WRITING ACTIVITIES IN A LITERACY BASED TEACHING

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Abstract

Literacy brings students to current and future learning, and for participation in the communication, society and workforce. As well as providing access to personal enrichment through literature, culture and social interaction. It provides access to material enrichment through further education, training and skilled employment. One of parts of literacy based teaching is writing. Writing is a principal form of communication, necessary in everyday life, in business, in creativity, in scholarly pursuits; in short, it is not a just tool of living, it is a tool of survival. It is the key activity in fostering language learners’ awareness of how purpose audience and context affect the design of texts. In order to help the students to write effectively, the teacher should provide some interesting and useful activities. This paper aims at explaining what the literacy based teaching is and writing activities that can be used a literacy based teaching such as letter writing, journal writing, and creative writing

Keywords: literacy based teaching, teaching writing, writing activities

Introduction

From the standpoint of literacy framework, writing is essential to academic language learning for number of reasons as mentioned in Kern (2000 p.172). First, in designing meaning through writing, learners develop their ability to think explicitly about how to organize and express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in ways compatible with envisioned readers’ expectations. Second, the concrete, visible nature of writing is of key importance in terms of the language learning process. Just as reading allows the learners to focus their attention on relationships among forms, writing allows learners to create and reshape meaning through explicit manipulation of forms. Third, like reading, writing provides time for learners to process meaning. When writing, students need not worry about turns, pronunciation, or keeping an idea (and its articulation) rehearsed in memory. The last, writing allows learners’ language use to go beyond purely ‘functional’ communication, making it possible to create imaged worlds of the own design. Learning to read and write thus involves a great deal more than mastery of writing system that involved a broader ability to understand relationships of visual and verbal forms in contexts of written communication. It involves creating ‘discourse world’ mediated by a variety of linguistics and non-linguistics devices and connections. In this context, the teachers play an important role in promoting students’ understanding of these devices so they can use them appropriately to improve their ability to read and write in second or foreign language.

As every writer should have a balance among several aspects in his/her writing like purpose, content, audience, organization, vocabulary, mechanics etc., writing seems difficult for both native and non-native learners (Salma, 2015). In EFL context as English is foreign language and there is no practical use of it, writing skill becomes most challenging task to the learners. Form this condition, the teachers should introduce the writing with various kinds of activities that can be implemented well in EFL classroom.
This paper focuses on framework of what the literacy based teaching is and writing activities in the literacy based teaching.

**Teaching Writing in EFL**

Writing is a complex process and teachers have a vital role in helping children, as they work through the challenges that allow them to become competent and confident writers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). Communication through the medium of writing is a necessary part of everyday life (ELCG, 2004) and may be for personal, academic, commercial and other purposes and audiences. Harmer (2004) stated that the writing process is the stages a writer goes through in order to produce something in its final written form. This produce may be affected by the content (subject matter) of the writing, the type of writing (shopping lists, letters, essays, reports, or novels), and the medium it is written in (pen and paper, computer word files, live chat, etc).

**Literacy Based Teaching**

Literacy-based approach to language teaching provides learners with an opportunity to think about how text and context relate to one another. On the one hand, learners explore how text’ language invites them to develop particular contexts of interpretation, and how those contexts can be redesigned by manipulating textual features. Kern (2000) stated that in the literacy-based teaching the relationship between reading, writing, and talking is not linear, but overlapping. It is the overlap that most clearly differentiates a literacy-focused curriculum itself from traditional curricula. Reading and writing overlap not only in the sense that students write formal essays about what they have read but also when students 1) use writing concretely represent their thoughts and interpretations of texts as they read (in form of reading journals, summaries, diagrams, and so forth; 2) write their own version of a topic or a theme before reading the target text, in order to be sensitized to the topic or theme before reading commences; 3) write reflections on their own reading processes (their experiences, difficulties, and insight) as a component of their reports on their independent reading; 4) read to improve their writing when they attend to linguistics, rhetorical, or stylistics elements in texts in order to incorporate them into their own work; 5) actively and critically read their own and their peers’ writing in the editing process.

A consider number of activities on literacy based teaching involve the combinations of reading, talking, and writing. The anticipated goal of working in these areas of overlap is not only enhanced skills, but also a greater awareness of language itself, of discourse processes, and of literacy practices. New London Group as cited in Kern 2000 p. 133 proposed four curricular components in addressing the full range of learners’ literacy needs. The first, situated practiced. It is immersion in language use and it focus on communicating in the ‘here’ and ‘now’, on learners’ own lives and experiences, and on the spontaneous expression of their thoughts, opinions, and feelings. The second, overt instruction involves developing an explicit meta-language of design and focuses on learners’ intention. Pedagogically, it involves creating scaffolded learning activities, not just drills and memorization. As the whole, overt instruction therefore introduces an element of conscious control as well as a vocabulary to allow students to talk about the meaning design process. The third, critical framing, involves learners thinking about relations and interactions among designs, communicative context, and socio-cultural context. The last, transformed practiced, involves acts in which students transfer and recreate design of meaning from one context to another. In concrete terms, this means creating new texts on the basis of existing ones, or reshaping texts to make them appropriate for contexts of communication.
other than those for which they were originally intended.

Literacy based teaching assumes the primary importance of developing communicative ability in new language, but it also emphasizes within that general goal, the development of learners’ ability to analyze, interpret, and transform discourse and their ability to think critically about how discourse is constructed and used toward various ends in the social context. According to Kern (2000), literacy based curriculum is concerned with texts in a broad sense: written, graphic, spoken, and multimodal. This range of text types allows teachers to deal with issues of the interpretation even in introductory-level classes without having to use materials that are overly complex linguistically p.195.

Writing Activities

Letter Writing
Kern (2000) stated that writing letters either to native speakers or to the other language learning is an excellent way to introduce students to writing. It corresponds well to the goals of communicative language teaching because it provides an authentic purpose of writing, entails the use of a wide range of functions (for example, greeting, asking questions, explaining, clarifying, apologizing, expressing agreement and disagreement, and also can motivate learners to pay attention to form (because they are addressing a real audience). Now days, the teacher may provide sending of the information via email, face book, and also applying the application letter online. The students and teacher are easily in sending letter to the native speaker via social media.

Journal writing
The principle of journal writing is to encourage a writing habit and to develop fluency, as well as to improve students’ motivation and attitude toward writing. It provides the students to write freely and expressively. Kern (2000) proposed two types of journals:

- **Personal Journals**
  Personal journal in this term is when the students write diary-like accounts of day to day experiences and thoughts. Blanton (1987) recommends starting class sessions with five minutes of journal writing, in which students write about whatever is on their mind. In this activity, to encourage the students’ fluency, teachers should not correct students’ journals, but respond by expressing personal reactions, similar experiences, and the like.

- **Intellectual Journals**
  Spack and Sadow (1983) describe the use of intellectual journal in the classroom can be done in the following activities: Students wrote one journal entry per day of class, from a half to pages in length, which was regularly wrote a journal entry to the class which usually cited certain students journal entries. Intellectual journals also provided valuable on what students had and had not understood from their reading, lecturers, and class discussions, and therefore served an important diagnostic purpose.

Other kinds of journals that can be applied in the EFL classroom are:

- **Dialogue Journal**
  Kern (2000), in applying dialogue journal, the students and teachers write directly to each other in an ongoing written conversation. It provides excellent medium for students to use a variety of language function such as asking questions, describing, expressing personal feelings, and so on as well as a good way for teachers to get to know their students better.

- **Reflective Journal**
  The reflective journal is a technique that combines metacognitive processing with learning. It can provide students with descriptive feedback on a regular basis so that they will gain greater confidence and experience greater success in class. Key to reflective journals and learning logs is to see
progression over a period of time and to “gain a sense of achievement.

Making Creative Writing
Shen (2009) stated that in this activity, the students had to read the three literary books and then were required to choose one of them to write a piece of creative writing in English according to their own interest and language levels. The creative writing was required as the final report which substituted the traditional test with multiple-choice test. They were free to write as they wished, e.g. a continuation of the story, a changed ending, or a rewrite of the story, etc. In the coaching process, the students were encouraged to interact with the reading text highly actively. Most of reading was cooperatively done outside of the classroom in the students' free time to ensure a tension-free environment.

According to Kern (2000), creative writing tasks can give the chance to play with the language, to adopt fresh perspectives, and to explore different emotions in writing. He proposed three activities under creative writing:

- **Cinquain Poetry**
This activity can be done from the earliest stages of language study, either in small groups or individually. It is a short poem consisting of five, usually unrhymed lines containing, respectively, two, four, six, eight, and two syllables. The best-known form of cinquain poetry was created in the early 1900s by a poet named Adelaide Crapsey. These cinquains are similar to haiku in that the rules for writing them are based on syllables. Allan & Valette (1994), Cinquain poetry involves writing within the constraints of the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 noun</th>
<th>subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 adjectives</td>
<td>description of the subject (can be noun and adjective desired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Verbs</td>
<td>action of the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Words</td>
<td>expressing an emotion about the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Noun</td>
<td>restatement of the subject with different word</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The example of Cinquain poetry:
Flower
Colorful, Fragrant
Swaying, growing, blooming
Make me feel happy,
Blossoms

- **Visual-based Writing**
In this activity, the teacher begins by showing the painting on a poster or slide and letting students look at it silently for a minute. The teacher then asks students to take out a sheet of paper and label three columns: adjectives, nouns, and verbs. Students are asked to write down all the nouns, adjectives, and verbs they can think of that apply to the paintings, listed in the appropriate columns on their sheet. Students then work in groups of four to share their lists and to develop a compilation which each group a member copied down. The teacher then asks the students what could be done with all these words, into what context(s) they could be inserted. Students brainstorm proposals (for example, story, poem, song, skit, description of the image, advertisement), which are written on the board. And the last, the teacher can provide the students to present their project.

**Conclusion**
In promoting the literacy based teaching, the teachers must create and use various activities in order to involve the students the interaction of reading, talking, and writing so that the students can improve their ability to read and write in second or foreign language. English teaching are suggested to choose the activities based on the level and the need of the students. Hopefully, seven activities (letter writing, personal journal writing, intellectual journal, dialogue journal, reflective journal , writing cinquain poetry, and visual based writing) in this paper can be used as an alternative ways for English teacher in literacy based teaching.
References
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