

THE (INTER)NET. SPECIAL USE OF ENGLISH

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Abstract. *The Internet is a large group of computers that are connected to each other. It is used to send information quickly between computers around the world. It has millions of smaller domestic, academic, business and government networks, which together carry lots of different information and services. The Internet is used for many things, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer and the interlinked web pages and other documents of the World Wide Web. In general, the universal language on the Internet is English, or more precisely, a vague collection of languages called „English”, because their common origin is the national language spoken in England. That national language has spread over the world, and several variants, such as American (US) English, Australian English, and Canadian English. In the textbooks I am using in high school classes there are some lessons concerning teaching English for the Internet (PROSPECTS advanced / UPSTREAM upper intermediate/MISSION 2) lessons dealing with special use of English as a foreign language.*

Rezumat. *Internetul este o rețea de calculatoare, legate unele cu altele. Sunt folosite pentru a trimite rapid informații între calculatoarele din toata lumea. Internetul are milioane de utilizatori casnici, academici, de birouri, firme sau rețele guvernamentale, care transmit diferite informații sau servicii.*

Internetul este folosit pentru multe lucruri, cum ar fi email electronic, discuții online, transfer de fișiere, pagini web accesate sau orice alte documente ale rețelei electronice (World Wide Web). În general limba utilizată pentru internet este engleza, sau mai bine spus, o colecție de cuvinte din engleză, pentru că originea rețelei este un limbaj vorbit în Anglia. Acea varietate de limbă s-a răspândit prin lume, luând naștere engleza americană (US), varianta australiană, canadiană, ș. a. m. d, aceste varietăți regionale coexistând de secole. În manualele pe care le folosesc la clasele de liceu apar lecții care privesc predarea limbii engleze pentru Internet (PROSPECTS advanced / UPSTREAM upper intermediate / MISSION 2).

Cuvinte cheie: *Internet, rețea web, limba engleză, manual de liceu, vocabular specific*

Keywords: *Internet, World Wide Web, English, high school classes / textbooks, special use of English*

Introduction

English is a West Germanic language that arose in England and South - Eastern Scotland in the time of the Anglo-Saxons.

Following the economic, political, military, scientific, cultural, and colonial influence of Great Britain and of the United States since the mid-20th century, English has been widely spread around the world, becoming the leading language of international discourse.

It has acquired the status of lingua franca¹ in many regions.

It is widely learned as a second language and used as an official language of the European Union and many Commonwealth countries, as well as in many world organizations.

¹ A **lingua franca** (originally Italian for "Frankish language") is a language systematically used to communicate between persons not sharing a **mother tongue**, in particular when it is a third language, distinct from both persons' mother tongues. This can also be referred to as **working language** or **bridge language**.

Approximately 375 million people speak English as their first language.

English today is probably the third largest language by number of native speakers, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.

However, when combining native and non-native speakers it is probably the most commonly spoken language in the world, though possibly second to a combination of the Chinese languages (depending on whether or not distinctions in the latter are classified as "languages").² The countries with the highest populations of native English speakers are, in descending order: United States (215 million), United Kingdom (61 million), Canada (18.2 million), Australia (15.5 million), Nigeria (4 million), Ireland (3.8 million), South Africa (3.7 million), and New Zealand (3.6 million)

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a "world language", the *lingua franca* of the modern era and while it is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language.

English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89 % of school children, ahead of French at 32 %, while the perception of the usefulness of foreign languages amongst Europeans is 68 % in favor of English ahead of 25 % for French.³

Among some non-English speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the adult population can talk in English - in particular: 85 % in Sweden, 83 % in Denmark, 79 % in the Netherlands, 66 % in Luxembourg, and over 50 % in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, and Germany.⁴

1 – about TEFL

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) refers to teaching English to students whose first language is not English.

TEFL usually occurs in the student's own country, either within the state school system, or privately, in an after-hours language school or with a tutor.

As a non - native speaker I have looked for ideas and methods to attract students with something new: and that SOMETHING was using role play activities, songs, poems and drama performances, whenever possible.

Having English textbooks that allow such methods, but also taking part in workshops and summer schools (in Oxford, UK, 1994, Barnstaple, North Devon, UK, 1998, or Sliema, Malta, 2003 and lots of webinars recently) where international professors pleaded for these fresh and modern techniques, I become acquainted with them and started to use during my teaching practice.

2 – about textbooks

In the textbooks I am using in high school classes there are special lessons concerning teaching English for Internet (PROSPECTS advanced / UPSTREAM upper intermediate / MISSION 2),

² Languages of the World (Charts), available at The World's Most Widely Spoken Languages

³ 2006 survey by Eurobarometer, in http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/doc631_en.pdf

⁴ idem

teaching English through music (SET SAIL 3 / INSIDE OUT), or special lessons dealing with English as a foreign language.

It is not a hypothesis, but a proven fact, that the use of prompts such as masks, costumes, pictures, role – play cards, scripts or situational cards, have the magic effect of creating a whole new world, in which students feel different, playing roles that make them loose their inhibitions and communicate more freely.

3 - lesson details

In Prospects Advanced (Ken Wilson, James Taylor, Deirdre Howard – Williams, Macmillan Education, 2001), Upstream Upper Intermediate (Bob Obee, Virginia Evans, Express Publishing, 2003,) or Mission 2 (Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, Express Publishing, 2005) one can teach lessons about internet and special use of English.

The topic is introduced at different units of the textbooks (Unit 7 in Prospects Advanced, page 34 – 37; unit 1 in Upstream Upper Intermediate, page 7 – 13; or unit 3 in Mission 2, page 64 – 67) but it is presented to students who are familiarized with the topic.

Let's have as an example PROSPECTS ADVANCED, Unit 7, Surfing the Internet.

Students have to start discussing the topic from a motto: "I don't surf the Internet, - I drive it...!"⁵

The so called First Impression activities follow:

a) Read and comment on the following statistics:

It took forty years for radio in the United States to gain audience of fifty millions people. The same number of people was using personal computers only fifteen years after they were introduced. From the time the Internet became available to the general public, it took just four years for fifty million American to be regularly using it.

b) How do you feel about the spread of the Internet? Do you agree with any of the following opinions? Do you have another opinion? Discuss your ideas with the rest of the class.

Since I started using the Internet for research, studying has been easier and more fun.

The Internet is quite simply the biggest breakthrough in communications there has ever been. I don't know how we ever lived without it.⁶

The Internet is difficult to access, full of unreliable information and contains offensive material that should be banned.

I don't understand the Internet. I'm not very computer – literate and I find it confusing.

Thus vocabulary is introduced:

(a) Computers and the Internet have created some new words, and given a new meaning to others. What do the following verbs mean? Which of them are also nouns? Access / click / download / format / store / surf

⁵ The Prospects Advanced textbook, page 34

⁶ Idem, page 34

(b) Complete these sentences using the verbs above: (there are 6 sentences to be filled in, using only words linked to the Internet.)

(c) Discuss with the other students what you know about the following words and phrases: (students are given 5 definitions of the following: The Internet; an Internet service provider (ISP); a search engine; a website; a domain name.) ⁷

Reading practice 8 is the next activity, as students are to read about domain names.

4 – discussion

Teaching the same textbooks for many school years now, being myself an Internet surfer and a Facebook addicted, I have always challenged my students to tell me what they will do in a world WITHOUT internet connection.

And the following honest answers are taken from my own 10th grade students' essays.....

"... the technology helps very much in our society. Young people use the modern technology for photos, video, movies or music. (...) they have many applications on their phones..."(Alexandra S, 10th B)

"...we cannot imagine our life without computers and the fact that IT has become so important that nothing can replace technology..." (Delia O, 10th B)

"...I have never imagined my life without e-mail (...) one could post a letter, but it would take days for the other to receive it. With email is so much easier and faster..." (Henrietta L, 10th B)

5 - conclusion

In my opinion life without modern technology would be MORE beautiful because nowadays all the children / people have them (smart devices), they don't have time for things that really counts. Like a blue sky, a summer rain, a smelly rose, or ...a birthday call

So, during my years of teaching alternative textbooks I have to "upgrade my vocabulary", to "access new files", to "download and store new Intel", so as not to be overpassed by my students.

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⁷ The Prospects Advanced textbook, page 34

⁸ Idem, page 35

WRITING TASKS IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Rezumat. *Lucrarea actuală își propune să facă lumină asupra practicilor și tehnicilor actuale utilizate în dezvoltarea abilităților de scriere în limba engleză, nivelul de cunoaștere a limbii-intermediar. Procesul de predare poate fi apreciat ca fiind eficient atunci când dezvoltă competențe. Profesorii au responsabilitatea de a dezvolta abilitățile de scriere ale elevilor, folosind strategii adecvate și metode eficiente de predare a gramaticii, vocabularului, regulile de punctuație. Dobândirea competenței de scriere are loc atunci dacă activitățile de predare sunt interconectate, iar aici se înțelege, importanța planificării unor activități interactive care sporesc angajamentul elevului.*

Abstract. *The current research paper throws light on the actual practices and techniques used in teaching writing in the classroom concerning intermediate level. The teaching of English becomes efficient when competences are developed. The teachers have the responsibility to develop the pupils' knowledge, skills of writing by using appropriate strategies and effective methods to teach grammar, vocabulary, punctuation. The achievement of writing competence can happen if the teaching actions are interrelated, and here it's meant the importance of planning adequate interactive activities that increase students' engagement.*

Cuvinte cheie: *competența de scriere, competențe lingvistice, limba engleză, activități interactive.*

Keywords: *writing competence, linguistic competences, English language, interactive activities.*

Writing is a key skill. The ability to put words down on paper is a critical skill for success in college and career, but few students graduate high school as proficient writers. Pupils usually prefer more oral tasks than written ones. Teachers have a responsibility to design teaching activities to efficiently combine oral and written tasks to provide formative learning experiences for their students. Teachers must consider the fact that writing tasks are valuable teaching activities that contribute to the development of the rest of language skills.

According to many researchers that study the issue of language education from our country and abroad consider that there are a lot of reasons why teachers have to insist on more use of writing in the classroom like reinforcing grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary in general, it gives pupils opportunity to be adventurous with the language and enrich knowledge experience [1].

Building an efficient writing activity needs a strategic approach. The teacher should bear in mind all the aspects and factors that facilitate learning as it supposes a complex process. There are important characteristics of teaching writing: Pupils need sufficient foundational skills and knowledge (in spelling, typing, content-specific knowledge) and may be taught some of this knowledge in the course of writing. This means that teachers in early grades should work on building basic skills in hand-writing, spelling, and typing, and that they in later grades spend some time focusing on sentence-building skills and incorporate content learning into writing assignments.

Pupils benefit from a writing environment where they write and edit frequently using word processing software on long pieces of writing that generate student interest. Although pupils in early grades may be predominantly writing by hand, as they move on to late elementary school and middle school they should move to type, which enables more rapid editing. Although work on basic transcription and sentence-building skills are vital, teachers also need to assign longer pieces of work as students' progress.

Pupils benefit from clear writing purposes and from having well-defined goals for improvement. This suggests that teachers choose writing assignments that have larger purposes beyond simply being submitted for a grade—student writing that is published, displayed, or otherwise shared can improve student motivation. It also suggests that teachers carefully structure the revision process. For instance, revision goals like “come up with two more reasons in favor of your argument and one reason in favor of an opposing argument” help pupils meaningfully revise their papers. *Pupils benefit from instruction on models of good and bad writing, and through explicit strategies in the writing process: for example, pre-writing techniques, ways of organizing the material, making their reasoning explicit.* Pupils must correct misperceptions of what writing that focuses on the product of writing (instead of the process). And they must be explicit about the strategies that good writers use to ultimately create solid writing. *Pupils benefit from guidance in genre-specific practices (for instance, diagrams that help students “fill out” both sides of an argument, character sheets that help students flesh out the characters in their narratives, etc.).* Teachers can't assume that skill in one genre of writing will necessarily transfer to others. *Students benefit from collaborating with each other: editing, receiving feedback, and editing again, or even working in groups to co-write material.* Providing feedback to others seems to provide as much or more benefit to writing skill as editing one's paper. Educators should focus on teaching students how to edit judiciously and provide feedback in a supportive way [4]. The teacher should consider while designing a writing activity all the stages of the writing process (pre-writing, writing, revising, editing and publishing) and their particularities, and present a step-by-step model of the writing process.

Demonstrating (modeling) the writing process and guiding students through each step naturally incorporates successful learning strategies while providing a variety of feedback that builds confidence and increases accountability while developing writing and thinking skills. The step-by-step process can be applied to any essay length or type.

Let us see some methods and techniques for teaching writing, these usually are not lengthy, they focus more on developing writing behavior and writing skills.

Read up or daily reading is considered the first step to improve writing and helps pupils to develop their ability to write. Good opportunity to acquire new vocabulary and refresh the passive one and use then in their own writing. *Frank Smith* writes in *Reading Without Nonsense*, “You learn to read by reading and you learn to write by reading” [2]. He tells to his students that something

magical happens when we read-the words and sentences enter our consciousness, float around, and drift out through our pen or keyboard in our own narrative voice.

Make the writing activity to be fun and try to connect pupils' interests. Use formative games like puzzles, word games and pupils especially younger would like the “write the word” game where they search for items and write down the word when they find each item. Don't forget about learners' motivation construct the reading task around their interests according to their age, their favorite book, character from the movie, or cartoon. So, whatever their interests are, connect them to writing. Propose your students to write a new short story about his or her favorite characters, or let them create a story all about what they like.

Try to use technology it will be an advantage to success. There's no getting around the fact that technology plays a huge part in our lives. Use it to your advantage by having your students to create a blog. This can help your students work on improving their writing skills by encouraging frequent writing habits.

Praising pupil's activity, show interest in their written assignments, appreciate when they write a short story and encourage their writing as much as possible. Organize monthly writing tour of papers and praise or find the specific way to appreciate them [4].

Giving feedback, feedback and more feedback is very important. The strategies that teachers chose while giving feedback are essential as well. Many of us chose to circle errors in red pen, but was noticed by teaching experience the need of writing a few comments, and return paper with a grade, most teachers because of time lack do not do that the amount of time they spend on grading student writing is staggering. And much of this feedback is not improving their writing.

To make writing easier for students, teacher should have a plan how to teach his students to write correct and quickly. For every stage there are a lot of methods and tasks that teach students how to write something.

Prewriting, planning and developing strategies are important steps in the writing process. Students will find it easier to complete a writing assignment if they have spent more time brainstorming, taking notes and working together to think about assignments before they begin any formal writing. The most used activities in this stage are: *brainstorming, making a list, mind maps, reconstructing an outline, cubing, focused freewriting, inventory of knowledge.* Cubing can be applied to different forms of classroom work on a variety of topics and aims. One activity that usually is used in the classroom and can really enhance writing can be as the following:

Cubing

This activity asks students to consider a topic or writing prompt from six different angles (think of the six faces of a cube). Write the topic on the board or hand it out on a sheet of paper. Ask students to divide a blank sheet of paper into six sections, and label the sections: *who, what, why, where, and how.*

Ask students to write without stopping for two minutes on each aspect of topic. They can use these notes to develop the topic into an essay or more complete assignment.

While writing stage pupils are monitored by teachers what steps to do and how to construct the message so to achieve their communicative goals. A strategic approach should be implemented at this stage as well. The pupils must be learned to follow specific actions in order to make a successful draft. They are learned to follow a specific algorithm like put the information you researched into your own words; write sentences and paragraphs even if they are not perfect; read what you have written and judge if it says what you mean; write some more, read it again and check; write until they said everything they wanted to say about the topic.

More useful activities can be the *refinery method*, *the jigsaw method*, *unpacking an idea*, *writing between lines*, *re-outlining*, *peer-editing-to love mistakes*. An activity that really was efficient and useful for my pupils is: **3x5 Note Card**

It will help students look at a paragraph-level draft. Teacher explains that on the back of each note card, students list the evidence they used to support their thematic proposal. They then rate how each paragraph matches their thesis.

- Are their individual paragraphs internally coherent, i.e. do they have one main idea?
- Does their argument or evidence support their claim?
- Are they using textual evidence correctly to complete the assignment?
- Are their paragraphs and statements in a clear and understandable order?

I've noticed pupils write less and less during classes. I've tried both to "spy" the reasons and to search for some ways to motivate their writing.

Here are some more useful activities that sometimes can stand as great hints.

The solution is pretty simple! First of all, make sure that your students are working together. Pair work is very important; your students brainstorm ideas and find the best way to put them on a piece of paper. It ensures high pupil talk time and great energy. Long silences would no longer be a problem.

Taking notes

On the first day of classes, I usually remind my students how important visuals are. When you hear a new word, it stays in your short-term memory for a second and then you forget it. Writing down new vocabulary is incredibly important because, not only the pupils internalize the word by physically writing it down, but it also helps them recognize the difference between the pronunciation and the way the word looks. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to write the translation for the new word, they can always write synonyms, explanations or even draw new concepts.

Keeping your topics interesting

Another key factor is interest. Your pupils have to be interested in the topic they are writing about. Personally, I believe our pupils are usually interested in writing something they are involved in personally. Some pupils keep diaries, cook books, journals, etc. which gives us, as teachers, a

perfect opportunity to encourage them to write an entry or two a week in English. This can provide a nice contrast to the email, reports and memos that they are used to preparing for work and in business classes.

Project work

Pupils love seeing results of their hard work while also exploring something new. Giving your pupils a little bit of freedom with their writing projects can boost motivation and creativity. Usually when they want to start writing something, they don't know where and how to start. I have recently discovered an app that is called "365" and suggested it to some of my pupils with a lower level writing skills of English to practice it. The best thing about it is that you don't have to write massive amounts of text at once. Each day the app sends you a reminder to write something down and a question to answer, for example, "If you were a character in a book, how would you describe yourself?" Basically, now our pupils can type little notes on their phones and then send them to each other. I think it is a great tool to write a little book with your students. You can start with working on the main characters and then move towards designing and developing the main plot line.

Conclusion. All in all, the reason for not wanting to write is not a lack of ability but the lack of motivation. Letting your pupils work together on meaningful pieces of writing or creating a book that would help create great memories for them are some simple ways to keep your pupils' motivation high.

Writing skills are essential for pupils' foreign language education. Their development is facilitated by the strategic way of designing them and identifying the right way to display the actions, viewing writing as a process. Many interactive activities can be used in the classroom or outside the classroom to enhance writing. Over time teachers select and adapt specific writing activities that work better for a specific ability or specific target.

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