

IMPLEMENTING CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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IMPLEMENTAREA PROCESULUI DE SCRIERE LA ORA DE LIMBĂ ENGLEZĂ

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Abstract. This research paper investigates the use of different writing approaches in English as a Foreign Language classroom activity. Specifically, the paper explores freewriting, controlled written activities, and guided written activities, and their potential to enhance writing skills, language proficiency, and soft skills, depending on the objectives and needs of the students. Additionally, the paper suggests strategies and techniques to encourage creativity and enjoyment in writing activities. A focus is put on the development of creative writing that is seen as a booster of skills. The study finds that students are more engaged and motivated when specific writing steps are followed, and they learn to use both convergent and divergent thinking strategies. The results indicate that writing promotes communication skills, increases confidence, and provides a permanent record of progress. However, it is recommended that writing should be combined with speaking, listening, and reading activities for a more comprehensive learning experience. Finally, the primary goal of this study is to empower students to express their thoughts and emotions through writing. By implementing the recommended methodologies, students can develop their writing abilities and build their confidence, which will be useful in more advanced writing tasks in the future.

Keywords: writing skills, strategies, techniques, creative writing, writing approaches.

Rezumat. Acest articol investighează utilizarea diferitelor abordări de scriere în cadrul orelor de limba engleză. În mod specific, lucrarea explorează abordări precum scrierea liberă, activități scrise controlate și activități scrise ghidate. De asemenea, este discutat potențialul acestora de a îmbunătăți abilitățile de scriere, competența lingvistică și abilitățile soft, în funcție de obiectivele și nevoile studenților. În plus, lucrarea sugerează strategii și tehnici pentru a încuraja creativitatea și sporirea motivației în cadrul activităților de scris. Se pune accent pe dezvoltarea scrierii creative care este văzută ca un stimulente al abilităților. Studiul constată că studenții sunt mai implicați și mai motivați atunci când sunt urmați pași specifici de scriere și învață să folosească strategii de gândire atât convergente, cât și divergente. Rezultatele indică faptul că scrisul promovează abilitățile de comunicare, crește încrederea elevului și oferă o monitorizare clară a progresului. Cu toate acestea, se recomandă ca scrisul să fie combinat cu activități de vorbire, ascultare și citire pentru o experiență de învățare cu impact sporit. În cele din urmă, scopul principal al acestui studiu este de a facilita experiențele de scriere ale elevilor. Prin implementarea metodologiilor recomandate, elevii își pot dezvolta abilitățile de scriere și își pot construi încrederea, ceea ce va facilita sarcinile de scriere în viitor.

Cuvinte-cheie: abilități de scriere, strategii, tehnici, scriere creativă, abordări în procesul scrierii.

Writing is an important aspect of foreign language learning as it helps reinforce grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. It develops communication skills and increases confidence while providing a permanent record of progress, so writing also allows you to reflect on students' progress and identify areas that need improvement. However, it should be combined with speaking, listening, and reading for a comprehensive learning.

During the lesson, the English teachers usually use more writing approaches. The following three writing approaches are often used in the English classroom: freewriting, controlled written activities, and guided written activities. Our teachers tend to use them separately or in a blended way during the lesson, depending on the goals and needs of the learners. Let us see what represents each of them and the types of activities they involve. Using freewriting on its own can be an effective way to help learners generate ideas, build confidence, and improve their fluency in writing. However, using it exclusively may not help learners develop specific writing skills such as grammar, vocabulary, or organization.

Controlled written activities, on the other hand, can help learners develop their accuracy and precision in writing, as well as reinforce specific writing skills. However, using only controlled writing activities may not give learners enough opportunities to express their own ideas and thoughts.

On the other side guided writing activities can provide learners with more structure and support while still allowing for creativity and personal expression. This approach can help learners develop specific writing skills, as well as practice more complex tasks such as organizing ideas, conducting research, or writing longer texts.

Therefore, a blended approach that incorporates all three writing approaches can be effective in addressing the different needs of learners. For example, a lesson plan could include a freewriting warm-up activity to help learners generate ideas, followed by a controlled writing activity to practice a specific grammar point, and finally, a guided writing activity to help learners write a longer, more complex text. experience.

Convergent and divergent thinking activities enable our students to interact effectively with others and navigate the complexities of the workplace. The basic features that should be point is that divergent thinking skills are associated with creativity, imagination, and innovation, which are essential for developing soft skills such as problem-solving, adaptability, and communication. When students develop their divergent thinking skills, they learn to think outside the box, generate multiple ideas, and explore different perspectives. These skills can help students to develop their problem-solving and decision-making skills, as well as their ability to adapt to new situations and think creatively. On the other hand, convergent thinking skills are associated with analysis, evaluation, and critical thinking, which are also essential for developing soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership. When students have to choose from a variety of ideas they develop their convergent thinking skills. So when our students are writing they learn to analyze and evaluate different options, ideas and make informed decisions. These skills can help students to develop their communication and teamwork skills, as well as their language skills.

Before starting writing in pre writing stage, the teacher can guide students to practice a variety of activities that will help them develop divergent thinking: brainstorming, mind mapping, word associations, random word generation and role playing. Definitely, the key to developing divergent thinking skills is to encourage students to explore different possibilities and generate multiple ideas without judgement. By using these strategies and activities, teachers can help students to develop their creativity and imagination, which are essential skills for creative writing.

Activities like: text comprehension, compare and contrast, critical reading, problem solving, Peer review work, encourage students to analyze and evaluate written work and to focus on identifying the key factors that contribute to effective writing. By using these strategies and activities, teachers can help students to develop their critical thinking and analytical skills, which are essential for creative writing.

In accordance with the psycho-pedagogical aspects of the teaching-learning process described in the specialized literature, a discussion was held with continuing education teachers to identify descriptors that could measure the level of development of divergent and convergent

thinking skills. The aim of this discussion was to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of our teaching practices. These descriptors will be used to select a suitable form of evaluation that can assess the level of development of students' divergent and convergent thinking skills. At the question what or how may be the form of evaluation were more suggestions like: *performance-based assessments, rubrics* that can be used to assess students' divergent and convergent thinking skills, *observations, self-assessments*, where teachers ask students to reflect on their own divergent and convergent thinking skills and assess their own strengths and weaknesses.

One of the debatable questions was whether students should be able to define divergent and convergent thinking, as well as become aware of the strategies used and their impact on the development of their skills.

It was found out that by understanding the concepts of convergent and divergent thinking, students can develop a more well-rounded set of problem-solving and decision-making skills. They can learn to approach problems from different angles, generate multiple solutions, and evaluate them critically to select the best one. This can help them to be more successful in their academic and professional lives, where they will encounter complex problems and challenges that require creative and analytical thinking. They can also learn to appreciate and value different perspectives and ideas, which can help them to work more effectively with others and be more open-minded.

What is the difference between writing and creative writing?

Writing refers to the act of creating written text, while creative writing is a specific type of writing that involves using imagination and original ideas to create works such as poems, stories, and essays. The main difference between writing and creative writing is that writing can be anything from academic to professional, while creative writing focuses on imagination and expression.

One of the definition says: In creative writing, the author has more freedom to express their thoughts and ideas in their own unique way, often using figurative language, imagery, and other literary devices. Is it possible to practice creative writing when students are beginners and have a limited amount of words?

The issue that creative writing is not possible for young or beginner ESL students due to their limited vocabulary is a common misconception. In fact, creative writing can be an incredibly valuable tool in language learning, even at an early stage. This is because creative writing is defined as writing that involves imagination, originality, and expression of the writer's ideas or thoughts on a given topic.

It's true that as students become more knowledgeable, their vocabulary and sentence structures will become more complex. However, this should not discourage teachers from incorporating creative writing activities into their lessons, even with younger or beginner students. The key is to provide an environment that encourages expression and creativity, regardless of vocabulary or language proficiency level.

Following the principle of gradual difficulty language learners should be gradually exposed to more challenging tasks and language structures as they progress in their language acquisition. This principle emphasizes the importance of scaffolding, which is the gradual support provided to learners to help them move from their current level of understanding to the next. So in the below pictures we see how the tasks starting with the early beginners are becoming more challenging. In English teaching, gradual difficulty means that the language tasks and activities provided to learners should be slightly more challenging than their current level of proficiency, but not so difficult that they become frustrated and give up. This approach helps learners to build their confidence and motivation as they see themselves making progress, while also ensuring that they are not overwhelmed by tasks that are too difficult for their level.

For example, if a beginner learner is just starting to learn the English language, the teacher may give students a very short writing mostly based on the picture and the active vocabulary

that students have just practiced and very simple grammar structures such as simple present tense, basic nouns and verbs, and common phrases for everyday communication followed by modelling. As the learner becomes more proficient, the teacher may gradually introduce more complex grammar structures, more vocabulary words, and more challenging reading and writing tasks. Let us give examples of gradual change of difficulty while practicing creative writing.

Creative writing tasks in the ESL classroom should be designed to encourage imagination and self-expression, while also incorporating language learning objectives and providing opportunities for feedback and revision. Here are some activities that can help a beginner English learner develop their creative writing skills:

1. Word association: Provide a word, and have students write a story or poem using that word as inspiration.
2. Picture prompts: Show students a picture and ask them to write a story or describe the scene.
3. Freewriting: Give students a prompt or topic and have them write continuously for a set amount of time without stopping to edit.
4. Character creation: Have students create a character and write a story or describe a day in their life.
5. Poetry: Teach students basic poetry forms, such as haikus or limericks, and have them write their own poems.
6. Journal writing: Encourage students to keep a daily journal, where they can write about their thoughts, experiences, and feelings.
7. Letter writing: Have students write letters to imaginary or real people, and have them focus on using descriptive language and vivid imagery.
8. Group storytelling: Have students work together to create a story, with each person adding a sentence or paragraph.

Word association activities can be simple, but they can actually be quite challenging and thought-provoking for students. By providing a single word as a prompt, students are encouraged to think deeply about the word's various meanings, associations, and connotations. This can help to improve their vocabulary, creativity, and critical thinking skills, while also promoting their ability to express their thoughts and ideas through writing or speaking. Additionally, word association activities can be a fun and engaging way to practice English language skills. They can help to spark students' imagination, promote their confidence in speaking or writing, and encourage them to explore the language in new and interesting ways. Overall, word association activities can be a valuable tool for ESL teachers, helping their students to build strong language skills while also having fun and staying motivated in the learning process. Let us see one example of activity that will make our elementary or intermediate students to think deeply about the word "Friends" meanings, associations, and connotations.

Activity - (Elementary level) Ask students to write a short paragraph or simple story inspired by the word "Friend". Encourage them to use simple vocabulary and sentence structures to express their ideas.

Example: My friend's name is Maria. She is from Mexico. She has brown eyes and black hair. She is very kind and funny. We met in class last year, and now we are good friends. We like to talk and play games together. Sometimes we study together, and she helps me with my English. I am happy to have a friend like her.

Activity - (Intermediate level) Ask students to write a short poem inspired by the word "Friends". Encourage them to use simple vocabulary association, rhyming words like: "rain", "friends", "ends", "blends", and "depends"

The rain falls softly on the roof, As I sit inside with my friends, aloof. We talk and laugh as the day ends, Sharing stories and memories that blend. With each passing moment, we grow,

Stronger and closer, like a river's flow. The rain may stop, the night may blend, But the bond we share will never end.

Activity - (Intermediate-upper intermediate) Here's an example of a character creation activity with the elements you listed:

1. *Name*: John Smith
2. *Appearances*: tall, muscular, with a scar on his chin
3. *Personality*: confident, ambitious, determined
4. *Activity*: John is a professional boxer. He spends most of his time training in the gym, pushing his body to the limit in order to prepare for his next big fight.
5. *Draw a picture*: Encourage students to draw their own interpretation of John Smith based on the description provided. They can use colored pencils or markers to bring their character to life on paper.
6. Once students have finished their writing, have them share their work with the class. This can be done through a peer review session, a group reading, or a class discussion.

This activity is a fun and engaging way to help English learners develop their writing and drawing skills, as well as practice using descriptive language. By encouraging them to think about the details of their character's appearance and personality, and to imagine what their character does in their daily life, you can help them to build their vocabulary and confidence in expressing themselves in English.

The above mentioned activities can help develop students' imagination, creativity, and writing skills, while also allowing them to express themselves and their ideas in a fun and engaging way.

Conclusion. All in all, it is very clear that creative writing on one hand transform our students in better English language speaker and on the other hand the process develops many others skills that are only an advantage for our students. Creative writing can be easy and motivating if teachers build an interactive learning use specific strategies and techniques to develop students' divergent and convergent thinking. The use of digital tools can only improve our students creative writing skills digital writing skills as they help students develop collaborative writing and peer editing skills to more creative tools to help students exploit poetry and develop stories.

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