Task-1: Describing a person:

Ask to students to work individually and to think of someone they know and like, such as someone in their class, a friend, cousin, relative etc. Ask them to write down five sentences, use prompt questions orally or on the blackboard to get them started. Once they are done with writing part and ask them to share with the person the one who sits next to him/her and ask them to identify any grammatical errors. Finally, teacher can go through it and give them positive feedback and discuss with them areas of improvement.

Task-2: Describing a famous place:

Encourage the learners to think about the place which they have visited recently and give them some time to think and recollect all the ideas. Once it is over ask them to write on paper without thinking about any grammatical errors. This will definitely work out because it's easy to recollect what they have seen and how they enjoyed. Teachers' role is to identify the learners who are not able to start and who need some help, support and motivation.

Task-3: Describing a smart phone:

Try to find out students' interest on smart phone and ask them to say something about the brand which they like accordingly ask them to write about it 200 words explaining the features of the smart phone. For example; colour, model, RAM, internal memory and camera features etc.

Task-4: Correcting Mistakes (p; 10-11):

Identifying and correcting mistakes in English, to encourage monitoring of their own mistakes.

Procedure: Write up few sentences on the board that have deliberate mistakes in them. If you wish, tell the students in advance how many mistakes are in each sentence. With their help, correct those mistakes.

Note: It is important to stress the fact that the sentences initially presented are unacceptable, and to make corrections on the board so that students are left with the image of correct sentences at the end of the activity.

Task-5: Describe your Family:

This is also one of the interesting tasks through which we can develop and improve students' writing skills. Ask students to write about their family within 250 words. Teacher has to give clear instructions to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. It's better if we give them some time to think and write so that they will not make more mistakes. Finally, teacher can collect all the written papers and correct them next he/she can discuss the mistakes which were made by students without mentioning any individual names.

CONCLUSION:

In this article firstly, we have discussed the significance of the writing skills. Secondly, it talked about writing as a process. Thirdly, it highlighted elements of good writing and how to teach writing. Finally it ended with tasks to develop writing skills; here we have given five model tasks to develop writings skills of ESL language learners.

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