

Boosting writing skills through creative thinking

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Развитие письменных навыков с помощью креативного мышления

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Abstract: *the research paper considers the implementation of creative thinking and writing techniques in English language classrooms. Written discourse is proven to be a challenging aspect for foreign language learners and to master it educators should explore novel routes of teaching it. The methods of improving writing skill are mostly student-centered and self-initiated as they attain more autonomy to improvise and express their ideas freely, to unveil their feelings and perceptions by surveying new arrays of vocabulary, grammar patterns and linguistic devices.*

Аннотация: *исследовательская работа рассматривает употребление творческого мышления и письменные навыки на уроках английского языка. Письменная речь является сложным аспектом для студентов, изучающих иностранный язык, и педагоги должны исследовать новые методы для преподавания его. Методы улучшения письменного мастерства в основном ориентированы на студента и его инициативу. Так они достигают большей автономии, чтобы импровизировать и выразить свои идеи свободно, чтобы раскрыть свои чувства и восприятия изучая новую лексику, грамматику и языковых средств.*

Keywords: *creative thinking, written discourse, language acquisition, narration, description, socio-cultural issues.*

Ключевые слова: *креативное мышление, письменная речь, изучение языка, пересказ, описание, социально-культурные вопросы.*

Foreign language acquisition and the ‘entrance into it’ entail a string of continual chances to perceive the world from the new standpoint, to experience cultural diversity by presenting their own culture, language and their ‘self’ from another angle. And within this large context the creative writing has an utmost importance being an essential dimension of what can be learnt through a foreign language.

‘Learning to express oneself creatively is a highly individual process deeply rooted in one’s inner imaginative and emotional life.’ [1, p. 134]. Creative writing calls for heightened perceptions and awareness of learners’ inner and outer worlds. The process of creation is stimulated by the desire to explore, to find out, to go in search, to experiment, to fail and learn to succeed.

In creative writing, viewed from this perspective, the teacher’s role is transformed from just delivering knowledge to providing opportunities for students to take their own initiatives and feel free to express their ideas, thoughts, emotions, senses and by finding out the insufficiencies in knowledge to try to develop them.

The process of creative writing is as a way from nothing to something. For some people it is a real torture and nightmare when the brain passes through untraveled paths, generates new concepts, fresh ideas provoking interest and appeal. ‘We’re all creative souls already, we just need to figure out how to harness inspiration and unleash the creative spirit within’ states Elizabeth Gilbert [2].

Creativity and curiosity are inseparable phenomena and educators need to trigger and kindle the creative bone in their learner’s body. Here are some examples of boosting creative thinking and imaginative writing competencies in learners described in the gradual methods from self-related matters to universal problems. These creative writing tasks, along with other activities based on novelty and somehow deviation from classroom routine and boredom [3, p. 85], have been successfully introduced during my teaching experience in Plekhanov Russian University of Economics.

1. Bio-tales (personal stories, anecdotes, etc.)

This activity of creative writing encompasses a range of patterns like presenting personal stories: from birthday parties to wedding ceremonies, from leisure to holiday time spending, life stories about their relations, friendship and relatives. To complete this kind of tasks learners are provided either with questions, or a definite topic with covered lexis or some leading prompts. The activities being self-centered students feel quite relaxed and inspired to present their life stories in an exciting way. Surely, educators should give learners clear instructions referring to grammar usage, length of written discourse, linking phrases, etc. And narrative writing techniques are of core importance here to be revealed by educators beforehand.

2. Art depicts (pictures, sculptures, etc.)

Coming to this creative task I recall the famous quotation ‘Pictures tell more than words’. Students are equipped with paintings, diverse pieces of art and they need to depict them focusing on structure, texture and emotional appeals that they arouse. It seems there is no room for creation here, but every writing process is creation whether the outcome is a groundbreaking or marketable product. During my teaching experience I have encountered learners who often get frustrated with such tasks but it is proven every writing process starts with the sense of insecurity and difficulty and ends with delight and fruitful results. Moreover, learners should be provided with some basic skills, even examples of descriptive writing style.

3. *Global issues (socio-cultural, technological, etc.)*

Following the presented order of activities it is evident that gradually they become rather complicated and demand more efforts to be completed. Under the heading of global issues we can discuss any question being relevant to the lesson theme, the current economic or political situation of the world, a range of social and cultural problems, etc. Consequently, learners can be given writing tasks of at least 250-300 words to analyze the specific issue from their perspective. Here the diversity of writing tasks may vary from Opinion to Advantages vs. Disadvantages, Comparing and Contrasting to Problem – Solution types of written discourse. For this kind of writing tasks we use as well as the Internet resources, like www.bbc.uk, www.ted.talks, etc, which provide huge platform for authentic information to be read and then analyzed in the written form.

Creative writing assists foreign language development at all levels: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and morphology. Learners make an attempt to manipulate the language in an interesting and creative way by expressing uniquely personal meanings. Creative writing tasks give them a chance to engage with the target language at a deeper level exposing grammar accuracy, topic relevance, originality of the lexical resources, coherence and cohesion in the whole discourse.

Creativity implemented in language learning frameworks is seen as ‘old wine in new bottles’ [4, p. 90] assisting to solve language teaching problems rather creatively, helping to produce new imaginative ability both in educators and learners by generating novel ideas and promoting language skills. Above mentioned writing tasks are both for individual and pair work, which help to develop intercommunicative abilities, language intelligence and self-confidence. These creative tasks are seemingly ordinary and frequently discussed, yet to present them in a written form having their own impact and implementing a wide variety of lexis and language patterns can be challenging and exciting for completing.

References

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