



## TEACHING WRITING TO ESP LEARNERS THROUGH VARIOUS APPROACHES

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### ABSTRACT

*The given article deals with the issues of different teaching approaches to ESP learners. At present time, this matter is of great value in the study of foreign languages for non-specific field specialists.*

Within the communicative framework of language teaching, the skill of writing enjoys special status—it is via writing that a person can communicate a variety of messages to a close or distant, known or unknown reader or readers. Such communication is extremely important in the modern world, whether the interaction takes the form of traditional paper-and-pencil writing or the most advanced electronic mail.

Writing as a communicative activity needs to be encouraged and nurtured during the language learner's course of study, and this work will attempt to deal with the early stages of writing. The view of writing as an act of communication suggests an interactive process which takes place between the writer and the reader via the text. Such an approach places value on the

goal of writing as well as on the perceived reader audience. Even if we are concerned with writing at the beginning level, these aspects of writing are of vital importance; the writing process, in comparison to spoken interaction, imposes greater demands on the text, since written interaction lacks immediate feedback as a guide. The writer has to anticipate the reader's reactions and produce a text which will adhere to cooperative principle. According to this principle, the writer is obligated (by mutual cooperation) to try to write a clear, relevant, truthful, informative, interesting, and memorable text. The reader, on the other hand, will interpret the text with due regard to the writer's presumed intention if the necessary clues are available in the text. Linguistic accuracy, clarity of presentation, organization of ideas is all crucial in the efficacy of the



communicative act, since they supply the clues for interpretation. Accordingly, while the global perspective of content organization needs to be focused on and given appropriate attention, it is also most important to present a product which does not suffer from illegible writing.

Wilga Rivers makes the distinction between notation and writing practice, and expressive writing, or composition. Notation ranges from mere copying to the construction of simple sentences describing facts or representing typical, uncomplicated speech. Expressive writing or composition involves the development of ideas either of a practical or a creative nature. Pedagogically, there is considerably more control in the development of notational skills than in more expressive types of writing. The expectation is that the EFL student will progress through several stages of writing practice to the early stages of creative composition.

The first activities are skill building activities taking the learners from the very beginning to the mid-intermediate proficiency level. Here the focus is on structural detail and accuracy in the use of the written language. Learners are presented with textual segments, clues, and models of typical prose to assist them as they attempt to rearrange words or sentences, complete partially written texts, and imitate or modify entire paragraphs. In skill building activities the progression is from simple to more complex structures, the so-called bottom up approach. The next part shifts the focus from the mechanical manipulation of structure to the more creative activities of process writing.

The process approach to writing is

based upon a set of principles basically different from those underlying skill building. Where skill building activities move from simple to complex structures, process writing, which is a top down model, starts with a concept or theme and works down to the grammatical and semantic units. In the process approach each learner completes a writing assignment in a group, exchanging ideas with other members of the group and receiving editorial help at various stages of composition. When conducted properly, process writing is a prime example of cooperative learning. The process approach, with its stress on group interaction, is a direct offshoot of communicative language learning, just as pattern practice was a product of the audio-lingual method. For many years preoccupation with structural accuracy allowed little room for the development of cognitive strategies in creative writing. Students, left to their own resources, were often at a loss as to how to formulate ideas on a topic or theme. Process writing provides for the formulation of ideas and plans through learner cooperation; recent studies have attempted to redirect the process approach with its stress on the general mechanics of creative composition to training in writing for specific content areas. The reason for this is a fear that process writing does not prepare students adequately for an academic career.

In a content-based approach students develop writing skills within specific academic disciplines so that they will be able to compose essays and reports using the specialized vocabulary and structures peculiar to these disciplines. Usually offered at the university level, such courses are often adjuncts to academic



courses, such as economics, history, or physics. Sometimes they are taught by teams composed of an EFL/ESL teacher and an instructor from the specific content area. In many respects, the content-based approach to writing has a lot in common with ESP courses, which are geared to developing oral and written proficiency in specific occupational fields. In a similar reaction to process writing, other researchers have suggested that teachers of writing classes concentrate on what is expected in the American academic community. Advocates of what has come to be known as the audience-based approach mean to train students in the type of writing that will be expected of them at a university or college. Valid as they are, neither content- nor audience-based approaches to writing lie within the scope of it, which is meant to assist instructors in teaching "general English." The range of topics and fields to which students might direct their knowledge of the language is very wide, ranging from critical appraisals of literature at one end of the scale, to issuing written

staff orders for the daily management of a hotel at the other. Basic fluency can always be channeled into specific directions at a later date, particularly through the acquisition of specialized vocabulary. The purpose throughout is to train the learners to think in logical sequences and to draw upon what they know of the target language in producing limited but meaningful prose.

Teaching students to produce a successful written text is a complex task which requires simultaneous control over a number of language systems as well as an ability to factor in considerations of the ways the discourse must be shaped for a particular audience and a particular purpose. Teaching students to become successful writers is no less a complex task. But it can be a tremendously rewarding one as well.

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