

How to Make Writing Fun: Free Writing in the Eng-Rus Languages

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Abstract

Writing is a complicated psycholinguistic process of generating messages. It is determined by the writers' personality, their communicative and cognitive needs, target settings for upcoming types of written messages, and the audiences for which the written speech is created. The present paper provided an absolutely new and original approach to writing teaching in the EFL class. Concepts of writing and free writing were investigated in order to differentiate recognized writing techniques from offered technique: Teaching free writing in the English and Russian. It was preceded from the classical model of automatic writing by Myers (1885) and the free writing strategy by Elbow (1998). Our newly elaborated technique had some common features with both of the above mentioned teaching techniques, but it differed in what English language learners had to write without stopping through using both languages: their mother and target languages. The research aimed to develop teaching tips based on free writing in Eng-Rus techniques that are recommended to be implemented for teaching English to beginners. Findings can be considered by English teachers of elementary and secondary schools, and adult English learners at the elementary level.

Keywords: Eng-Rus languages; Free writing; Free writing strategy; Model of automatic writing; Mother tongue; target language.



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1. Introduction

Writing is a way of communication. The effective writing is not just somebody's spoken words that are put on the paper. "In writing, one must pay special attention to making ideas clear and convincing, and know strategies and techniques that can be used to produce the effective writing" (Abdratikova *et al.*, 2015).

A great number of Russian (Ainetdinova and Trubnikova, 2008) (Antúnez, 2018), (Elbow, 1998) and foreign (Filatov, 2004), (Glukhov, 2005), (Goldberg, 1986) scholars developed highly effective techniques of teaching writing in English classrooms. However, no one has implemented a teaching technique of free writing simultaneously in both languages so far: their mother and target languages (Halskova and Nikitenko, 2004).

In The present study, authors presented a strategy of writing teaching in the EFL class: Teaching free writing in the Eng-Rus in which "Eng" stands for the English and "Rus" stands for the Russian. This approach is correlated with the theoretical framework of an automatic writing model by Harmer (2001) and the free writing strategy by (Ilyina, 2013). The present research provided techniques of teaching writing skills in a foreign language at elementary and secondary schools of Russia (Ilyina, 2013), (Iskander *et al.*, 2016).

Teaching tips are samples of how to make writing fun in the EFL class. The offered teaching technique urges students to be engaged in the clearly-enunciated and meaningful activities.

Research materials can be modified according to learners' first languages and applied in the EFL class.

2. Research Objectives and Materials

The main objective of research was how to make teaching writing skills innovative and promising in the English classroom allowing to highlight Russian and foreign scholars, linguists and educators' overviews on the issue.

Most Russian researchers (Klingman, 1985), (Kudryashova, 2007), (Luria, 1950), (Maslyko *et al.*, 2004) advocate the following model of writing teaching including three stages:

3. Planning the Content of a Written Message

The purpose of writing, and its message and addressee are identified at the first stage; and the general content of message and its structural-and-semantic relations are overviewed. These tasks lead to development of message topic, the establishment of semantic links in phrases and sentences, and the selection of ways for the thought formation.

The process of taking notes can be unstructured. The following training strategies are offered in teaching writing skills to students: brainstorming; drawing up logical and semantic maps; automatic writing; discussion; answering questions; and making an action plan (Mustafina *et al.*, 2017), (Myers, 1885), (Nagore *et al.*, 2017), (Novikova *et al.*, 2018).

4. Implementation of Idea of a Written Statement, And Its Design in Speech Structures

At this stage, the written message is structured on the basis of known rhetoric and composition schemes: Writing the introduction; the body of text; and the conclusion. Logical rearrangement, consolidation of text units as well as their expansion and reduction are considered as useful exercises.

5. Editing a Written Message

At the control stage, the written message is edited and it presupposes the possibility to return to the first two stages of work.

Another teaching strategy is supported by foreign scholars (Petrovsky and Bartholomae, 1986), (Pimenova and Yarmakeev, 2015). This is a free writing strategy which was developed by Peter Elbow. He introduced a non-stop or free uncensored writing first without any editorial checkpoints, followed by the editorial process vs. traditional writing methods (Shcherba, 1974). This approach focuses on developing students' confidence and inspiration through the free writing.

What is the free writing? Free writing is a prewriting technique in which a person continuously writes in a period of time without consideration of spelling, grammar, or topic. It produces raw, often unusable material, but helps writers overcome blocks of apathy and self-criticism. It is mainly used by prose writers and writing teachers.

According to Shchukin (2006), free writing focuses on the self-expression and can be even used in teaching elementary school children.

Shcherba (1974) asserts that free writing increases flows of ideas and helps students to improve the ability to easily produce written language.

Therefore, the literature review made it possible to identify the free writing concept and rules of teaching writing based on this strategy – a paraphrase of Goldberg's rules for free writing:

1. Writing for a strictly limited period of time without pausing.
2. Writing quickly and paying no attention to rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.
3. If you run out of ideas, go on writing/ scribbling to keep the hand moving.
4. Look at what you have written, and mark passages that contain everything (ideas/phrases, etc.) that, in your opinion, might seem meaningful for elaborating in a subsequent free writing session.

Another objective of the present research was to utilize teaching tips based on free writing in the Eng-Rus language. This paper contained a few teaching tips, which list the proficiency level with best suited activity, activity aims, necessary time for preparation and necessary materials in classes.

6. Results and Discussion

The fact that free writing is a technique, which is used by writers to generate ideas and connect concepts, gave us an opportunity to reconsider and rethink two theories: automatic writing by Henry Myers and free writing by Peter Elbow. Both theories do not produce a polished piece of writing, but simply create the habit of writing without censoring and editing (Sirotkina, 2004), (Solovova, 2003). Based on this idea, the following two teaching tips are suggested.

6.1. Teaching Tip # 1 “At the Supermarket”

Levels: Elementary to pre-intermediate

Aims: Increase writing speed and fluency

Class Time: 60 min.

Preparation Time: 15-20 min.

Resources: A classroom computer with Internet access. Audiovisual equipment and handouts

6.2. Rationale

Writing skills are essential to assure that the written output is highly usable and relevant to tasks. This teaching tip can help you structure the lesson of free writing as both examples and templates.

6.3. Procedure

1. Put students in groups of three or four. Engage them in the starter online activity of spinning a fruit machine and dragging words that best describe the texture of fruit.
2. Organize students' work to develop descriptive writing skills.
3. Have students work together and identify silhouettes and sounds of people and objects in a shop and write these words down.
4. Have teams that exchange their works and analyze them, make corrections if needed.

5. In the main session, students are offered to imagine themselves to be the latest type of CCTV camera that can see, hear, smell, taste and touch surrounding things. Make students work individually and describe their journey in supermarkets in written form. Give them about 15 minutes to do this. After this time, students discuss their findings with teammates.

6. A teacher gives students handouts to work on the previously revised vocabulary and use discussion points to answer questions in written form.

6.4. Caveats and Options

1. Teach students how to write and use descriptive language, so that they can add that element to their stories especially if they are writing narratives.

2. Ask students to use a certain grammar structure while creating their stories or reflections.

3. In pairs or groups, students share and compare/contrast their words and sentences.

6.5. Teaching Tip # 2 “Getting Acquainted With the Narration”

Levels: Elementary to pre-intermediate

Aims: Develop an understanding of the narrative elements. Use narrative elements in free writing

Class Time: 60 min.

Preparation Time: 30 min.

Resources: Video of “Island Song” by Ashley Eriksson. Handouts of song lyrics. Audiovisual equipment

6.6. Rationale

Writing a personal narrative simply means writing a story resembling to the original, but indicating how characters deal with problems and learn lessons. Since a narrative relies on the delicate experience, it is in the shape of a story. A personal narrative is usually stuffed with details that are meticulously selected to explicate, sustain, or beautify stories.

6.7. Procedure

1. Make copies of handouts for your class. Make sure a video of song is available.

2. Go over the applied vocabulary to discuss a narrative. Have students define terms on the “Narrative Vocabulary” (handouts).

3. Watch video in class. Handout lyrics and discuss its meaning.

4. Have students fill in the information that illustrates each of elements of story. This can be done with partners or as a whole class.

5. Watch the video again; discuss the vocabulary; and identify the setting, characters (antagonist/protagonist), background, conflict, climax, resolution, and theme/thesis.

6. Have students brainstorm the idea of a personal narrative using the given structure.

7. Have students write their narratives.

8. Students can do a peer-review of narratives, or the instructor can mark their narratives and meet with students to help them improve their writing (optional).

9. As a home assignment make students use storytelling applications (Educational App Store, Toontastics, etc.) to record the story with music.

6.8. Caveats and Options

1. This lesson demands several lessons on working with the specific vocabulary, development of setting, getting to know all elements of narration, writing dialogues, etc.

2. For higher-level students, more work can be done for analyzing story elements in other writings.

3. Devote 3-4 lessons on writing accurately and fluently

APPENDIX A: Recommended lyrics

1. Dallas Smith Lyrics

2. Hiatus Kaiyote Lyrics

3. Lafee Lyrics

4. Nadia Ali Lyrics

5. Gwyneth Paltrow Lyrics

6. TalibKweli Lyrics

As long as languages are taught, teachers ask students to write things in their notebooks and exercise books. Sometimes, it seems that writing is considered as only a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary over time, rather than as a skill in its own right. The reluctance to engage in writing activities with the enthusiasm is an obstacle with which teachers have to overcome (Vygotsky, 1999). Free writing is a great tool that can meet this challenge.

7. Summary

How do we can make writing fun in the English classroom? By “making writing fun”, it should be understood making writing easy, motivating and effective for learners. These exigencies always suggests the need to create

many and varied opportunities for students to develop their writing skills. Searching for a good answer to outlined questions, authors have reconsidered different approaches to this educational problem.

Free writing is elaborated in the Eng-Rus language teaching technique based on the free writing strategy. This teaching technique draws students in classroom activities with the aim to teach writing with meaningful and clearly articulated messages in two languages: L1 (their mother tongue) and L2 (target language) as it provides a metacognitive approach to teaching writing skills to students.

The present paper offered two teaching tips based on the free writing in the Eng-Rus technique. They may be helpful for developing writing skills for beginners. They can serve as general guidelines for all English teachers and learners at the elementary level.

8. Conclusion

The main conclusion is as follows:

1. The strategy of teaching free writing in the Eng-Rus languages can make the process of producing effective writing easy and beneficial for learners. This strategy consequently leads to a stable motivation in students as it ensures students to believe that they "can" write. The free writing in the Eng-Rus language technique guides students to become independent learners and writers.

2. Authors claim that this technique can be recognized by foreign language teachers due to the fact that it can be easily modified according to learners' first languages, and then be applied in any language environment on the basis of regular activities.

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