

Teaching Writing as Productive Skills

By Kalayo Hasibuan

Abstrak

Pengajaran 'writing/menulis' sebagai keterampilan berbahasa yang tergolong dalam 'productive skills' menuntut guru bahasa Inggris untuk mengarahkan peserta belajar untuk bereksperisi dalam bentuk bahasa tulisan yang membutuhkan elemen-elemen keterampilan berbahasa seperti penggunaan pilihan kata yang tepat, penulisan ejaan kata yang tepat, dan penulisan kalimat-kalimat yang terterima menurut kaidah-kaidah bahasa. Kesemua elemen-elemen tersebut berbeda dengan penerapan keterampilan berbahasa 'speaking/berbicara', yang mana tatkala berbicara, pembicara dapat menggunakan isyarat, penggunaan ekspresi wajah, dan juga mengajukan pertanyaan. Penulis menawarkan komponen pembelajaran menulis seperti praktek dan tujuan menulis, bagaimana menyusun isi dan pengalaman-pengalaman belajar untuk pengajaran menulis, pendekatan-pendekatan menulis, pengajaran menulis berbasis teks, dan peran teknologi untuk mengajarkan keterampilan menulis dalam bahasa Inggris.

A. Introduction

Teaching writing as productive skills requires teachers to direct students to produce their expressions in written form and needs more elements of skills such as using appropriate words, proper sentences and correct spelling that is different from speaking. When students speak, they can gesture, use facial expressions, ask questions or fumble their way through it, but when they write, they have to communicate with actual visual words.

In this paper, the writer in describing writing as productive skills proposes some points how writing as productive skills is taught and learned. The proposed points include teaching writing practices and writing purpose, how to organize the content and learning experiences for teaching writing, approaches to writing, , teaching a range of text types, the role of technology for teaching writing.

B. Teaching practices and Writing purposes

As teachers' conceptions of writing have changed, so have their teaching practices. Raimes, Ann (2002, 307) maintains that teachers are required to recognize their perceptions of the relationship between the type of writing they teach and the roles they are preparing students for in academia and the wider world of work. The teachers' perception of how they teach writing in connection with the roles of students in learning writing is associated with beliefs about learning and the teaching of writing. Beliefs about learning and the teaching of writing are described as follows:

1. Writing is both a process and a product.
2. We learn to write by writing.
3. Spelling and handwriting are tools for writing.
4. Writing is a powerful learning tool.
5. The conditions which existed for learning oral language can be applied in classroom settings for learning written language; namely, immersion, demonstrations, expectation, responsibility, approximation, use, response.
6. Readers learn about writing from reading and writers learn about reading from writing.
7. Evaluation of written language is a constant part of the teaching cycle.
8. Learners need constant demonstrations (models) of both process and product of that which they are to learn.

9. When writers perceive themselves as writers they read like writers; they engage in how texts work.
10. Different subject areas, purposes and audiences require different 'forms' or 'registers' of language.
11. Language is functional, social and contextual; it is the principal vehicle for making sense of our world.
12. Spelling is thus functional, social and contextual activity.
13. Spelling serves writers but is learned primarily through reading.
14. Spellers need to be effective readers and proofreaders.
15. Language learning is a problem solving process; namely gathering information; formulating and testing hypotheses; gaining feedback and confirming the hypotheses.
16. Learners use a variety of coping strategies to solve the written language puzzle.
17. Teachers need to know why they do what they do with respect to the written language classroom practice.
18. Children need to learn to write different kinds of texts for different purposes; they need to know a variety of genres in order to be successful in their future lives.
19. Writing in schools should be more than 'story writing'; it should focus on particular genres.
20. Children learn language, learn through language, and learn about language as they use language.
21. Teachers and students need a language to talk about language.
22. Teachers need to make explicit how different genres work; how they are constructed; what the functions of different genres are.
23. Teachers and students need to share understandings and language about successful written genres.
24. Teachers need to make explicit their own beliefs about learning, about what writing is and why they teach it as they do.
25. Teachers need to be able to justify their evaluation judgments about writing.

26. Profiles have the potential of supporting teachers and learners when teachers have developed a thorough understanding of language and literacy.
27. Profiles should be viewed as a framework for student learning and a guide for student assessment in writing development.

Beliefs about learning and the teaching of writing based on the above description, mainly (1) teachers need to know why they do what they do with respect to the written language classroom practice; (2) teachers need to make explicit how different genres work; how they are constructed; what the functions of different genres are; (3) teachers and students need to share understandings and language about successful written genres; and (4) teachers need to make explicit their own beliefs about learning, about what writing is and why they teach it as they do become the basic principles how language teachers design writing lessons.

C. How to organize the content and learning experiences for teaching writing

How teachers design writing lessons is teachers' main job to decide what content and what learning experiences during writing lessons. Citing Raimes, Ann (2002, 306), the content and learning experiences refer to types of syllabus organization for teaching writing as shown in the following matrix.

No.	Syllabus Type	Content
1.	Topical	Writing lessons can be organized around theme, such as housing, health, education, or abstraction such as success or courage.
2.	Situational	Writing lessons can organized around situational transactions such as applying for a job, complaining to a landlord, writing letters to the

		newspaper, writing a business memo, or writing essays.
3.	Functional	Writing lessons can be organized around rhetorical activities: describing, telling a story, writing autobiography, comparing, and contrasting, classifying, defining, explaining, arguing, persuading, or supporting a thesis with examples, illustrations, and other evidence.
4.	Structural	Writing lessons, particularly at beginning levels, can be organized
5.	Skills and processes	
6.	Tasks	

D. Approaches to writing

How teachers practice teaching writing lessons should first refer to teachers' beliefs and approaches to writing. Therefore, language learners should be directed with approaches to writing. Walter, Teresa (2004, 76-85) introduces approaches to writing such as modeled writing, and shared writing.

Modeled writing according to Walter, Teresa (2004, 76) is through teacher's demonstration and modeling writing process comprising adding, revising, asking questions, and clarifying purposes for writing. Shared writing is similar to modeled writing in which students take a more active role. This technique is the follow-up of modeled writing; students have an opportunity to develop their understanding of written language and successfully participate in the writing process. Teachers encourage students to participate and engage actively as they demonstrate and model

new writing skills, strategies, and language patterns. Finally, students and teachers share the task of creating a readable text that can be used again.

Walter, Teresa (2004, 76) provides a sample shared writing experience as follows:

1. The teacher demonstrates by modeling a short piece of writing such as a simple story of a personal event.
2. The teacher elicits 'help' from students to model and reinforce specific aspects of writing such as language structures, world chunks and spelling, or descriptive language.
3. The teacher reads the piece of writing, asking for ideas to improve the writing – making it clearer or more interesting.
4. Students and the teacher read the piece of writing together.

The follow-up of shared writing is the *three-phase writing tasks* representing writing tasks from controlled to guided to free writing assignment. Olshtain, Elite (1991, p.250) introduces a three-phase writing tasks or writing tasks along a continuum from 'controlled' to 'guided' to 'free' writing activities prescribed as follows:

1. Controlled writing task through dictation. It allows students for the kinesthetic experience of writing in their own hand. Writing through dictation can also serve to produce a similar passage/text, and to learn sentence structure.
2. Guided writing model - asking students to compose a short text by answering directed, yet open-ended questions which provide a rhetorical structure for student-generated text; and a 'dicto-comp' model, a combination of a dictation and a composition, in which the teacher first reads aloud a passage at normal speech; then the teacher write down some of they key vocabulary on the board; and asks the students to write the text down from memory using key words and their knowledge of grammatical and text structure to guide them.
3. 'Free' writing assignment – asking students to produce complete texts in response to variety of writing stimuli, such as pictures, or texts which have been read.

Guided writing is categorized as writing tasks along a continuum from ‘controlled’ to ‘guided’ to ‘free’ writing activities. The implementation of guided writing involves the teacher working with small groups of students. Students through guided writing can apply the understandings they have gained from modeled and shared writing sessions, with varying degrees of support from the teacher. In addition, students explore aspects of the writing process, which have been demonstrated.

David Hornsby (2000) outlines two different ways that guided writing can be managed. Each approach has a different main purpose.

1. One or two sessions may be planned for small groups of children who need assistance with specific writing skills.
2. Many sessions, building upon shared reading and writing of a particular genre, are planned. Firstly, the children are immersed in the genre during reading. Secondly, they compose a text in that genre during shared/interactive writing. Finally, they are guided to write their own text in that genre.

Guided writing is useful for a range of teaching purposes, which will vary, depending on the developmental stage and the needs of the students.

E. Teaching a range of text types

Referring to beliefs about learning and the teaching of writing mainly (1) writing in schools should be more than 'story writing'; it should focus on particular genres; (2) teachers need to make explicit how different genres work; how they are constructed; what the functions of different genres are; and (3) teachers and students need to share understandings and language about successful written genres is important for language teachers to design teaching writing lessons about types of texts or the so called ‘genres’.

Jan Turbill highlights the importance of developing students’ skills in tackling different types of texts. Before working

with teachers to develop specific teaching strategies, she outlined some of the distinguishing features of a number of text types:

Features of common text types

Text Type	Social Purpose	Framework	Language Features
Recount Such as: Personal retellings, e.g. diary; Factual retellings, e.g. science experiment or news; Imaginative recounts	To tell what happened, to retell events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation (who, where, when) • Series of events in time-order • Personal comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of nouns to identify people, animals and things • linking words to do with time e.g. 'later', 'after', 'before' • simple past tense • action verbs
Narrative E.g. fairytales, legends, plays, science fiction, myths, cartoons, adventure stories	To entertain, create, stimulate emotions, motivate, guide, teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orientation (introduce main characters in a setting of time and place) • complications /problems (main characters find ways to solve the problem) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defined characters • descriptive language • dialogue • usually past tense

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resolution 	
Procedure e.g. recipes, craft instructions, game rules, science experiments	To tell how to do or make something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goal • materials • method or steps • evaluation (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of action verbs (turn, put) • linking words to do with time • tense is timeless • use of precise vocabulary
Information Report	To organize and present information about a class of things.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general statement identifying the subject of the information report • bundles of information relating to such things as: habits, behavior, color shape • summary (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generalized participants • impersonal objective language • timeless present tense • technical terms • paragraphs with topic sentences
Explanation E.g. explain	To explore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a statement about what 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cause and events

<p>how soil erosion occurs, explain why Australian fauna is unique</p>	<p>how things work or how something came to be - to explain phenomena</p>	<p>is to be explained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explanation sequence (several statements of reason explaining and elaborating on the topic) • concluding statement (optional) <p>Explanations may include visual images such as flow charts or diagrams</p>	<p>relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple present tense • generalized non human participants • passive voice e.g. 'is driven by' • complex sentences • technical language
<p>Exposition E.g. a letter of protest, poster advertising sun-smart behavior.</p>	<p>Expositions are used to argue (or persuade) a case for or against a particular point of view or position</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statement or position • points in the argument with evidence and examples (elaboration) • reiteration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generalized participants • linking words associated with reasoning e.g. 'therefore' • nominalization (actions become things). E.g. 'to pollute'

		- restate the position in light of the arguments presented	becomes 'pollution' • evaluative language e.g. 'important', 'significant', 'valuable'
--	--	--	--

Using written communication in daily practical situations in teaching students

Teaching productive skills of English writing holds numerous valuable reasons for students to be able to communicate this way. Writing gives them confidence with the language and forces them to use a regular or bilingual dictionary and therefore expand their vocabulary. Their other skills become sharpened and heightened as they think of how words are formed and spelled. Teach and practice the following practical exercises with your students:

- a. Teach students how to write up letters of reference and correspondence for school and work. This practical ability will reveal whether or not they have the technical written ability to handle their courses or job requirements.
- b. Pretend they are going shopping. Get them to prepare a grocery list to itemize supplies like milk, bread, eggs, fruits and vegetables. Get them to write a list of different types of stores: hardware store, pharmacy, grocery store, the market etc. Have a class discussion about what they bought and what type of store they went to find these items.
- c. Discuss paying bills and general banking online and filling in forms for accounts. Get them to create banking forms, writing a check and writing down money figures etc.

- d. Order forms for general items at work, school and home. Talk about sending a written fax and ordering stationery like pens, paper and paperclips.
- e. Medical emergency forms for the hospital, doctor or dentist. Give various scenarios of why and when you would fill out these forms ie illness, pregnancy, death in the family, routine check-up etc.
- f. Applications forms for work, school, renting, leasing or buying a home or vehicle. Discuss these big moments in life. A written project is a lot of fun, as each student can describe what type of house and car they are pretending to purchase on a made-up application form.
- g. Short reminder notes or messages at work. Teach them what essential notes they might have to leave for someone at work. "Please call Bob when you are back from lunch." "Sandy called and would like to order some pens."etc.
- h. Instructions on how to make, cook or do something. Discuss recipes, changing a tire, baking a cake, fixing a sink. Get students to write down as many different instructions as possible. There are endless possibilities in teaching, you just have to be creative!
- i. Directions on how to find a location of a place. Ask students to name a few different places locally and to describe in writing the directions of how to get there. Get them to write down street names, parks, shops, rivers, schools etc.
- j. School essays, poems or tests.
- k. Resume and cover letter when applying for a job. Teach EFL students how to prepare these for practical use in life.
- l. Writing a postcard to an English friend when they travel. Drawing and creating a mock postcard is fun! It can be from anywhere in the world and they can write about the weather and their travel experience.

- m. Writing a fax to order something or correspond with another office.
- n. Online correspondence through email and social media. Do any of your students use Face Book, Twitter or another form of social networking? Discuss vocabulary regarding using these written communication forms.



- a
ch
ne
- on the computer or paper.
 - p. Texting English friends. Do any of your students text? Talk to the class and find out what they mostly text about. Get them to write a list of common English words they might use in texting.

Teaching productive skills of these day-to-day written tasks will give your EFL students huge amounts of confidence to go about their daily lives.

E. Cultivating, developing and strengthening English writing and spelling for teaching

writing as productive skills

Teaching students to have a strong spelling aptitude is a definite way to enhance their writing. You can tell whether a person reads and writes often or not if their spelling is weak. You want to teach students to read often so that they're exposed to different styles of writing, a wide range of words and sentence structures.

Their vocabulary and grammar improves at a vastly rapid rate. Poor spelling reflects a lack of exploring a variety of literature. There are several ways to improve their spelling skills and therefore make their writing attractive, interesting and accurate. Teaching productive skills takes a proactive approach.

- Teach them the English alphabet well. Make sure they recognize each letter, know its sound and use.
- Expose them to as many different types of books as you can. This will help them discover different writing styles and choose one they like. Whether you take them to the library or read to them in class, talk about the writing style of the author and the genre of the book.
- Teach them to take note of how English people around them write their emails, notes and general correspondence.
- Guide them to written exercises online and in books.
- Get them involved in educational writing games, puzzles, activities and worksheets.
- Writing in a daily journal is a great exercise to teach them. Over time they will notice how their skills improve as they look back at older entries.
- Carrying a regular or bilingual dictionary with them is good practice to correct themselves and expand their vocabulary.

- Get them to write short stories and get an English speaking friend or tutor to correct their work when you are not around.
- Teaching English punctuation is critical. When they're forming sentences, they'll be surprised at how knowing punctuation can help and how it can change the meaning of the sentence completely.
- Get students to write about something they know and like. Creating a themed-project on fashion, travel, animals etc with pictures and descriptions can be a lot of fun!
- Teach students to ask themselves who, what, when, where, why and how questions when they are composing ideas.
- Get them to research and seek out their own practical writing tips to share with the class.
- Students should keep a dictionary with them at all times. They can form a great habit of referencing unknown or difficult words.
- Teach students to write down problem words and post them on their fridge, wall or on sticky notes.
- Reading books, magazines and other literature will familiarize them with a large collection of words. When you travel and teach, try and pack some light literature that they might not see in their country.
- A great project would be to create flashcards for the alphabet and hard to spell words. Get students to test each other.
- Keeping a notebook and writing down words they hear but don't understand, is a good habit to adopt.
- Teach them to ask someone to spell or write the word out for them if they're not sure of its spelling.
- Use video and audio lessons to supplement their learning. Students can follow along with visual words either in a book or on the screen.

- Spell words out loud as you teach them. First letter by letter and then as a whole word. Example: f-l-o-w-e-r = flower.

F. Teaching productive skills of writing paragraphs

Teaching students to write great paragraphs once they have a firm grasp of grammar, teaches them to be organized and well structured in their ideas. Paragraphs should have a beginning, middle and end and be clear in what it's trying to say.

Teaching them to have well written paragraphs, leads them to produce strong stories and essays. Grammar, spelling and punctuation should be sharp. Their paragraphs should have a main idea and sentences that support that idea clearly. When the paragraph comes to an end, it should have a concluding sentence so that the reader can move into the next paragraph smoothly.

Well written paragraphs have:

- A main idea or topic sentence to convey what the idea or message is of that paragraph.
- Support sentences that give details of what the main idea is. They could be three to five sentences or so to elaborate on that idea.
- Concluding and transitional sentences that will complete the paragraph and lead to the next one smoothly.

G. Teaching productive skills of writing chapters

Once students know how to put good paragraphs together, they'll start to form chapters. Chapters will be in longer stories and they show a change of setting, time, place or happening. A chapter may go forward in time or shift and focus on another character completely.

When building a story, you need to teach students to have a plan or a blueprint that they can refer to in order to build layers and keep their story on track. Obviously there has to be a beginning,

middle and end of a story, but there also has to be a struggle or a change or the reader will get bored.

Discussing all these aspects with the class and exposing them to various examples of literature, will give them inspiration and wider writing knowledge.

Main elements for a well written story:

- Setting - where is this story taking place? In a circus, mansion, garden, a town, city, school or a fantasy planet?
- Time frame - will this story happen over several hours, days or years?
- Time period - is this story set in modern times, Victorian times, Medieval times?
- Characters - is there one main character? Are there a few supporting, secondary characters? Is there a protagonist (main or lead character) and an antagonist (a person who goes against the main character)?
- Character description - Is the main character young, old, short? Are they a person, animal or fantasy creature? Do they have any memorable traits, special abilities or disfigurements like a scar, pointy ears, big feet or the ability to disappear?
- Genre - what type of story is this? Fantasy, horror, Heroic tale, adventure, comedy or biography?
- Struggle or happening - what is the main goal of the character/s and how will they achieve it? Will there be something they have to struggle against or overcome? A fire-breathing dragon, a scary neighbor or the death of a character?
- Mood or tone - is the story dark, sad and dreary or is it light and happy? Is it raining all the time? These elements are the type that really bring the story to life.
- The flow of the story - will there be a struggle in the middle of the story with a tragic ending or will it be a happy one?

- Audience - who are you writing for? Children, adults or teens? Young or old? Base the length of your story on your audience's reading ability and concentration.
- Fact or fiction? Is this story fact based (non-fiction) or is it fiction (fantasy and make-believe)? Do your research well if it is fact based.
- Length of the story - will it be a full novel or a shorter tale?

H. The 'Genre' Approach

In the 1980s the genre approach became popular along with the notion that student writers could benefit from studying different types of written texts. Derewianka (1992) defines genre as the schematic structure of a text which helps it to achieve its purpose. Texts differ in terms of their purpose, and different cultures achieve their purposes through language in different ways. Texts also differ according to particular situation in which they are being used.

The genre-based writing teaching according to Halliday, 1975, Paiter, 1986, Oldenberg, 1987 is actually developed on the basis of child language studies undertaken within the systematic functional model that shows how young children learn language and how, in particular they learn to develop texts. These studies demonstrate that in the course of adult care-takers and children interaction, adults are constantly modeling genres in their discourse with young children. So we must find ways to introduce strategies familiar to students from their experience of learning to talk. Usually in the course of learning, the adults and the children share the same experiences. Therefore the classroom genre for teaching genres should include the three basic stages: modeling, joint construction and independent construction.

Sawyer and Watson (1982) stresses that learning to write is learning to control genres. Genres are identified by their generic structures. Students should learn first of all the structure,

but the emphasis on structures should not detract from the essential emphasis on meaning. Rothery's (1985) suggestion for a genre-based approach to teaching writing includes the following steps:

1. introducing a genre: modeling a genre by reading to the whole class,
2. focusing on a genre: modeling a genre explicitly by naming its stages,
3. jointly negotiating a genre: teacher and class jointly composing the genre under focus,
4. researching: selecting material; assessing information before writing,
5. independent construction: students individually construct the genre

References

- Hornsby, D. (2000) *A Closer Look at Guided Reading* Eleanor Curtain, Victoria.
- Olshtain, Elite (1991, p.250)
- Raimes, Ann (2002, 307)
- Butt, D; Fahey, R; Feez, S; Spinks, S; & Yallop, C. (2000). *Using functional grammar: An explorer's guide*. Macquarie University: NCELT.
- Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2001). *English Language Syllabus 2001 for Primary & Secondary Schools*. Singapore: Ministry of Education. (Also available on the Internet at the following url address: <http://www1.moe.edu.sg/syllabuses/doc/English.pdf>)
- Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring how texts work*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Derewianka, B. (2003). Trends and issues in genre-based approaches. *RELC Journal*. 34(2), 133-54.
- Eggs, S. & Slade, D. (1997). *Analysing casual conversation*. London: Cassell.
- Foley, J. & Thompson, L. (2003). *Language learning: A lifelong process*. London: Arnold.

- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective* (2nd edition.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M A K & Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. 3rd Edition. London: Arnold.
- Kim, Y. & Kim, J. (2005). Teaching Korean university writing class: Balancing the process and the genre approach. *Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 7(2), 69-90.
- Ladbrook (2005). Writing recipes. *The Language Teacher*, 29(4), 23-27
- Lantolf, J.P. (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lin, B. (2003). English in Singapore: An insider's perspective of syllabus renewal through a genre-based approach. *RELJ Journal*, 34(2), 223-46.
- Mann, W.C., & Thompson, S.A. (1988). Rhetorical structure theory: Toward a functional theory of text organization. *Text*, 8(3), 243-281.
- Paltridge, B. (2001). *Genre and the language learning classroom*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Rodgers, T. (2001). Language teaching methodology (<http://www.cal.org/ericell/digest/roddgers.html>, ERIC Digest, September 2001)
- Swales, J. (1981). *Aspects of article introductions*. Birmingham, UK: University of Aston Language Studies Unit.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Genre-based Approach for Teaching English Factual Writing
(<http://englishsmp17.blogspot.com/2010/02/genre-based-approach-for-teaching.html>)