

Teaching and learning to write at the EOI

Dra. Inma Garín

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Some questions

1. When is the last time your students wrote?
2. Why? What did they have to accomplish?
3. Can you describe the conditions? (Time, task, help, feedback...)
4. What was the failing (imperfection) in the situation that needed change?
5. How could writing change or how could the situation improve?
6. How did “genre” enable or shape action?
7. What texts did the writing refer to, in what form, for what purposes?
8. What kinds of feedback did you present, in what form, for what purpose?

Teaching writing

- Defining writing ability (sentences, text, discourse).
- Goals (accuracy, participate in a discourse community).
- The dilemma: product or process?
- Tools (dictionary, internet resources, grammar, help).

Dimensions, aspects and strategies

1. What dimensions are more relevant in our context? Linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, genre, social, rhetoric, psychological, etc.
2. What aspects? Process or product. Macrostructure, microstructure.
3. What strategies? Planning, text generation, revision, etc.

The learners' processes

1. What do we know about the learner as a writer? What can s/he do in LI? Writing practices?
2. How can we find out? Questionnaires, interviews?
3. What issues about learners' processes are relevant for teachers in B2 and C1 classrooms? Topics, genres, linguistic aspects, register?

Didactic intervention

- Justification. Time.
- Ethics of intervention. Feasibility. Modalities. Education.
- Activity Theory
- Evaluation grid. Formative evaluation.

Discourse genres

- Justification.
- Definition. "Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact. Genres are familiar places to go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar."
- Options.
- Life vs classroom.
- Classroom vs tests.

Domains and situations

- Define interests: real or imaginary situations.
- Cater for interests and provide help here and now.
- Feasibility according to sources, means and levels of SS competence.
- Provide space and “concepts” for expression about the way discourse and language works at each level (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, etc.).
- Provide room for oral discussions about the topics and arguments.
- Provide texts for info.

Long term writing

- Projects (articulation of levels and modalities). Regulation as a shared experience.
- The didactic sequence based on a genre. Functionality, motivation, formative evaluation, integration of skills, processes and product, diversity issues, etc.

Tasks

- Writing assignments. Difficulty. Wording. Clarity. Sequencing. Evaluation grid.
- Tasks and evaluation. Integration.
- Instructions and feedback.

Social environment

- Groups, interaction and the social function of knowledge
- When what?
- Open vs semi-open tasks and projects.
- In and out of the classroom.

Group interaction

- Justification: to better manage the text; to make explicit internal processes, to provide extra help; to make students more aware of audience, to use group knowledge; to make people more confident; to make sure information reaches everyone; to share knowledge; to avoid misunderstandings, to create group culture, to favour transference of specific competences among students, etc.
- Interaction outside the classroom. Social networking and other tools.

How to plan?

- What genres, topics, news, students write and read? How do you trigger motivation?
- How do you decide what may be suitable for the group?
- Have you ever tried to make SS write a first piece without instruction to see what they can and cannot do?
- How do you make them aware of audience?

The didactic sequence

- What stages are needed in the process: before, while; after. Planning & revising !!! (levels: discourse, sentence; inside vs outside).
- Let's make an evaluation grid with the main aims in terms of discourse, interest, grammar, etc. (Use a variety of tenses; complex sentences, complex noun phrases. Organization.)
- Decide how long do they need to complete the writing project.

Summing up

- Complex activity (stages, levels) that takes place in a social context. Articulation of layers.
- Need to approach one thing at a time (shift of focus according to purpose). Planning. Language generation. Reviewing.
- Need to start and end from and at the SS to guarantee motivation (psychology). Vigotski's ZPD. Take advantage of learner differences.
- Link learning and meaning (social-personal), (Life vs school). Engage students in the activities.
- Built in evaluation (self-regulation) (formative evaluation). Aims and regulation go together.
- Intention is the engine that activates the writing activity. Learn by doing.
- Social-interactionsit perspective. Vigotski. Bronckart.

References

- <http://uv.academia.edu/inmagarin/Papers>
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