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PREPARING FOR TEST OF WRITING ENGLISH: WRITING PROCESS AND ITS MAIN STAGES

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У статті розглядається проблема підготовки студентів, для яких англійська мова не є рідною, до складання письмової частини тесту англійської мови TOEFL. Пропонується розподіл письмового процесу на основні компоненти і обґрунтовується доцільність використання цієї теоретичної бази в процесі підготовки студентів.

Ключові слова: етапи процесу написання, передписьмовий етап, розробка, перший примірник тексту.

В статье рассматривается проблема подготовки студентов, для которых английский язык не является родным, к составлению письменной части теста английского языка TOEFL. Предлагается распределение письменного процесса на основные компоненты и обосновывается целесообразность использования этой теоретической базы в процессе подготовки студентов.

Ключевые слова: этапы процесса написания, предписьменный этап, разработка, первый вариант текста.

In this article the problem of preparing for the students, for whom English is not a native language, for making a written task of TOEFL-test is shown. The division of the writing process into main components is proposed and the appropriateness of use of this theoretical base in the process of students' preparing is grounded.

Key words: stages of writing process, prewriting, drafting, first draft, revising, publishing.

The basic point, which we should keep in minds preparing students for writing an essay, is the right focus on this problem. Instead of focusing primarily on written products – stories, poems, reports, essays and other of writing that people produce – the focus should be transformed to the writing process, to the steps that we follow as we produce a written product [1, p. 301].

In our teaching process this problem has become more actual since we have begun preparing for the TOEFL-test and its third section, Test of Written English.

Writing process involves all the thoughts and activities that occur from the time a decision is made to write until the time when the final written product has been completed. Generally, the process can be divided into four main stages: Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, and Publishing.

Prewriting is the first stage of the writing process. This planning and organizational stage consists of a series of decisions. Practically, all students are suggested to solve themselves such problems as:

- stimulus for writing – Why am I writing this? Good literature can be the springboard for many writing experiences. Ideas from literature often provide the motivation to write and students feel motivated to engage in story-making themselves.
- finding a topic – What will I write about? Finding something to write about is an early step in the prewriting process. Prewriting includes opportunities to brainstorm about ideas in stories, with a special focus on the vocabulary that is a necessary part of the brainstorming in any foreign language.
- focus on detail – What aspect of the topic will I emphasize?
- deciding on form – Will I write a story or a report? Often the same topic can be treated as a narrative story, a poem, a personal letter, and advertisement, or another form of written response.
- deciding on audience – Who will read what I write? Audience helps in deciding tone, form, and style [2, p. 330].

Prewriting also includes an incubation time, a time for students' ideas to take a shape. The components of the prewriting stage cannot be reduced and its length depends on the nature of the writing activity, the grade and ability level of students, the goals of the instructor, and many other factors.

Writing is the second stage of the process, the time when students commit their ideas to paper. It should be clear for students that they start writing in first-draft form. The first version of writing should be a draft in which students have opportunities to experiment with putting meaning on paper.

If students and instructors understand that every writing experience starts with a first draft, there is no need to worry about things like spelling, usage, punctuation, handwriting, and other mechanical matters of form at the beginning. The best advice that instructors can give students is to get their ideas down on paper, write the story so that they can read it to an audience. And if they can't spell a word, write it down the way it sounds and later find the correct form, not to lose the clue of the narration.

On this stage such questions should be answered:

- drafting – what ideas and details will I include?
- vocabulary – what words will I use?
- sentences – How can I write so others will be interested and entertained

[1, p. 301]?

The writing process results in written products, which can include imaginative stories, informational reports, journals and logs, letters, scripts and dialogues, and other forms of writing. Each of these products can be directly related to literature or other materials used in the classroom.

For a successful process, it is also recommended to avoid typical mistakes. Some “most popular” can be the following:

- volume of work is much more than it is demanded in the task (this mistake is the most spread one: students have so many thoughts, which they try to get into the work, that they have no time to express the main ones);
- failure to follow logics in writing (which usually leads to exceeding of volume);
- volume is much less than it is demanded;
- absence of grounds of own opinion;
- not all aspects of the task are covered, etc.

Such mistakes are easily explained and connected with the following:

- lack of vocabulary;
- wrong word choice;
- wrong compatibility of lexical units (for example: *my mother said me to stay at home* instead of *my mother told me to stay at home, to make advices instead of to give advice, etc.*);
- wrong word-building;
- word-by-word translation from a native language (for example: *at the other side* instead of *on the other hand; to have feeling of humour* instead of *to have a sense of humour*);
- wrong use of logical connections: disagreement of subject and predicate or categories of animate and inanimate beings;
- limited stock of means of logical connection or absence of means of logical connection (for example: *I heard about a photographic exhibition. The exhibition will be in central museum. Let's go to the exhibition on Monday* instead of *I heard about a photographic exhibition which will take place in central museum. Let's go to see it on Monday*);
- grammar mistakes in tense forms, substitution of nouns with pronouns, use of prepositions, use of infinitive constructions, word-order in questions and especially in indirect questions and building of conditional sentences are a weak spot of the students' writing;
- absence of text division into paragraphs or inadequate logical division;
- also usually the students do not take into consideration the necessity to paraphrase the words from the task;
- use of words from formal style in informal statements and vice verse;

- wrong use of absence of parenthetical words and constructions;
- unreasonable use of punctuation marks especially commas and exaggerated quantity of exclamation marks, etc.

Storywriting is stimulated by the full range of narratives that students encounter in the world of teenage literature. In our case books about Harry Potter can be used as the basis. Students can create their own witches and goblins, heroes and villains, friends and foes based on the characters that they find in these books. They can write their own versions of chapters, write new endings, and write sequences. An awareness of narrative story structure – how problems develop in stories and how these problems are solved – provides a structural dimension that students' writing often lacks.

Written reports provide students with opportunities to develop expository writing, and nonfiction texts – in our case lectures in applied economics or entrepreneurship can be used – are essential in gathering content for these reports. But sometimes even a fictional story can stimulate students' interest in a topic enough to lead them to research and reporting.

Scripts and dialogues provide opportunities to integrate reading, writing and speaking, as students produce their own versions of stories. Such courses as “New international business English” or “Business circles” provide models of dialogues and monologues for students to follow as they write.

Revising focuses on meaning and clarity, with an eye to interesting word choice, sentence variety and linguistic complexity, paragraph organization, and clarity of ideas. This type of careful examination of text is the essence of critical reading.

Part of the revising stage of the writing process is conferencing. As time allows, instructors meet with students to discuss their writing. The instructor's role is not primarily to find where errors occur but to show how improvements can be made, to identify problems in such a way that students see that they have some chance of overcoming them.

Effective writing conferences focus on the writing process as well on the product, also focusing on such issues as completeness of sentences, spelling, and grammatical structure.

Peer conferencing is also appropriate, as students share and discuss each other's writing with partners or in small groups. With demonstration, modeling, discussion, and guided practice, students become adept at helping each other in postwriting activities. When students read and react to each other's writing, they become more aware of what makes their own writing more effective. “Here is a place where the link between reading and writing is forged, as students read each other's writing with an eye to constructing meaning in text” [2, p. 330].

Feedback and comments need to be made in a constructive, positive fashion. Students can learn to focus with questions as “What other words might you use?” rather than such comments as “That's a dumb word to use!” Instructors need to model this constructive approach.

Based on feedback and revision, students produce a final draft. Rewriting has been always looked upon conventionally as punishment, but rewriting what one has written is not evidence of failure but a way to achieve a greater measure of success in writing [3, p. 189].

Publishing is the culmination of the writing process, while writing is a communication activity, and the circle of communication is not complete until the audience reads the writing.

A simple form of publication occurs when students read each other's writing as part of a classroom work [2, p. 330].

Each stage of the writing process involves the reading-writing connection. Wide reading gives students impressive models and helps them generate ideas that they can use as topics in the prewriting stage of the process. The act of writing itself involves students in the construction of meaning in text that is essential to both composing and comprehending. Revising alerts them to the language standards and qualities that will make them keener processors of print. Publishing what they have written gives students a sense of authorship. The instructors' task is to help as much as possible during all four stages of writing process.

References

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