

COMPETENCE APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the theory and practice of teaching writing: traditional methodological approaches to teaching writing in general and writing in a foreign language in particular are analyzed, the content of instruction, basic teaching models, techniques of developing and improving EFL writing are considered in each approach. The main statements of the competence-based approach to the development of EFL writing are revealed, the main role of communicative competence is highlighted. The components of communicative competence are described.

Keywords: Writing, written speech, learners, EFL teachers, improvement.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Teaching learners to writing is implemented in the process of developing and mastering students a set of relevant knowledge, skills and communication abilities that are essential to creating a written text. Writing serves as a means of communication, however, as the analysis of the results of student work shows, the level of learners in this regard is typically poor. Text created by learners seems to be an only written reflection of their oral speech that can be good evidence of students' transformation of their speaking to writing though. Nowadays, when with the development of OCT the importance of writing is crucial, and e-mails and the Internet provide with vast opportunities for international communication and information exchange, new approaches to teaching writing are necessary.

There are numerous varieties of approaches to teaching writing. Whereas some linguists deny writing and claim that writing only serves to fulfill other competencies, others admit the necessity of teaching communicative writing. However, all these varieties can be organized into three categories: 1 – limited use of writing that serves to refine, test or control other skills; 2 – structural writing – producing writing texts as a combination of several patterns such as learning writing by dividing it into paragraphs and distinguishing types of writing according to argumentative, descriptive and narrative writing; 3) meaningful, creative writing, where writing is a tool for communication.

Proponents of the first view stated that using a foreign language is the only manipulation with previously learned chunks and teaching writing was not an objective of learning a foreign language. This tendency can be observed in a test for university enrollment where applicants did not use writing at all, reading questions and ticking correct answers. However, even the founder of this theory Charles Fries admitted later that writing is crucial even for teaching and learning of oral speech. Therefore the complete deny of writing was replaced by developing writing as one of the objects of teaching English. Gruzinskaya indicated that writing is a universal consolidating tool that assists in better learning of all other skills. This occurs due to the synchronous activities of all analyzers and a student consciously imagines the learning

phenomena. Writing is unique and different from other skills as unlike speaking it allows review and revision as many times as needed. As writing was serving other skills, the main attention in writing was paid to grammar and lexis rather than content. Therefore the main task for a student is correctly express what has been learned and in this case, the writing is managed by the repetitive tasks and exercises. The role of a teacher is being a corrector rather than inspirer and the content of the writing is left beside the attention. Noteworthy, that some linguists consider the ubiquitous attention to the vocabulary and grammar limits the creativity. This view can be eliminated by providing students writing essays with two or three leading questions as such tasks are close to authentic activities. However, the system of providing creative tasks was not widely spread at that period and first sight writing might be seen as unpopular. Teacher-practitioners concluded that for effective writing other requirements in addition to structuring grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs are necessary. In the writing process not only linguistic competence but also specific writing skills and writing behaviors matter.

Formal grammar writing and writing with creativity are first, linked by distinguishing the terms “writing” and “written speech”. Secondly, studies that researched the development of L1 writing and its influence on L2 writing also contributed to intertwining these two approaches. Lastly, they are linked by Robert Caplan’s theory of contrastive rhetoric. According to this theory, syntactical patterns are joined into higher-level forms. These forms are realized in the types of written speech such as expository, persuasive, narrative, and descriptive. According to this point of view, any of these written types require a specific combination of forms and models, therefore, learning those types of writing has become an objective of learning English. Firstly, students were taught to the forms of written texts, later, using features of their forms and contents, learners wrote their texts following the model.

Typical algorithm of actions in this approach is the following:

- study the text model;
- strictly managed writing practice;
- free writing tasks;
- feedback and checking by the teacher;
- error correction and editing.

In the process approach of learning, writing the central figure is the writer who produces ideas. Text is rated as the secondary phenomenon, and the reader and context are not very important.

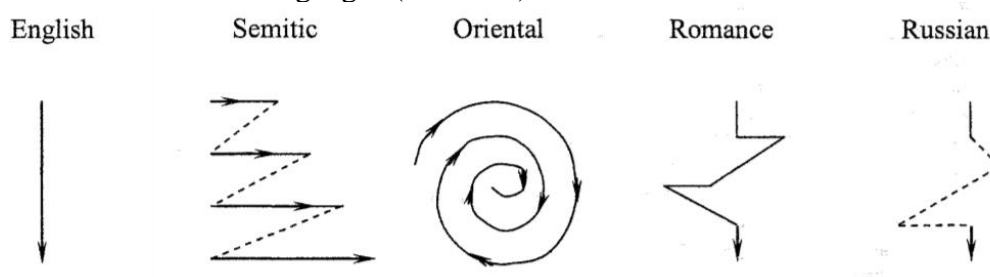
However, historically, this is not a linear consequence of approaches that replaced each other in a certain period. Approaches to writing rather remind a spiral development of different theories, which are changed, modified and used in other techniques. It can be proved by observing text-books produced in Uzbekistan that contain first and second approaches. As to the process approach, it exists mostly in foreign text-books and the works of European and the USA linguists. Noteworthy, along with advantages all these approaches have drawbacks and as a result, become not very effective to develop writing drastically. None of these approaches considers modern requirements to the level of writing and their appropriateness not only to the L2 register, grammar, conventions, and vocabulary but to the communicative and ethical factors. Therefore, not only linguistic competence but also the socio-cultural competence of L2 should be interpreted correctly and used accordingly. Everything should be considered: a writer, a reader, a context and a situation and relations between them.

All five competencies should be integrated into the process of teaching and learning writing: socio-political (or problem-solving), information, communicative, socio-cultural and lifelong

learning. All of them in total provide preparedness English teachers and learners to adapt and implement their potentials in the labor market in the age of the digital era. Thus, it is reasonable to talk about the competence approach to teaching writing. This approach appeared and develops as an alternative to traditional and rotted knowledge and delivers learners with useful knowledge that is in demand in real life. The competence approach is based on some principles, such as *communicative* and *cognitive* orientation, *contrastive alignment*, *individuality*, and *reflection*.

Communicative orientation becomes apparent when, first, the curriculum considers teaching communicative awareness in creating written texts that can convey the information in authentic domains. Second, it contemplates learners' needs in communication. Third, the material is studied according to its communicative functions.

Cognitive orientation is also very important, as it is crucial to develop learner's cognitive activity and creative thinking. Contrastive principle considers the contrastive analysis of language phenomena of L1 and L2, as developed written speech in L1 does not mean that L2 learner has communicative writing abilities in the target language. Claiming for above-mentioned statement Robert Kaplan in his work "Patterns of Written Discourse" demonstrated written discourses of different languages (Picture 1)



Picture 1: Written Discourse in Different Languages.

As we can see from this picture, writing in the languages is definitely diverse. Constant control of learners over their writing and actions and processes during writing allows them to develop the ability to create writing work independently. Insensibly, teachers stop to demonstrate samples of writing works as models to follow.

Individual orientation considers the general cultural development of the person, his/her abilities, and the intellectual levels of learners.

Reflection is linked with such elements of writing as a control, analysis, and self-check. In the framework of the competence approach, we discuss the following competencies: subject competence, communicative, action, and developing competence. The leading competence is communicative competence. The main components of communicative competence are linguistic, discourse, strategic, pragmatic and socio-cultural.

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