

Strategies of Improving Writing Skill for B1 Learners

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Abstract: *As a main part of a language, teaching writing is one the most complex skill for every foreign language learner as well as teacher. The very paper is intended to describe and suggest several essential ways of teaching writing in English which makes EFL classroom more effective and enjoyable.*

Keywords: *ESL, writing skill, grammatical accuracy, teaching strategies, effective ways, explicit strategies, KWL strategy, peer feedback, model-practice-reflect cycle, successful writing.*

Teaching writing as a basic language component is important just as other language skills such as speaking, listening, and reading. It is often thought to be for learners and sometimes difficult to teach which demands not only grammatical accuracy and rhetorical devices but also conceptual and judgmental elements. Writing as one of the four language skills occupies an equal role with the others although most of the people tend to focus on speaking form than writing. As Holiday has pointed out that 'speech is no less than structured and complex than writing one' (David, Nunan, Language teaching methodology 1991).

Concerning this, writing skill is one of the most rewarding but one of the most challenging for B1 learners as they are not expert user yet and still have shortcomings in regard with language proficiency. The reason is that writing is accuracy focused activity as well as an act of communication where one can practice their skills of using grammar, vocabulary and also put their ideas together in a coherent style [9, 8]. At this level, teachers do much effort in teaching learners how to express their thoughts in writing, but students frequently will not be able to demonstrate desired results because of the difficulties and obstacles they face up with while transferring ideas from mother tongue into target language. Thus, it is important for teachers to use various teaching strategies, implement effective ways, approaches and methods in their EFL classroom in order to analyze students' needs and improve their writing skill effectively. There are some essential ways and recommendations designed for B1 learners below:

Teaching writing strategies explicitly

Throughout this method, techniques allow students to coordinate thoughts, study and knowledge that will guide their writing. Teaching students by applying cognitive techniques is one way to improve their critical thinking skills, eventually allowing them to write more effectively. For instance, **K-W-L strategy** in writing process which extended means K- know about the topic, W stands for want to know and L-Learned support strategic thinking. It includes planning, goal setting, drafting, evaluating, revising and editing processes which enable learners to create their piece of writing in organized way. The K-W-L cognitive writing technique helps students recognize holes in their previous knowledge and guides them through reading and writing. Another strategy is **peer feedback**. Comparing to teacher feedback, peer feedback is more essential and have greater influence to develop partners writing skill. As learners receive feedback by their peers in

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terms of their writing mistakes or achievements students will be more engaged and invested in working to complete the task successfully [1,98].

Use of the Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle

The Model-Practice-Reflect approach allows students to examine the thinking and behavior of a good writer, try to imitate the features of successful writing, and then test their writing according to those features. By learning from teachers, role models and their own written work, students may internalize the characteristics of effective writing and develop effective writing techniques, skills and knowledge. Teachers should apply the Model-Practice-Reflect approach to writing instructions and classroom events, progressively transferring responsibility until students use writing strategies independently. As students learn writing techniques and skills for the components of the writing process (planning, target setting, writing, reviewing, revising and editing), teachers can progressively minimize their modeling to allow students more opportunities to incorporate strategies on their own. This gradual release of accountability will help students choose and execute strategies independently.

Integrate writing and reading to emphasize writing skill

Combining reading and writing together in an activity or assignment helps students learn essential text features. For example, asking students to summarize a text where they only reads signals. A well-written texts have a collection of key points, that students should understand the main points when reading, and that when students compose those types of compositions, they should concentrate on the main points [10, 39]. The integration of writing and reading in all disciplines allows students to improve their writing in a variety of contexts. By improving their writing skills throughout the curriculum, students are given more chances to practice various styles of writing. In addition, the Panel believes that the benefits of writing across disciplines extend beyond writing itself can enhance reading comprehension, critical thinking, and disciplinary material awareness (Panel, 2010).

Moreover, writing and reading have similar strategies, knowledge, and skill to create meaning. For example, when reading a story, allow students to imagine the environment by creating mental images based on the author's use of sensory information. In the same way, students will define visions, smells, sounds, tastes, touches, and gestures to paint an image in their own words as they construct their own narratives [1, 97].

Cognitive-strategy sentence starters is one of the tool in integrating teaching effective writing with reading which helps students to structure their thinking and writing, and focus on key features. Through this strategy students learn implementation of several grammatic structures, appropriate use of vocabulary in context, pick up their favorite phrases, collocations word combinations. In a short term, they will learn authors' vivid language in order to adapt them to their context as well. It is also important to mention that writing classroom should not be thought superficially with reading, instead teachers incorporate writing and reading to further students' learning of each skill.

Use of Scaffolding strategy to teach writing

Rozenshine describes scaffolding as a method in which students are encouraged before they are able to apply the skills and techniques they have learned individually. The word 'scaffolding' often refers to providing conceptual support for meaning through the use of condensed language, instructor modeling, images and graphics, cooperative learning and hands-on learning.' Normally, the assistance is provided by the instructor. The scaffold is progressively removed as students become more qualified (Rozenshine, 1992). The scaffolding modules consisted of tasks that the students had to complete. Scaffolding was provided in the form of the level of assistance provided to the students. The tasks were classified into three levels: regulated

writing, guided writing, and almost free writing. Regulated writing consisted of activities that were simple enough to facilitate students' comprehension of the definition. The tasks were constructed on the basis of prior knowledge and cultural context of the students. Most of the knowledge on student success and needs was derived from the teachers who taught them the English language [1,100]. The Guided Writing Module consisted of tasks that were less difficult than those on Regulated Writing. A little bit of influence has been reduced to allow students to strive on their own. Types of tasks include filling in blanks using text clues, sentence completion, sentence building with given terms, paragraph writing with sections of sentences, paragraph writing based on answers to questions. The tasks were more difficult for students than those in controlled writing. Students were able to start this module after they had shown improvement in a managed writing module. A research conducted by Allan, J, Clarke (2009), a group of first-year undergraduates to find their views about what constitutes successful teaching has shown that they favor teachers who can provide and build a healthy learning atmosphere [5, 37]. Findings have also shown that good and efficient teaching requires a great deal of help from teachers who are capable of scaffolding learning to produce effective results. Their results showed that the scaffolding techniques used to improve student writing have enabled EFL learners to develop new ideas and skills.

All in all, writing classroom will be more effective and successful if teachers use distinctive ways of teaching writing skill concerning the needs, interest and level of the learners. In order to implement these strategies and ways in the context teachers should develop knowledge about teaching strategies and adapt them to their learners.

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