

TEACHING WRITING AND READING AS INTEGRATED SKILLS

Abstract. The article deals with fundamental questions and importance of a receptive skill such as reading and a productive skill such as writing in the process of learning and teaching English as a foreign language. The paper discusses the most suitable reading approaches which not only improve the readers' motivation to read but also strengthen the confidence of learners, which is extremely important in dealing with big and academic research papers. Two types of writing were discussed and given feedback for each individual student, pointing the weak and strong part of writing. The authors suggest some practical implications and applications of learning and teaching reading and writing as integrated skills not only for the classroom setting but also outside of classroom.

Keywords: *CLT, motivation, confidence building, process writing, genre writing, extensive and intensive reading.*

ОБУЧЕНИЕ ПИСЬМУ И ЧТЕНИЮ КАК ИНТЕГРИРОВАННЫМ НАВЫКАМ

Аннотация. В настоящей статье рассматриваются фундаментальные вопросы и важность рецептивных навыков, таких как чтение, и продуктивных навыков, таких как письмо, в процессе изучения и преподавания английского языка как иностранного. В статье обсуждаются наиболее подходящие подходы к чтению, которые не только улучшают мотивацию читателей к чтению, но и укрепляют уверенность учащихся, что чрезвычайно важно при работе с большими и более научными исследовательскими работами. Обсуждаются два типа письма и дана обратная связь для каждого отдельного обучающегося, указываются слабая и сильная часть письменной работы. Кроме того, авторы предложили некоторые практические рекомендации и возможности обучения чтению и письму как интегрированными навыкам не только в классе, но и за его пределами.

Ключевые слова: *CLT, укрепление доверия, процесс и жанровое письмо, экстенсивное и интенсивное чтение.*

Introduction

Effective reading and writing are two of the major factors of building the basics in learning English as a foreign language. The importance of reading and writing has increased substantially in the last decades because of social and technological advancements. Teaching reading and writing, however, still lag behind in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where speaking skills are of high priority (for example, in Mongolia). This is probably due to misunderstanding and lack of both practical and theoretical knowledge about CLT. The purpose of the present article is to look at some theoretical issues connected with reading and writing and consider the way to teach them for adults, integrating these two skills.

Reading is a process of constructing meaning from written text and it is a complex, multi-dimensional, pursuit containing a large number of sub-component processes, such as macro-process, micro-process, top-down, bottom-up process, etc. There are two distinctive features about reading – the process of reading and

the result of that process, product. The process is the interaction between the reader and the text. In other word, it is the process of looking at print, deciphering marks, understanding the meaning, thinking the relationship between what he reads and what he knows [1]. The bottom-up process is recognizing the printed word and graphic stimuli, decoding them to sounds, and decoding the meanings, while the top-down process is what the reader brings to the text, when reading is driven by the meaning.

In addition, some important terms such as automaticity, affect, autonomy, and socio-cultural awareness play a huge role in understanding and teaching reading. Automaticity means fluent reading and word recognition whereas affect comprises any factors influencing the motivation for reading. Autonomy is reading a topic chosen according to readers' interests rather than imposition and socio-cultural awareness refers to readers' subjective attitude towards reading [2].

Discussion

Considering reading, in this article we will investigate two approaches: extensive and intensive reading. In our opinion, extensive reading is one of the key elements in building language skills. It provides comprehensible input in language learning. Krashen (1982), says extensive reading can be useful if certain pre-conditions are met including adequate exposure to language, interesting materials, relaxed tension-free learning environment [3]. It improves the learners' general language knowledge on the topic the reader chooses; it increases automaticity of word recognition, of decoding symbols on the printed page (bottom-up process). Moreover, extensive reading helps to increase vocabulary knowledge leading to better writing. If the students are encouraged to do extensive reading at home, where there is no tension, the brain acquires more input than in the time-limited environment. It is reflected in Krashen's work that when the affective filter is lowered, when students are relaxed, the comprehensible input is contributed much more effectively [3], [4]. Also, extensive reading not only improves the reader's motivation but also strengthens the confidence of the learners, which is extremely important in dealing with bigger and more academic research papers. Another no less important point is the more we read the books, the more we get acquainted with the structure of the text, the better we identify genres and styles of the books and develop the ability to predict general content of the book.

Day and Bamford (2002) described some unique features of extensive reading as follows: students select read as much as possible on their own oriented by teacher, who is model reader [5]. Reading is rewarding and we read for pleasure to get general information and understanding. Reading materials can be graded or not graded, abridged or not abridged, and authentic, like magazines, newspapers, web pages that are related to both second and first language culture. Teachers should provide not too long or difficult texts or books without a wide range of extended vocabulary and complicated sentence structure.

Some advantages that students will gain by extensive reading are most importantly forming positive attitude towards reading and good reading habits.

Students gain confidence and motivation. It increases readers' vocabulary, reading comprehension skills, general language skills and preparation for further studies.

Disadvantages of the reading approach under discussion come mainly from teachers, administrators, parents and peer groups rather than from readers and reading. For example, some teachers think extensive reading as useless, some spend too much time on extensive reading rather than teaching; it is costly for mass copy and parents may find it useless.

The other type of reading, which is intensive reading, plays an active role in acquiring reading skills. Long and Richard (1987) say it is a detailed in-class analysis of vocabulary and grammar points in a short passage, led by the teacher [6]. Usually it is classroom based, where students are intensely involved looking into the text, focusing their attention on the linguistic and semantic details, structure, grammar, discourse markers and key vocabulary. Munby (1979) suggests four categories of questions that may be used in intensive reading, such as plain sense, implication, relationship of thoughts and projective [7]. These terms, in general, can be understood through understanding factual exact meaning, noticing nuance or figurative language, correlation between sentences and paragraphs and integrating knowledge from the texts and the reader's knowledge. Reading materials selected by the teacher should be graded, abridged, and contain various styles of written texts.

Advantages of intensive reading are as follows: it forms the foundation for studying the language structure, vocabulary, idioms, proverbs, and realia. Moreover, it offers complex comprehension check for students enabling them to know weak or strong side of the reading.

However, it has some drawbacks; it offers insufficient practice of reading as a result of time limitation and small texts. Since teachers hand out the same reading materials, students cannot choose texts or topics according to their interests and skills, which may cause less motivation. Also, reading exercises are done intensively and in the 'against the clock' atmosphere, it increases the affective filter of students [4].

Speaking on writing types it is connected with Free and Process writing. Writing is "a set of visible or tactile signs used to represent units of language in a systematic way" (Coulmas, 1999, p. 560 cited in Cook and Bassetti, 2005 [8]). Throughout the history humans have developed two types of writing: full writing and limited writing. The attitude towards literacy is changing with the fastest developing society, lifestyle and the increasing requirements set by employers (Gibbons, 2002 [9]).

Thus, teaching foreign language writing also has seen some modifications, especially in the era of globalization, in which multi-nationals got closer. Different nations pursue different writing styles, depending on their unique cultures and social situations. For example, good writing in English is different from good writing in other languages. This is not only grammatical difference but also the way writers organize and express their ideas. English writing is direct, stating the ideas in a straightforward and forceful manner, judged by the degree of subordination, rather than coordinating order like Arabian or Persian writing

(Hogue, 2003 [10]). Arabian writing follows parallel style and the important ideas are often repeated. In Asian style writing, topic is viewed in different angles and analyses indirectly. The core points lie in “a word behind a word”. Spanish paragraph may begin and end on the same topic, but the writer often takes the reader to the interesting side trip that is not directly relevant to the main point. This style contradicts one of the important rules of English writing - the rule of paragraph unity. So, apart from style, the effective writers in English need to pay their attention to planning, drafting, organizing, editing and revising from the first draft to the final product. On the other hand, less effective writers focus their attention on the mechanics, i.e. spelling, punctuation, abbreviations and capital letters without having a plan of the whole text [9].

Furthermore, teaching, learning and understanding the genre approach in writing is one of the vivid expressions of obtaining authentic writing skills. Gibbons states that every genre has a number of characteristics that make it different from other genres:

- a genre has a specific purpose, a particular overall structure, specific linguistic features;
- it is shared by members of the culture.
- most importantly, members of the culture recognize it as a genre (even though they probably do not use the term) [9].

Once the specific purpose is set, the other genre specific rules will follow the formality. For example, if you are going to take IELTS exam, you have to follow and write essays according to the standard IELTS writing genre, obey the certain style, use certain commonly used vocabulary, discourse markers, fairly good reasoning and analyzing.

There are two types of writing: free writing and process writing. In free writing, learners write in a class for over a period of time on the interesting topic. It is a time-limited individual action in which students write on any topic that comes to their mind. The teacher gives feedback for each individual student pointing out the weak and strong parts of writing.

Process writing begins with pre-writing activities, in which learners work together in groups to generate a particular topic. This includes brainstorming, lists, timeline and the learners' own experience. Each group member then works individually to compose the first draft, concentrating on getting new ideas, without thinking about grammar mistakes. After that students have to set the goal of the writing text and then to plan its sequencing.

The idea of integrating reading and writing has become increasingly popular in the last few years. But changing the curriculum into such a conception lacked research and knowledge. The constructive theorist Louise Rosenblatt introduced a revolutionary approach to literature called ‘reader response’. In early 1990s, several researchers described how construction of meaning occurs through reading and writing linkages. Pearson and Tierneu proposed “composing model of reading” in which readers construct meaning by maintaining an ongoing dialogue within themselves about the text and its purpose, just as writers compose to convey meaning [11]. In reading the major activities of planning, composing, editing and

monitoring occur repetitively, recursively and simultaneously in a process similar to the model described by Flower and Haues (1981) in their cognitive theory of writing [12].

More recent research suggests that to maximize the benefits of reading and writing connection, students must believe that they have the authority to generate ideas and direct reading and writing strategies for their own purposes.

In terms of practical implication of teaching reading and writing, first, teachers have to think of the goal of reading activities (intensive). The goals can be directed to understand and notice the way how logical arguments presented in the text, rhetorical pattern of the text, emotional, symbolic or social attitudes and purpose of the author and linguistic aspects of the texts. Besides, we need to bear in our minds the following elements we want to reach: developing rapid reading practice, interpreting the text by using word-attack skills, text-attack skills and non-text information.

Before choosing and handing out the materials, we think teachers need to conduct needs analysis, because, as it was mentioned above, students do not have any choice of the material according to their interest. If we conduct needs analysis, somehow, we can avoid the risk of causing less motivation of the students. Text materials are usually very short, not exceedingly more than five hundred words in length. Teachers choose and provide the text, considering the degree of difficulty of readers and the text type of a certain genre, linguistic aspects such as tenses, vocabulary, idioms and proverbs that the teacher wants to cover in their teaching. Intensive reading activities may include looking at the main ideas versus details, making inferences, looking at the order of information presentation and how it affect the message, noticing and identifying connecting words and discourse markers. Moreover, teachers should direct the students to the application of such elements. This can be achieved through writing and group discussion.

In fact, we believe that it is useful to do any piece of writing in accordance with the text studied in the classroom. After reading and analyzing the text, students write a composition on their own following the exact style of writing.

Thus, the role of teachers should include selection of suitable texts, deciding on specific task and activities to develop skills. Also, we should orientate and explain the tasks before, during and after reading. The teacher allows and prepares students for work on their own and encourages students through prompts, without giving answers. One of the most important things for teachers is giving feedback to the group as a whole or to certain individual students. It is connected with doing mini research and conducting survey that requires analytical skills, exploring weak sides of students and their causes, the way to solve the problems, considering both the whole-class atmosphere and individual student's behavior and character.

Teaching with the help of extensive reading also demands much more work on the part of teachers than usually teachers think. It starts from giving advice and orientation to the students within the framework of the course. Although it is free for students to choose the topics of their interests, teachers have to keep control over their selection. Students may choose too difficult, scientific, complicated, uninteresting, too long books which can lead to further lack of motivation and

interest. On the other hand, for non-native teachers it is difficult to give feedback on the vast-range and unknown areas where teachers themselves lack sufficient vocabulary and understanding of the topic. In general, the topic should be both simple and authentic. Moreover, it is useful if the topic is from both the native culture and the target culture. McKay (2003) states: Traditionally, many English language textbooks have used target culture topics. Frequently, ELT textbooks use such content because textbooks are often published in Inner circle countries and because some ELT educators believe such information will be motivating to English language learners. Whereas it is possible that target cultural content is motivating to some students, it is also quite possible that such content may be largely irrelevant, uninteresting, or even confusing for students [13].

Authentic materials would include newspapers, magazines, current bestseller books that attract learners in both target and source culture. The Internet and web pages are also authentic and simple because written styles of the Internet are aimed at mainly international readers and, most importantly, everybody enjoys taking a trip through the Internet.

It is also possible for the teachers to select a topic or a book. When choosing the topic teachers need to be aware of the fact that the style should include repetition of the new vocabulary, should not, at the same time, be abundant in difficult structures. Annotated reading lists are available, suggesting books that can be read for pleasure and a minimum of frustration for new language learners. Materials should be at or below the level of the intensive reading texts. Reading will be useful when combined with writing. For example, after reading the newspaper students may be asked to write a newspaper article.

There are certain tasks teachers should complete in arranging the extensive reading activities. The teacher gives recommendations on reading materials, based on student's interests, guides appropriate levels of materials, sets specific goals for reading, explains the new vocabulary. The teachers themselves should be model reader. At the same time students should be aware of the responsibility for developing the reading ability and improving the skills of skimming and scanning.

Writing is usually considered one the most difficult and boring study areas of leaning English as a foreign language. It takes lots of effort and time by either teachers or students to see the progress. This is because writing classes are mostly conducted by means of the traditional Grammar-Translation method, where students learn and practice unauthentic, over-difficult, needless, and uninteresting topics. Making the writing class into an interactive class is extremely challenging. It requires real teaching skills, knowledge, experience and hard work from the instructor to teach it interactively, interestingly, and in a lively manner. So, the teachers have to think over every single detail when elaborating the syllabus, planning the lesson and even the timetable.

In our opinion, process writing is the way to make interactive writing classes. It includes both individual and group activity to reach the goal. But the teachers think of time management, because classes are run in time-limited conditions. So, we think that writing tasks should be left out as homework, where students have plenty of time to organize, plan, edit and revise the writing piece.

However, students have to be used to writing in time limited and pressed conditions as well. It helps them to think quickly, making decision on the spot, react and respond quickly to any pressurized atmosphere. This experience can help them take and pass exams successfully.

One of the best examples of integrating reading and writing in practice is writing annotated bibliography. It is very useful in the way of developing reading, writing skills, analyzing, overviewing, concluding, summarizing, and processing skills. Also, it requires certain academic register of writing, learning to make references, expressing their ideas in a limited-words situation with very accurate selection of every single word. It is a pre-requisite for writing further academic assignments and research.

Dicto-gloss is also a useful activity for developing students' listening and writing skills. It makes students think quickly making analysis of the topic, process it quickly in their mind and write on the paper. It would be optimal that students exchange the writing pieces with each other to find out different angle of viewing topics, variety of styles, new vocabulary after writing the task. Of course, if the teacher provides model piece of writing, it will be effective. Then students discuss the outcome in groups for further effective and better writing.

Peer-group reviewing is another factor to make a writing class interactive. In peer response, students are given plenty of opportunities to brainstorm ideas in pairs or groups, to give feedback on each other's writing and to proofread and edit for each other. While increasingly more mainstream classroom teachers are encouraging students to write in collaboration, ESL/EFL writing instructors sometimes have reservations about its effectiveness mainly due to the concern that students lack cognitive sophistication and linguistic skills in judging writing and in revising and editing a piece of work.

We think that when peer-assisted writing activity is implemented in an ESL/EFL class, the teachers' intervention and direct feedback will help writers to overcome problems, such as grammatical errors in their writing, as well as to learn how to generate ideas for better content. Since writing is a complex problem-solving process, the teachers are recommended to intervene at points in the writing process that can most benefit the students. When the teacher evaluates the results of this activity, the teacher meets with each pair and comments on the meaning, order, style, spelling, and punctuation of the writing.

In-class free writing is tension-free, topics are chosen according to the students' interests. The teacher gives some orientation about sentences, whether they would be complex, compound, or simple sentences. After writing the sentences, students are asked to write their sentences on the blackboard (or whiteboard) for correction and revision.

Writing projects on a number of social, economic and political controversial issues can be an interesting and motivating way of writing. It encourages students to study the detailed information, cause and effect, problem solving, developing collaborative activity and understanding various factors that influence their lives. Thus, it is very real-life writing because they feel it as a member of society. For example, we may consider the topic "*How to increase the salary and social*

benefit?”. To write the project on this issue, students will look at political and economic factors and study them carefully. The first steps may be run in the native language, but to express their ideas and write the project they will have to look at and read on the topic in English.

The modern technology enables students to write authentic and real life writing in English. E-mail writing and chatting with both native or non-native speakers are very effective ways to write in the target language. Nobody forces them to write in English, students are automatically motivated to learn to write themselves and learning from their pen friend.

Although there is not much experience of teaching interactive writing class in Mongolia, we tried to suggest how interactive writing classes should be run (adapted from. Hamp-Lyons and Heasley 1992 [14]).

Group-brainstorming on a given topic

Students work cooperatively and write down all the ideas that come to mind in connection with a topic.

A whole class discussion of how a particular text might need adjustment according to the audience it is addressed to.

Collaborative writing

Students work together to write a previously agreed text.

Whole class text construction and composing on the blackboard.

Writing workshop or in-class writing

Students consult each other and co-construct texts while the teacher moves around listening to their comments, providing feedback or answering questions on grammatical patterning, lexical items, the force or validity of an argument, the order of information presentation, organizational aspects, use of detail, etc. The teacher keeps track of their progress and works out a record of the most frequent questions, doubts and inaccuracies for a future ‘error analysis session’.

Group research on a text topic

Students divide the responsibility for different aspects of the information-gathering stage on a certain topic. They then pool their results and work together to plan a text, which may be collective or individual.

Peer-editing

Students exchange their first drafts of a text and point out changes which are needed to help the reader (e.g., better organization, paragraph divisions, sentence variety, vocabulary choice). They can also act as each other’s editors spotting vocabulary repetitions, grammatical infelicities, spelling mistakes and so on.

Whole class examination of texts produced by other students (with names removed, photocopied or displayed with the help of an overhead projector) for the purpose of analysis of specific aspects (e.g., development of ideas, text structure, cohesion or grammar or adequacy to context).

Specification of an audience and purpose of a text by making the situation ‘real’ (e.g., exchanging e-mail messages with other English-speaking students, sharing information about a topic another class is actually studying, producing a class newspaper to be read by family or friends, outlining the explanations of a game which will then really be played, among many other possibilities).

In this way, interactive writing becomes valuable, communicative and purposeful; at the same time, it enables the students to permanently challenge their current language practices and gain the experience. Making writing interactive requires imagination from teacher, but it is rewarded by the creativity and enthusiasm that most students show.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have discussed some theoretical and practical issues of teaching reading and writing in the classroom setting and within the outside classroom activity. Although, we tried to do some research on methodology integrating writing and reading and making such teaching more interactive and authentic, we faced lack of theoretical and practical knowledge and experience, because this is a relatively new teaching approach in our home country. Writing the assignment on this topic revealed the weak side of teaching and we understood that to teach writing and reading in the interactive way, the university has to review the curriculum and syllabus.

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