

# Innovative Ways of Improving Writing Skills

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## Abstract

This article is about Writing. Writing is one way of providing variety in classroom procedures. It provides a learner with physical evidence of his achievements and he can measure his improvement. It helps to consolidate their grasp of vocabulary and structure, and complements the other language skills. Therefore, if a teacher is open to welcome new pedagogical innovations, he can provide goal-oriented introduction of innovative ideas into educational process. Lately, range of significant official acts was issued on accelerating and developing the foreign languages teaching; they define the state policy towards teaching foreign languages.

**Keywords:** Provide a learner with physical evidence, achievement, measure, improvement, great importance on writing.

## Introduction

In order to reach the aim and fulfill tasks put forward before education every teacher, every researcher in the field of methodology should think of finding the effective ways of teaching children. By growing, we start losing our capability to absorb languages and we focus on the codes of our mother tongue. We learn our mother tongue by listening, speaking and later by reading and writing. Nevertheless, when learning English or another language, we have to develop the four skills in the same time [1-3]. They are followings:

- Listening comprehension is the receptive skill in the oral mode. When we speak of listening, what we really mean is listening and understanding what we hear.
- In our first language, we have all the skills and background knowledge we need to understand what we hear, so we probably are not even aware of how complex a process it is. Here we will briefly describe some of what is involved in learning to understand what we hear in a second language.
- Writing is the productive skill in the written mode. It, too, is more complicated than it seems at first, and often seems to be the hardest of the skills, even for native speakers of a language, since it involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way.

Writing is one way of providing variety in classroom procedures. It provides a learner with physical evidence of his achievements and he can measure his improvement. It helps to consolidate their grasp of vocabulary and structure, and complements the other language skills. Sentence is the base of an article. So he should begin his writing with sentences. For example, translation, sentence pattern exchanging, and text shortening and rewriting. It helps to understand the text and write compositions. It can foster the learner's ability to summarize and to use the language freely [4-9].

## Materials and methods

Results from various language studies have shown that the teacher who emphasizes and focuses on the writing skills on the study can bring about a change. The students become efficient at generating and organizing creative ideas as a result. The most adopted teaching model that helps in developing writing skills in the balanced literacy approach is the method of writing process. [5-14].

As a teacher, your role is to help each day and every student improve them, acquire new skills, and become a better individual by the end of their time spent in college. What most teachers don't

actually realize is that they should be carrying way more responsibility when it comes to helping students improve their writing skills.

All the educational schools place great importance on writing. Whilst teaching, the teachers often find that some students are able to articulate their thoughts quite well while the others are not. This is mainly because writing is a skill that some students are more proficient in than others. As we all know, writing is an important skill especially in settings where English is taught as a foreign language. In classes where students are required to master certain genres of writing, the importance of writing as a skill is highlighted [15-22].

Writing is the system of written symbols which represents the sounds, syllables or words of language. Writing skill requires different mechanisms as capitalization, spelling and punctuation, word form and function. It helps to convey the meaning clearly. So, writing is an activity to improve our understanding of any subject. Writing is the ability not only to put ideas from mind to paper but also to generate more meaning and make ideas clear. Writing demands conscious intellectual effort, which usually has to be sustained over a considerable period of time. There are various processes in writing skills. Process writing is one of the most important skills in writing. The more the students learn the writing process, the more they will be able to express themselves efficiently.

### **Discussion**

It is important for teachers to balance their teaching activities to provide students with subject content knowledge, instructional guidance to assist in learning writing skills. The working memory is where the majority of the writing tasks take place and three major processes are associated with it: planning, translating and reviewing. Good writers are better at understanding of how to integrate their subject content and discourse knowledge. Outline exercises offer students the opportunity to create and revise their ideas that will reflect greater coherency as they become more skilled in this aspect of the writing process. Also, good writers are able to identify flaws in their work such as the choice of words or excessively repeating a term or phrase. Graham and Harris noticed that less sophisticated writers had problems seeing the value in editing their first draft. Often, those who struggle with writing will neglect devoting adequate attention to revising papers. This affirms the need for teachers to help students cultivate self-regulation skills and use outlines as a valuable tool for communicating ideas which can be transformed into a formal paper. [3,6].

One of the most important requirements for designing effective writing tasks is to think of coherent, connected activity sets, which include pre-writing, during-writing and post-writing activities. Connected activity sets help students complete the writing task successfully and foster the process of writing. Each Writing task was carried out in three sequential stages; the prewriting stage, the while/during writing stage, and the post writing stage. These stages were the followings:

#### **- The prewriting stage: The preparation and brainstorming stage.**

Students were required to research the topic they will be working on the next meeting outside the class hours using one of the search engines, Yahoo or Google. In the First Session, Students were asked to browse the web page containing the lessons where they worked independently to study the lesson set for the task of writing and thus learning writing skills for thirty-five minutes. Then, students were asked to sign in to the text-based chat room which is linked in the homepage to share and exchange ideas and opinions on the topics they are to write about in groups of four. This activity lasted for fifteen minutes.

#### **- The While Writing Stage: (The drafting Stage).**

At the beginning of the second session, students were encouraged to read a sample model on the topic they were to write about. After that, students were asked to organize the information and ideas they have generated in the pre-writing stage and put them in an essay according to the task of writing for 50 minutes.

#### **- The Post Writing Stage: Revising, Editing, and Publishing**

Students shared their first drafts with other peers using text-based chat to get feedback. This stage allowed time to reflect upon what had been written to rethink, reconsider, and reshape ideas. Students received the comments, discussed them further with peers and decided what to

incorporate in their final drafts. Students were requested to send their final drafts only to the instructor by posting them through the e-mail.

Understanding different types of writing assignments is given below:

The first step is reading and understanding your writing assignment. Read your assignment carefully. Then, reread your assignment, asking yourself these questions.

What is my topic?

- How much am I expected to write? How long should my finished paper be?
- Who is my audience?
- How long will I have to complete the assignment?
- What is the main purpose of the assignment? Is it to show that I learned the material for a particular class, to analyze a piece of literature or situation, or to showcase my writing ability?

Some writing assignments give you a question or a topic on which to write. Others are more open-ended and you have to come up with a topic or question that you will address in your writing. What do these different kinds of writing assignments look like? Here are some samples. [2].

When the Topic is provided. When a topic is given, your writing assignment might look like these examples. These are the types of writing assignments you will often find on standardized tests and other timed exercises. You are also likely to find these types of exercises in your non-English classes. It's typical for humanities, science, and social science classes to expect you to write about the material you have covered in class.

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper explaining your point of view on year-round schools.
- Your state is considering building a prison in your community. How do you feel about having a prison near your home?
- Is it a good idea for schools to incorporate technology in the classroom? Why or why not?
- Nuclear energy avoids the mining and pollution problems of traditional fossil fuels, but it also poses contamination and health risks. Do you think governments should build nuclear power plants? State your opinion and support it with convincing reasons.
- Explain how your local recycling program works.
- How did the Korean War differ from the Vietnam War? What were the causes and results of each war?
- Compare the goals and achievements of the French Revolution with those of the American Revolution.
- Identify three main causes of disease. What are two causes of infectious diseases? Give an example of a disease caused by each factor you discuss.

When a Topic is not provided. When you are expected to develop your own topic, your writing assignment will be open-ended as the following examples are. Usually you will be given more time to complete these types of writing assignments, and you will often find them in English and composition classes. These types of questions are also common on school application forms.

- What would you do if you were President for one day?
- Write an essay about a childhood memory.
- Describe your ideal partner in life.
- Write a five-page research paper about a subject that interests you.
- Write an essay giving advice on a topic you are familiar with.
- Describe a social problem in your community and suggest ways to address it.
- What are your three greatest accomplishments?
- Write an editorial on an issue about which you have strong feelings.
- Describe a specific work of art and discuss how it makes you feel.

Breaking down the assignment when a topic is given:

Often the assignment will tell you exactly what is wanted in the essay. You just have to identify the key words and provide the information requested. Use the direction words to guide your writing.

What are direction words? They include words, such as describe, explain, discuss, compare—you've probably seen them in lots of writing assignments.

Example: Explain how your local recycling program works. Trace the movement of cans, jars, and newspapers from your home to the point where they are recycled. Give examples of products that can be made from the materials you put in your recycle bin at home.

SUBJECT	DIRECTIONS
how your local recycling program works	Explain

the movement of cans, jars, and newspapers from your home to the point where they are recycled	Trace
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of products that can be made from the materials you put in your recycle bin at home	Give examples
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Example: Assume that you have just completed a unit in your biology class on genetics, and your biology teacher has given you the following writing assignment. Break the writing assignment into its subject and direction words. (Don't panic if you don't know the answer to this question). Describe gene therapy. Explain how it has been used to treat cystic fibrosis. Discuss why gene therapy is not yet considered a cure for cystic fibrosis.

SUBJECT	DIRECTIONS
gene therapy	Describe
how gene therapy has been used to treat cystic fibrosis	Explain
why gene therapy is yet not considered a cure for cystic fibrosis	Discuss

**P r a c t i c e:**

Assume that you have just covered the material requested in each of the following writing assignments. Remember, your task is only to break each writing assignment into its subject and direction words.

**M a p p i n g.** [1,3].

Mapping is also called clustering or webbing. When you map your ideas, you make a visual diagram about a topic. Often the topic is circled in the center of a page. From there, the writer draws spokes linking ideas together. Mapping helps you generate new ideas and relate them to one another. A map can be very simple or more involved like the one on the next page.

Example: This writer used mapping to explore his ideas about legalizing drugs when given the following writing assignment.

Should drugs be legalized in the United States? Why or why not?

The writer generates a number of different ideas and approaches when looking at the issue of drugs and the consequences of legalizing them in this country.

**P r a c t i c e:**

Use mapping to generate ideas about the following topic.

Each of us has unique abilities, aptitudes, or personality traits that makes us special in some way. What makes you special?

**Listing-** When you list, you make a column of words or phrases.

Example: Assume you are given this writing assignment.

Describe a social problem in your community and suggest ways to address it.

You might start by listing all the problems you've read about or heard in the news lately. Here's one possible list.

- Animal rights
- Violence in schools
- Poverty
- Hunger
- Crime
- Unemployment

- Teenage pregnancy
- Lack of universal healthcare
- Kids dropping out of school
- Gangs
- Child abuse

If you already have a topic in mind, you can use listing to generate supporting details and examples to include in your writing.

Visualizing - This is putting yourself in another situation and describing the situation from your point of view. Visualizing can be especially helpful when you are trying to write about another place or time or provide a creative perspective for a topic. For example, you could use visualization to help you explain a technical topic, such as how the human heart works, by visualizing the flow of blood through the different parts of the heart. You could also use visualizing to help you imagine another historical period or for creative writing assignments.

Using charts - Like word maps or webs, charts are ways to group your ideas visually. Some different kinds of charts you might find helpful include:

- Pro and con chart—to show both sides of an issue or an action plan
- Five senses chart—to break an event or situation down into observations
- Comparison and contrast charts—to show how things are alike and different
- Timeline—to show the chronological relationship between events
- Flow chart—to show the steps in a process

Here are some examples of these different kinds of charts.

Example: The pro and con chart below was used by a student to develop ideas in answer to the following writing assignment.

Nuclear energy avoids the mining and pollution problems of traditional fossil fuels. It also poses contamination and health risks. Do you think governments should build nuclear power plants? State your opinion and support it with convincing reasons. [2,5]

PROS

Once the plants are built, they can provide low-cost electricity for a long time. They can allow us to meet our growing energy needs.

CONS

Sometimes they melt down with horrible consequences. (Chernobyl is one example.) Communities near have risk for nuclear contamination.

Nuclear energy avoids the pollution problems of fossil Fuels and won't add to global warming problems Safety features and protocols can prevent contamination problems Nuclear power is virtually unlimited

Nuclear wastes build up over time and have to be stored for millions of years Nuclear energy causes other kinds of pollution—thermal pollution to nearby waters, which harms fish

The five senses chart. Example: The five senses chart below was used by a student to develop ideas for a poem about the seashore.

SEE

Birds

HEAR

Ocean

TASTE

Salt in the air

FEEL

Cold, wet water

SMELL

Fresh air

Waves

Gulls

- Clammy sand in between my toes

Fishy smells

Sand

Waves crashing

Waves

Tide

-

-

Sea breeze

Comparison and contrast chart. Example:

A student to develop ideas in answer to the following writing assignment used this comparison and contrast chart.

Compare a virus with a cell.

VIRUS

Not living—just an inert particle  
Must enter a cell in order to replicate—cannot reproduce independently

CELL

Living—smallest unit of life  
Can reproduce on its own

Can infect living things and cause diseases

Can infect living things and cause diseases

Tiny— cannot be seen with a basic compound microscope

Tiny— seen using a basic compound light microscope

## Conclusion

In order to improve writing skills of English language learners, educators must consider new and innovative methods for their instruction. Current methods are simply not moving these students to the level of proficiency that is expected of them. A safe environment can reduce EFL anxiety and provide opportunities for risk taking which is necessary to produce even adequate writing. Scaffolding coupled with peer work provides English language learners the support they need to facilitate the writing process. Finally, diverse literacies along with technology, work together to capture their interest while motivating them to succeed in the writing classroom.

I can say that writing can be improved by learning through repetition. If the teachers would be aware of the writing process, this would help in teaching appropriate strategies and that would also improve the writing abilities of students in education environment.

This article provides guidelines to the teachers as to which pedagogies should they adopt to improve their students' writing skills. I hope that with the help of suggested methods, teachers can conduct classes efficiently.

Firstly, they can contribute to the development of students writing performance as well as they can be motivational for the students.

Secondly, innovative technologies require students to work in a collaborative learning environment. Besides, they increase students' autonomous learning.

Finally, they allow students to write with a low stress environment, which encouraged students to communicate in English without worrying too much about making mistakes.

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