

2021 Teacher Takeaways: Practical ideas for classroom teaching

Q&A List

**Using product and process approaches
to teach writing effectively**

Date: 14 October 2021

Time: 16.00 – 17.00

Question	Answer
<p>I like the idea of peer assessment and I sometimes did that with some tasks like writing emails. However, some students were not really confident to give feedback to their friends as they're lower level students. How can I improve that?</p>	<p>Great question. It is all about learner training and developing their learner autonomy.</p> <p>As we discussed in the session, by designing a clear rubric, this can help the students not only with drafting their writing, but they can also use the same criteria to peer assess each other's work too. This will make it easier for them, develop their skills and their confidence, but in a scaffolded way.</p> <p>In the meantime, here is an article which also offers some good ideas https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/encouraging-peer-response</p>
<p>When we use peer feedback or peer editing, it is likely that student's comments on their peers' writing can be inaccurate in certain aspects. Is there any way to handle it or to guide students through this process?</p>	<p>That is a good point, again related to the above question, re learner training and developing learner autonomy.</p> <p>Depending on the level of your students, you can decide on which aspects you feel they are able to comment on (e.g. content, vocab, spelling, grammar structures, target language, etc.) and again you could create a rubric which guides your students to know which aspect (or aspects if they are at a higher level of development) they should be focusing on.</p> <p>In the early stages, this will help raise awareness of target language areas. With higher level students, this will lead to skills development and confidence.</p> <p>Remember, it is a process and so it will take times. Making mistakes on the way is part of that development process. As long as you (and they) can notice them and make corrections,</p>
<p>How do teachers teach students the difference between words or sentences used in speaking and those in writing?</p>	<p>See answer below, as two questions connected.</p>

<p>I mean when we use a word or a sentence, how do we know it is commonly used in a speaking or writing context?</p>	<p>This all comes down to awareness of ‘genre’ and ‘register’. If we know in which context we are using language, be it spoken or written, informal or formal, etc. (genre) then we can start to raise students awareness of what is appropriate (or inappropriate language to use (register).</p> <p>Here is an article with some practical activities to help you support your students with the concept https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/register-degrees-formality</p>
<p>In China, do you think is it a good idea to teach English writing by using translation?</p>	<p>To be honest, I don’t have much experience in this area. With lower levels, it may be of some benefit, to compare and contrast language choice, structure and style. With higher levels, you may need to reply on it less. Especially, if you want your learners to ‘think’ in English – again thinking of writing as a process, from brainstorming onwards.</p> <p>One activity I have used (adapted from a chain writing task), that employs translation is to get pairs or groups to write something in English, exchange it with another group/pair who then translate it back into Chinese, then exchange with another group/pair who translate it back into English. You can then get groups/pairs to work together to compare and contrast together – what do they notice about the various versions – what is similar? different? why? A great awareness-raising activity. Try it with your learners – see what they learn or ‘takeaway’.</p>
<p>Chinese students need to write an end to a story in their college entrance examination. They need to write at least 150 words, two paragraphs. The starting sentence of each paragraph is already given on their test papers. A lot of students find it difficult write in such limited time. What should we teachers do</p>	<p>This all comes down to exam preparation and recreating those exam conditions in class activities. As with anything – practice makes perfect, and these skills and strategies can be developed over time.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided writing – MC Jamie made a great suggestion of using/adapting these to help students familiarise themselves with the format (product) and their response (process). • Speed writing – As we discussed in the session, this can be useful to develop that skill

<p>for our students to help our students improve their writing skills?</p>	
<p>Is the product writing similar with the guided writing?</p>	<p>Yes and no. It depends on the type of template you use/design for your students writing. Normally, the template will guide the students towards a particular type of end-product (see the examples on the PPT slide 19. However, you could design a template to scaffold and support the students to adopt more of a process approach to writing. Depending on the level of your students and their familiarity with writing genres, you can decide how you could make use of different template designs to scaffold the development of your students' writing.</p>
<p>Any recommendation for teaching students writing online due to COVID pandemic?</p>	<p>As mentioned in the Q&A, to be honest, I have not been 'in the classroom' much during the pandemic so have less direct teaching experience. However, what I have observed is that while of course there are many challenges, one of the opportunities that online teaching has presented is the ability to do more collaborative writing outside of class time (asynchronously) by using more online tools (e.g. Google Docs, Padlets, WhatsApp, etc.)</p>
<p>What's your understanding of improving students' deep learning through teaching a unit as a whole?</p>	<p>Apologies in advance if I have not fully understood your question. However, I consider the main benefit of teaching the unit as a whole is that we can focus on the relationship between the unit topic/theme and the various lessons focusing on language and skills in a more integrated way. In terms of writing, this might mean that after a reading, listening or speaking task, as a teacher, you could consider integrating some short writing tasks, to consolidate learners' understanding.</p>
<p>Can you help me the way to teach writing skill online (aged 11)?</p>	<p>As mentioned above, to be honest, I have not been 'in the classroom' much during the pandemic so have less direct teaching experience. However, in answer to the question above I share some observations about teaching writing online. Furthermore, if you want some practical advice about teaching writing to elementary learners, please read this article. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/writing-elementary-learners</p>

<p>In one specific class, we usually spend a lot of time on prewriting stage and drafting but have limited time to do Editing, Sharing and proofing, do you have any suggestions? Thank you so much for these sessions.</p>	<p>Thanks, I'm glad you enjoyed the session. Hope you found it useful.</p> <p>Thanks for your question, which is so true. As teachers, it is important that we recognise that writing takes time to develop and practice, especially if we are adopting more of a process approach to teaching writing. As we discussed during the session itself, we need to be aware of the time it takes to plan and teach each of the stages. Below, I offer three suggestions for you to consider when planning and teaching process writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan backwards – remember to include enough time for those important final stages. By planning backwards, you can realistically reassess precisely how much time you (and your students) will need to complete a task/each step of the process. • Change the focus – between different writing lessons, you could spend more (or less) time on various stages of the writing process. This will give you and your students one area to focus on without taking up the whole lesson (or series of lessons) slowly working through all the stages. • Phase your writing - Consider which stages need to be done in class and which could be done out of class (possibly collaboratively, asynchronously) and/or whether the process writing stages could be conducted over a few lessons. This could offer both teacher and learners more time to reflect on the writing and provide feedback at various stages.
<p>How do we help English teachers who prefer to think and write in their mother language to come up with authentic English learning content?</p>	<p>Remember, writing in our L1 is already challenging, so writing in an L2 is even more so. By introducing some of the earlier stages of the process approach to writing (e.g. pre-writing, brainstorming, generating ideas) in English, over time teachers and learners are more likely to start thinking and writing in English more easily than perhaps they would at the start. This is even more likely to develop if such activities are done collaboratively, with both teacher and fellow learners sharing content ideas and vocabulary at those earlier ideas generation stages, through activities such as brainstorming and mind mapping.</p>

<p>If the students' writing is with quite limited words or they cannot use well the structures etc. which they have been taught already?</p>	<p>Not quite sure of the question, but I think the answer would be for the learners to have lots of practice, and also receive lots of support (in the form of scaffolded and differentiated tasks) from their teachers, using a process approach to writing. You could also include a discrete stage/task to get them to recall previous vocab/structures learnt which they could reuse/recycle in this particular writing task.</p>
<p>How to help students express their ideas coherently in writing. Like in academic writing. They already know the TEEL structure.</p>	<p>Again, this brings us back to the need to focus on audience and purpose, and as a result genre and register when writing. If they are asked to focus on who they are writing to (audience, writing for a reader) and why they are writing (purpose) this should help them to focus on the type of writing (genre) and thus the type of language which would be appropriate to include in that genre of text (register). Adopting a process approach can certainly help with this. And as we've said above – practice makes perfect.</p>