



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

Grammar skills or Writing practice?

THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

adelaide.edu.au

seek LIGHT

Outline

- Group discussion
 - Rationale
 - Writing activity
 - Other activities
 - Reflection
 - Handouts & questions
-

Rationale

Writing takes time to do.

‘Writing involves a different kind of mental process. There is more time to think, to reflect, to prepare, to rehearse, to make mistakes and to find alternative and better solutions.’

(Scrivener 2011)

Writing needs knowledge.

‘the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences’

(Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

Rationale

Write in a familiar context.

‘plausible contexts’, relevant content areas, ‘purpose of writing is not just to produce a certain type of writing: it is an act of meaning making’

(Caplan & Farling 2017)

Write with a relevant purpose and genre.

‘focus on grammar in diverse contexts can help students understand variation in forms and functions across genres as well as build linguistic resources for a range of writing needs’

(Frodesen 2018)

Rationale

Writing takes time to learn.

- some grammar errors ‘can be ‘treatable’ with focused instruction and learning’
(Ferris 1999 in Zhou 2009)
- some others take longer possibly due to rules not clear, numerous exceptions to the rules, or impact of L1
(Harris and Silva 1993 in Zhou 2009, Mekela, Pomani and Shabitha 2016)

Rationale

- Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback (DWCF) can be considered an effective pedagogical approach to improve linguistic accuracy.
- **Indirect feedback** can lead to better self-monitoring abilities when writing, which can lead to **increased automatization of accurate language production.** (Lalande cited in Kurzer 2017).
 - **‘untreatable errors’** are crucial to communication (*e.g. word order, word choice, collocations*). Some of the rules governing untreatable rules may not be teachable, but from **DWCF students gain practice in revision using their own authentic texts** that may result in **increased accuracy.** (Hartshorn & Evans cited in Kurzer 2017)

Rationale

- Students become better at self-editing and have more accurate timed writing paragraphs after taking classes that supplement grammar instruction using DWCF.
- Providing feedback targets students' individual needs and teachers are able to interact with students' ZPD
- This helps students better **internalise grammatical concepts to their productive writing**, when these grammar features may have been reliant on decontextualised grammar instruction.

(Kurzer 2017)

Other activities...

Rewrite paragraph

- This type of activity allows for individualized feedback. Students will need to write on a topic that is relevant to students' situation.

Example: Discuss the importance of speaking in English when living and studying abroad.

- Students write a paragraph for approximately 15 to 20 minutes on a given topic at regular intervals (weekly or daily).
-

Other activities...

Organizing writing instruction around **genres** can be a **highly effective and engaging preparation** for students' academic and professional writing needs.

1. *Joint construction:* Teachers and students together compose a text in the target genre. Teachers may need to consider eliciting the structure / word choice / grammar from students. Graphic organizers and guided questions can also be used.
2. *Deconstruction:* Organization and linguistic choices in a genre are made explicit to learners through analysis of mentor texts.
3. *Independent construction:* Students write their own texts. (Caplan & Farling 2017)

Examples: online product reviews, professional emails, and restaurant reviews.

Other activities...

Genre-based writing: Review of café

- Students visit a café and are instructed to take thorough notes so they can describe the place to a friend and make a recommendation whether or not to visit.
- The teacher can provide some vocabulary (based on level) to enable students to express their ideas more successfully.

TABLE 1. Genre Analysis of the Restaurant Review

Stage	Purpose	Typical language features
Title	Attract attention; suggest overall evaluation	Strong adjectives; not a sentence
Orientation	Introduce the restaurant and state the focus of the review	Personal pronouns, present perfect tense verbs
History (optional)	Provide background information	Past tense verbs
Description	Enable readers to visualize the space	Adjectives, adjective clauses, sensory verbs
Features	Describe and evaluate characteristics (e.g., food, setting, service)	Adverb clauses, specific vocabulary for taste, texture, smells, etc.
Recommendation and star rating	Conclude the review and persuade the reader to try or avoid the restaurant	Modal verbs, personal pronouns

Other activities...

Description paragraph:

1. *Simple description with visuals:* have students examine a picture and ask them to name the objects in it. Then, ask students to write a paragraph to describe the picture. Expressions and language structure can be provided if necessary.
 2. *Completing a description paragraph:* give students a picture and have them complete a description by supplying a language feature and using vocabulary required by the context.
 3. *Writing a description from questions:* have students examine a picture and use a set of questions as a guide to write a short description of the picture.
-

Other activities...

Description paragraph - writing a description from questions:

1. *Questions:*
 - a. Who do you think are talking?
 - b. Where are they sitting?
 - c. What are they talking about?

 2. *Make a conversation for the situation.*
-



Reflection

- Share a grammar practice you've done in the past that you may do differently now.



Acknowledgements

- Thank you to our colleagues who have shared their ideas and given feedback especially Adrienne Harris, Chris Wasow, Asher Reynolds, and Angela Nicholls, Beth Hutton, Paula Dimmell, and Sandra Caon-Parsons.
-

Reference List

- Ajmal, A 2015, 'Process-genre approach to teaching writing university foundation course students in Pakistan', Proceedings of the European Conference on Language Learning 2015
Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, Cambridge University Press
- Caplan, N & Farling, M 2017, 'A dozen heads are better than one: collaborative writing in genre-based pedagogy', *TESOL Journal*, 8.3, September 2017, pp.564-581.
- Hartshorn, KJ, Evans, NW, Merrill, PF, Sudweeks, RR, Strong-Krause, D & Anderson NJ 2010, 'Effects of dynamic corrective feedback on ESL writing accuracy', *TESOL Journal*, vol.44, no. 1, pp. 84-109.
- Kurzer, K 2017, 'Dynamic written corrective feedback in developmental multilingual writing classes', *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 52, issue 1.
- Paterson, K 2013, *Oxford Grammar for EAP*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Rollinson, P 2005, 'Using peer feedback in the ESL writing class', *ELT Journal*, vol.59, no.1.
- Ruecker, T, Shapiro, S, Johnson, EN & Tardy, C 2014, 'Exploring the linguistic and institutional contexts of writing instruction in TESOL', *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 48, issue 2.
- Scrivener, J 2011, *Learning Teaching*, 3rd edn, Macmillan.
- The Conversation 2013, *More chocolate means better Nobel prize odds – true or false?*, The Conversation, viewed 26 October 2018, <https://theconversation.com/more-chocolate-means-better-nobel-prize-odds-true-or-false-16454>
- Zhou, AA 2009, 'What adult ESL learners say about improving grammar and vocabulary in their writing for academic purposes', *Language Awareness*, vol. 18, no.1, pp. 31-46.
-



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE