DEVELOPMENT of PRIMARY STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS

Aigul Askarova, Teacher of English, Nazarbayev Intellectual school of Physics and Mathematics, Kokshetau

ANNOTATION

This article is aimed to describe research materials on developing writing skills of the 3rd and 4th grade learners of NIS Kokshetau. The technique of collecting the research data uses observation and analyzing the writing tasks of different difficulty levels, different strategies and approaches to enhance the writing skills of the students.

Данная статья описывает результаты исследовательского материала по развитию навыков письма учеников 3-го и 4-го классов НИШ г.Кокшетау. Техника сбора данных исследования использует наблюдение и анализ письменных заданий разного уровня сложности, различных стратегий и приемов для улучшения навыков письма учащихся.

Бұл мақалада Көкшетау қаласындағы НЗМ 3-4 сынып оқушыларының жазу дағдыларын дамыту бойынша зерттеу материалдарының нәтижелері сипатталған. Зерттеу мәліметтерін жинау әдісі бақылау мен талдау сияқты техникаларды қолдана отырып, оқушылардың жазушылық дағдыларын жақсарту үшін әр түрлі деңгейдегіжазбаша тапсырмалардан тұрады.

Key words: *writing skills,* *matching, unjumble the sentences, picture story*.

Due to the educational progress, globalization and the development of technologies, communication became the main part of humans’ life. Nowadays, people communicate with those, who live in other countries and even continents. All around the world people use a link language – English, which is understood by most of people. Thus, the English language serves its social role, and more and more people try to acquire it. And that is the reason why people learn all the skills of the English language, as they fulfill the main role in their communication.

To learn a foreign language, a student needs to learn the skills of that particular language. Among the four language skills, students find it difficult to acquire writing skills than the other three skills, that are listening, speaking and reading. Listening and reading are perceptive skills and there is no need to produce language when doing these. While speaking and writing are considered productive ones. It is a well-known fact, that a speaker feels confident using his first language, while producing a foreign language is less comfortable for a speaker and more apparent to others. Furthermore, speaking and writing are also controlled guided activities and the main focus of these skills is on accuracy. Writing English is considered the most difficult as well as important skill, because of the complexity of structure and vocabulary involved in it. To get mastery over writing, students need more guided practice. Moreover, English teachers are to focus on particular techniques and strategies in their teaching writing in order to motivate the students and enhance their level of writing ability.

In our teaching practice we have implemented a series of strategies and methods, which in our opinion are aimed to reach the objectives set. We decided to take a progress test once a month to make sure we are going in the right direction and to make changes in case of necessity. We picked up the following types of works with increasing complexity, such as: *matching, fill in the gaps, sentence completion, error correction (find the mistakes), unjumble the sentences and picture story*. All these types of writing include reading for comprehension as the learners first have to understand what the task is and how to do it. Moreover, these types of work are further developed into complex ones in higher levels.

Matching involves basic thinking skills such as remember and understand. It makes learners to read and match the words with pictures or words with sentences. Further learners are asked to copy them in their notebooks, which helps students to remember not only separate words or phrases, but structures and word order. Another good point of the work is a kind of scaffolding for students at this stage of learning, when they have a model to look at.

Fill in the gaps and sentence completion tasks are very similar and provide not only remember and understand skills, but apply and analyze. We have noticed that most learners find these two kinds of writing a bit challenging, as they still struggle to fill in the gaps with appropriate words and to complete the sentences. Analyzing learners’ works and feedback we came to the following conclusion: learners’ inattentiveness and weak analyzing skills. The first reason is learners’ inattentiveness when doing the task which is caused by the sense of competitiveness both among girls and boys. It’s of utmost importance for them to shout out *“I have finished”* the first, as try to complete the task faster than others which sometimes negatively results on their task performance. Another reason is learners’ inability to analyze basic statements to comprehend the main idea. Most learners read the first half of the sentence or confuse target words. To eliminate this problem we decided to give learners differentiated tasks with very *detailed* instructions, when sometimes double check was repeated in the beginning and at the end of the task. Moreover, learners peer checked each other, and what is important at this stage of learning, we gave them freedom to choose a partner. It gave them a sense of independence in making choice and a chance to work with all members of the learning environment.

Error correction is one of their favourite activities to do. Learners enjoy checking and correcting sentences as they pretend to be teachers. First they experienced difficulties and didn’t show good results in doing this type of writing task as it seemed boring and useless to them, but since we readjusted the strategy, learners’ attitude changed. We allowed them to use green ink to find and correct errors. Another feature we used drastically altered their view to the task from psychological side. We told them they are to check their knowledge by correcting other learners’ home task (which wasn’t actually) and students performed better as they took the role of a teacher. They tried to do their best when checking and correcting exercises and even consulted each other thus giving support to classmates when needed. Another good point of this trick was- learners didn’t hurry anymore as they gave more careful look to this type of task and tried to ‘to act professionally’.

When doing *unjumble the sentences* task learners arranged the words in the correct order as a puzzle and enjoyed it greatly. What we noticed during the lessons and progress tests, learners recalled common mistakes so as to avoid them. They applied basic thinking skills along with self-control and double check. Hence most of the boring task turned into an entertaining, responsible and extremely important job.

Last but not least important is *picture story* which needs some preparation to be done beforehand. First learners get to know necessary grammar and vocabulary. Then they read or listen to a story. Then the teacher prepares a series of pictures, which are put onto slides of presentation. The first time we did the story orally, making up sentences with the whole class, and then typing them on the presentation. After learners got used to this type of writing task we asked them to do the story in class and finish at home. It was interesting to hear/read their stories the next day since they were original, diverse and with expected outcome, given the fact that the pictures were all the same. Every student, desiring to surprise the teacher and classmates, wrote really unique stories, applying their imagination.

This article is an attempt to cover the knowledge and the ways of improvement of teaching writing to primary learners. All in all the chosen kinds of writing activities provided thinking skills in Bloom taxonomy, such as remember, understand, apply, create, analyze and soft skills, such as collaboration, teamwork, self-control, self-organization and building up curiosity.

The findings of our research do support the hypothesis that writing across the curriculum, presented by the diverse activities, growing in difficulty, can improve the writing skills of primary learners. According to the research this is the top strategy to allow the students to peer check. If you look at the tables above, there is a sharp increase in indicators of progress in learners’ writing after they have checked the classmates’ works. It results in better marks and greater interest in Writing as a process and in the English language as a subject. The very research will be held during next year for further investigations and discoveries in this field.

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