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THE WAY OF IMPROVING READING AND WRITING SKILLS DURING THE LESSONS

Kamola Abdullayevna Shokarimova
Chirchik State Pedagogical Institute, Toshkent region

ABSTRACT

Reading and writing largely depend upon the same skills. Spelling and single-word reading rely on the same underlying knowledge, and instruction and practice in one should aid the development of the other. For instance, the ability to link sounds together to construct words is reinforced when students read and write the same words. Furthermore, writing instruction improves reading comprehension and the teaching of writing skills — such as grammar and spelling lessons — reinforce reading skills. Research suggests that reading and writing skills are best developed when taught and practiced in conjunction.

Keywords: Prediction, Cohesive devices, Expository Writing, Persuasive Writing, Intensive Reading.

INTRODUCTION

Reading extensively inside and outside classrooms helps to improve the learners' reading skills.When preparing a lesson plan, teachers need to think that learners want various skills at different ages and competency levels. Teachers should use learner-related contexts whenever possible, as this will help them motivate students to read. Some of your learners have complained that reading is boring and they do not want to read the texts you have given them - what should you do? Choose the same types of texts that learners enjoy reading outside the classroom and design motivating pre-reading and post-reading tasks to go with them. They would probably enjoy doing the reading task as they are acquainted with it already. After relieving their boredom, you could introduce academic reading comprehension, poetry or prose. Basically reading can be of two types: extensive and intensive, and the idea is to impart some skills needed for both. Teaching reading skills could be easy when taught with nuances and strategies with continuous practice. Reading skills become boring for many when they are not given the correct strategies. In a classroom structure, students use reading for different purposes; it may be instructions, to do lists, course books, blogs, websites, newspapers and magazines. Here the question is how to develop their reading skill in the above structure? There are six strategies to

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be taught to the students for enhancing their reading capabilities in different contexts. The below six techniques are step by step procedures essential for effective reading. [1]

METHODOLOGY

Prediction. Prediction is a preparation task by guessing the genre of the text before reading it. Use titles, subtitles and pictures to find out what the text is broadly about (using also previous knowledge and experience). The teacher could set up preparation tasks by setting up general questions to get acquainted with the lesson or passage to be worked with.

Skimming. Skimming is a fast reading process to get the general information of a passage. During skimming, ask your students to underline the nouns, starters and conjunctions in order to make it easy to pick out the general idea and concepts.

Scanning. Scanning is done for grabbing the specific information of the passage. Here the students ought to be taught the nuances of picking up specific information to underline the text for picking up dates, years, names, important vocabulary etc. You read your marked highlights in the text to search for your answers. For example, If your learners are reading a museum website just in order to find out how much the entrance fee is, they could use this scanning strategy.

Cohesive devices. Look for connectors and starters like 'on the other hand',' in spite' and 'even though', where the writer wants to take the text in a different direction.

Guessing the meaning of vocabulary. Having read an article, your intermediate-level learners have found some words that they don’t understand. In this situation, ask learners to think about the linguistic context of each word. Ask them to use the words or vocabulary before and after the text to get clues about the meaning of new words.

Intensive Reading. You take time to read a text carefully to find out the authors perpective, to search for abstract concepts, to find out hidden answers, and to synthesize the text as a whole. This type of reading comes easily after constant practice of all the above strategies put together.

Developing Writing Skills. When you prepare writing activities, consider how to make them as meaningful as possible. You can do this by thinking about audience, context and purpose. This could be a task for young learners, such as writing a story, or for adult learners writing about their ambitions. Very often in the classroom, it’s easy to ask learners to do a task from the syllabus or course book without thinking about the above three. Try making it a regular feature of any writing task in future -

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that you identify context, purpose and audience before they begin the task. You could identify them all together, or learners could even decide themselves. Whichever way you try, it should make the writing more meaningful. [2]

1. Writing can be fun - consider topics your learners enjoy.
2. Writing sometimes needs a lot of planning, and sometimes none at all.
3. Learners need opportunities to write freely without worrying about accuracy.
4. Writing can be varied - there are many different kinds of writing!

Generally to develop fluency in writing the writer has to concentrate and practice the various skills as follows;

Planning ideas logically. Planning carefully helps learners arrange text in a logical sequence, that flows well and is easy to read. The beginning should feel like the start of a text that gets readers interested. Each 'piece' of text should lead naturally into the next one. And of course the end should feel like it finishes it all.

Writing accurately. When writing is done concisely, it means the most effective words are being used. Writers often fill sentences with words that are poor choices and can be removed or replaced. By getting feedback, editing and revisiting their writing after a day or two, learners can develop skills to notice words that shouldn't be in the text.

Paragraphing. Using paragraphs effectively helps readers follow a piece of writing. In general, each paragraph should have its own idea. A big block of text without paragraphs can leave readers confused and annoyed. If sentences are thrown together without linking words or phrases, the paragraphs are difficult to read. As sentences need to be linked within paragraphs, paragraphs also need to be linked. When a reader moves from one paragraph to another, if the link is not obvious, words and phrases can be used to help with the transition.

Writing is one of English skills that should be mastered by the students. It belongs to productive skill in which ones are expected to communicate their ideas with others in a written form. It is suggested to create meaningful activities in order to engage students in the learning process. Writing is one of the most rewarding yet one of the most challenging skills for English Language learners. Why so? Because writing is an accuracy focused activity as well as an act of communication where one can practice their skills of using grammar, vocabulary and also put their ideas together in a coherent fashion. Through writing, students can express themselves. Writing involves processing, editing, and while writing, there is more time available to the students for thinking and accessing familiar language. Writing is a very important activity and set of skills to develop as part of your academic study.

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Many teachers connect writing to speaking, suggesting that a written piece consolidates language used in class. And yet, writing which is properly integrated with other classroom activities can become great way of consolidating language acquired in class. Students can be motivated to write when topics are interesting and relevant to them and when teachers allow them some choice: this choice may be a choice of a topic or of how to present their topic or regarding how much they should write. Writing can be a nice way to engage and motivate our shyer and quieter students. That is why many think that it's better to give the writing task in the classroom rather than giving it for homework, as when writing is done in class, teachers can guide their students through the whole process. The teacher will be able to facilitate and fix so students can actually gain many things aside from the practice of writing itself.[3]

The more practice students get, the more they will improve upon any skill, including writing. There are four main types of writing: narrative, expository, descriptive and persuasive. Each type of writing can be practiced using different and interesting ideas for activities.

Narrative Writing. Narrative writing is about telling a story and is the type of writing most often involved in creative or literary works. To practice this type of writing, students need to tell a story using a beginning, middle and end. An amusing idea is to write a story imagining yourself as a pair of shoes. Before writing the actual story, students should create an outline of the plot and setting, and do brief character sketches. This helps to put the story together and can be a means to brainstorm ideas. Another idea is to write a narrative essay about the first day at the university.

Expository Writing. A daily journal entry is a good way to practice expository writing. This type of writing is informative, so keeping a journal allows students to inform the teacher (or whoever reads the journal) of what is going on in their everyday lives and what is on their minds. This can be a cathartic exercise for students, even if this journal activity is kept personal. Organization is important for this type of writing, so another good activity is to get students to explain how to do a task, step-by-step, such as saving music on an MP3 player or building a bird feeder [3].

Descriptive Writing. These activities should help the reader create a clear picture in his mind. Ask students to recreate a scene from their favourite vacations. Let the students know that not only should they describe what they see, but other sensory details, such as what they hear, smell, taste and touch, create a complete picture. Another writing idea — this one can be done in pairs — is to get a student to

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describe an object at home so another student can draw it. The better the description, the more accurate the drawing will be.

Persuasive Writing. Pose a yes or no question and have students take a position on one side or the other. For example, should weekends be increased to three days instead of the current two days? Most students undoubtedly will say yes, but they should give good reasons to support their stance so that they can persuade the reader to formulate the same opinion. The best questions are relevant to the students. Another worthwhile activity is getting students to write a letter to their parents trying to get their permission for something Mom and Dad initially opposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Start with a mind-map. A great way to set the stage for a piece of writing is by brainstorming ideas related to your topic and activating all of the English you will need to express yourself. Try creating a mind-map in which you write down any prior knowledge you have on the subject in bullet points and specify facts or opinions you would like to include. You may also choose to make a list of English vocabulary words that will help you articulate your thoughts.
- Use an outline. A blank page can be intimidating, even for the most seasoned writers. Give yourself something to work with by laying out the structure of your piece in advance. Leave placeholders for an introduction, several paragraphs that provide support for your thesis and a conclusion and then use your mind-map to fill in the details.
- Learn how to type. Did you know that we think a lot faster than we write? Translating ideas into language can be slow and cumbersome if you are handwriting or hunting for individual letters, one key at a time. You can lose your train of thought and or experience frustration with the mechanics of writing. But you can automatize the process and help your thoughts flow freely through your fingertips and onto the screen by learning how to touch-type. You'll not only be faster, but more accurate too.
- Revise, revise and revise some more. Writing is a process that involves crafting a sentence then going back to re-read what comes before. You want to be sure your ideas make sense in a particular order and that you've used a variety of different vocabulary and phrasing to express yourself. When you write on a computer you can use the same document for your mind-map, outline and initial draft. Being able to copy, paste and delete means revisions are a lot easier to make. Continue to write and revise until you are happy with your draft.

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- Have a native-speaker proofread your work. Everyone makes mistakes in writing. This is because when you've been focused on a text for so long, it becomes hard to see the errors. Leave your work for a day or two before you come back to it to proofread. It's also helpful to ask an English speaker to take a look as they are likely to catch awkward phrasing and may even be able to provide you with some more native-like solutions when it comes to re-wording and presenting your ideas. Depending on the length of your piece, you can sign up for a language exchange and help someone with their writing in your native language at the same time.
- Use spelling and grammar checks. Some learners may feel that relying on automatic spelling and grammar checks is cheating because it prevents you from catching your own errors and allows you to be less accurate. However, these checks can help call attention to problems with your English grammar and/or spelling skills. Use the content that they bring up as a learning experience and decide on how to revise each error by weighing their suggestions. You'll be surprised at how much you learn.
- Build your productive vocabulary. Most English language learners have a larger receptive vocabulary than a productive one. This means you may understand a word when you see it but it won't necessarily show up in your writing. Purposefully using words you have recently learned is one way to increase your productive vocabulary. When you use a word in your writing it makes it more available the next time you sit down to compose a sentence. Another strategy is to use a thesaurus to look up alternatives to the words you have chosen. Just be sure you don't pepper your text with awkward word-choices that don't fit the context or your original phrasing.
- Spend more time reading in English. Good writers tend to be avid readers. The more you read in English, the more you are exposed to different ways of expressing ideas. The grammatical structures and style of the writer will eventually start to show up in your own writing and you may learn some new vocabulary at the same time.
- Familiarize yourself with different text types. Not all writing assignments require the same kind of English. A factual article for the newspaper, an email to a potential employer and an essay for a literature class will all necessitate a unique format and different elements. You can improve your writing by familiarizing yourself with a diverse range of text types. For example, read the newspaper, look up sample essays and make your way through an English novel or two.

Developed reading skills allow students to get the most from their education—one of the many reasons why it's part of the curriculum, no matter the grade level.

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Teachers in primary grade levels focus on helping students develop a strong foundation, while teachers in higher grades reinforce that foundation and show how reading is necessary for the real world.

Utilize various reading materials

Be creative by teaching reading through different formats. Books, magazines, books on tape, CDs, and other recorded reading can give students multiple ways to connect with the material. Have students practice reading along with a book on tape. They will gain experience seeing the words on the printed page while hearing them on the recording. Other technologies, such as text-to-speech software, can refocus a reading exercise into one where students can pay attention to the sentence structure and words without getting discouraged by their own comprehension.

Relate reading to other areas of the student's life

Encourage your students to read selected material and then discuss it in relation to other books, movies, news items, or TV shows. Have your students make the comparison: What did they like about how each format portrayed the topic? How would they have changed a format to better match the topic? What was the message the writers intended the reader/observer to get from the material? Being able to connect what has been read to something else in their lives helps students think abstractly about the material.

Have fun with words

As students work on their reading assignments, ask them to write words or phrases down that they don't understand and bring them to class on an index card. You can then conduct a classroom discussion on the words until everyone understands the various meanings and uses. Additionally, students can then put their cards up on a wall creating a record of challenging language they have mastered. Depending on the type and format of the classroom, these cards could be used for subsequent writing classes to help students further develop their vocabulary.

Create a record of progress

Help students create a journal of their reading work. Have them list the reading they have done and a brief summary of the material. Make a section of challenging words or phrases; another section can be used for passages they don't readily understand. Finish with the students' opinion of the material, likes, dislikes, and whether they would read more from this author. Review these journals with the students regularly and celebrate their progress with them. Use the journals at parent-teacher conferences so the parents can also see the progress.

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Make reading about communication—not just a tool Prepare several lessons where students read a number of different written materials: grocery store ads; instructions on how to put together a bookcase; a recipe; a newspaper article; part of your state's driver education handbook—all great examples. Start a discussion on how important it is to be able to read these items accurately and understand them. In each case, ask: what is the important information being conveyed? Where might students encounter the material currently in their lives? These real-world examples help students understand the long-term importance of quality reading skills and comprehension.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say, that learning to write in a foreign language is a demanding task that can easily leave students unmotivated. To combat this problem, teachers can apply their knowledge of current theories and methods to make writing instruction more successful. For example, familiarity with the process approach to writing allows a teacher to help students recognize the steps they go through to create a written text, which should lead to less stressful and more motivated writing. Additionally, an understanding of how to apply the principles of project work to a writing task lets the teacher incorporate elements that are sure to stimulate students to express themselves on paper: a relevant topic and an authentic purpose for writing; collaboration with their peers; use of all four skills; and a variety of activities to gather information. The end result is motivated students who are pleased that they have created something that is useful and has meaning.

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