

DEVELOPING THE WRITING SKILLS; BALANCING SOME APPROACHES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

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Abstract—This research paper aims at developing approaches and teaching strategies for writing skills for third year students from Technological Universities. Although there are various kinds of writing, third year students in this academic year (2019-2020) are taught business writing (cover letter), pen pal email, creative writing, etc. In this research paper, a survey on selected students from third year is carried out within two months. To collect the data, need questionnaires about how they write a formal letter and a sample of business letter are given. To work out this research, pretest and evaluation design is used. According to data, they feel confusion about their usage and they need to aware of the academic style. Some approaches and techniques are implemented in this paper to improve writing skills of the students. This paper is expected to have a good command of writing in certain settings, such as correct formal, proper words, usage, informative details.

Keyword; approaches, teaching strategies, business letter, evaluation

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1 INTRODUCTION

I HIS paper aims to develop the writing skills of the third year students who are attending at the Technological Universities. All of the third year students are adult learners and they have learned English for about 13 years, however, they have never had the experience of business letter or pen pal email or creative writing. Therefore, all knowledge related to writing styles are new to students. They know little about how a formal letter should be written. Most students will be doing import or export business after graduation. Writing a promising business letter is the starting point to connect with prospective employers and develop a business relationship. Therefore, students need to know how to write a good letter in order to get employers' consideration. The reason for teaching writing to students includes reinforcement, language development, learning styles and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right. Some students acquire languages in a purely oral way, but most of them benefit greatly from seeing the language written down. Students need to know how to write letters, how to put written reports together, how to reply advertisement, how to write using electronic media. Moreover, in many countries, education system emphasise on writing for taking tests. For many students, the only reason to practise writing is to pass the examinations or to get a good grade in the class.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important for all students to know themselves what English and what types of writing they learn and what content they are exposed to. Writing is discovery of learning, not just demonstrating of learning. Writing, unlike speaking, provides the students with a way not only to generate ideas before presenting them to

an audience but also to scrutinize the idea. When the students start a piece of writing, they focus on critical reading, generating ideas and expressing them with clarity, organisation, style and accuracy.

2.1 What Writing Is

Writing is a difficult skill for non-native speakers alike, because writers must balance multiple issues such as content, organisation, purpose audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics like capitalisation. Indeed, writing refers to the conveying of information or the expression of original ideas in a consecutive way in the new language and writing is generative of ideas. Writing consists of many constituent parts and the writer needs to consider which one will be the most important for a course: content, organisation, originality, style, fluency, accuracy, or using appropriate rhetorical forms of discourse. Moreover, a writing course exists primarily as grammar practice. All forms of writing are difficult to some extent for ESL or EFL students. The ability to express one's idea in written form in a second language and to write accurately and coherently with the context is more difficult. Writing involves the production and arrangement of sentences in a reasonable manner to the purpose of the writer, the person or persons addressed, and the function of what is written. Writing makes the writer exact (Bacon 2000). Writing is just another form of communication. Writing, an important part of a language learning, is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic and analyse and classify any background knowledge. Writing for engineering students provides guidance in the use of words, construction of sentences and organisation of paragraphs.

2.2 What Academic Writing Is

Academic English employs for less imagery activity and far more structured activity. Writing a good assignment is both a challenge and one of the most rewarding aspects of study. However, while academic English writing may not have the beauty of creative writing or the beauty of memos, texts or email, it has its own form of elegance and style. The purpose of academic writing is to communicate writer's ideas as effectively as possible. Effective way means that the reader must understand the writer's purpose clearly, concisely and yet comprehensively. Students may also require to write book reports, literature reviews, film critiques, speeches, dissertations, theses, or complete 'gobbets' papers. All of these forms of assessment require similar academic English writing skill. In many ways, academic English writing allows them less freedom to express themselves as writers.

2.3 The Importance of Teaching Writing to the Students

The reason for teaching writing to students includes reinforcement, language development, learning style and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right. Some students are fantastically quick at picking up language just by looking and listening. Writing can also be a quiet reflective activity instead of the rush and bother of interpersonal face-to-face communication. It is important to know what language the students have at their command and what can be achieved with this language. There is no limit to the kind of text that students are asked to write. The writer manages to maintain the reader's focus on the topic while distributing new information in consecutive portions that hold the reader's interest and create anticipation of what is to follow in the discourse. In order to create a communicative written message, the writer needs to be motivated to write and to impart information of some types. On the other hand, these can be barrier and anxiety which may accompany the writing task. Such anxiety usually stems from the student's fear of failure – not being able to think of what to write about, not knowing how to express it properly, not being able to be composed successfully and as a result of this, feeling incompetent. Teaching writing for university offers the students to get into the writing habit if they have been away from formal education, to develop a procedure for writing essays and reports, and to develop strategies for organising their ideas. As their writing skills develop and they become more aware of what is required, they can be more flexible and creative in their approach to writing.

3. APPROACHES

Writing techniques concern themselves with the composing process, development of ideas, argument, logic, cause and effect, etc. The writer's responsibility is to produce a text that will be coherent to the potential reader, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to help students to develop writing strategies to do so (Cele. Murcia and Olshtain- 2000).

3.1 Product Approach

According to Jonthan Celestino (2003), typically students in the classes adopting the product approach would find themselves studying model texts and attempting various exercises aimed towards drawing attention to relevant features of a text. The product approach to writing usually involves the presentation of a model text, which is analysed and then forms the basis of a task, leads to writing of an exactly, similar of a parallel text. A product approach often leads to a simplistic copying of the model text to produce a new text. With the product approach, teacher focuses on what a final piece of writing will look like and measure it against the criteria of vocabulary use, grammatical use and mechanical consideration such as spelling, and punctuation as well as content and organisation. In this approach, it requires constant errors correction and affects student's motivation and self-esteem.

3.2 Strategies for Product Approach

Students study model texts then the features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if they are studying a formal letter, students attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and language used to make formal requests. Lesson planning serves invaluable function in the learning process. It introduces information through readings (writing models) followed by exercises. The introduction provides students with the basic information about the important of writing a good business letter. This is likely to encourage students to pay more attention to learn it well. As the students have little knowledge on business writing, the teacher needs to introduce general information about business letter, like what the letter refers to, what is the difference between this letter and other personal letters, what feature it has and what the component are. By doing like this, students are able to acquire all the knowledge through provided samples and exercises.

3.3 Process Approach

An important element of process approach is the meaningfulness it brings to students, who makes a personal connection to the topic and come to understand the process they follow when writing about it. The process approach is widely accepted and utilised because it allows and recognises that what students bring to the writing to understand the steps involved in writing classroom contributes to the development of the writing skill. The idea of process approach is to lead students through the various stages of the writing process but to construct process-oriented writing instruction that will affect performance and to have an effective performance-oriented teaching programme.

3.4 Strategies for Process Approach

In this technique, the teacher makes the students think of as many words or ideas as possible related to the topic and write them on the paper. This aims to stimulate students'

knowledge about the topic, thus drawing together ideas and vocabulary necessary for writing a successful composition. In some cases, they can encounter some specific terms, they have to check them in dictionary. Planning stage helps the students to develop an interest in the topic by relating it to their experience. In this stage, the students need to aware not to repeat, clarify their thinking and organise their material. Moreover, they exchange ideas into note form and judge quality and usefulness of the ideas. In drafting stage, the students are ready to write their first draft. Sometimes this activity can perform by group work or pair work activities. Making a mind map can be a spontaneous prewriting activity. Students start with a topic at the center and then generate a worth of ideas from that, developing and relating these ideas as their mind makes association. In other words, this stage helps to make the hierarchical relationship of ideas which helps students with the structure of their texts. After writing part of the draft, the students need to review the text. Revising is not merely checking for language errors. It is done to improve global content and the organisation of ideas so that the writer's intent is made clearer to the reader. In this way, they can improve their own drafts. The students are, however, not always expected to know where and how to correct every error. Therefore, editing should be done as the best of their ability for course prior to submitting their work for evaluating each time. Editing within process writing is meaningful because students can see the connection between such an exercise and their own writing in that correction is not done for its own sake. In these ways, students are expected to make their own study plan with the support of above approaches and strategies and then they can write follow-up exercises with confidentially.

4 BALANCING PRODUCT AND PROCESS

In our country, most teachers and students deeply emphasised on grammar and final product. Moreover, students are provided with the texts which play a key role in their learning. Students are confined within a supply of texts and can only produce or reproduce what they have as inputs from the sample texts. In fact, the evaluation of a writing is done on the usage of correct grammar, a range of vocabularies (specified in some cases), meaningful punctuation, and accurate spelling (hedge 1988). The teachers need to mix the careful control of language for learners (as in product) and the creative use of language by the learner (as in process) for improving learners' writing skills (Kim and Kim 2005).

5ACTIVITY FOR CLASSROOM AND FINDINGS

5.1 Activity for Classroom

The students are provided with a sample of cover letter and writing guide lines. The strategies and approaches for writing a task are also presented above.

July 15, 2017

Mr. Patrick Garrett

Hiring Manager, Alto Restaurant Crop.

589 Hillside Drive

Raleigh, NC 27604

Dear Mr. Garrett,

I am writing to apply for the restaurant manager position at Alto's Raleigh location. I have worked in the food service industry for seven years. Including the past three years as a manager, I believe that my skills and experience would make me a valuable member of the Alto team.

At my current job ,I have been an effective and skilled leader who performs to a high standard , even under pressure. I first proved my value by training the entire wait staff in preparation for the restaurant's grand opening. Other achievements include:

- Meeting daily, weekly and monthly sale goals
- Heling to develop and effective social media presence
- Making sure that the restaurant complied with all relevant food safety policies and regulation. In addition, I have an enthusiastic interest in Alto's unique and would be glad to contribute to your business growth.

Please see my attached resume for further details about my education, background, and reference. I would be happy to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the position. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jullia Barton

By using sample and writing guides, find a job ad online that appeals to you. Then on a separate sheet of paper, write a cover letter for that job.

A good cover letter is important for attracting the attention of respective employer. When writing a cover letter, follow this format 1.

Heading and greeting: In the upper left corner, give the date and the name, job title, and address of the person you are writing to. In your greeting, avoid writing to whom it may concern or Dear sir or madam. It is better to use the person's name if possible.

Paragraph 1: Introduction state why you are writing, including the specific position you are interested in.

Then briefly state why you are right for the job.

I am writing to apply for..... I am writing to express interest in..... I read with interest your ad in.....for the opening of.....As an experienced...., I believe I have the right qualifications for.....Because-, I think that I would be a valuable member of the team.

Paragraph 2: Details Give details about your education, skill, qualities, and achievement that are relevant to the job. You may

choose to use bullet points. If possible, mention the specific detail about the company that especially interests you.

I have a degree in – from–, During my three years at –, I have.... I have proven my – by.I succeeded in..... I am especially interested in your company's.....

Paragraph 3: Conclusion Offer to meet for an interview. Mention any attachments, such as your resume. Finally, thank the reader for considering your application.

I would be glad to meet you to discuss..... It would be my pleasure to come by your office to... ..Please see my attached resume..... Please find attached a list of references. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

5.2 Finding

Student 1: When I started studying business letter for the first time, I had no idea what to do. I found I had difficulties in writing. I think I am weak in vocabularies. My teacher gave me an example of business letter and suggested some online references. She also advised me to use workbook exercises to show examples of correct punctuation. She gave me really helpful comments about the business letters I wrote. I think these things make me better in writing. Now, I am becoming more familiar with writing business letter. I really appreciate my teacher for giving me very useful recommendation.

Student 2; When I knew that I have to write about business letter I'm very surprised. I don't know much about business letter and we haven't learnt it before. But I know the writing forms of other letters. It's difficult for me to write a business because I'm not used to it. But I tried to write it by myself, and I can write it properly. Since I have to search about business, I've got many knowledge about it. By doing this, I also got experiences of writing unknown letters and now I also knew about the business letter. I'll keep studying about Business English learning and I like this way because I think it will help me to improve my skills.

6. CONCLUSION

This research paper has been conducted through the questionnaires and sample letter to the third year students. With the findings and results from the questionnaires, some strategies and approaches are presented in this paper. This paper may encourage the students to be able to write and to practise writing on their own. After they have learned about the sample letter, some students are interested in assigned letter and they try it their own. On the other hand, some students deeply rely on the sample letter. All in all, students are willing to practise letter writing if they have opportunities. But some problems are there like knowledge related topic, style and organisation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to acknowledge for her heartfelt thanks to everyone for their support and encouragement. And also, the author would like to express her ever warm gratitude to all her friends who gave her their invaluable support and motivation and students from Technological University(Mandalay), who were of a great help throughout her research paper.

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