

SOME TIPS ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING IN TEFL

Writing is a complex process that allows students to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete. Writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thoughts available for reflection. When thought is put on paper, ideas can be analyzed, paraphrased, rearranged and added. Being one of the four language skills writing can be taught with the help of listening, speaking and reading skills which are interdependent and connected. The question of teaching writing reveals a further question, what type of writing are you going to teach your students to?

According to Jeremy Harmer, there is so called, *writing for learning*, and *writing for writing* type. Writing for learning helps the students to learn better, but it doesn't help them to improve their writing. Writing for writing, on the other hand, helps students to become better writers capable of writing in different genres.

So, **tip №1** for teaching writing is to define a type of writing you will teach your students to.

The second **tip** will include defining what methods to use in teaching a corresponding type of writing. In teaching writing for learning, you can use reinforcement writing and preparation writing, as well as activity writing, depending on what are the objectives of your class: if you need to check grammar skills and improve them, then reinforcement writing is the right choice for you. If your objective is to prepare some kind of activity - choose preparation writing to concentrate on certain points necessary to be revised. The aim of creative writing is to write notes which will be used for acting out, speaking or language practice.

Despite of the type of writing and the objective you choose there are still some basic rules to be followed in teaching.

Tip №3 – teach gradually: start with the structure of the sentence, and then increase the vocabulary and spelling, grammar rules, introduce new forms of writing, encourage reading, because writing doesn't include only one medium.

Tip №4 – be patient with the students. Patience promotes not only a good classroom atmosphere, but as well fosters students' self-esteem and pays the way the success [3].

If to put all the aims of teaching and learning in a schematic way, we will have a gradation from reproductive to speculative learning language approach, which varies the role of a teacher as well as the assessment type and characteristic activities. The aim of the reproductive approach is a simple transfer of knowledge and skills, which determine the assessment means: tests of memory, recall and practical demonstration of skills, emphasis on replication, geared to ranking. The role of a teacher in this approach is to be almost exclusive source of knowledge, direction, and assessment. The basic learning aim is correctness.

The aim of the analytical approach presupposes analysis of information and ideas within interpretive frameworks, modelling of demand for critical approach to knowledge and conventions. The types of assessment demand problem solving with the emphasis on originality, quality of interpretation. The basic aim is to develop independent styles of thinking, development of capacity for theory and abstraction. The types of learning activities used here are questioning, judging, and recombining ideas and information into

an argument.

At critical stage of learning the teacher may try to use a peer review as a means of assessing writing. The teacher and peer feedback in writing can be complementary. Teacher feedback is an essential part of learning to write effectively, reflecting writing teacher's expertise, whereas peer feedback can be viewed as a useful addition to the writing process. So, **tip №5** in writing assessment is using peer review.

Peer feedback itself is dialogic, when the writer and the reader are able to discuss feedback in detail. In addition, peer feedback is informal and it gives less threatening and more motivating evaluation. One of the advantages of peer-feedback is that of raising awareness of writing issues, developing language proficiency and community building. From a writing point of view, peer feedback highlights the effect of audience on text production, while at the same time, providing an authentic audience for students' writing [4; 5].

The other positive issue is that in English Language Classrooms, peer feedback is given in English rather than the student's native language, that helps the students use the language extensively in authentic communicative settings.

But at the same time, peer feedback has some disadvantages of usage. The main of them is that writers may doubt the value comments a peer evaluator may make, especially when the reviewer is considered to be less proficient than the writer. Generally, the students attach more importance to teacher feedback than the stronger student [1, p.64], while peer evaluator may focus more on surface issues like spelling rather than on meaning and structure.

In writing class peer review may be delivered in several forms: face-to-face, written (i.e. traditional) and computer-based (i.e. online). Choosing the form of peer review may raise the questions of how to set up peer feedback, what steps to take and what tasks to set, and how to treat mistakes in teaching ESL writing.

Thus, teaching and assessing writing in general has several tips to follow: the first is to define a type of writing you will teach your students to, the second **tip** will include defining what methods to use in teaching a corresponding type of writing, then third tip is to teach writing gradually: start with the structure of the sentence, and then increase the vocabulary and spelling skills, grammar rules, introduce new forms of writing, encourage reading; and be patient with the students.

References:

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