

**O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI  
OLIV VA O'RTA MAXSUS TA'LIM VAZIRLIGI**

**NAMANGAN DAVLAT UNIVERSITETI**

**FILOLOGIYA FAKULTETI**

**INGLIZ TILI VA ADABIYOTI KAFEDRASI**

**XASANOVA (TURSUNOVA) MUHAYYO ORIFJON QIZINING**

**“DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS VIA FREE WRITING AT  
VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND ACADEMIC LYCEUMS”**

**MAVZUSIDAGI**

**BITIRUV MALAKAVIY ISHI**

**NAMANGAN – 2016**

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AT VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND ACADEMIC LYCEUMS.**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Actuality of the theme**

Today English is a world language spoken by more than 1 billion people in dozens of countries. It's clear without saying that English is not only native speakers' language but also it's used as an official in some countries of Asia.

Since the Independence the educational system of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been growing at a high speed. From the first year of independence cooperation with British partners on a wide spread of English has been established in our country. Nowadays, Uzbekistan pays great attention to the study of English in secondary, vocational and higher education institutions. "As far as standpoint and enlightenment enter the number of major factors of the people's upbringing, we must display the state's care of the matters in this sphere and create all conditions for their development"— that is how our president expresses his intensive care of educating the youth of our republic. Our government draws every year for expend the system of education. As a result, there are built innumerable collages, schools, high educational places and others.

Educating young generation has always been a top promising and cardinal focus of social development in our republic. Especially, measures to improve the system of education in the field of English language learning have been taken at level of the country's Leadership.

On December 10, 2012 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a decree "On measures to further improve foreign language learning system".

According to the decree, starting from 2013/2014 school year foreign languages, mainly English, gradually throughout the country are being taught from the first year of schooling in the form of lesson-games and speaking games, continuing to learning the alphabet, reading and spelling in the second year.

Furthermore, in order to increase teaching standards in distant rural areas, the decree envisages 30% salary increase for foreign language teachers and 15% increase for those in other areas.

As I.A. Karimov highlighted<sup>1</sup> “Our young generation must be quick- cutter wiser, healthier and of course, must be happier than us”. The independence has also served as the base for the establishment of teaching children in foreign language in Uzbekistan. So, in all schools, high schools and universities of our country introduced a course of learning English as a compulsory subject. Especially, almost all the students of Vocational colleges and academic lyceums are learning this language so perfectly that they have all the conditions for a comprehensive study of English: each library has been provided free access to variety of textbooks, manuals, dictionaries and other English language resources. In addition to this, in every city of the country there have been operated specialized centers for the study of language.

In order to achieve English, each learner should master language skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) perfectly. Among them writing has such a great role that it expresses who you are as a person. Thus, good writing skills are so important especially for college students because of the fact that it is considered as an essential job skill. As after finishing college they have to get a job and these days, the employers look for good verbal and writing abilities in the candidates. Therefore, to learn the art of writing skill is significant in order to excel both academic and professional levels. Besides, learning to write in English as a foreign language provides learners with a voice in their new culture and enhances language acquisition.

### **Investigation level of the theme**

There have conducted several researchers on developing writing skills of students via free writing such as Marta Cristina, Dr.Robert Weissberg, Arthur Brookes- “Beginning to write”, Wohl, Jim A.P, Raimes Ann-“Techniques in

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<sup>1</sup> I.A. Karimov “There is no future without history” Tashkent 1997. P 47

teaching writing”, Bello T.-“Writing topics for adult ESL students”, Crandall J.A., Piltch Charles-“Problems with free writing”, Talmage Harriet, Nadine Gordimer and so on.

### **Aim of the qualification work**

The main aim of my gradual qualification work is to point out the importance of free writing in teaching English as a foreign language through a case study in an EFL classroom.

### **Tasks of the work**

- To describe the significance of writing skills;
- To analyse writing process;
- To point out the importance of free writing in teaching English;
- To express effective methods to help students develop free writing skills.

### **Objective and subject of the work**

The objective of this work is investigating the importance of free writing in teaching English as a foreign language.

The subject of the work is using a general method in the EFL classroom to help students improve free writing skills and their attitudes.

### **Novelty and practical significance of the work**

Learning to write in a foreign language is not easy for students. They face some difficulties, such as (1) how to start writing, (2) how to generate ideas, (3) how to make grammatical sentences, (4) how to beef up students’ low motivation in learning English. It demands much experience and especially good psychology of teachers in order to get to set up aims. That's why the teachers of schools, colleges and lyceums are being trained for further qualification by specialists. It is definitely indicated in the decree that the teachers who don't get such special trainings are not allowed to teach.

As the practical significance of the work, we can say that free writing is a valuable writing tool that serves several key purposes. First, it is a great warm-up

exercise for getting the mind ready to write. Second, through the process of free writing, we tend to access information that we never knew we had. Third, free writing seems to help us get around our internal critic, that voice that judges what we write. Last, by engaging in free writing, we come to learn that we can indeed write on demand.

### **Articles published on the gradual qualification work**

There have been published two articles on this gradual qualification work: “Analysis of writing process” and “Characterizations and peculiarities of free writing” published by the Department of philology of Namangan State University.

### **Theoretical aspects of the work**

Basic information of the qualification work is given from the works of great scholars such as: Jim A.P., Wohl, Krahen, Harmer, Marta Cristina, Bello T, Patricia Cumming, Charles Piltch, Talmage, Rodrigues and others. Apart from the above mentioned data, I took information from the source of Internet.

### **Content of the gradual qualification work**

Our gradual qualification work consists of the introduction, three chapters all of which have three items, conclusion, tables, appendix, and bibliography.

## **CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF WRITING SKILLS.**

### **1.1. Definition and significance of writing skills.**

Writing is one of the language skills which is important in our life. Through writing, we can inform others, carry out transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell what we feel. However, we know that writing or learning to write especially in a second language is not simply a matter of “writing things down”. It is one of the four basic skills that are very complex and difficult to learn.

Writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one’s thoughts and feelings. It can be challenging, whether writing in one’s native language or in a second language. Yet as adult English as second language (ESL) learners put their thoughts on paper, see their ideas in print, and share them with others, they find they develop a powerful voice in their new culture (Peyton, 1993).

In Wordreference, writing is one of the ways to give an idea or message which is form in writing on a piece of paper or the other area. It is an act of making marks on certain surface. Specifically, writing is one kind of expression in language which is created by particular set of symbol, having conventional values for representing the wordings of particular language which is drawn up visually.

Raimes states that there is a very simple and important reason to write besides communicating with each other: writing helps our students learn. By writing learners reinforce grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary they have been learning. Moreover, when they write they have the chance to be more adventurous with the language, they can go beyond what they have just learned to say, they take risks. Finally, when they write, they become involved with the new language; they work hard to express

their ideas and the constant use of eye, brain, and hand is a unique way to reinforce learning.

Bello agrees with Raimes by saying that writing also enhances language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and larger chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class.

Jim A.P. explains that writing skill is complex and difficult to learn. Requiring mastery is not only grammatical patterns but also the rule of writing such as high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information and also choosing the appropriate vocabularies and sentence structure to create a style which is appropriate to subject matter.

According to Heaton, there are four skills necessary for writing. They are:

- a. Grammatical skill : The ability to write correct sentences.
- b. Stylistic skill : The ability to manipulate sentence and use language effectively.
- c. Mechanical skill : The ability to use correctly those conversations peculiar to the written language e.g. punctuation, and spelling.
- d. Judgment skill : The ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with an ability to select, organize and relevant information.

In teaching English process writing and reading skill are interrelated. As Krahen cited in Subiakto and Nababan investigated "The effective of finding writing skill is by reading comprehension. The focus of reading is done continuously, all the role of the structure and language

system which are support the writing skill will be learned by the readers naturally”.

From the theories above, we can conclude that there is a relationship between reading and writing. When the students are reading the text, it means that they are interacting at the text. In other words, they have learned all the roles of the structure and language system at the text.

According to Subiakto and Nababan that the effective way of finding writing skills is by reading comprehension...because, all the roles of the structures and language system which support the writing skill will be learned by the reader naturally.

## **1.2. Analysis of writing process.**

Writing process is a process which writer begins to write down their ideas on paper which is valuable aid to the whole learning process. According to Wohl in almost all kinds of writing the basic structural unit is the paragraph...the paragraph is basic to all good writing. Moreover, Wohl said that there are 3 writing processes:

### **1. Finding the Topic Sentence**

Usually some students find difficulties in recognizing the topic sentence of paragraph. The topic sentence is usually taken from several things such as: an experience and from the book. According to Wohl a good topic sentence narrows the focus and points to one particular aspect of the over theme. The topic sentence usually represents the most general statement of the paragraph. The topic sentence occurs most frequently at the beginning of a paragraph. When the topic sentence does occur at the end, it serves to summarize the preceding sentence and to conclude the paragraph.

### **2. Developing Paragraph from Topic Sentence**

Some students can write a paragraph without following any formal steps or using formal techniques such as a topic sentence. Here are some steps to develop a paragraph according to Wohl :

- a. Choose a general topic of interest to you.
- b. Narrow down the topic. Select one aspect of the topic and decide what your main point is.
- c. Write down the few facts, believe or opinion that are directly related to your topic sentence details that will help to support or explain it.
- d. Take a second look at your tentative topic sentence.
- e. Using the fact and ideas from step three, develop the topic sentence into a full paragraph. This is your final draft.
- f. Think about unity as you read what you have written. Revise as necessary and then write your final draft.

### 3. Editing the Finish Product

The final step in completing a piece of writing is editing. Editing is the checking of one's written work for various faults in making last-minute changes and correction (Wohl). Students of English as second language must check their writing for basic grammatical errors. Basic grammatical errors include the improper use of tense and aspect agreement articles, word order and other small but important details.

There are several ways to approach writing in the classroom. It should be said at the beginning that there is not necessarily any 'right' or 'best' way to teach writing skills. The best practice in any situation will depend on the type of student, the text type being studied, the school system and many other factors. Thus, I hope to describe and contrast two popular, yet very different approaches, and examine how both can be used in the classroom.

Now, let's see these approaches one by one:

#### 1) A process approach

Process approaches to writing tend to focus more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing. Such an approach can have any number of stages, though a typical sequence of activities could proceed as follows according to Ron White & Valerie Arndt.

##### Stage 1

Generating ideas by brainstorming and discussion. Students could be discussing qualities needed to do a certain job, or giving reasons as to why people take drugs or gamble. The teacher remains in the background during this phase, only providing language support if required, so as not inhibiting students in the production of ideas.

##### Stage 2

Students extend ideas into note form, and judge quality and usefulness of ideas.

### Stage 3

Students organize ideas into a mind map, spider gram, or linear form. This stage helps to make the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas more immediately obvious, which helps students with the structure of their texts.

### Stage 4

Students write the first draft. This is done in class and frequently in pairs or groups.

### Stage 5

Drafts are exchanged, so that students become the readers of each other's work. By responding as readers, students develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else, and thus can improve their own drafts.

### Stage 6

Drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.

### Stage 7

A final draft is written.

### Stage 8

Students once again, exchange and read each others' work and perhaps even write a response or reply.

## 2) A product approach

This is a traditional approach, in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage. A model for such an approach is outlined by Ron White & Valerie Arndt, below:

### Stage 1

Model texts are read, and then features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to

make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques.

#### Stage 2

This consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests, practicing the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure.

#### Stage 3

Organization of ideas. This stage is very important. Those who favor this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language.

#### Stage 4

The end result of the learning process. Students choose from a choice of comparable writing tasks. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent users of the language.

Let's look through the differences:

Process driven approaches show some similarities with task-based learning, in that students are given considerable freedom within the task. They are not curbed by pre-emptive teaching of lexical or grammatical items. However, process approaches do not repudiate all interest in the product, (i.e. the final draft). The aim is to achieve the best product possible. What differentiates a process-focused approach from a product-centered one is that the outcome of the writing, the product, is not preconceived.

Table 1: Which Approach to Use:

Process writing	Product writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• text as a resource for comparison</li> <li>• ideas as starting point</li> <li>• more than one draft</li> <li>• more global, focus on purpose, theme, text type, i.e., reader is emphasized</li> <li>• collaborative</li> <li>• emphasis on creative process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• imitate model text</li> <li>• organization of ideas more important than ideas themselves</li> <li>• one draft</li> <li>• features highlighted including controlled practice of those features</li> <li>• individual</li> <li>• emphasis on end product</li> </ul>

The approach that you decide to use will depend on you, the teacher, and on the students, and the genre of the text. Certain genres lend themselves more favorably to one approach more than the other. Formal letters, for example, or postcards, in which the features are very fixed, would be perhaps more suited to a product-driven approach, in which focus on the layout, style, organization and grammar could greatly help students in dealing with this type of writing task.

Ron White & Valerie Arndt (1991), claim that other genres, such as discursive essays and narrative, may lend themselves to process-driven approaches, which focus on students' ideas. Discursive activities are suited to brainstorming and discussing ideas in groups, and the collaborative writing and exchanging of texts help the students to direct their writing to their reader, therefore making a more successful text.

The two approaches are not necessarily incompatible. I believe that process writing, i.e. re-drafting, collaboration, can be integrated with the practice of studying written models in the classroom.

### **1.3. The most common writing problems and the best ways to avoid them.**

Learning to write in second language is not easy for students. They face some difficulties, such as (1) how to start writing, (2) how to generate ideas, (3) how to produce unified paragraphs, (4) how to organize ideas logically, (5) how to make grammatical sentences, (6) how to beef up students' low motivation in learning English.

According to Nurgiantoro (2001:298-299) there are some problems which are faced by students in learning writing. They are:

- a. Organizing idea
- b. Lack of vocabulary
- c. Grammar accuracy

From the problems above, the writer concludes that the students can learn writing easier if they can organize their idea, mastery of vocabulary, and also mastery of grammar.

According to Heaton the writing skill in a foreign language are complex and difficult to learn not only the ability to use structures but also conceptual of varied skills such as stylistic and mechanical skill. Stylistic skill is the ability to manipulate sentences and use language effectively whereas mechanical skill is the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language such as punctuation and spelling.

Lado states the ability to write a worthwhile composition is not possessed by all the speakers of a language: the ability to write creatively requires talent special talent and special writing. Writing a foreign language is the ability to use the language and graphic representation productively in ordinary situation. It means that writing is one of language skills, another author says: "It can be used as a means of communication to convey messages by using written language or symbols. It is able to function as a system of symbols and writing is a representation or symbols of a language".

## **CHAPTER 2: THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE WRITING IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND ACADEMIC LYCEUMS.**

### **2.1. Characterizations and peculiarities of free writing.**

The free writing movement in English instruction began about two decades ago. Possibly, what the profession has learned since then is that free writing is not a writing program, yet free writing does have its uses.

Free writing reached its peak of popularity during the neo-progressive movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s when experimentation in new methods and content of English instruction was widespread. However, the back-to-basics movement of the mid-seventies discouraged free writings and other innovations such as improvisation, open classrooms, media study and elective English programs. Challenges to free writing raised in this period because the popular press often saw innovations as “frills” or evidence of permissiveness.

There are many definitions to free writing approach. Cumming says that free writing is a basic and very simple exercise: “one of those, like touching your toes with alternate hands or diaphragmatic breathing”, that everyone should do every day because it is easy – it only takes ten minutes - and “its moral, spiritual, and physical benefits are incalculable”. “It helps you to know yourself; it can free you from the mundane or show you that you are hopelessly enmeshed in it”, completes Cumming. Moreover, Cumming even comments that “free writing is better than aspirin for tension, and has no counter indications”. According to him, it helps when you are depressed; and sometimes you find out what you were concerned about. Cumming recommends the following instructions to give classes, friends and to ourselves:

“Write for ten minutes. Do not stop writing. Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, complete sentences, and grammar. If you can’t think of anything to say, write, “I can’t think of anything to say”, over and over again until you think of something. Do not read over what you have written (at least not for a while) (CUMMING, 1977, p. 34).

Cumming summarizes by saying that free writing is not only a way of finding out what one is thinking but also how, in what rhythms, words, and phrases; it is a way for people who are locked into textbook language or other people’s thoughts to find their own.

Cumming preserves the idea that writing, even unfinished writing, is communication since the students hand their papers in. Further however, Cumming says that free writing is a special kind of communication; it is confidential, and remains the writer’s own property exclusively, to be used or thrown away as she or he decides.

Finally, Skier presents the most convincing argument to apply free writing in L2 writing class. According to Skier free writing can be a most useful method for channeling excess energy. Skier reports a case when students in his elective, evening writing class got too giddy, too happy, too high on being together again after another long lonely week out there, and when jokes and general good times threatened to stretch throughout the class hours, Skier would ask what people wanted. He pointed out that they could continue what they were doing, or they could do something else. Any suggestion? He asked.

Sometimes, Skier says, there were “Let’s go out.” “Let’s turn off the lights.” “Let’s get up a kitty for beer.” Skier would discuss the alternatives with his students. Sometimes he would select one. Other times Skier would say, “You go ahead; do what you want to do”. “ I am going to write”. He would either say or imply, “You can write, too.”

Then the result was amazing, within sixty seconds, what had been the loudest classroom on the hall would have become the quietest one. The room remained charged, but the energy was no longer dissipating into the air: it was turning into words, stories, sequences of images and ideas on paper. Skier continues reporting that they would usually write for twenty minutes or so. When their eyes all met again, they would talk. Sometimes, he says, those who wished to would read what they had written. Other times they would go on to something else, but on a new level, a cooler, calmer level, more directed, ready to work, ready to write, ready to deal with our writing – to communicate with each other, constructively and creatively.

Free writing can be either prompted or unprompted. During unprompted free writing, you begin to write whatever is on your mind for a set amount of time, usually three to ten minutes. It is imperative that you censor nothing and that the writing does not stop until the designated time. If you get stuck, simply write the last word over and over or write any nonsense that may find its way onto the page. During prompted freewriting, you follow the same procedures, but the difference is that a word or topic becomes the focus of the exercise. Therefore, freewriting may start off with a simple word or phrase such as “children” or “the causes of childhood poverty.”

As I mentioned above, free writing is an extremely useful tool that can be successfully implemented as part of new idea generation or writing methods. Be it blogging, fictional writing, legal documentation or just getting ideas on paper for a new opportunity, free writing can help achieve outstanding results.

The free writing technique is implemented by writing fast and continually without worrying about proper punctuation, spelling, structure, topic or form. It’s an exercise of writing everything that comes to mind without reservation and is a great way to get ideas onto paper extremely quickly without being encumbered by analysis or over thinking. Free writing

allows people to reach a level of thinking that goes beyond those that they have through the course of a normal day.

Here are several ways that the free writing technique will improve your writing:

### **1. Increases your creativity**

The act of continuous non-stop writing forces your mind to come up with new ideas. Getting these on paper then allows the creative juices in your brain begin to flow. With free writing, the stream of ideas that must be generated will move you through all different topics. The right brain will kick in trying to come up with new areas to explore.

### **2. Generates new ideas**

Going beyond creativity, you simply do not know what's buried in your brain until you give this technique a chance. Without the ability to fall back into your regular thought pattern you will generate ideas that you never thought were possible or never thought that you would have. Free writing helps you to bring new ideas to the surface that may have been hiding in the back of your mind.

### **3. Gets you unstuck**

Whenever you're stuck in a situation, this technique can help you blast right through that feeling, opening new possibilities and concepts. Whether you are stuck on a writing project, business plan or in your personal life, getting a stream of ideas down will help move you past the block.

### **4. Makes you feel great!**

One of the biggest challenges to a writer is come up with something new and original every time – adding value to the reader. Once complete, this method of idea generation allows you to sit back and review a whole range of different thought directions. Most times, you will amaze yourself with a level of creativity and the sheer volume of material just by pushing yourself. It's a powerful feeling to reflect on a successful free writing session.

## **5. Forces you to think differently**

One of the biggest problems is the regurgitation of your own ideas. Every writer has “fallen into a rut” where your topic seems to be similar no matter what you try to write. Free writing forces your mind to think in different ways outside of your normal. Like using a mind map, it helps you to explore different ideas from different points of view and make connections that never existed before.

## **6. Creates a chain reaction of new thoughts**

It's often surprising how quickly you get focused on getting the words written down. As ideas come, all it takes is one slight deviation to your thought pattern and your writing goes in an entirely new direction. You may start with getting ideas for a new blog post and end up writing the first paragraph of your next novel!

All in all, free writing is one of the most useful tools for generating ideas, getting unstuck or increasing your creativity level. It can be done in very little time and forces you to think in new and exciting ways. If you have never tried free writing, I advise you to start a small topic in mind, a set time limit then get writing and let your mind explore!

## **2.2. A general method to help students develop free writing skills.**

Free writing as stated by Jacob is an opportunity for students to write freely for a brief period in each class, usually 10 minutes or thereabouts. This offers students a rewarding experience of writing because it can avoid the inhibitions, which normally influence writing, inhibitions that have developed since first grade of elementary school, i.e. writing had to be clear, correct and neat. ESL/EFL students especially can benefit as their level of competency develops. To be successful, though, free writing, while free for the students, still requires the teacher to be organized, disciplined and methodical.

At the beginning of each class, allocate about 15-20 minutes for the whole free writing exercise. The basic process can be broken down into four steps, according to Jacobs:

### 1) Preparing for writing

Students must prepare a piece of paper, or a notebook, and a pen. Free writing is usually best done as the first activity in class because other activities, anxiety over assignments, and classroom stress may all interrupt or even hinder the creative process. Free writing needs space, time and a certain degree of freedom from anxiety.

### 2) Setting up the task

Jacobs advises nine basic criteria for free writing in an ESL environment while Elbow (1998) describes clearly and simply the philosophy of free writing in *Writing without Teachers*:

"The idea is simply to write for 10 minutes ... Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write, 'I can't think of it.' Just put down something. The easiest thing is just to put down whatever is in your mind. If

you get stuck it's fine to write 'I can't think of anything to say, I can't think of anything to say' as many times as you want; or repeat the last word you wrote over and over again; or anything else. The only requirement is that you never stop (ELBOW, 1998:3)."

### 3) Free writing

Initially the teacher may provide an example of what to do themselves by sitting in front of the class and doing the same task. However, the other role as facilitator of free writing is also important. Ensuring that students aren't correcting, changing what they wrote, consulting their dictionary, or one of the hundred and one other activities that distract or interrupt students writing. Moreover, merely acting as an encourager can also provide students with the necessary reminder to remain focused on the task at hand. This is not a test, but it does require concentration. An involved teacher can play an important role, here.

### 4) Post-writing

Warn the students that the time is up about 2 minutes before the end helps to round up the class activity. Students write their name at the top and may be asked to note the number of words in that particular free writing. The teacher can collect paper or notebooks for later reading although no explicit correction or grading should be carried out on the papers. Free writing like this may form an important element of a portfolio of writing.

### **2.3. “How to develop writing skills via free writing at Vocational colleges and academic lyceums?”**

I wonder that many college students fear and even hate writing, as do many human services and helping professionals. Fear of and displeasure with writing is a social problem that greatly affects the abilities of many people to write and communicate effectively. Besides, there has been a marked decrease in the writing abilities of students in elementary and secondary schools over the past several decades. Writing in schools is often taught as a means to an end, not as a pleasure in and of itself. Schools are often underfunded, and teachers are overwhelmed with the task of teaching poorly prepared students even the most fundamental skills. These difficulties often continue into the college years; faculty in human services disciplines struggle with how to balance the teaching of content with helping students with inadequate writing skills. Furthermore, most students do report negative experiences in writing, usually complaining that they do not know what to write. If so, how can we develop their writing skills as a teacher?

In these situations, free writing exercises can be very helpful way. They are merely places to start writing, and if the students end up writing about something completely different, the free writing exercise will still have been completely successful.

Dickson demonstrates a number of prompts to be used in English writing classes:

#### **1. Short story**

A short story can be read out to the class. Perhaps it will be familiar to students already in their first language, such as one of Aesop's fables. Keep the story time limit to less than five minutes. Even an interesting chapter or part of a story that inspires can be chosen from a longer book.

#### **2. Music**

Music works very well as a prompt, because it allows space for the imagination to grow and develop during the free writing time, as well as provides a break from the monotony of the teacher's voice. However, avoid songs with lyrics because students may become frustrated with trying to comprehend the lyrics. The lyrics themselves may also lack subtlety, thus limiting the range of responses students may have.

### 3. Memory

Think of a powerful memory that you have. Set the scene by sharing your memory with the class. Elicit other kinds of memories from students, e.g. from childhood, a trip, even a person in their lives. Then tell students to share a memory that had a powerful effect on them.

### 4. Picture: piece of art or photograph or abstract drawing

Again, a picture that can stimulate a variety of responses will work better than one that demands a 'correct' interpretation. Abstract art may work better than traditional art. Simple sketches can also be very effective in creating a variety of responses, since interpretation remains open for the writer.

### 5. Question

A provocative question can also be a good stimulus for writing. Find a question that provokes your students into responding in writing, but also one that allows students a variety in the type of responses. This gives them freedom in what to write, while avoiding numerous pieces all dealing with the same ideas and content in more or less the same fashion.

### 6. Poetic license

A short poem that has a strong theme may also work. Do stress to students that they do not need to give you the correct interpretation, but just ask them to respond however they like.

### 7. Video segment

A good video segment or situation that presents itself, such as a scene from a movie that most of the class has seen, or a scene in which the

situation is obvious. Again avoid closed situations where there are only a few possible stances, as this will help students to focus on expressing their ideas and interpretations.

#### 8. Odd predicaments

An open-ended situation can present an ideal opportunity for students to react in an unhindered way. You can use a 'what if' scenario, such as 'What if you woke up tomorrow morning and found you had been turned into a dog'; or an ethical dilemma like 'You see a poor woman stealing in a store, what would you do?'; or even a situation that happened to you in real life, but posed as a question.

#### 9. Proverbs or sayings

This is an effective way to encourage students to write. Get the students to write down a favorite proverb or saying on a piece of paper and drop it in a bag that you pass around. Then distribute the pieces at random. Elicit a student response to the proverb or saying that they receive.

Some of these prompts (e.g. the story, video, and odd predicament) require setting up prior to writing, so allow adequate time to prepare, provide the prompt before students begin writing, and deal with unexpected impediments. Any story, situation or activity may also consume more time than usual with follow-up questions from students (story or odd predicament) or technical problems (video/audio equipment). Some prompts, such as the musical prompt, should be started before free writing begins, but students can begin writing whenever they feel ready.

For several examples of free writing exercises, see exercise 1 below.

## Exercise 1

### FREEWRITING EXERCISES

1. As a warm-up, on a blank piece of paper, write the sentence, “Today I feel. . .” Then, write for five minutes without thinking or censoring yourself. Often, writing from our own experience helps free us to write more easily.
2. It is difficult for some people to write about themselves. As an alternative warm-up, write for five minutes on this sentence: “If I could write about anything today, it would be. . . .”
3. On a blank piece of paper, write the one word that best describes your main research interests (e.g., “adolescents”). Starting with this word, free write for five minutes.
4. Complete the exercise described above, but with a concept that intrigues you.
5. Write on a piece of paper the following sentence: “Two important concepts that I am trying to connect are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.” Write for five minutes.

Researchers suggest several helpful tips that improve students’ writing skills. Let’s see some of them:

- **Write like it’s your job**

If you want to improve your writing skills, writing on a regular basis will not only diminish your fear of the blank page, it will also help you develop a unique style. So, even if nobody reads it, keep writing. Because of the fact that practice makes perfect.

- **Imitate writers you admire**

Before we go any further, a disclaimer-imitation is not the same as plagiarism. Don’t rip off anyone’s work. Never. Just as you probably have a list of blogs you read often, you will likely also read the same writers on a regular basis. Identify what it is you enjoy about their work, and see if you can use it to improve your writing skills. Does a writer you like use humor to spice up dry

topics? Try it. Do they use pop culture references to make their work entertaining and useful? Try that, too.

- **Edit your work ruthlessly**

So, you are writing every day, and you are feeling more confident about your work. Awesome! Now you are going to become your own harshest critic.

- **Accept that first drafts are almost always crap**

Remember that first drafts are almost always crap, and that's okay. Don't beat yourself up if you don't create a masterpiece on your first attempt. Just get your ideas down on paper first, then go back and start cleaning up.

- **Don't be afraid to say what you think**

Don't be shy about sharing your opinions, once you have started to discover your own "voice".

- **Use strong words**

Look for words that are as specific as possible. Try not to repeat the same word over and over.

- **Cut the chuff**

Good writing is simple, clear and direct. You don't get points for saying in 50 words what could be said in 20, or for using multi-syllable words when a short one does just as well.

- **Join a writing workshop**

One of the best ways to improve your writing and stay motivated is to talk with others and get feedback on your work. Find a local or online writing group.

- **Write every day**

Keep a diary, mail a pen pal, or just set aside an hour or so for free writing. Just pick a topic and start writing. The topic itself doesn't matter- the idea is to write. Metaphorically saying, writing is a skill that takes practice, and it is a muscle that you can strengthen and nourish with the right training.

- **Develop your confidence!**

## **CHAPTER 3: PRACTICAL PART.**

### **3.1. Implementation of activities based on free writing conducted at vocational colleges and academic lyceums.**

The implementation of my research work conducted at academic lyceum number 2 with first and second-year-students. I decided to create some projects for them. The projects are not strictly intended for certain grades, they can be used with younger children as well as with older ones according to their skills, level of English and interests. These projects have various features.

Firstly, they should mediate knowledge through an interesting pre-writing activities and alternative way of teaching.

Secondly, they should present useful facts and teach skills such as cooperation, communication, searching for information, selecting sources, giving presentation and etc.

Thirdly, to show how important and useful is using free writing in order to teach writing skills in foreign language teaching. This process is easy and interesting for learners – it is original and convenient.

Lastly, students will be able to write any kind of assignments without hesitations and difficulties.

It is true that, a complex project can give students more than simple learning from a textbook since there are a lot of activities and many things to do condense in relatively short time that is devoted to the project. The time given depends on the schedule possibilities and learners' skills.

Optimally, there should be time for introduction, motivation and pre-teaching vocabulary before the project itself starts. There is also a demand for suitable facilities and materials such as handouts, pictures and things like that.

In this chapter I will present the data collected from the observations and interviews. I have divided this chapter by sorting the information. The information given in the sub-chapters is a summary of the most relevant data

for my study and the observation and interview are summarized in chapter. The results are summarized in coherent text since the tangible data consists of notes that were written down when conducting observations and interviews.

### **Feedback to the practical part**

I had a practice with two and second-year-students. What is more is that, I taught 2 different classes according to free writing to improve their writing skills. And the other 2 classes I taught according to ordinary teaching writing methods. At the end of the lesson I achieved good results and I have realized that teaching writing according to process more affective and easier.

I used the first lesson to work with a text in the textbook Wings. The text included a lot of descriptive language. I first instructed the class to read the text individually, in silence, and then I played a recording of the text. After this, I talked to the students about the text in terms of how the author had used language to describe people. I asked them to re-read the text, underlining words that could be of use when describing someone. The last part of the lesson was spent on discussing these words as a full-class activity and before leaving the classroom the students were asked to answer some questions about the text and its descriptive language as homework for the following lesson. The second lesson was opened by me reminding my students of the work they did last time. Then I told them that they were going to write a personal description of their own during this forty-minute lesson. They were asked to consider what they had talked about regarding how people are described in the text, and to divide their text into paragraphs. For the rest of the lesson, my students worked individually with their texts, sometimes asking each other or my help with vocabulary. When asked, I encouraged my students to use the dictionaries as little as possible and try to use the words they knew already. I also sat down with some students that found this assignment hard and tried to help them by guiding them to use adjectives for rich descriptions. By the end

of the lesson, all students handed in their texts. For the next lesson, when the students entered the classroom the lights were switched off and I asked my students to enter the room silently, take off their jackets and sit down and wait for my instructions. I placed a pen and two sheets of paper on each table. I told my group that they were not allowed to speak to each other or ask any questions. They were only allowed to listen to me and follow my instructions. I placed a picture on the overhead and I instructed the class to closely look at the picture silently. It was a picture from the Warsaw ghetto during the Second World War - a picture of children playing in a very sad surrounding and with a child lying dead in the corner of the picture. After a couple of minutes I told the students to take one of the two pieces of paper and divide it into three columns. Further, I told them to write a heading for each column. The first column should say; *what do you see in the picture*, the heading for the second column; *what do you hear when looking at the picture* and the heading for the third column; *what do you feel when you look at the picture*. I moved on by instructing them to answer the questions at their own pace while looking at the picture. The students began to put down words and phrases in their columns. After approximately 15 minutes, I switched on the lights with the picture still on display. Then I asked the students to take the other (empty) sheet of paper and I told them that on this they were supposed to write a poem that would go with the picture on the overhead. Further, I told them that the sheet with the columns, which they had just filled in, could work as a source of words and phrases that they could use in their poem. During the rest of the lesson the students wrote their poems individually while I walked around helping the students that asked for help. I explained that the following lesson would be dedicated to reading English poetry and that this lesson served the purpose of showing the students that poetry is not necessarily difficult to write or read.

I spoke about the ability to communicate and reach out to others through writing. I spoke about writing as a means of expression, where

reflection and inner thoughts are central. I weigh this against formal writing; articles, essays where the importance lies in structure. I enjoyed brainstorming with students when it comes to planning what kind of formal writing to include. Guidelines regarding structure and content, I sometimes find in textbooks and teaching aid material. Moving over to writing assignments of a more expressive and creative character, I explained that I could find inspiration for topics to write about from just about anywhere; TV. Later, I sat down by my desk and structured my ideas and decided on what the actual written product should be. I emphasized the importance of having a purpose for each assignment. From here, I decided on a pedagogic lesson plan. I strongly believe in “providing students with as many ideas and information as possible before asking them to produce a text”. Pre-writing activities such as looking at pictures, listening to music and mini-discussions are some examples of how I introduce writing assignments. Furthermore, I believe in being very clear when instructing my students and I showed them sample essays and gave them thorough guidelines. Most of the writing takes place in my classroom. It depends on the purpose of the assignment. If the purpose is to evaluate the quality of the students’ writing – definitely in-class writing. When my students are researching or writing answers to things that they have gone through in class, they can do it as homework. I mentioned poetry, creative or narrative writing, argumentative writing and informative writing as examples of different kinds of writing that I and my second-year- students have worked with. As mentioned earlier, I saw a great value in pre-writing activities and throughout the writing lessons I used “pit-stops”. During the “pit-stops”, the students momentarily stop their writing in order to go through what they have accomplished and to check what they might have missed out on as well as helping each other. However, I highlighted that it is not the process and the pit-stops that I evaluated it is the actual written product that is of interest to me.

On the other hand, with two classes I mean the groups number 213 and 214 I taught them according to course book. I made them do some writing exercises without process writing. Consequently they did following course book instructions. With them we also wrote some short essays. At the beginning of the lesson they had some difficulties how to start their essay. In order to motivate I organized some activities which help them to concentrate their minds. Some of the students coped with this task.

However, with classes that I did an experience, before I made them to write something we passed several steps in order to produce effective writing products. Together with students we did cluster mapping, brainstorming and maps which helped pupils to gather ideas and concentrate their minds about the topic. For each lesson the students gave me their drafts and I showed them their mistakes. Due to achieve successful results we did step by step. Before I gave them my own feedback, I asked my learners to give feedback to each other. Because the more they realize their mistakes, the better and more interesting would be their learning process. During the practical period, I have realized that, teaching learners according to free writing learners feel more confident and motivated. At the end my internship, I gave all classes to write a 100 or 150 word essay. For first-year- grades I gave my future profession and for the second-year- grades I gave the topic “My ideal person”. Finally I gathered all essays and compared them with ordinary groups that I didn’t teach process writing. The results were more positive that I waited at the beginning. The classes I taught according to writing process took better marks than the pupils of other two classes. The classes which were taught according to course book, they couldn’t organize their ideas and of course they had a serious problem with the choice of topic sentence.

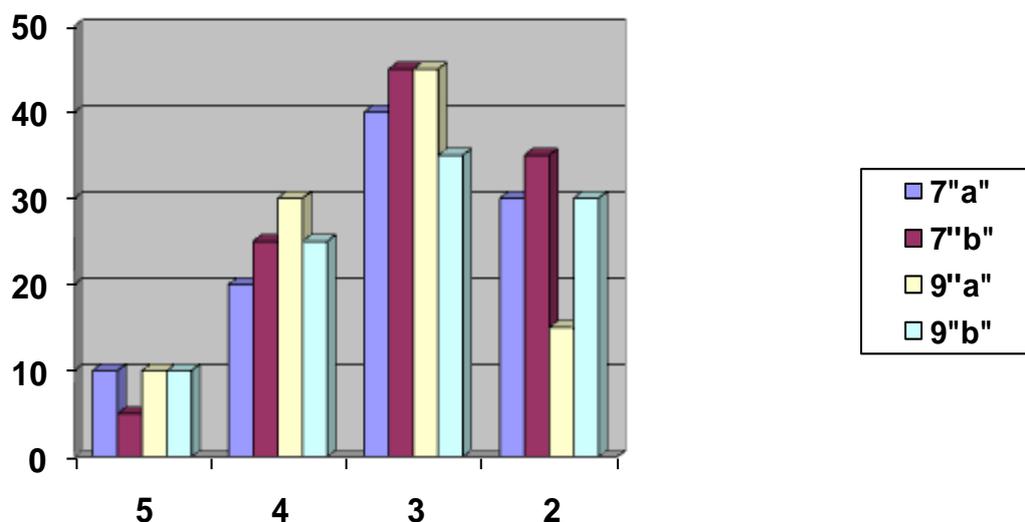
Some students even couldn’t write an essay when I gave in my first lesson in order to check their level on writing. At the end, they did an

enormous progress and of course I was satisfied with results. To sum up, language teachers should teach learners with the best and easy ways that I did with two classes.

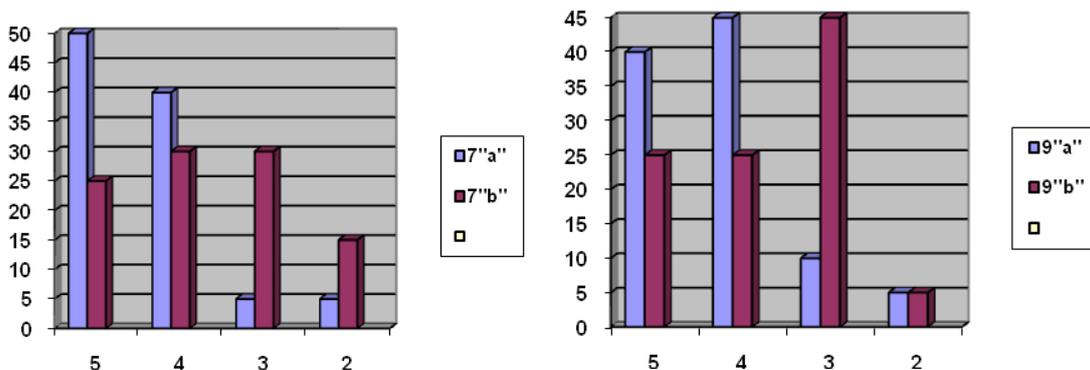
### The results before the internship

These are the results of the students' essays at the beginning of the internship. I took them without explaining how to write an essay. Those essays were estimated according to 5, 4, 3, 2 marks. I tried to pay attention to their grammar mistakes, spelling, accuracy and punctuation.

### The results before the internship



The results after the internship with the groups: 213 and 214.



After getting the results I made up my mind to teach writing through the process. Because learners acquire this method with ease and sail through all writing assignments.

### **Some findings during the practical period.**

I thought about the importance of teaching writing in the EFL classroom, I think that it is important to work a lot with writing in order to help the students write for different purposes and audiences. Moreover I emphasized the importance of pointing out the difference between spoken and written language.

Further, I explained that I presented all writing assignments within some kind of context. I wanted my students to know from the start what I expected from them, and to have a clear purpose for their writing assignments. I mentioned that my purpose most often is the practicing of one's writing tools and also to learn how to express oneself in a comprehensible and effective way. I said that this purpose is too wide to be presented for every single writing assignment. Instead I mentioned 'smaller' purposes such as considering the implied reader, the structure of the writing or the different kinds of language used in different texts.

When it comes to the 'hands-on' writing assignments, I mentioned writing factual texts, argumentative letters and articles, descriptions and essays to be found in Process Writing. I used it in English classrooms. I said that its biggest advantage is that it works well, and that the students can see their progress through it. According to my experience, students learn more about their own writing by using process writing. Although I claim that Process Writing requires too much time and energy in order to be used all the time. When creating writing assignments, I often used the help of my teachers. I liked the idea of working with English in theme-form, mixing it with other

subjects. The reason for this is that I saw a need of reality-based assignments; the students need to see the use of what they are doing.

I was involved in this study seem to agree with Donald's theory when he stated that written language is more complex than spoken language. I took a stand against structured writing assignments I gave the students the freedom to work without frames and guidelines. This way of working with writing corresponds to what Hedge calls "effective writing", meaning a high degree of organization when it comes to developing and structuring ideas, information and arguments." I have understood that during my internship, the students need a well-developed written language for their future careers. Learning how to write in order to bring messages across through understanding how to structure the writing. To be more precise, writing is a social artifact that is affected by a social setting, social conventions and social interaction. The majority of the writing assignments mentioned could be tasks that the students would have use of in a real social setting; for work or future studies. During the practical period, many parts of the lesson carry elements of Free Writing. It seems like most of the informants' teaching methods are to some extent in agreement with the ideas of Free Writing.

## CONCLUSION.

Telling the truth, writing academic research is not easy or always enjoyable. As with many things we love, there are moments of drudgery and difficulty. Yet we can draw an important distinction between the notions of happiness and joy and the importance of meaning. May (1979) distinguishes between the deep joy experienced from creating a life of meaning and the fleeting experience of momentary happiness. We can find momentary happiness through consumption and passive-receptive acts, which demand little effort. Writing takes effort, though, and at times it can lead to frustrations and headaches. Yet there is a profound joy to be experienced when you are able to overcome such feelings. Each time you write something, take a few moments to reflect upon what you have accomplished. Let it wash over you, and give yourself the validation and praise that you deserve. Changing your perspective about the free writing, and about what you are able to write, will help lead to a shift in the role writing plays in your life.

To my mind, English teachers need to understand that students' goal in mastering a second language is just reached in practice, when they are exposed to real situations, inside the classroom and in many other kinds of situations outside it. Then, EFL students that do not have constant contact with people that dominate the language can feel their real development and comfort in using the new language. Otherwise, it is always very important to put the classes content in practice in all possible occasions. Considering my own experience as an English teacher, one of the reasons of students' difficulties in writing in a second language because they do not read even in their L1; consequently, they do not like to write. So, it is necessary to plan all the classes and to have predisposition in putting it in action; and the most effective way to do that is through free writing. Looking back to the figures, I analyze that the way the students were taught to write (in the regular school) they represented it in their free writing samples. Equally important to mention is the

fact that most of the people in Brazil do not have the habit of reading. Therefore, the consequence of that are the poor writings students present.

Finally, to get a better result in students' learning, students and teachers need to work together. Teachers have to bring real life situations to the classroom; then students can develop their imagination and write better. The important point is to involve students and motivate them to create their own stories because they need to feel that their writing has value and that it will be relevant to their lives. The teachers' role is essential; they must be close to students, to help them with their doubts and give them confidence to overcome their difficulties and reach their goals.

During my practical period I have found out that in teaching students motivation is very important. The more complicated subject to learn, the stronger the motivation should be. Motivating through personal experience and catchy materials is highly efficient. In addition to this, students need to write, write, and write some more! Students write only on the front of their paper, skipping lines as they go. This allows them to write more easily. Some students may actually want to cut out whole sections and paste them elsewhere – or remove them altogether. It is not a problem.

At the beginning of my practical work I did not expect that I could get successful results on writing. It seemed to me that, students couldn't acquire this way of writing. It is because they had never experienced before to write essays or letters. They were so passive and closed. However, I tried to motivate them by doing different kinds of activities such as brainstorming, cluster mapping and free writing. They began to participate actively as gave their ideas and share with each other. All we need to do in this situation is to be a good motivator and instructor. We should never critique our pupils for their mistakes and stupid ideas. We have to listen every idea that comes from learners' minds. Because no one is perfect at the beginning of the process. So, I have understood that language learners should be given an opportunity to

identify their own mistakes. This helps them to be more active during the writing process.

In summary, free writing is a beneficial technique for students of English, despite some of the obvious difficulties for learners of English. This writer's experience of using free writing in the classroom highlights the potential of the technique. These variations provide a rich source from which students will benefit greatly in their writing and in the enrichment of their ideas and language usage through the feedback from fellow students and the class teacher.

All in all, my research experience has allowed me to learn more than I was able to in regular course work., by giving me hands-on experience in designing the experiments, and simply learning and figuring things out as I went along. It has also stretched me in learning to be a self-starter and to manage my time better. I believe these personal lessons will be extremely valuable in anything I attempt in the future!

It is the end... Now, finishing my academic research, I can see that I still have a lot to learn! Until now, everything that I did I must, at first, thank God that gave me power and health. Besides, thanks a lot to my professor teachers- Mrs Makhliyo and Alimova Ma'mura. Without them, I would not succeed!

## APPENDIXES

### The first lesson plan

1. Organizational part  
(10 minutes)
2. Introductory questions
  - Who do you see on the picture?
  - Can you describe his or her appearance?
  - What kind of features have you noticed?
  - What kind of adjectives do you know for the description of a character? (15 minutes)
3. Motivation part
  - Displaying the supporting materials on a desk distributing short texts about description of people to students. Students come to see them then read their texts. (10-15 minutes)
4. Introduction of the project
  - We are going to talk about describing people and we will learn how to describe people in English language.
  - Setting the rules and requirements
  - Division into groups. (10 minutes)
5. Working in groups, discussing the way of working out the task, division of work among pupils, asking the teacher questions or for help. Using materials displayed and distributed to all groups.  
( the rest of the lesson)  
Homework: to look some information up on the Internet

### Activity Type

Describe the activity

- 1) *Reading a text. Listening to it. Talking about how people are described.*
- 2) *Writing a personal description.*

How is the writing assignment introduced?

- Instructions?

1) *“Today we are going to work with this text. Next time we are going to continue by doing a writing activity linked to this text.*

2) *“You’re going to describe a person, anyone. Remember the personal descriptions in the texts that we read last time in the textbook.. Try to use similes such as ‘his eyes are as blue as the sky on a beautiful summer’s day’ instead of just writing ‘he has blue eyes’. Remember to include more than just looks, and*

*to be nice if you choose to write about someone real that you know.”*

*Also: Divide your text into paragraphs. Write just one page. Students only have this lesson (40 mins).*

### **Participant Organization**

- Individual assignment?

- Group assignment?

- peer - peer reviewing activities

*Individual assignment, although students are encouraged to help each other out.*

### **The Content and Purpose**

Prewriting activities?

1) *Listening to a text, reading it both in silence and aloud. Class-discussion on how people in the text are described*

2) *Actual writing assignment. No pre-writing this lesson.*

What kind of writing is assigned? (argumentative, narrative, poetry etc.)

*Descriptive text.*

Presented Purpose?

- Writing for writing or a focus on practicing linguistic features (grammar, vocabulary etc.)?

1) *“Make sure that you think about how people are described. A description of a person that is more than just ‘he is tall and has dark hair’ makes people interested in reading it.*

2) *“Think about all the adjectives that you know.”*

.

### **Teacher – Student Interaction**

Teachers should be aware of the students’ understanding of the assignment. They should *walk around in the class during the writing activity and makes sure that students have understood. Also help out with some vocabulary and grammar.*

### **Student Influence**

- Questions?

- Ideas?

*Students are free to ask anything, and their ideas are welcomed: one boy, whose name is Abdulaziz, during the lesson wanted to describe his pet. As long as the students wrote a description of someone, and made sure to include personality-descriptions as well as describing looks, they were free to choose the ‘object’ of their descriptions.*

### **The first lesson**

I entered to the class ‘213’ according to my lesson plan. I asked students introductory questions as a warm up activity and to get involve them to the lesson. They cooperated well. I found out that they can easily describe people using different kind of adjectives. I used this first lesson to work with a text in the textbook Straightforward. The text included a lot of descriptive language. I first instructed the class to read the text individually, in silence, and then I played a recording of the text. After this, I talked to the pupils about the text in terms of how the author had used language to describe pupils. I asked them to re-read the text, underlining words that could be of use when

describing someone. The last part of the lesson was spent on discussing these words as a full-class activity and before leaving the classroom the pupils were asked to answer some questions about the text and its descriptive language as homework for the following lesson.

Then I displayed my materials on a table and invited the students to come there and see them. They were surprisingly interested and spent on them about 10 minutes.

After that, I told them about my project and explained what they would do next. I distributed them short texts to read quickly.

In the rest of the time, they were supposed to start working on the project. I helped them with choosing materials useful for their tasks.

At the end, I asked them to find famous people's pictures and describe in written form. As I supposed, there were huge protests. They argued against my task that they couldn't do individually at home. I told them to try as well as they can.



## **The second lesson plan**

### **1.Organizational part**

(10 minutes)

2. Discussion on short essays that students handed in second lesson.

Well you know that, on our third lesson we altogether discussed the problems that pupils came across during producing their descriptive essays. First of all, I let pupils exchange their products then write feedback. After that, I myself checked their essays and assessed.

Assessment

I assessed fluency (F), accuracy (A), content (C) and grammar (G).

Mostly pupils made mistakes on grammar and accuracy. They couldn't structure all the sentences well. That's why, I gave students some advices to improve their grammar by doing more exercises. At the end of the third lesson, I gave feedback myself to each student. In order to increase motivation to write better, I tried to give constructive feedback.

## **The third lesson plan**

### **1.Organizational part**

(10 minutes)

### **2.Introductory questions**

- Who do you see on the picture?
- What do you hear from the picture?
- What do you feel when you look at the picture?

(15 minutes)

### **3.Motivation part**

- Displaying the supporting materials on a desk distributing piece of papers and pens. (10-15 minutes)



### **Activity Type**

*Write a presentation of an organisation.*

How is the writing assignment introduced?

- Instructions?

*Read the instructions in the textbook.*

*Eva points out questions to bear in mind that should be answered through the text: When?, How?, What?, Where?*

### **Community Building**

Writing an Autobiography

Based upon a the book *Best Wishes* by Cynthia Rylant

### **Instructional Routine Overview**

- Summary of Routine: Students will write and share their autobiographies using the following scaffold.

- Student Outcomes: Students will be encouraged to speak clearly and listen to one another. By writing and sharing their autobiographies, students will build community by making connections to one another. They will develop their own unique sense of place within the community.
- Estimated Time: 30 to 45 minutes each day for 2 days.

### **Day 1:**

- Ask students if they know what an autobiography is. Discuss how an autobiography differs from a biography.
- Read and discuss the book *Best Wishes* by Cynthia Rylant. Any other autobiography that is readily available can be replaced in this lesson. Explain that this is a book Cynthia Rylant wrote about her life. Tell students to listen carefully as they will be writing their own autobiography.
- Discuss what questions students will want to ask their families in order to write their own autobiographies. Allow students to brainstorm these questions. Write them on chart paper.
- Have students copy some of the questions they will want to ask their families for homework.

### **Day 2:**

- Have students sit with their partners. Allow them time to share what they learned about their own life when they spoke with their families.
- In the whole class setting, allow students to share their autobiography if they are comfortable. Only a few may want to share, but allow as many as time allows.

- For discussion, ask students what they liked about this activity/what they didn't like. Why is it helpful to know about yourself and others? Why do you think authors write biographies?

**Extension:**

This activity may be extended over several days and students may write a final copy – going through the steps of revision, editing, and publishing

**All about me**

First, middle, last name \_\_\_\_\_

My parents named me this because \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday/Place of  
birth \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite  
book \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite food(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_

My least favorite food(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_

When other people think about me, they think I am (happy, silly, grouchy, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Something unique about  
me \_\_\_\_\_

When I grow up I hope to \_\_\_\_\_

The best gift I ever  
received \_\_\_\_\_

Write 15 or more words that describe **you!** Then, draw a picture of yourself.

## Primary Editing Checklist

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Editor's  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Color the smiley face or frown face for each editing target. Does each sentence begin with a capital letter?

Does each sentence end with a punctuation mark?

Are the words spelled correctly?

Is the handwriting neat and easy to read?

Are all paragraphs indented?

Are all proper names capitalized?

## **Around the World Editing Checklist**

**Writer's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** After editing your own paper, prepare your draft by numbering each line of your writing piece. Find one other person in your classroom to read your draft and edit it for one specific area. You may not ask the same person to do more than one area.

### **Trip One**

Editor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Read the paper
2. What words are misspelled? List the word(s) and what line number it can be found.

### **Trip Two**

Editor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Read the paper
2. Check for punctuation errors. Point out to the writer any errors in using commas, questions marks, periods, quotation marks, or capital letters. List the line number of where the error(s) can be found.

### **Trip Three**

Editor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Read the paper.
2. Is each paragraph indented? List any line number where a change needs to be made.
3. Does the paper have appropriate margins?
4. Is the handwriting neat?

## **Adaptations:**

Teachers can add or delete the number of editors along with what skills the editors are looking for in each paper.

### **Writing Workshop**

#### Compliments for Writers

You write like a pro!

May I share this with another class? Teachers?

This should be published for everyone to read!

You are a gifted and talented writer.

Someday you could make a living by writing.

When I read your story, I laughed out loud!

You described your mother's cooking so well, I felt hungry.

You used great transition words. I especially liked \_\_\_\_\_.

Your characters are very real. I felt as if I knew them.

The beginning really got my attention because\_\_\_\_\_.

Your story sounds so real!

Your story paints a picture in my mind of\_\_\_\_\_.

The ending surprised everyone!

Your story made me think about\_\_\_\_\_.

The dialogue added much interest.

I can't wait to hear what will happen next!

### **Writing Workshop**

#### Conference Questions for Writers

Where did you get your idea? Is your story fiction or non-fiction?

What is the main idea?

What is the problem? How was it solved?

What is the beginning? Middle? End?

What is your favorite part of your story? Tell me more about it.

Who is your favorite character? Tell me more about the character.

Read me the places where you're pleased with your description. What makes these sections work?

Are there places you could describe more?

Is there any part that you are not happy with? Let's talk about it.

Is there anything that doesn't seem to fit?

Do you think that you have more than one piece (paragraph) here?

Are you going to publish this?

Were you trying to write this in the style of a certain author?

Why did you choose this topic? What is important about it to you

What is the most important thing you are saying?

What questions do you think others will have for you?

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